

ACTIVIZENSHIP

The European Civic Forum's annual Review for Civil Society in Europe

Call for Contributions

Activizanship #5 - Civic Space Watch report 2020 - Stories from the lockdown

1. What is Activizanship?

1.1. Aims and Values

“Activizanship” is a word that doesn't exist. And yet, in our sense, to be full, citizenship must be one of action, especially when citizens do not feel those elected by them are ensuring representation and defence of the common good, but also because citizenship is more than a quality assumed solely during short and punctual election periods. We consider equality, solidarity, inclusiveness and democracy the aims and values the European project need to serve if it is about building a shared future. Many of our fellow citizens, engaged in civil society organisations or movements, bring these realities to life.

Launched in **2014**, Activizanship is a magazine **edited by the [European Civic Forum](#)**, a transnational network of over 100 associations and NGOs across Europe working to promote civic engagement, thus contributing to the emergence of a European public sphere where the role and influence of civil society are fully recognised.

Activizanship's aim is to **explore the potential** of ancient and contemporary forms of **civic, social and political activism** to contribute to renewing, rethinking and reshaping a poetics of citizenship. It also attempts to **capture current trends and transformations affecting civil society** environment in Europe and worldwide, **connect ideas**

and experiences about changing the world **from grassroots up**, prospect the role of citizens' movements, assemblies and organisations in revitalising civic and political space.

Activizanship wants to contribute to giving those who act **at local, national, European and international levels**, the confidence they need to pursue their invaluable work. This also means providing them with arguments to louden their voice and ensuring it be heard by those they wish to convince. Activizanship is published under a Creative Commons licence, in order to allow access to all. It is published in form of a paper magazine and in PDF version online.

1. 2. Underlying Avenues of Thought

With these aims and values in mind, as well as the European Civic Forum's general objective, that is to promote popular ownership of a European project based on the aims and values we defend, the underlying objectives of Activizanship Magazine are to provide a reflection and submit proposals on:

- **Education to Citizenship:** creating or revealing tools for the exercise of citizenship, “learning by doing”

- **Citizenship and Action:** organising for action.

How do citizens, movements or civil society organisations act? How do they develop their citizenship involvement?

- **Learning from Citizenship:** how citizens learn from their action? How do institutions interact with citizenship involvement, institutionalise or simply take into account citizenship activity?

2. Activizanship #5

As the planet faces the Covid-19 emergency, we are all asked to act responsibly as individuals and as a community. Our societies are going through an unprecedented crisis in Europe in times of peace. The institutions of the European Union and the Member States have taken decisions dictated by the urgency to slow down the spread of the pandemic. We have to change our life to protect ourselves and others.

Civil society and movements too are adapting to these circumstances. Many organisations were forced to close their centres and stop their activities. Some countries forbid any form of gathering and limited freedom of expression. But many have found creative ways to get re-organised in order to be useful to their communities, to offer social and cultural tools against isolation, to promote policy proposals to face the pandemic with rights and solidarity for all, to support and advocate for the weak and vulnerable, to protest against rights' violations. Everywhere civic actors are in the front line to witness the precarious situations people suffer from, trying to respond to people's needs for effective access to rights, to promote the positive public policies and to alert and protest against the negative ones, to react against abuses of power, to put solidarity at the centre of the response to the crisis. Civic space under the lockdown has been seriously narrowed but is still dynamic and alive.

The European Civic Forum observes these trends through the Civic Space Watch (<http://civicspacewatch.eu/solidarity-amid-covid-19-crisis/>), a platform

collecting resources on threats to fundamental rights as well as positive initiatives aimed at countering these trends. The platform was launched in early 2018 and has so far gathered over 600 resources from dozens local, national and European organisations active in 24 EU countries.

Also this year, the European Civic Forum will illustrate the finding of the Civic Space Watch through the stories of the activists and groups that are at the forefront of the solidarity response amid the COVID-19 crisis. The issue will combine the traditional layout of Activizanship with the analysis emerging from the Civic Space Watch, standing in the crossroad between a magazine and a report from the frontlines.

2.1 Selection and award

Through an [open nomination process](#), we are looking for stories of activists, associations, movements or groups of citizens who are organising solidarity and civic contestation amid the COVID-19 crisis in face of a restricted civic space.

We are particularly interested in the transformative and emancipatory potential of these struggles, empowering activists and people in general to step from reaction to the crisis to positive outcome and even systemic change in the post-COVID-19 reality.

Six of them will be selected by the European Civic Forum based on:

- 1) the positive impact of their action on their communities as well as on the political and public life;
- 2) the potential for positive spill-over effects in the aftermath of the crisis;
- 3) the general state of civic space and fundamental rights in the countries in which they operate.

The selection will also try to ensure a fair territorial and thematic representation of various roles and activities of civic actors and diverse rights related issues.

Selected activists will be invited to a reward ceremony in Brussels in winter 2020, and their stories will be collected in the Activizenship #5 magazine.

2.2. A Form Supporting Content

Each story will be collected in the form of an interview exploring considerations, strategies and impact of the initiative.

The interviews will aim

- 1) to understand the elements that contributed to the positive impact of their initiatives or campaigns and their potential, long term, positive effects;
- 2) to showcase the lessons learned that can be passed to other civic actors in Europe and can inform a post-COVID-19 institutional and societal response;
- 3) to relate the human struggles behind such actions.

For each of their stories, the ECF will rely on national watchdogs and resources from the Civic Space Watch to provide an analysis of the situation on the ground and a picture of the European landscape.

2.3. Dissemination

The case studies of Activizenship #5 will also be at the centre of ECF's campaigning and advocacy efforts for 2021. The magazine will be disseminated online as well as through local, national and European events and policy discussions, where the activists will be invited to share their stories. The ECF will also rely on the partnership with ARTE TV to reach a wider audience and make the case of the initiatives rewarded.

2.4. Timeline

May 2020: Open nominations

June to October 2020: Selection and collection of the stories and analyses

December 2020: Award ceremony in Brussels in the European Parliament

2021: Dissemination

3. Contacts

For contributions, information, questions and other, please contact

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