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HER Voice Workshops

Democratic Participation Package (DPP)

Four workshops to build women's confidence, knowledge, and voice in democratic life



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TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLE OF CONTENT 02

HER VOICE PROJECT 04

- Project objectives 04
- Project target groups 04

THE FOUR WORKSHOPS : A COMMON STRUCTURE 05

LEARNING OBJECTIVES 06

WORKSHOP 1 — DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: MAKING YOUR VOICE COUNT 07

- Icebreaker 07
- Interactive activity 08
- Reflection and discussion 09
- Action-oriented activity 09

WORKSHOP 2 — CRITICAL THINKING: QUESTION, REFLECT, DECIDE 10

- Icebreaker 10
- Interactive activity 10
- Reflection and discussion 11
- Action-oriented activity 12
- Online resources 13

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TABLE OF CONTENT

WORKSHOP 3 — EU VALUES AND HISTORY 15

- Icebreaker 15
- Interactive activity 15
- Reflection and discussion 16
- Action-oriented activity 17

WORKSHOP 4 — MEDIA LITERACY 18

- Icebreaker 18
- Interactive activity 18
- Reflection and discussion 19
- Action-oriented activity 20

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TRAINERS 21

THE GUIDE TO POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 22

CONCLUSIONS 25

HER VOICE PROJECT

HER Voice: Women Shaping Democracy supports the democratic participation of women facing socio-economic difficulties, migration-related barriers or systemic discrimination.

The **Democratic Participation Package** is a practical tool consisting of four interactive workshops developed by partners in Italy, Cyprus, Romania and Spain.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- **Strengthen women's democratic participation** by building knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in civic and political life.
- **Empower women who face barriers** due to socio-economic difficulties, migration or systemic discrimination.
- **Provide practical tools and interactive learning** through a package of four accessible workshops.
- **Foster inclusive communities** that value equality, diversity and active citizenship.

PROJECT TARGET GROUP

- **Marginalised women:** women facing socio-economic difficulties, migration-related barriers or systemic discrimination.
- **Community organisations:** non-profits, NGOs and local groups working with women.
- **Neighbourhood centres:** community spaces and hubs for local engagement.
- **Staff and women trainers:** professionals and peer trainers facilitating women's empowerment and civic participation.

THE FOUR WORKSHOPS: A COMMON STRUCTURE

All four workshops share a standardised framework. Each workshop lasts on average two to three hours, and the recommended group size is twenty to thirty participants.

1



1. ICEBREAKER

Around fifteen minutes.

2



2. INTERACTIVE CORE ACTIVITY

Flexible timing.
Can be delivered in person or online.

3



3. REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Trainer-led discussion.
Timing is adaptable.

4



4. ACTION-ORIENTED ACTIVITY

Around fifteen to twenty minutes.
Ends with a concrete commitment or next step.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Each HER Voice workshop follows a simple and flexible journey:

Welcome · Experience · Reflection · Action

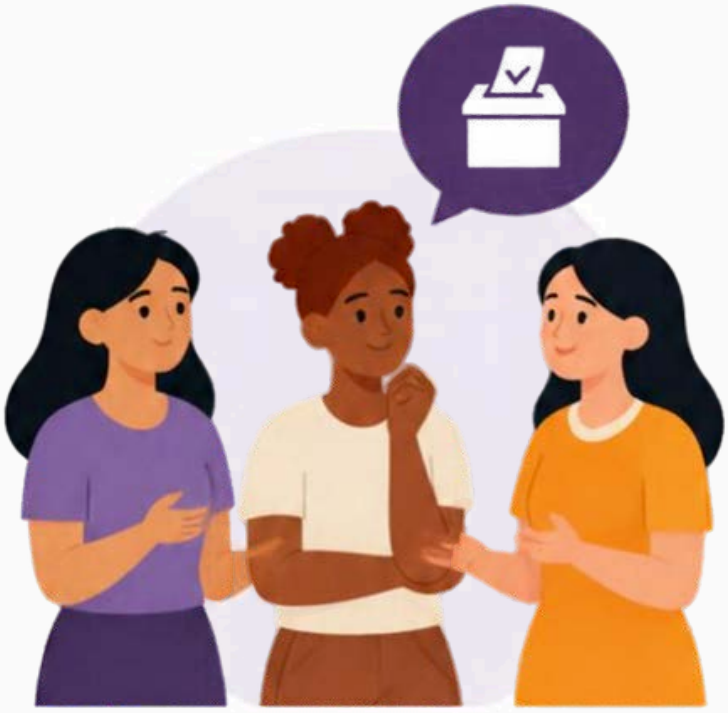
This structure creates a safe and engaging space where participants learn by doing, reflect together, and plan meaningful steps forward.

These learning objectives guide that journey and can be adapted to different groups and contexts.

BY THE END OF THE WORKSHOPS, PARTICIPANTS WILL:

1. **Deepen understanding of EU values, democratic structures, rights and responsibilities.**
2. **Strengthen critical thinking and media literacy.**
3. **Boost confidence to engage with local decision-makers.**
4. **Turn learning into realistic civic engagement actions.**

WORKSHOP 1
DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: MAKING YOUR VOICE COUNT



In this workshop, participants explore democratic life and active citizenship. They learn about their rights and responsibilities, how representation works, barriers to women's participation, and practical opportunities to get involved and make their voices count in decisions that affect their lives.

ICEBREAKER:
'A STEP FORWARD / RAISE YOUR HAND'

Read out a series of statements across three spheres of influence:
L1 personal and informal, L2 community, and L3 formal and institutional.

Each time participants recognise themselves in a statement, they step forward (or raise their hand, if online or in a small space).

L1

PERSONAL & INFORMAL

Relationships, family, and close networks

L2

COMMUNITY

Neighbours, schools, local groups, and community spaces

L3

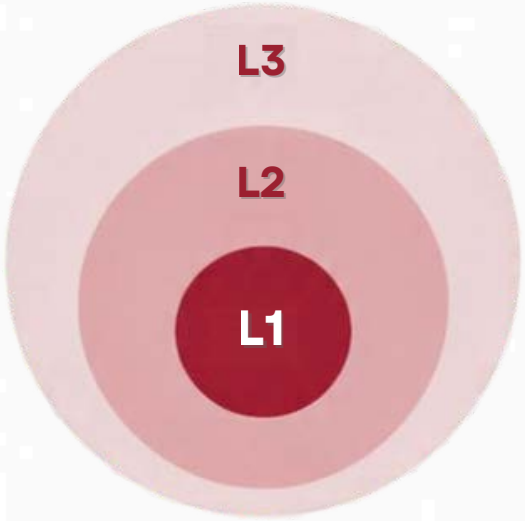
FORMAL & INSTITUTIONAL

Local councils, public institutions, and decision-making bodies

WORKSHOP 1 – INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

My community, my voice

This activity invites participants to explore the different spaces where their voices matter. Using three centricric spheres, it helps visualise the many ways to participate in decision-making and community life.



L1

PERSONAL AND INFORMAL SPHERE

Includes family, friends and neighbours. The people closest to us.

L2

COMMUNITY

Includes associations, NGOs and community groups. These are organisations that bring people together around shared interests.

L3

FORMAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SPHERE

Includes local authorities, representatives and public institutions. These are decision-makers and formal structures that shape public life.

FOR IN-PERSON GROUPS: WORLD CAFÉ METHOD

Participants sit at small tables. They discuss the three spheres and note down ideas, examples or people for each one.
After a set time, participants move to a new table and continue the conversation, building on previous ideas.

FOR ONLINE GROUPS: SHARED MAP APPROACH

Participants use a shared online map or board.
They place notes, examples or names into the three spheres.
All contributions are visible to the group in real time.

KEY MESSAGE

Democratic participation can begin with **small, everyday actions** in the spaces closest to us.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

In both cases, conclude the activity with a brief discussion of the opportunities and obstacles women face in the three spheres.

Then facilitate a quick debrief, comparing the different situations within the group, and expand on other opportunities for participation that may not have emerged.

WORKSHOP 1 – REFLECTION AND ACTION



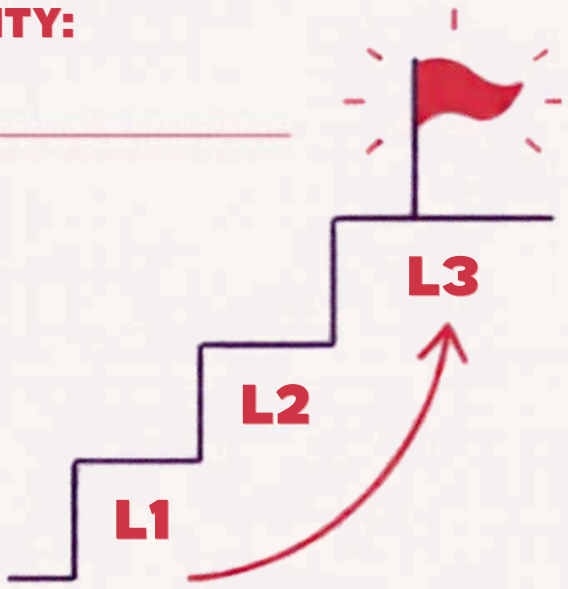
REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. Have you ever been involved in a community decision or activity?
1. What motivates people to get involved?
2. What prevents women from getting involved?
3. How can communities become more inclusive and welcoming?

ACTION-ORIENTED ACTIVITY: 'MY NEXT STEP'

Each participant identifies one next step from one of the following three paths:

1. Move from **L1** personal participation toward **L2** community participation.
2. Move from **L2** toward **L3** formal participation.
3. Move from **L3** back to **L1** by supporting another participant.



No matter the path, progress means taking **one achievable step forward.**

WORKSHOP 2 – CRITICAL THINKING: QUESTION, REFLECT, DECIDE

In this workshop, participants learn to distinguish facts, opinions and interpretations, recognise gender-related biases and stereotypes, assess source credibility, identify emotional or persuasive language, and discuss different viewpoints respectfully.



ICEBREAKER: 'FIRST IMPRESSIONS'

Participants respond to short statements, images, headlines or everyday scenarios and choose agree, disagree or insufficient information.
Can be delivered in person or online.

TRAINER PROMPTS

1. What led you to that conclusion?
2. What information are we missing?
3. Could there be another explanation?

WORKSHOP 2 – INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

Fact, opinion, assumption or manipulation?

Invite participants to work in small groups. First, ask them to create their own categories for classifying the statements below. Give them time to discuss and agree on labels that make sense to them.

Next, introduce five common terms used to evaluate statements and compare them with the groups' own categories:



Sample statements

- Women are by nature less interested in politics
- 80 people attended this event
- Everyone knows this is the best solution
- A woman who speaks firmly is difficult

CHECKLIST FOR ANALYSING STATEMENTS

- [ ] Who is making the statement?
- [ ] What evidence supports it?
- [ ] What information is missing?
- [ ] Whether the language creates fear or pressure?
- [ ] Whose voice is represented?
- [ ] Where the information can be verified?

WORKSHOP 2 – REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

This workshop helps participants examine how assumptions form, how emotions shape judgement, and how to engage in respectful, thoughtful dialogue.



DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. When do we make hasty assumptions?
2. How do emotions influence our judgement?
3. Why do we sometimes believe information that is repeated or presented with confidence?
4. How do stereotypes influence women's voices and leadership?
5. What makes it difficult to disagree?
6. How can we challenge an idea respectfully?



KEY MESSAGE

Critical thinking means curiosity, fairness, reflection and openness to new evidence, not mistrust or constant criticism.



PRACTICAL NOTE

If in person: use worksheets and flipcharts for group activities and discussion.

If online: use breakout rooms for small groups and shared digital boards for capturing ideas.

WORKSHOP 2 –
ACTION-ORIENTED ACTIVITY

Help the group to choose together a simple, realistic situation taken from everyday life and discuss the chosen situation with the group, using five questions.

1 

Pause

What is my immediate reaction?

2 

Question yourself

What do I know and what am I assuming?

3 

Check

What evidence or information do I need?

4 

Consider

What other points of view might there be?

5 

Choose

What is the most informed and responsible course of action?



YOUR PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Every action-oriented activity ends with a concrete commitment or next step. Take a moment to reflect and write down your commitment.

- **One thing I've learnt...**
- **One assumption I'll challenge more often...**
- **One action I'll take...**

WORKSHOP 2 – ONLINE RESOURCES

These resources can support your preparation and further learning on media literacy and critical thinking.



RESOURCE 1

UNESCO curriculum on media and information literacy, "Think Critically, Click Wisely!"



RESOURCE 2

"Critical Thinking Development Programme and Toolkit for Adults"

https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/content/critical-thinking-development-programme-and-toolkit-adults



RESOURCE 3

"Media Literacy: the Key to Critical Thinking"

https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en resource-centre/content/media-literacy-key-critical-thinking-collection-good-practices

WORKSHOP 3 – EU VALUES AND HISTORY

This workshop explores the history of democracy in Europe, rights, representation and equality, the need to limit political power, and the EU values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights.



ICEBREAKER: ‘DEMOCRACY IN EVERYDAY LIFE’

When you hear the word ‘democracy’, what is the first word, idea or everyday situation that springs to mind?

There are no right or wrong answers: the aim is for everyone to feel comfortable speaking up right from the start.

Democracy is experienced through rights, freedoms, equal treatment, access to information, participation and the opportunity to voice concerns.

WORKSHOP 3 – INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

EU values in everyday life

Read each real-life situation below. Then use the discussion questions to guide your group conversation.

1 

Residents affected by a local decision feel unheard.

A neighbourhood decision was made without meaningful consultation.

2 

A person feels unfairly treated because of a personal characteristic.

They believe they have been discriminated against in a public service or by an institution.

3 

Public information is difficult to find or understand.

Important information is unclear, incomplete, or not accessible.

4 

A public decision seems unclear or unfair, and someone wants it reviewed.

They are not sure the decision followed fair or transparent processes.



1. **Which EU values** are at stake in this situation?
2. **Which democratic principle** should apply here?
3. **Where** is the **gap** between principle and lived experience?
4. **What could** the person or community **realistically do?**

WORKSHOP 3 – REFLECTION AND ACTION



FROM DEMOCRATIC VALUES TO EVERYDAY REALITY

Where might there be a gap between democratic principles and people's everyday experiences?

- Language
- Access to information
- Time and care responsibilities
- Unfamiliar procedures
- Confidence in asking questions
- The feeling that one's voice does not count

A DEMOCRATIC ACTION I CAN TAKE

1. Identify the issue and linked value.
2. Find reliable information, rules or procedures.
3. Make connections with a public institution, community organisation, NGO, association or trusted source.
4. Take a realistic action.

WORKSHOP 4 – MEDIA LITERACY

In this workshop, participants learn to distinguish reliable and unreliable sources, recognise fake news, disinformation, clickbait and manipulated or AI-generated content including deepfakes, and use simple checks before believing or sharing information.



ICEBREAKER: 'PAIR WORK'

1. **Share an app or account**
   In pairs, take turns sharing one app or account you check every day.
2. **Ask a follow-up question**
   Ask your partner one follow-up question about what they shared.
3. **Introduce your partner**
   Introduce your partner to the group and share what you learned.
4. **Show of hands**
   Let's see what most people use!



WORKSHOP 4 — INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

Spot the fake news



This activity builds critical thinking and media literacy. Present participants with short news extracts, headlines or images. Some are true, others are false or manipulated.

In small groups, participants decide whether each item is trustworthy and explain their reasoning using the verification questions below.

How it works

Show 5–8 items one at a time. Groups discuss, decide, and justify their answer using the checklist. Share and reflect as a whole group.

VERIFICATION QUESTIONS

1. Who is publishing or sharing the information?
2. What evidence supports it and is a credible source cited?
2. What information is missing?
3. Does the language use fear, urgency or exaggeration?
5. Could the image or video be AI-generated or altered?
4. Would a quick search or reverse image search confirm or refute it?

WORKSHOP 4 – REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Use the following prompts to guide an open, respectful conversation. Encourage participants to listen to others and share their perspectives.

- Why do fake news and disinformation spread so quickly online?
- Why do we believe information that is repeated or presented with confidence?
- How has this happened through propaganda or political communication before the internet?
- How can disinformation influence elections, public health or trust in institutions across the EU?
- What responsibility do we have before sharing?
- What tools or habits help us verify information?
- What role do EU regulations such as the Digital Services Act play in making platforms more accountable?

KEY MESSAGE

Media literacy means curiosity, patience and healthy skepticism.

WORKSHOP 4 – ACTION-ORIENTED ACTIVITY

My fact-checking toolkit

1



1. Pause

Identify the initial reaction.

2



2. Source

Check who published it, credibility and date.

3



3. Verification

Compare with another reliable source, official website or fact-checking organisation.

4



4. Decision

Decide whether to trust, ignore or share responsibly.



Media literacy strengthens personal safety, critical thinking and democratic participation.



MY COMMITMENT

One action I will take to apply my fact-checking toolkit and support media literacy:

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TRAINERS



PREPARE WITH CONFIDENCE

- Read the entire workshop beforehand.
- Prepare worksheets, posters, Post-it notes or slides.
- Check any online tools.
- Consult reliable sources.



CREATE A SAFE SPACE

- Create a safe and welcoming atmosphere.
- Use accessible language.
- Choose non-sensitive, everyday examples.



STAY FLEXIBLE

- Adapt timing and format.
- Every group is different.
- Adjust as needed.



FACILITATE PARTICIPATION

- Facilitate rather than lecture.
- Encourage interaction and participation.
- Support everyone to contribute.

THE GUIDE TO POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

This guide turns learning into concrete civic participation at local level, while keeping national and European dimensions in view.

PRINCIPLES FOR SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

1. PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Every participant has the right to speak and be heard without fear of judgement, pressure or retaliation.

2. EMPOWERMENT-ORIENTED FACILITATION

Facilitation strengthens confidence, voices and leadership, not dependency.

3. TRAUMA-INFORMED AWARENESS

Facilitators recognise signs of distress and adapt pace and approach accordingly.

4. CO-CREATION AND EQUAL TREATMENT

All voices are valued equally in content, time, visibility and decision-making.

5. THE RULE: WOMEN SPEAK FIRST, POLICY-MAKERS LISTEN FIRST

Women set the agenda. Decision-makers listen before they respond.



TWO HERVOICE DIALOGUE EXERCISES

This section introduces two practical dialogue formats that help trainers design safe, constructive interactions between women and elected representatives.
Each exercise can be adapted to your context.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT: FROM DIALOGUE TO ACTION

DIALOGUE EXERCISES

1

SOFTSHOE SHUFFLE

(around twenty-five minutes)

Participants step forward or back in response to statements reflecting their political engagement. This is followed by debriefing.

2

CONVERSATION ON FEET

(around forty minutes)

Participants position themselves according to their experience or agreement with a statement. The group reflects and identifies the wisdom of the minority.

TYPES OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Visits to local political institutions
Encourages understanding of how governance works.

Dialogue sessions with councillors or officials
Builds mutual understanding and accountability.

Community-based civic engagement
Strengthens collective action on local issues.

STEP-BY-STEP FACILITATION FLOW

1. **PREPARATION**
   Clarify the purpose, invite participants, and prepare materials.
2. **ACTIVITY**
   Facilitate the chosen dialogue exercise.
3. **ACTION**
   Co-create practical commitments or next steps.
4. **REFLECTION**
   Discuss what was learned and what it means.
5. **FOLLOW-UP**
   Plan how progress will be tracked and supported.

GUIDANCE FOR COMMITMENTS

Commitments need a name, date and clear way of verifying them.

TOWARDS LASTING EMPOWERMENT

Through ten local political engagement activities, participants grow in confidence, build networks, and influence decisions.

The goal is lasting civic participation and empowered communities.



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