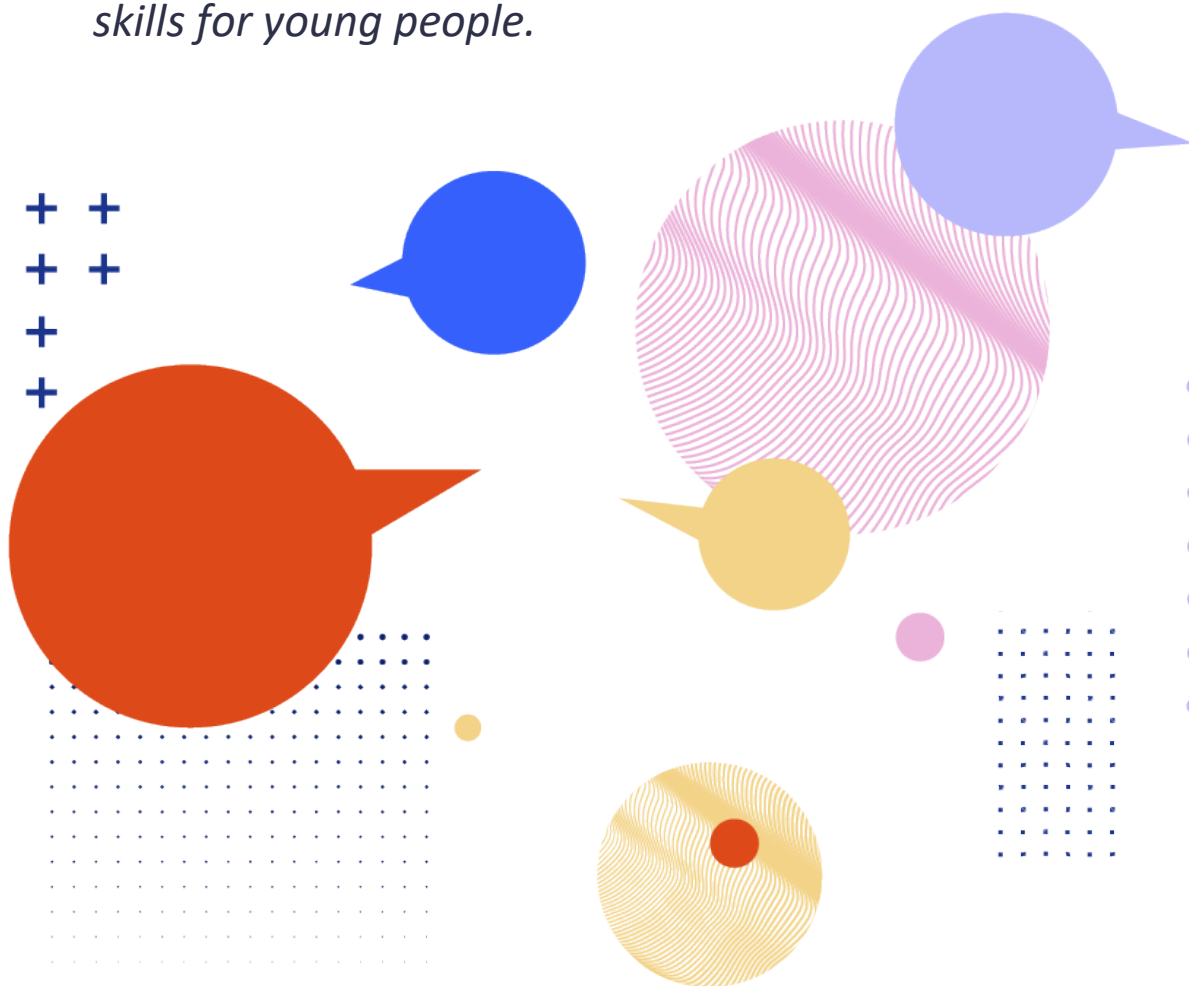


## IO3 - OAER1

# Creative Digital Activism, Digital Inclusion and Active Youth

**Citizenship:** *youth workers building participation, involvement and employability skills for young people.*





## Consortium



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United Kingdom

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## Introduction

Warm welcome to the first toolkit of the DigiSMARTS project.

The context of DigiSMARTS is the need for young people to not only have good digital skills but also to be able to apply these to engage with citizenship, democracy and social change, to become influencers and activists, skilled-up and ready to shape the future. Some young people are skilful and able to utilize the creative digital sphere for activism; however, many others wish to get involved but need help, support and skills. Youth workers with creative digital skills are vital to encouraging, skilling and motivating young people in this field.

This training kit provides

- Basic understanding of concepts related to digital activism
- Opportunity for individual skills assessment regarding digital activism
- Information on how it is possible to create your own digital activism project
- Practical-level examples from all over Europe

**The first part** of this training kit provides a conceptual framework for digital youth work. It goes through the most important concepts related to digital activism and describes the state of the art of digital youth activism in current Europe. At the end of the first part, there will be a self-assessment tool for participants to assess their current skills to promote digital activism and implement it together with youths.

**The second part** of the training kit proceeds to the more practical matters, giving an overview of different digital technologies used in digital activism projects. Especially the kit focuses on blogging and social media usage: how they work and how to use them safely and productively.

**The third part** consists of practical examples of earlier digital activism projects from the European Union.

## Learning Outcomes

After this training kit, the participant will be able to

- Understand what is activism and how it relates to digital activism
- Understand what digital exclusion means in the current society and how to ensure inclusion, participation and employability, when creating digital activism projects
- Know the scope of youth digital activism in Europe
- Recognize different digital technologies used in digital activism projects and is familiar with their pros and cons
- Understand what kind of ethical, safeguarding and safety matters should be taken into account when creating digital activism projects
- Plan their own digital activism project



# Part I

## Key Concepts

### Activism

In the United Nations (UN) universal declaration of human rights, article 19 reads “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” (United Nations 1948). The UN being the world's largest intergovernmental organization may rightly be considered the above declaration as a moral justification for the existence of activism. Activism is a phenomenon that one can explore from a variety of angles. Furthermore, because of the global challenges humanity is facing, there has risen a need for more revolutionary forms of activism, aiming at a more profound change in societies. This should be seen as the most precious core of all types of activism and a living challenge for young people to tackle.

Activism is generally defined as the practice of taking direct action to achieve mainly social or political goals (Dictionary 2022). Another definition of activism as 'collaboration by people to advocate for a position in society or violate or transgress the laws or norms of society' (Atkinson 2016, preface X), lays more emphasis on activism appearing as disobedience to the laws and order of society as it is. Furthermore, activism is defined in dictionaries for example as 'the use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result, usually a political or social one' (Cambridge dictionary 2022) or as “a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action, especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue” (Merriam-Webster 2022).

What is noticeable in all definitions, however, is the word 'action': activism always includes action as concrete deeds. However, the nature of the deeds may vary significantly. For example, we may view the advocacy of wealthy individuals concentrated on gaining arguably unfair advantages as a form of activism (Scully et al. 2017). The moral basis of such forms of activism is arguably questionable. This raises the question of what the most correct definition of activism should be. Some conceptions of activism may include intent towards the 'greater good' as a necessary element, and others may impose less strict requirements on intent or even effect. Therefore, we consider it worthwhile to ponder the moral issues of different manifestations of activism as well. It could even be argued that there can barely exist a greater good for as long as the interests and scopes of activism are limited to defending the interests of a specific group against others.

In light of the above, it becomes essential to ponder about what the means and energy with which activists move towards their goals, are like. Inactive demand-driven activism can for instance do so by involving elements of violence in its manifestations, as we have witnessed in many protests, strikes and demonstrations, in which case its goals, whatever they are, already appear to carry a seed of violence in them. Instead of a belief that “the end sacrifices the means” when the statement is explored more profoundly, it appears clear that the means and the end are interrelated. Therefore, even if G.K Chesterton’s famous words state that “a dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it” (Ratcliffe 2017) the nature and means of the action, do appear to make a crucial difference. Trying to bring about good changes in the world through violent means is always, as we see it, questionable. In addition, at the same time, “it is no measure of health to be adjusted in a profoundly sick society”, as the famous Indian philosopher Krishnamurti, has phrased it. These observations bring forth the fundamental question of whether activism can spring from a living discontent with all forms of injustice in society, and at the same time not add to the violence of the world.



Image Retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/hands-raised-raised-hands-arms-up-1768845/>

Individual or greater groups of people can exercise activism and it can develop into more collective movements. Naturally the more collective the manifestation the greater its influence. Here again, it is to be noted that the separation between an individual and the collective is not clear-cut, as the collective consists of individuals. In light of this, it is easier to understand the famous American anthropologist Margret Mead’s claim that one should never doubt that a group of people can change the world and that it is indeed the only thing that has ever done so. The potential of each individual to change the world can for example be witnessed through the example of the world-famous Swedish contemporary young environmental activist Greta Thunberg, whose urgency to fight climate change has set the precedent for how humans need to act if we are to save the planet that we call home (Rochell 2022).

## Different types of activism

### Human rights activism

Human rights protect the dignity of all individuals, and they guide and oblige people and governments to respect everyone equally. Individuals have rights and responsibilities and no one's rights are to be violated. Human rights are valid all over the world and they are interrelated. They aim at an equal and non-discriminative society. (Unicef 2022.) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. It is the basis of human rights treaties and laws. (United Nations 1948.) Human rights activism happens locally, nationally and internationally defending universal human rights. It takes many forms and covers political, social and economic activism. Human rights organisations do research, educate, intervene in violations against humanity and help the victims of the violations. (United Nations 2022a.)

Amnesty International is one of the best-known human rights organizations. It fights for violations of human rights. The movement works by doing research and pressing companies and governments to acceptable and sustainable policies. People worldwide can join the campaigns and actions. (Amnesty International 2022.)



Image Retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/photos/barbed-wire-rust-rusty-wire-1269430/>

### Social activism

According to Joshua Atkinson, social movements and activism do not influence politics so directly, but past and present research has shown us three overlapping topics: democracy and social discourse, political identity and the political economy of communication and power of the media. Social activism has an important role in democratic processes and in social discourse about problematic issues: information and social discourse shared by activists affect media, community and the way people vote. Activist groups and communities can affect the formation of political identity, in addition to sharing information and social discourse, they can shape the way people view the world and understand political issues and events. Profit and resources usually centralized in corporate media can eventually depoliticize people, but the internet has allowed activists and their networks to produce media themselves, communicate and coordinate actions. It is exactly this freedom of speech and action enabled through the internet that can act as its own force, independent of political or financial interests, enabling also young people to express their societal concerns (2016, 5-9.)

## Political activism

Political activism is inherently the effort to use methods of persuasion for initiatives and campaigns where one tries to generate awareness about political issues. The term political activism does not only contain activism inside the political system and its body, for example, political parties, but also the wider perspective outside of them. (Mukhongo 2015, 5.) Examples of political activism outside of the traditional political system are urban activism where urbanites aka city dwellers demand more walkable and accessible cities and city planning for people, not cars. (Mukhongo 2015, 6.)

In the article "Political activism: concept, factors and forms" researcher Mykyta Drozd says that political activism is determined by the activity phenomenon, which consists of actions aggregation both of individuals and social groups (classes, parties, community organizations etc.). Drozd claims in the article that political activity has two levels: participation and professional activism, and it is necessary to consider different factors affecting political participation, like wealth and identity. Drozd also says that scientists mark out that there is controversial contact between citizen participation in political activism and the efficiency of the political system. He also outlines that political activity is a virtue of people or social groups, which makes them able to function efficiently in different conditions. (Drozd 2015, 230.)

Nolas, Varvantakis and Aruldoss pointed out that usually studies of political activism largely ignore the agency and experiences of the very young or the very old and the diversity of experience within generations. They claim that the relationship to time is an important social category and lived experience, which shapes political outcomes as much as political participation. (Nolas et al. 2017, 8.)

## Economic activism: consumer activism and shareholder activism

Over the recent years, it has become obvious that the contemporary level of consumption is destroying our environment. So-called green consumption meaning for example simply consuming less, recycling, using carbon-neutral services and buying organic goods, has been one attempt to solve the problem. (Littler 2009, 92.) However, the answer is not that simple. Green products are more available for those with greater social and material privileges, which enhances inequality. Green issues may also be kept separate from other domains of life. Green consumption can mean producing more and more goods in the spirit of saving the environment and thus being an actual booster of economic growth. (Littler 2009, 101–103.)

The choices that consumers make connect them to labour rights, civil rights, human rights and environmental issues (Hyman & Tohill 2017, 2). In consumer activism, boycotts mean urging individuals or groups to refrain from making certain choices and buying goods. Boycotts involve encouraging people to purchase goods following certain criteria. Boycotts



seem more controversial because they may step on the right of individuals to produce, sell and buy what they want. People with money and the freedom to decide to buy or not to buy can cause harm to the workers who need their paycheck. (Wiedenhof Murphy 2017, 6, 31–32). Consumer activism tries to influence unfair working conditions and the terms in which goods are produced but it can simultaneously be harmful to the exact same things.

Shareholder activism is another form of economic activism. A shareholder activist is someone who wants to make a change in the way a company operates without a change of control. Buying and selling shares is a response to the management and performance of a company. (Gillan & Starks 2015, 40.) Large institutional investors may try to influence companies by using different strategies such as dialogue, voting, collaboration with other investors, media communications and influencing share prices. Smaller shareholders use critical public comments and establish coalitions with others with the same interest. (Sullivan & Mackenzie 2017, 154–156.)

## Animal rights activism

In 2012, the University of Cambridge's three neuroscientists made a "Declaration on Consciousness", which includes non-human animals. It states that non-human animals have neuroanatomical, neurochemical and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states. (Low et al. 2012.)

The basics of the modern animal rights movement are that non-human animals have basic interests that need to be recognized and protected. In this view, advocates of animal rights give animals moral and legal rights. (Wise 2022.)

Inviolability is widely accepted concerning human beings, but very few think that animals might have inviolable rights as well. In animal rights theory (ART), all animals with subjective existence, as in all that are conscious and sentient beings, should be subjects of justice and have inviolable rights. This goes beyond everyday animal rights; anyone who argues on the use of animals is defending animal rights. Those who advocate for a better quality of life for example farm animals are often described as believers in animal rights. A stronger view than the previous is that animals have a right not to be sacrificed unless for an important human or ecological reason (Donaldson & Kymlicka 2011, 19-20).

PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, one of the largest animal rights organizations founded in 1980 opposes speciesism, a human supremacy worldview and focuses on four different areas where animals suffer the most: in laboratories, in the food industry, in the clothing trade and the entertainment business. Peta encourages people into everyday activism through pro-animal messages printed on leaflets, clothes and stickers. They encourage planning demonstrations, sharing information and using social activism in local communities. (PETA 2022.)

## Feminist activism

Feminism is an interdisciplinary approach to issues of equality and equity based on gender, gender expression, gender identity, sex, and sexuality (Beasley 1999, 9–11). Feminist activism focuses on removing gender inequality and it has a long history as a social justice movement. Feminist activism has historically been divided into separate waves. The idea of new-wave feminism (later called the second wave) arose in the context of the demands for the improvement of civil rights in the sixties. The third wave has been born from postmodernism, with its diversity and emphasis on feminism since the early 1990s. (Grady 2018.)

Nowadays it seems the fourth wave of feminism has risen. (Abrahams 2017; Grady 2018.) It is characterized by the use of the internet and has been the predominant form of feminist activism since the early 2010s. It has had many accelerating points and campaigns, but Donald Trump's election for POTUS in 2016 November and the emergence of the (earlier) #metoo hashtag and activism campaign in the public in early 2017 has been the most significant points of feminist action. Nowadays it is generally understood that feminist points of view should be considered everywhere when taking any societal matters into the discussion. (Grady 2018.)

Fourth-wave feminist action is described as an intersectional, holistic view of considering all the different platforms and premises of any matter. In addition, it is primarily considered to happen online. (Abrahams 2017; Molyneux et al. 2021, 13.) At times, it has been criticized to prefer academic discussion styles, but lately, the emergence of non-academic activists has been considered both locally and globally. (Molyneux et al. 2021, 13.)

## Revolutionary or global activism

According to Magdoff & Williams, in fourteen years the number of cars will have increased to over two billion. As a result, climate change and its effects on humans and all other life



Image Retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/photos/hands-world-map-global-earth-600497/>

forms can only worsen (2017,43). It has also been estimated that large ecosystems can collapse sooner than expected; for example, the Amazon rainforest has surpassed a tipping point in 2021, after which deterioration is considerably faster (Cooper, Willcock and Dearing, 2020). Furthermore, approximately one billion people are either routinely hungry or malnourished.



Over one million people across the world, mostly in rural areas, are forced to defecate in the open because they lack sanitation and toilets (Magdoff & Williams 2017, 41). Literacy, although viewed as a human right by European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET 2022), remains a global issue with 773 million illiterate adults, a number mostly comprised of women. There are even concerns over democratic processes, concerns that take a global form, considering the interconnectedness of economic systems. Some argue that trade agreements lessen democracy, while Milner and Kubota (2005) view policies of economic liberalization as strengthening democratic processes. Apart from the interconnectedness of economic systems, we should also realize the common undivided nature of all ecosystems that affect all life on Earth.

The endless list of global concerns is pointing to the need for a more holistic approach to all global crises such as climate change and pollution, pandemics and threatened world peace. In short, activism, the action that is concerned with fundamental changes in society and human beings, is called for! This is what we should, in all possible ways, encourage in young people. The revolutionary quality of action is being brought about, as is seen here, through the awareness of oneself as an inseparable part of the whole of human consciousness. This realization also implies an understanding that the world, as it is, is an outer reflection of our inner state and that to change the world, we must change ourselves first and last. Consequently, this type of activism appears the most comprehensive, including all other types, too. Closely linked to this is 'subtle activism', a term introduced by David Nicol which describes a creative approach to social engagement, aiming at extending our spiritual attention (awareness) to all aspects of our lives, including our participation in the social and political realm (2015,1).

## Environmental activism

Environmental activism encompasses a broad array of individuals and organizations working in scientific, social, conservational, and political fields that address the concerns of environmentalism. These individuals and organizations are known collectively as part of the environmental movement or green movement. Environmental activists within the green movement do not share a common political affiliation or agenda and seek diverse solutions to environmental problems. (Environmental activism 2022.)

To increase their membership and influence, these organizations must find ways to speak to wider audiences and broaden their bases of support. On a deeper level, more people in more places must be convinced that protecting the environment is an essential and achievable task as well as a valid and vital way of being in the world. (Willow 2019, 16.) It appears that people's relationship to their environment, in general, plays a crucial role in awakening an environmental activist within each one of us. It seems that it is only when a human being is seen as an inseparable part of nature, and consequently of his surroundings, that our deeds to the environment are no longer seen as separate from how we treat



ourselves. It is beyond doubt that amidst the challenge of human-induced climate change, the world is crying for environmental activists with as broad an understanding of the phenomenon as possible.



Image Retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/photos/environmental-protection-326923/>

Wider environmental activism has often started as grassroots collective action. According to Poulos, such action, for instance in the form of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) movements, has over the years successfully blocked or modified the construction of numerous environmentally hazardous projects around the globe (2015, 16). NIMBY has been in use since at least the 1980s to refer to opposition by individuals to new developments in their neighbourhoods for fear of pollution of one kind or another. In conclusion, it appears important to realize the potential contained in local environmental activism.

Another way to actively increase environmental awareness is through teaching it as a curriculum subject. Trip & Muzzin mention the significant role of teachers who understood the essential links among all living beings and made this insight the centre of their personal and political understanding. Furthermore, a teacher's role in this requires ongoing reflection and revision. Individual scientists and educators should be encouraged to build alliances with philosophers and ethicists to deepen environmental awareness through enquiry into environmental ethics. (Trip & Muzzin 2005, 44.)

Environmental ethics is again closely linked with people's values. It is therefore no surprise that contemporary environmentalists many of whom consider Gandhi as the father of active environmentalism, reiterate his critique of our fascination with the good of modernity and the notion of progress as 'more', 'bigger' or 'faster' (Gruzalski 2014, 53). Without a profound



change in our way of thinking and our attitude towards the natural environment and ourselves as parts of it, there can hardly be any truly sustainable solution for global environmental issues.

## Artivism

Artivism is based on urban art, graffiti art and situationism from the twentieth century. Urban art is always a sum of the meanings of the artist and the elements that are in place. Art produced in artivism is usually situated in urban but unused, empty, meaningless areas that are transformed into a voice of a new, young and creative society. Artivism is an artistic activity that aims for social intervention, and simultaneously is fighting against old concepts like elitist artistic activities. Artivism does not criticize anything systemically but works with metaphors, alternative images, irony, humour, compassion or provocation. Artivism has specific features that make it temporal and practical with its visibility, durability and risk. An urban artist can ignore limits that are dictated by property owners and decide where to act. They can make visible how limits and physical boundaries are cultural and arbitrary. (Aladro-Vico et al. 2018, 9–18.)

## Different forms of activism

### Demonstrations and protests

The best-known forms of activism. The United Declaration of Human Rights declares in the 19th and 20th articles that everyone has freedom of opinion and expression and peaceful assembly. Based on those people unite for a cause choosing a certain time and place to articulate their thoughts. In demonstrations and protests, activists are often faced with counter-protesters. (Human rights careers 2022.)

### Boycotts

Protesting an organization by withdrawing from social or commercial relations (Oxford languages 2022). For example, abstaining from buying cosmetics that have been produced using animal testing.

### Strikes

Refusal to work because of an argument with the employer or to gain a concession (Oxford Languages 2022; Cambridge Dictionary 2022). Also striking for a certain global cause, for example, School Strikes 4 Climate / Fridays for Future -movements started by Greta Thunberg's solo strike in Sweden in 2018 (Handford & Maeder 2020, 219).

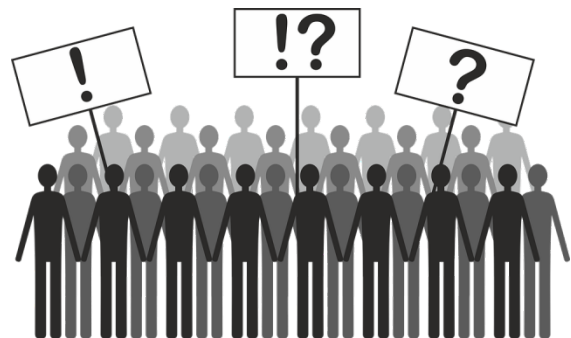


Image Retrieved from:

<https://pixabay.com/vectors/demonstration-show-me-demonstrate-2137449/>

### Letters and petitions

Letters written by individuals or smaller groups, and petitions as documents signed by a large number of people, are both done to demand some kind of action from a government or other authority (Cambridge Dictionary 2022). For example, the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act (PACT act) preventing animals from abuse and torture was signed into law in 2019 in the U.S. The petition gathered 800 000 signatures. (Change.org 2019.)

## Canvassing

Includes neighbourhood door-to-door canvassing, talking to people, and distributing pamphlets or literature. It is often well-planned, targeted and scheduled. (Green & Gerber 2015, 24.) Canvassing can often be used in the city streets asking the passerby about their opinions and participation in campaigns and signing petitions. It is also used for raising awareness about global issues.

## Social media

Also known as hashtag activism, using social media such as Twitter and Instagram. Social media campaigns are the most effective when combined with other ways of activism. Social media is often used by younger people, but the campaigns may lack depth and influence if they solely include sharing content. An example of a social media campaign was the Black Lives Matter -movement in 2020. (Human rights careers 2022.)

## Arts

Art activism means combining creativity, culture, and activism to make social changes, taking risks and sharing one's thoughts and opinions, and taking a stand. Art is accessible as a means of influencing the surrounding society and also for marginalized people who may not be able to use new technology or have political access. (Center for artistic activism 2022.) Art is not as restrictive and discriminative as words. (Greenpeace 2015.)

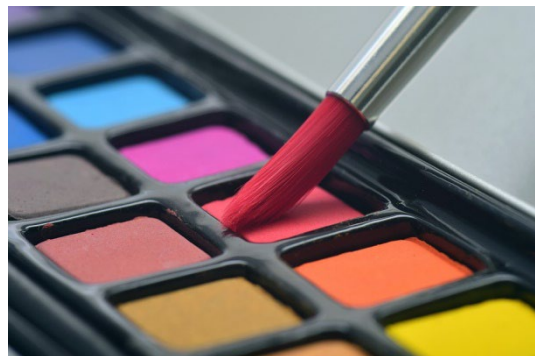


Image Retrieved from:  
<https://pixabay.com/photos/watercolor-colour-art-paint-brush-3445376/>

## Civil disobedience

Activism, which is non-violent and public and of which the outcomes are striving toward the common good. The actions break the law to raise awareness of the need for change but the activists on the other hand respect the laws. (Sommier et al. 2019, 132.)



## Different forms of digital activism

Internet was used for political activism already in the early 1990s by the Zapatista movement publishing their goals in Mexico and the Balkans used it to communicate over enemy lines. The Zapatistas are considered responsible for a change in politics and for showing the true potential of the Internet. Since then, online activism has spread throughout the world with social media, microblogs like Twitter, video-sharing sites like YouTube etc. (Hill 2013, 22–23.)

According to Joyce (2010, vii–ix), digital activism is the most inclusive term used in social and political activism which uses digital network infrastructure. “Social activism for social change” refers mostly to the use of social media while “cyberactivism” or “online activism” refers only to the use of the internet. Instead, digital activism also includes activity using mobile phones and other digital offline devices.

There are expansive digital social environments to be considered such as social networking sites and smartphone applications, together with the people and communities who engage with them. It is constituted and shaped by a wide range of internet technology—including devices like smartphones, tablets and “wearables”—and online venues such as virtual communities, blogs, forums and e-commerce. Digital environments hence are the conglomeration of technologies, events and realities that interpenetrate each other, sometimes co-constitute each other, and that have led to changed ways of being. They have fostered new expressions of identity, new forms of collaborative working, new commercial and political strategies, new modes of producing and distributing art, and new configurations of sociality, exchange and intimacy. Digital environments are so closely entangled with the physical world that any opposition between the “virtual” and the “real” is fundamentally misleading in almost the same manner as a distinction between the “digital” and the “nondigital” (or “analogue”) is untenable. (Frömming et.al 2017.)

Furthermore, Mary Joyce interestingly defines digital activism by comparing it to riding a bicycle. Just as the infrastructure of bike riding is based on the network of paths, highways, and trails over which the bike is pedalled, the infrastructure of digital activism is based on the digital network (Joyce 2010, 2). Her description helps us to feature and understand the technical nature of the platform where digital activity can take place.

In addition to digital activism, many other terms have been used as the same, or overlapping concepts including online activism, networked activism, social media activism, internet activism, hybrid activism, hashtag activism and also different terms with prefixes of digital connection; “e”, “net”, “mobile” and “web”. The variety of these terms explains the fast growth and popularity of the whole phenomenon. Changes in terminology often mean developments in technology: “web” and “cyber” are early digital communication, whereas “hashtag” and “social media” reflects from the late 2000s. (Özkula 2021, 64.)





Amnesty International presents digital tools for the use of activism. It describes social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and gives tips on how to use them in activism. It is important to know how to use e-mail, encrypted messaging tools (such as Signal, Telegram and WhatsApp), project management tools and copyright-free media. You can choose your online identity and the audience you want to address. To be safe you must know the basics of protecting yourself and your privacy online and recognizing false information. (Amnesty International 2020.)

## Slacktivism, performative activism and hacktivism

Slacktivism is considered digital activism with minimal effort or used time (Oxford English Dictionary). There is criticism, though, about using the term, which easily gives negative vibes. Joyce (2012) explains that those who are politically active participate both offline and online and those who are not active offline may still participate online. In addition, those who participate in activism for example via Facebook likings are likely to do something else for a cause, too. Online low-threshold activism should be considered meaningful to encourage people in taking action. One “click” can be the first step towards more effective action.

The concept of performative activism (also known as performative allyship) describes online behaviour, which aims more at enhancing an individual's social status than fighting for an actual social or political cause. By doing this, people let their surroundings think they are concerned about global issues etc. but instead in the real life, they continue making even opposite choices. Performative activism may form a false image; people ignore the injustices in society because they think others are already fighting for them. The best-known act of performative activism was posting black squares on social media for the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, which aimed for a good cause but ended up spamming important web sources. (Boston medical centre 2022; Fu 2021.)

Hacktivism includes computer hacking which is used for political or social activism. Those who are purely hackers use the same tools but lack the goal of social or political change. (Lutkevich 2022.) Hacktivists use means like virtual blockades, e-mail attacks, hacking and computer break-ins and computer viruses and worms. Hacktivism must be distinguished from cyberterrorism. Hacktivism does not aim at killing or terrifying people. (Weimann 2004, 4–5.)



## Examples of digital activism

### Hashtag-movements

The Hashtag movement started in the UK with The Uncut movement of tax dodging. It quickly went viral and was followed by Slutwalks, where women were protesting victim blaming, which went global. This activism was produced through Twitter, a miniblog service, where you can share a “tweet” of 280 letters for anyone to read. The hashtags “#” was first just a means to find subjects that people were interested in, but later is used as a means of activism. (Hill 2013, 38-53.) One of the most recent hashtag movements has been #metoo, which has been against sexual abuse and abuse of power.

As another example, we could mention Arab Spring, a series of protests and uprisings in late 2010 and early 2011 that challenged some of the Middle East and North Africa’s dictatorships. Protesters demanding greater political rights, economic equality, and government accountability often faced violent repression by their countries’ security forces. In December 2010, protests began in central Tunisia against the corrupt and authoritarian government and quickly spread to the rest of the country. (Encyclopædia Britannica 2022.) The tide of mass protests that swept through the Middle East in early 2011 highlighted the distinct role of modern information-communication technologies (ICT) and digital social media tools and networks. The impact of these technologies was felt globally, affecting both developed and developing nations, if not in the same way. While the “Arab Spring” may point to a phenomenon of new mass forms of socio-political protest facilitated by social media networks, particularly regarding their organizational and communication aspects, it should also produce some major reservations about the applicability of any “direct lessons” to other regional and socio-political contexts. (Stepanova 2011.)

Although popular media narratives about the role of social media in driving the events of the 2011 “Arab Spring” are likely to overstate the impact of Facebook and Twitter on these uprisings, it is nonetheless true that protests and unrest in countries from Tunisia to Syria generated a substantial amount of social media activity. On Twitter alone, several millions of tweets containing the hashtags #libya or #egypt were generated during 2011, both by directly affected citizens of these countries and by onlookers from further afield. (Bruns et.al. 2013.)



Image Retrieved from:  
<https://unsplash.com/photos/5KkgINl852A>



## Suohpanterror

Suohpanterror is an activist collective consisting of Sámi visual artists from Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian parts of the Sápmi. The collective, which takes its name from the word 'suohpan' (the language of Northern Sámi) is a traditional lasso-like tool used to catch reindeer. (Aikio 2019.) The group's artists strive to remain anonymous so that the discussion doesn't get attached to them as individuals, but one of them is artist Jenni Laiti, who has agreed to appear in interviews. The group started operations in 2012. The operations started with a website set up on Facebook. It has then expanded towards all channels of contemporary social media. (Säilynoja 2014.)

Suohpanterror distributes his works mainly through social media. Beyond social media, Suohpanterror's art has been exhibited at Littfest in Umea, Sweden; the Siida Sámi Museum in Inari, Finland; the World Village Festival in Helsinki; the XXII Triennale di Milano in Italy; Saw / Gallery Nordic Lab in Ottawa; and the 2020 Biennale of Sydney in Australia. Suohpanterror was included in the SAMI contemporary art = Dálá SÁMI dáidda = SÁMI Contemporary travelling exhibition of contemporary Sámi art that visited Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Germany in 2014–2015. (Laiti 2018.)

Suohpanterror is known for its positional and provocative propaganda posters that take advantage of the catalogue of pop art and Western popular culture. The group has also directly edited old propaganda and advertising posters into Sámi-themed ones, such as We Can Do It! and President Barack Obama's "Hope" election advertisement, in which Klemetti Näkkäljärvi, the Speaker of the Finland's Sámi Parliament, appears in the Suohpanterror version. (Säilynoja 2014.) Suohpanterror creates their works using image processing and a computer. Their art is well-established poster art and performance. Suohpanterror is considered to belong to the third generation of Sámi artists. (Heikkinen 2016.)



## Digital skills

When talking about digital skills it is important to point out that digital competencies shall include not only the technical skills one might expect, but also comprehensive competencies that include digital safety, digital rights, and digital emotional intelligence. In other words, these competencies should allow people to not just use a computer or smartphone, but to deal with the modern social and economic challenges and demands resulting from technological advances. (IEEE 2020, 9.)

The issue of digital safety in a growing and ever more complex digital world is undoubtedly an essential aspect of digital skills. It is closely connected to the need to develop skills with which to discern between factual and false information. This we call digital literacy. It also implies the knowledge and skills of using appropriate technical devices. In addition, the nature of communication in the digital world is unpredictable and exponential. It brings us to ponder the role of human thinking in an ever more digitalised world. The solving of more complex problems, creative thinking and learning are still beyond the reach of computers and robots. (Digitaidot, (Digital Skills) 2022.)

Digital activism should be a combination of the benefits of digital means and platforms combined with creative thinking. Therefore, apart from transferring technical skills, it is even more important to awaken and feed creativity among young digital activists. Creativity also implies an ability to question and doubt the norms and values of modern societies. This is essential when it comes to making a real difference in the world, which can be seen as the ultimate and most important goal of this international project. Together with imparting knowledge of digital skills, sensitive youth workers should also share and support young people's deeper concerns.

### Digital skills in Europe

Digital skills have been growing in the EU slowly in the past few years. 56 % of people in the EU have at least basic digital skills: people can take part in the digital society and consume digital goods and services. Basic skills are the "use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet" (EUR-Lex 2022). Digital skills are closely related to sociodemographic aspects: young people, aged 16-24 years of age, people with high formal education, employed or self-employed people and students have at least basic digital skills. 55- to 74-year-olds and retired people have the least digital skills. (European Commission 2022a.)

EU defines digital competence as sound understanding and knowledge of the role, nature and opportunities of IST (information society technology) in everyday contexts: in personal and social life and at work. It requires critical and confident use of ICT (information and communication technology) for work, leisure and communication. This means main





computer applications and understanding the potential risks and opportunities of the internet and communication in electronic media (e-mail, network tools).

## Different generations and their digital skills

When talking about different generations and their digital skills and digital behaviour, people often refer to “boomers”, “generation X”, “millennials” and “generation Z”. The youngest generation is called the “alpha generation”. While “boomers” have learned to use social media platforms, like Facebook, their grandchildren are way past the trend –they are using new technologies like TikTok and Snapchat instead.

“Boomers” or “baby boomers” are a generation born between mid 40’s and mid 60’s, who have had to learn a new set of skills, digital skills, in their adulthood. Generation X are people born in mid 60’s up to the early eighties, which makes them people who have lived in both, non-digital and digital eras. Millennials are people born between the early 80’s and mid 90’s, who have been growing up alongside the growing digitalization. They are known to be proficient in using digital and social media for personal use, but not necessarily so much for work. For the middle-aged learning digital skills and the rules of the digital world, it may not be so simple. Learning to use applications, filling digital forms, searching for information etc. may take a lot of time. It would be ideal to have levelled courses when teaching digital skills classes. Those with no experience cannot benefit much if the teaching follows the pace of those who already have somewhat basic or even advanced skills.

Generation Z sometimes also called “Digital natives” born between the mid-90’s and early 2010’s, have been born into, and lived in a very digitalised world. They prefer graphics to text, function best when networked and seek the internet first for information.

The “alpha generation, also called “Screenagers” or “web generation” are born starting from early 2010’s to now. Some studies say they will spend the most time on devices rather than socializing or being with family. (Cirilli & Nicolini, 2019). They are taught coding at school from a very young age, seem to prefer entertainment to information, and are using very quick-paced, video and other multimedia applications that require low focusing. Their digital skills are more focused on mobiles and tablets. However, the accessibility of digital equipment and skills is highly dependent on their growth environment and the social and economic status of their families.





## Digital exclusion

Being excluded has traditionally been linked to different phenomena such as poverty, deprivation, low educational level, unemployment, poor housing and not being able to access social and political institutions. More recently, it has been defined more broadly, as

the inability to participate in the basic political, economic and social activities of the society (Bellani & D'Ambrosio 2011). In the context of youth work, social inclusion has been described by the Council of Europe, as "the process of [an] individual's self-realisation within a society, acceptance and recognition of one's potential by social institutions, integration (through study, employment, volunteer work or other forms of participation) in the web of social relations in a community". (Council of Europe 2020).

Technological change has had an important implication on social integration, requiring everyone to build the skills and competence needed for the digital world. Young people have grown amongst digital devices and are often described as "digital natives". However, "being digitally competent is more than being able to use the latest smartphone or computer software — it is about being able to use such digital technologies in a critical, collaborative and creative way". (European Commission 2017). Thus, digital exclusion refers not anymore only to the differences in accessing the Internet but also to the skills, use and outcomes of Internet use. (Scheerder et al. 2017). How and with what consequences people utilize the web has grown more crucial as in the western world almost everyone has Internet access: in the EU, over 90 per cent of households in 2019. (Eurostat 2021).

The benefits from Internet use are found to be correlating with education levels and income. In practice, people with higher education and better income utilize the Internet in more profitable ways, e.g., for online courses; employment; e-health services and social and political participation, whereas those with lower resources spend their time more aimless surfing. (van Deursen et al. 2017; van Deursen & van Dijk 2015). This applies to young people as well: those with higher socio-economic status use the internet for information, while those with lower status use it for entertainment (Peter & Valkenburg 2006). Youth workers should support youths to build social media literacy and search, understand, communicate and create posts with a critical mindset. (Siurala 2021).

One should not forget that digital development has benefited youths in many ways, such as easing the building and maintaining relations and communities; enabling participation; providing opportunities for more open communication through online anonymity. On the other hand, especially social media may also cause or increase psychological problems; lead to inadequate sleep, bullying, FOMO ("fear of missing out") and addiction; decrease self-esteem; exposure to abusive content and behaviour and reinforce vulnerable youths' status as social outcasts. From a youth worker's perspective, it is important to admit and understand both positive and negative aspects and keep these in mind when building new activities and services. (Siurala 2021).



## Self-assessment tool

1. The state of the art of your digital skills today
  - a. How easily can you get access to digital advice needed to connect and carry out your tasks? Do you know how to use e-mail? Do you use it only passively only to receive information or also actively keeping touch with actual people?
  - b. What is your attitude towards digital technology and skills? Are you interested in digital devices and social media?
  - c. Which social media platforms do you use? How often?
  - d. Do you have some kind of photo and/or video editing skills? Only basics, or more upskilled? Do you use editing tools on a mobile phone or a computer?
  - e. Do you know what kinds of safeguarding and prevention tools should be used to avoid malware and keep your information safe?
  - f. Do you recognize what kind of ethical issues there is in social media platforms and, more generally, in the digital world?
  - g. From where did you get the digital skills you have? Has it been a lengthy process or a swift transition?
  - h. What kind of media content do you prefer: are you more drawn to literary or graphic content?
  - i. Reflect: what are your strengths, weaknesses and fears considering the digital world?
2. Questions/suggestions on how to increase your skills in the areas where more practice is needed
  - a. How much time you can spend learning digital skills?
  - b. What would you like to learn? How would you exploit your learnings?
  - c. What kind of support would you like to receive?
  - d. What helps you learn? (having your device, trying/failing, repeating, pictures...)
3. Questions/suggestions on how to pass on the skills to young people in a creative way
  - a. Do you consider yourself open to suggestions and experiments?
  - b. Is it easier to work in a classroom-like environment, in webinars or face-to-face with just 1-2 youths?
  - c. How would you rate your ability to engage the young when learning something new / learning together?
  - d. What creativity means to you? How does it manifest in your work and your relationships with youngsters?
  - e. "Case": how would you organize and carry out a digital activism campaign? What platform would you use? How would you engage youth creatively?

**Click to take the self-evaluation test**



**Digital youth work self-assessment**



## Part II

### Creating a digital activism project in practice

#### Pros & Cons of digital activism

All people with very basic computer skills can seek information and also produce content themselves and communicate online. The internet and social media provide important tools for activists to share content, work together share common interests and spread information throughout the world. (Cernison 2019, 36, 47.) Online communication is more direct and allows more relational communication than traditional means of communication such as TV, radio, or printed materials (Cernison 2019, 33).

The beauty of networks, as we see them, lies in their potential to connect and link people to each other all over the world directly, in real-time, regardless of the participant's physical location or time zone. This being the case, also digital activism can have unprecedented growth and impact through digital means. The fact of this, depending on the scope, nature and ways of expression of activism in question, can act as both a pro and a con. As much as there is action and intention through the internet to bring people truly together to explore and inquire into different social, political, environmental or existential issues to change the world for the better for all, a pro is unquestionably at work. Examples of this could be the increase in awareness of global issues such as climate change, or, even more importantly, the increase of self-awareness among people without which a holistic, more fundamental approach to problems cannot take place. However, there is also a possibility to misuse the potential of the internet and use it to increase division and contradiction between people.

It must be noted that there are also restrictions to the 'free access for all' mentioned above. Computers are expensive; consequently, more accessible to those with financial resources. Such access also affects digital activism participation rates. (Joyce 2010, 2–5.)

Digital activism campaigns, like #me too, show online spaces as opportunities for victims of discrimination, harassment and abuse to support others, speak out and participate in debates. At the same time, it can have negative effects on online spaces, making digital activism risky by exposing and surveying users or for example sharing disinformation about activists and activism itself. (Hansson et al. 2021, 617–626.) Therefore, pros and cons can be intertwined as well.

The power of images is strengthened on the internet due to the absence of a physical connection. It is worthwhile to ponder how the nature of activism can be affected by the very digital means where it takes place. How is 'direct action' realised through the internet which is filled with imaginary realities and where the people involved, may also be more easily lost in images about themselves and others? How to discern the 'actual' from the 'fictional'?



Furthermore, how can more serious and deeper concerns be spread through the internet where the domination of entertainment is so obvious and powerful? How about the deterioration of language and expression skills in the digital world and social media where simplified, superficial, colloquial or even sloppy language has taken over? It is also essential to ponder how the overall deterioration of language skills affects the young users' ability to think and take part in activism concerned with more serious issues.

Greijdanus et al. (2020, 3) describe the interconnectedness or the pros and cons of digital activism as follows: "The internet is widely used for emancipatory actions to raise awareness, rally people, set activist agendas, to debate and evaluate actions, but also antagonistically (by groups and authorities) to polarise, misinform, and repress unwanted actions. Unmistakably, minority groups can more easily make contact and make themselves heard through social media. This gives social media great vibrancy and pluralism, but it may also divide and polarise societies. It is the responsibility of each one of us, which of the two alternatives we wish to feed.

### **Digital technologies that can be used in youth work, examples, pros & cons**

Whether the number of readers, social media followers or tweets or comments is enough for an activist campaign to succeed depends on the purpose of the campaign. The activists must always consider the strategic goals and means to get to them. (Karpf 2010, 154–155.) In addition, when talking about activism or other kinds of activity in the digital world, the used technologies must vary depending on the goals of the activity. Defining the purpose gives ideas on what kind of digital platforms are the most fruitful and effective.

Moreover, there's a difference between the terms social networking sites (SNS) and social media sites. SNS site users usually have public or semi-public profiles for communicating with others (for ex. Facebook) whereas social media refers to web 2.0. In web 2.0 users, often called creators have more input in making content, and sites have more add-ons like pictures, "share" and "like" buttons etc.

Next, we give out examples of various popular social networking sites and social media sites as well as other digital technologies that can be used in youth work, and point out some of their pros and cons.



## Digital technologies for youth work



### *Tik Tok*

TikTok is a social media platform made for sharing, discovering and creating short videos. Originally, Tik Tok is a Chinese application that was called “musical.ly” and was heavily based on music, dance and “lip syncs”. You can give likes, and comments and get followers. The content in Tik Tok is mostly creator based; anyone can make a video, edit it, add music and effects to it, and publish it. It has over 500 million users around the world, because of the almost addictive short videos, trending challenges and content for everyone. TikTok has an age limit of 13 years in most countries, and users may encounter some bad language and sexual content. The platform itself encourages positive commentary. (Webwise 2022.)

TikTok has an exceptionally good algorithm: it learns quickly what you prefer to watch and suggests more similar content. The algorithm has also its downside: who controls what you watch? Is it the corporation behind the service, or maybe even the government in some countries? At the moment, the situation in Ukraine has led to Russian creators disappearing from suggested feeds and can only be found by followers. On the other hand, the whole world can see the war in almost real-time through civilians' eyes. TikTok is also used also in “identity activism”: patriotic, racial, religious and LGBTQA activism. For example, in Finland Karelian and Sapmi creators teach others about their culture, way of life, traditions and beliefs.



### *Reddit*

Reddit is a social news forum and a website, which is curated and promoted by the community through voting. Reddit has hundreds of subcommunities, that are called subreddits and the topics vary a lot. (Stafford 2022.)

Reddit is said to be “the next generation Facebook”. Originally used for sharing news, nowadays large, international chatroom has community rules and is well known for their dedicated community. Reddit is mostly used by late teens and young adults.

Reddit has been a host to a massive collaborative art project called r/space in April 2022 and a few times before that since 2017. This means providing a blank canvas that allows users to place one coloured pixel every 5 minutes. The canvas is changing constantly with for example logos, flags, QR codes, arguments and more. This project allowed people to express their individuality as well as collective identities through interactions in online spaces. (Childs 2022.)



## Jodel

Jodel is based on local contacts in anonymous chat rooms. Users are totally anonymous and can start new channels, for example around certain themes. Users get a number code that only applies in that certain conversation, so tracking users is impossible. In Finland, for example, Kela (social insurance institution) uses Jodel for “ask me anything” quad as well as other public organizations.

On Jodel’s own FAQ site, a user called Kaddi describes the platform as a place where everyone has a voice (Jodel 2022). Jodel has guidelines for its content and is moderated by its users by downvoting and reporting abusive content. Nonetheless, anonymity has a downside: literally, anyone can write anything with no repercussions.



## Discord

Discord is an advanced multimedia messaging application that allows you to set up permanent servers to create a community between users of the application. Both text and audio channels can be set up on the server, and audio channels act as video channels as well. (Librarian 2022.) Channels can be created as needed and can be restricted to server members in different ways, allowing for age-restricted or language-restricted channels, for example.

Discord enables the simultaneous use of servers by several thousand people, and there is no need to limit the number of multimedia channels or the number of their participants. Simultaneous hosting of video chats can be encumbering for participants’ Internet connections if there are dozens of participants, but that is usually not a problem either. (Ashworth 2021.) The maintenance of text channels can also be outsourced to bots, and code snippets that can perform automatic maintenance work. (Hayes 2022.) For example, you can set an automatic message retention period for a channel so that, for example, when discussing mental health issues, only current, for example, latest month messages are displayed.

One practical example of how Discord was used happened at the beginning of the covid pandemic to help with municipal youth work. In the spring 2020 in the town of Utsjoki, Discord was used in virtual youth work. Utsjoki locates in Lapland and has several villages, the farthest of which are more than a hundred kilometres apart. Therefore, the virtual remote youth work suited the conditions of Utsjoki very well. Moreover, when youth work could be done during 2021 using more traditional community-based methods, such as maintaining physical youth facilities, Discord remained in support of community-based work, and for some young people, it was even more accessible than traditional youth work.



### *Youngsters at Roblox: gaming and social game designing*

Roblox is an online gaming system, sort of like the YouTube of the gaming world, where you can play tens of millions of different games designed and made by hundreds of thousands of ordinary people, mostly young people or even children. (Utraiainen 2020.) In addition, you can make and upload your games to be played at. This is because Roblox has a very easy-to-use visual gaming environment that can be utilized to make and play a variety of games from very simple games to quite complex game worlds. People under the age of 16 make most of the games planned at Roblox, and a large proportion makes their first games before they turn 12. (School of Gaming 2021.)

The effects needed for more complex games can be designed and coded inside Roblox with the Lua programming language. (Roblox 2022.) Lua is an easy-to-use and easy-to-learn procedural scripting and programming language that is currently the world's most popular game programming language. (Lua 2022.) At Roblox, Lua is supported by comprehensive and hand-held instructions as well as official video instructions from the site. Quite minor English language skills are enough for Lua-assisted game programming, Roblox's design software without scripts can be used practically without English skills because it's simple and visual. (School of Gaming 2021.)

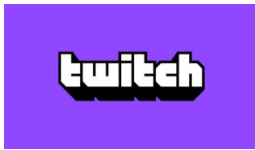


### *Virtual reality*

In general, we perceive reality through our senses and sensory perceptions. Usually, we talk about the five senses, but they are only the most obvious senses observed by our sense organs. In reality, humans have more senses, even organic ones, such as the sense of balance. Consciously, we also know that no matter how we get information about the world with all our many senses, our perception of it is always above all a perception, an abstraction. Man can distinguish what truly exists from what he can sense, or at least perceive that such a difference exists. (Virtual Reality Society 2017.)

In comparison, in a way, the virtual world exists just as much as the “real reality” or at least we can experience it as a reality because we do not have the necessary ability to distinguish what exists in the real world from what exists in the virtual reality. Therefore, some virtual reality activists prefer to use the concept of the virtual world. (Virtual World Society 2016.)

Technically, of course, defining virtual reality is easier. The term is used to describe a three-dimensional computer-generated environment that can be experienced and explored around one another. The user is presented with a version of reality that is not there, but from the users' perspective perceived as real. The user is thus a part of a virtual reality and can influence and manipulate the objects there. (Dredge 2017.) Therefore, in summary, virtual reality entails presenting our senses with a computer-generated virtual environment that we can explore in some fashion.



## *Twitch*

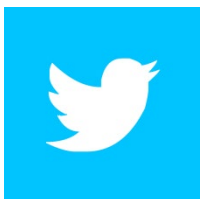
Founded in 2011, Twitch is a platform for live (video) streaming, offering nearly anything you'd want to watch, from cooking, music, Q&A sessions, and first and foremost video games. It originally started as a spinoff division of another product, but became so popular, that it became the firm's most valuable brand, and was bought by Amazon in 2014. (Creator Camp 2022.)

One of the most useful and popular types of watching twitch streams began as a way to get to know new games beforehand buying them. Many of the biggest gaming streamers may have been provided with an upcoming game before publication for promotional material. Usually, the gaming streamers will have two video captures going at once: One of the games itself and one of the streamer. This gives each stream its personality. You aren't just watching the game, but the streamer, as well. (Yaden 2021.)

Nowadays Twitch is not about only gamers and their playfield. Many popular musicians have turned to Twitch to make money during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the cancellation of all tours. (Gökhan 2021.)

After tuning in to see the content you are interested in, you might end up connecting with the streamer and it is this connection between streamers and viewers that the former needs to succeed. Streams will typically be accompanied by a live chat, in which its viewers can communicate with the streamer and other people watching. (Yaden 2021.)

While Twitch's primary premise is that it is a platform for observing video game players in action, Twitch has many other perks and features to offer users. Twitch chats have their slang and many idioms come from those. (Gökhan 2021.) There has been criticism, however, that it is not good enough for socializing and building a dedicated community around. It has been stated that it is not encouraging the building of a community because it is primarily an individual, not a community-oriented, platform. (Bijan 2020.)



## *Twitter*

Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets. Tweeting is posting short messages for anyone who follows you on Twitter, with the hope that your words are useful and interesting to someone in your audience. Some people use Twitter to discover interesting people and companies online, opting to follow their tweets. Twitter's big appeal is how scan-friendly it is. You can track hundreds of engaging Twitter users and read their content with a glance, which is ideal for our modern attention-deficit world. Twitter employs a purposeful message size restriction to keep things scan-friendly: every microblog tweet entry is limited to 280 characters or less. This size cap promotes the focused and clever use of language, which makes tweets easy to scan, and challenging to write. (Gil 2021.)



## *Instagram*

As one of the biggest social networks worldwide, Instagram is especially popular with teenagers. People can upload photos or videos to the service and share them with their followers or with a selected group of friends. They can also view, comment and like posts shared by their friends on Instagram. Anyone aged 13 and over can create an account (Instagram Help Centre 2022). The low age limit attracts young users.

Considering the visibility afforded by the platform, users generally aim to share images that everybody can appreciate. This common idea follows the intent of reaching a high number of followers. The intent of sharing photos on Instagram might involve the presence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that generally guide behaviours in photo-sharing communities. The intrinsic motivation is the satisfaction that participants achieve from the activity of photosharing itself. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation is the reward that users expect to gain from photographic self-development, which is useful to build a reputation in the community.

Although motivations for photo sharing are different according to different users, gaining a high number of followers is seen to testify to self-development, and it is considered the most common strong motivation. To do so, users are aware that they need to share photographs that a wide number of users might appreciate through likes, positive comments and feedback. Reciprocity and positive social interaction seem to be common expectations for the majority of users because they represent an incentive to share more photographs. A Swedish University student in his 20s, for instance, believes that giving and receiving positive comments fosters users' engagement with other users and increases their visibility on the platform. The more users receive positive comments, the more they are motivated to share images and, potentially, receive additional positive comments. (Serafinelli 2018, 59-60.)

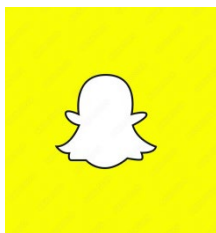


## *Facebook*

Facebook is a social networking website where users can post comments, share photographs, and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live, and watch short-form videos. Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of friends or family, or with a single person. Facebook makes it simple to share photos, text messages, videos, status posts and feelings. The site is entertaining and a regular daily stop for many users. Unlike some social network sites, Facebook does not allow adult content. When users transgress and are reported, they are banned from the site. Facebook provides a customizable set of privacy controls, so users can protect their information from getting to third-party individuals. Facebook allows you to

maintain a friends list and choose privacy settings to tailor who can see content on your profile.

Facebook allows you to upload photos and maintain photo albums that can be shared with your friends. It also supports online chatting and the ability to comment on your friend's profile pages to keep in touch. Facebook supports group pages, fan pages, and business pages that let businesses use Facebook as a vehicle for social media marketing. You can also stream videos live using Facebook Live. (Nations 2021.) It is to be noted that young people do not usually use Facebook very actively.



### *Snapchat*

Snapchat is a social media platform that allows users to send images, videos, and texts within a specified amount of time for the receiver(s) to view the content before it becomes permanently inaccessible to the receiver. Snapchat is unique in that it erases messages several seconds after they have been sent, affording its users a higher level of privacy. Yet, little research exists on Snapchat use in general, let alone its broader psychological implications. (Utz et al. 2015.)

In addition to sending snaps, Snapchat offers a feature called My Story, which allows users to post snaps for up to twenty-four hours on their Story. A Story can be viewed by other users an unlimited number of times during this period. Snapchat also offers text and video chat functions, a multiuser input Our Story, and an electronic payment system called Snapcash. Snapchat is one of the most popular social media applications available, with estimates of approximately 187 million active daily users. Snapchat is notable for its prominent use of augmented reality “filters” and “lenses.”

Snapchat’s central feature is that all snaps are ephemeral and will eventually be deleted. Snapchat therefore allows users to communicate and express themselves through an online medium with the knowledge that they will not create a permanent record. Snapchat co-creator Evan Spiegel has claimed that Snapchat differs from other social media by removing the requirement to cultivate an idealized online identity, instead allowing for a less inhibited form of expression. (Kirtley & Shally-Jensen 2019, 530.)



## Vlogging and blogging

For the most part, blogs were an obscure part of cyberspace until the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States initiated a spike in the number of blogs and blog readers, who discovered these sites as a way to share their grief and get first-hand accounts of the events of the day. Since then, blogs have become powerful voices for and against media and government and many other causes and issues. (Tremayne et al 2006, 128.)

“Blog” is an abbreviated version of “weblog,” which is a term used to describe websites that maintain an ongoing chronicle of information. A blog features diary-type commentary and links to articles on other websites, usually presented as a list of entries in reverse chronological order. Blogs range from the personal to the political and can focus on one narrow subject or a whole range of subjects. Many blogs focus on a particular topic, such as web design, home staging, sports, or mobile technology. Some are more eclectic, presenting links to all types of other sites and others are more like personal journals, presenting the author’s daily life and thoughts. (WordPress 2022.)

A video blog or video log, sometimes shortened to vlog, is a form of blog for which the medium is video. Vlog entries often combine embedded video (or a video link) with supporting text, images, and other metadata. Entries can be recorded in one take or cut into multiple parts. The Vlog category is popular on the video-sharing platform YouTube. In recent years, "vlogging" has spawned a large community on social media, becoming one of the most popular forms of digital entertainment.





## Inclusiveness

EU is making the Internet more accessible through the policy of digital inclusion. This includes

- Accessible ICT (information and communication technology),
- Supporting the development of ICT that assists people with disabilities
- Empowering citizens to fight marginalisation and social exclusion through digital skills
- Increasing the participation rate of disadvantaged people in public, social and economic activities.
- (European Commission 2022b.)

The EU directive on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies was published in 2016. It promotes everyone's access to public services, sets minimum requirements for accessibility and enhances the quality of public digital services. It forms a very good guideline for everyone, even though only public organizations are obliged to follow it (Saavutettavuusdirektiivi 2022, EUR-lex 2016.)

Inclusiveness in social media platforms means making content both physically accessible and visibly diverse. Content needs to be connecting people instead of excluding them, and the diversity of the content should correlate with its users. Ways to make social media platforms accessible and inclusive are for example automatic captioning on videos (for example Facebook Live and Instagram IGTV), which helps hearing impaired and language learners. (Sehl, 2020, Gilbert, 2021) For example, Twitter has improved its accessibility for different disabilities by including a screen reader, high contrast settings and even refreshable braille display support in the platform. Voice controls and keyboard shortcuts help with mobility and cognitive accessibility; you can reduce motion settings, turn off sounds and prevent video auto-play. (Twitter 2022.)

Even though the EU is working towards digital inclusion and accessibility and many organizations have addressed it, there are still gaps in accessibility, digital skills and digital infrastructure in Europe. The pandemic with covid 19 has increased the levels of digital divides but has also shown that it is possible to live in a highly digitalized society. In 2021, Global kids online reported that in Europe, 14% of under 19- year-olds still do not have frequent access to the internet. (van Kessel et al 2022.)





## Safeguarding and ethics

When you go online, for example, your web browser, online accounts, network provider and the sites you visit all record and analyze information on your identity and your online behaviour. Some countries (for example the European Union) have laws protecting privacy. You need to consider, which internet service provider you want to choose and whether you want to use a virtual private network (VPN). That allows the service provider to know, when and how much you use the internet but not what you do there. Your web browser collects all your data, passwords and history but you should remember to clear your history, cookies and cached passwords regularly. Using applications and shopping online build profiles about you and your preferences. Cookies help to identify you and link certain information to you. (Donaldson et al 2019, 87–89.)

A bachelor's thesis in information technology specialization features many physical threats that should be factored into a security program including theft, human error, sabotage, and environmental disruption. Video surveillance and IP are modern technologies and devices used in different parts of the world toward protecting enterprises from the physical threat against their network as well as computing equipment. A keyed lock is one of the most common means of restricting access. However, precautions need to be taken about the types of keys used. Plain-text passwords should be avoided. The use of either an OTP (One Time Password) or an encrypted password is recommended. Also, the stronger your password, the more protected your computer will be from hackers and malicious software. Finally, to protect against known viruses, host antivirus software should be installed. (Sulaimon 2021.)

Nancy Willard points out an interesting aspect, namely a change in paradigm when it comes to safeguarding online. In the old paradigm, adults understood the risks and the environment. They were generally in a position where they could detect risky behaviour and intervene. Now, the parents are more like digital immigrants who do not have significant credibility in the eyes of young people. Professionals working with youths must have the necessary insight into the issues to be effective guides. (2011, 4-5.)

In social media, people share even very personal thoughts and life experiences, and they are openly accessible to a very large public. What personal information do you choose to share and with whom? Social media, blogging and vlogging encourage self-reflection and feedback, hopefully, the positive kind. Anonymity on the other hand may lead to cyberbullying, hate speech and trolling. Those are mostly due to the lack of face-to-face communication and a short response time on the internet. (James 2009, 36–39, 73.)

There are some positive and negative sides to online behaviour when it comes to blogging or vlogging. Young people may form virtual identities, which may help them say things they would not have the courage to say offline as themselves. They have the possibility of gaining positive feedback. However, they are in danger of creating a wrong kind of dependency on feedback. (James 2009, 33.) False identities also facilitate grooming. Grooming means an





adult trying to interact with a child under 16 to gain trust and make the child a victim of abuse. (Davidson 2010, 10–11.)

Social media enables individuals to be their own publishers, and this creates new and unfamiliar ethical dilemmas for practitioners in the field (Kvalnes 2020, 4). Users of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat and other social media platforms do not depend on the support of

an editor or a journalist to make their content publicly available. Social media users may have strong reasons to be concerned about honesty, the public interest and the reliability of the information, but their scope of action is wider and less restricted by professional norms, duties and expectations. (Kvalnes 2020, 5.)

As social media algorithms seek and offer information also based on the preferences and interests revealed by a person's digital history, they can keep people stuck in their old habits and patterns, thus discovering new things more difficult and possibly hindering the creative use of the digital means. Algorithms are far from 'neutral' and in the digital world, they serve the benefit of others, which may not be for the users' good. "Part of the challenge of understanding algorithmic oppression is to understand that mathematical formulations to drive automated decisions are made by human beings. While we often think of terms such as "big data" and "algorithms" as being benign, neutral, or objective, they are anything but. The people who make these decisions hold all types of values, many of which openly promote racism, sexism, and false notions of meritocracy." (Noble 2018, 2.)

Kvalnes and Øverenget (2019) designed a Navigational Wheel in 2012 to be used in ethical decision-making, which could be utilized in online activities as well. This tool consists of six basic questions rising from dimensions of law, identity, morality, reputation, economy and ethics. The questions are:

- Is it legal?
- Is it following our values?
- Is it right?
- Does it affect our goodwill?
- Is it in accordance with business objectives?
- Can it be justified?

When we talk about activism, which aims at improving social and political injustices, we are highly dependent on basic human rights. Thus, all online activity is based on the same rights. An activist must remember that one shall not violate anyone's rights by any action and that no one else violates one's rights.





## How to start blogging and vlogging

### Should you start a blog or a vlog?

If you are not familiar with social media and blogging and vlogging, the idea of starting a blog or a vlog can seem intimidating. However, only the most basic computer skills are needed to start a blog or a vlog. You don't have to be a great writer or videographer either to be successful: actually, nothing could be further from the truth. People read blog sites and watch vlogs to get a personal perspective on things, so most of them are written in a very informal and conversational style.

In addition, you don't necessarily need to be an expert on the topics you blog or vlog about. Being an expert can make you feel unapproachable to your followers. When starting a blog or a vlog, it might be helpful to think of yourself as a leading learner — what are you learning about currently? If you teach that, you'll always be a step or two ahead of the others, and they'll appreciate your perspective. People want also to hear about real experiences and their knowledge of the world. As long as you produce content about things that you are genuinely interested in, your passion will come through and keep your followers interested. Interacting with your followers in the comments section helps to further the connection with the audience.

The downside to blogs and vlogs being so easy to create and update is that they are all vying for a limited amount of attention. There are hundreds of millions of active blogs and vlogs in the world. This means that you will need to stand out. Moreover, you must post regularly because people are drawn to the newest and most relevant content available.

To be successful as a blogger or a vlogger, there is just one requirement: a passion for your topic. There's an old maxim that states, "No fun for the writer, no fun for the reader." No matter what industry you're working in, as a blogger or a vlogger, you should take this as your ground rule.

Think about why you are starting a blog or a vlog: Do you want to communicate something, like a message or an idea? Do you want to build a community around a topic you enjoy or establish your expertise and build an audience or perhaps enhance your writing skills?

### How to get your blog online?

To get your blog online, you need to choose a blogging platform. It's not easy as there are several different blogging platforms out there, with differences in pricing and features. The most popular platforms include WordPress.org, Blogger, Tumblr, Squarespace, Web.com, Wix, and WordPress.com. Some of them are free and some offer both free and payable versions. Free versions have more limited features, and your domain name will be formed as a subdomain.



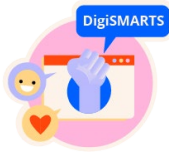


Different bloggers have different needs, and different blog platforms are good for different things. Ultimately, the “best” will depend on you and your situation. You can find provider comparisons on the Internet.

As a beginner, it is important to choose a platform that's easy to set up and doesn't require any coding skills. You'll also need to think about what kind of blog you want to create as switching, later on, can be a bit difficult. It's a good idea to choose a flexible blogging platform, with room to grow.

## Before you launch your blog

- Customize your blog. For example, WordPress offers different kinds of themes, from which you can choose. The theme adds style to your site and makes it look good.
- Think about the readability: don't make the text too small or too tight. Be aware that ads or a hard-to-navigate layout can also hamper readability and drive readers elsewhere.
- Create an “about” page or bio. People will want to know more about the person behind the blog.
- Comment section. You should develop a policy for handling or moderating discussions. Will you approve every comment separately? Will comments be automatically published if they're not spam?
- Write & publish your first post. Share your thoughts with the world. The fun part!
  - Plan your blog post by choosing a topic, creating an outline, conducting research, and checking the facts.
  - Construct a headline that is both informative and captures readers' attention.
  - Write your post, either writing a draft in a single session or gradually little by little.
  - Use images to enhance your post and improve its flow
  - Add humour and explain complex topics.
  - Edit your blog post. Make sure to avoid repetition, keep sentences and paragraphs short
  - Don't be a perfectionist, don't be afraid to cut out text or adapt your writing.
  - You can also ask someone else to read the text and provide feedback
  - Remember the frequency of blogging to keep your audience interested (ideally, you should post several times a week)



## What is vlogging and how to start

Vlogging is about creating video blogs. As a vlogger, you film your own life rather than write about it. You might make videos of your activities daily or less frequently, as in when you have something specific to say to your followers. Vlogging is about streaming videos on YouTube, Facebook, and other live video networks. Video is either live-streamed or pre-recorded and uploaded. Usually, as a vlogger, you are speaking directly into the camera, sharing your day or thoughts on a particular subject.

A good way to start vlogging is firstly to take a look at the different vloggers and analyse those you like.

### How to start your vlog – step by step:

1. Select a theme for your vlog. What is your passion? Writing about your passion helps you continuously come up with content ideas. Think about the keyword of your theme.
2. Choose your target group. Every theme has its audience who search for content related to their interests. Instead of targeting too large an audience, focus your content depending on gender, age, occupation, knowledge level or location. Use the keyword to find out the monthly search volume (on Youtube).
3. Choose a platform (Youtube, Facebook, TikTok). Think where you reach your target group most likely.
4. Get the gear needed in vlogging: camera, microphone, lighting, editing software, drone etc.
5. Find inspiration from other vloggers and different channels that are related to your theme. Use relevant keywords, and comment on other vloggers.
6. Create and launch your channel
7. Plan the video: outline the topics, and keywords – or just go with the flow
8. Finally, make your first video and release it
9. Build your brand. A clear theme for your vlog, get to know your audience, find a few adjectives that describe the way you want your blog to be, post regularly, short for Search Engine Optimization SEO, and make sure your audience gets something valuable from your vlog. Adapt different factors, including market trends and technological limitations.
10. Be patient: it takes an average of 12 to 18 months for your branding efforts to show the first results. When your brand is ready and well-known, widen your vlog to different channels.



## Part III

### Examples of digital activism projects

<b>Title</b>	<b>Digital Youth work</b>
<b>Description</b>	<p>The project objectives promote quality youth work through supporting open and innovative practices in a digital era. The project produces three outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good practice collection of 36 good practices in total</li> <li>• Digital Youth Work Training Resources to be used in youth worker trainings</li> <li>• European Guidelines for Digital Youth Work</li> </ul>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.digitalyouthwork.eu/info/">https://www.digitalyouthwork.eu/info/</a>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Changemaker</b>
<b>Description</b>	<p>Changemaker organises advocacy campaigns and various training events for youth who are interested in development questions and want to learn how things can be changed in Finland and globally. At the heart of the network's activities are the involvement and volunteering of young people. Young people all over Finland are actively involved in planning and implementing Changemaker's activities.</p>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.changemaker.fi/en/what-is-changemaker/">https://www.changemaker.fi/en/what-is-changemaker/</a>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Digital Storytelling for up-skilling and empowerment of learners with intellectual disabilities</b>
<b>Description</b>	<p>This project aims to promote the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. The main goal is to develop a digital storytelling approach adapted to people with intellectual disabilities; thus, delivering an innovative, empowering and fun tool for teachers and facilitators working with this target group. Digital storytelling is a simple and creative process through which people with little or no computer experience gain the skills needed to tell a personal story as a two-minute film that can be streamed on the web or broadcast on television.</p>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://digistorid.eu/">https://digistorid.eu/</a>



<b>Title</b>	<b>Sisterality - International network of girls and young women</b>
<b>Description</b>	Sisterality wanted to create an international network of girls and young women to promote their employability, encourage them for labour mobility and to create awareness about the topic “gender inequality on the labour market” through a campaign. It aimed to achieve this target by e.g. organizing workshops and public events as well as other activities, such as social media platforms, movie nights, round tables and, podcasts.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2016-3-HR01-KA205-034836">https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2016-3-HR01-KA205-034836</a>

<b>Title</b>	<b>DiaLog</b>
<b>Description</b>	The project explores methods in youth work and develops new forms of youth work for working on the issue of intercultural dialogue and tolerance. The consortium organizes the “DiaLog” project for youth workers and young people from Greece, Jordan, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia and Tunisia who will gain specific skills and competences in the field of intercultural dialogue and tolerance through non-formal education and use of creative tools – concept graphics, photo and music; trained youth workers will test and multiply newly adopted competencies in their local communities among young people. Moreover, the project will deliver a DiaLog mobile app – a game where young people can compete and learn more about intercultural dialogue and tolerance.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://kom018.org.rs/en/dialog/">https://kom018.org.rs/en/dialog/</a>

<b>Title</b>	<b>ByLEAP</b>
<b>Description</b>	ByLEAP aims to strengthen the participation of grassroots CSOs and youth initiatives in regional network and ensure sustainability of young entrepreneurs’ (student/youth) companies through demonstration and training/mentoring activities. The efforts will go towards improving the policy environment and supporting human and institutional capacity/workforce development initiatives that respond to the needs of the CSO’s and local/grassroots beneficiaries.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://by-leap.com/about-the-project/">https://by-leap.com/about-the-project/</a>



<b>Title</b>	MLADI
<b>Description</b>	The project aims to support and enable youth participation through media and digital presence and activism. It aims to empower young people in Serbia to be engaged, informed and responsible democratic citizens by raising their digital awareness and literacy and providing them with necessary tools and channels to express their opinions and attitudes to the wider public.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.mladi.org.rs/o-projektu/">https://www.mladi.org.rs/o-projektu/</a>

<b>Title</b>	Reçel
<b>Description</b>	Reçel is a blog created to be a voice for young muslim women to share their daily experiences, their perception of social issues, their interests, curiosities, troubles, hopes, concerns and struggles.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="http://recel-blog.com/tag/english/">http://recel-blog.com/tag/english/</a>

<b>Title</b>	NKD
<b>Description</b>	Raising awareness of the general population of the importance of activism for a better civil society; encouraging and empowering citizens through project activities to make active steps towards offering solutions and suggestions in their own local communities, participate in political and social processes in local communities, as well as in an active communication with decision-makers.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://nkd.rs/">https://nkd.rs/</a>

<b>Title</b>	I Weigh
<b>Description</b>	Founded in March 2018, I Weigh is a community allyship platform built to share ideas and stories that ultimately mobilize activism on social issues that stem from mental health to climate change.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://iweighcommunity.com/">https://iweighcommunity.com/</a>





<b>Title</b>	ELEVATION
<b>Description</b>	Elevating marginalised and low skilled youth through innovative and creative thematic areas in the context of micro-learning and micro-learning resources promoting self-directed learning
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://elevationproject.eu/en/about/">https://elevationproject.eu/en/about/</a>

<b>Title</b>	Glocal Move
<b>Description</b>	The aim of the project is to engage young people to participate more actively in civic participation, through the gamified platform which is based on the SDG goals
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://challenges.glocal-move.eu/en/">https://challenges.glocal-move.eu/en/</a> (platform) <a href="https://challenges.glocal-move.eu/en/">https://challenges.glocal-move.eu/en/</a> (website)

<b>Title</b>	SpaghettiPolitics
<b>Description</b>	SpaghettiPolitics is a community that wants to give space to young people's voices and stories. The project is built on voluntary contributions from young and talented individuals
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.spaghettipolitics.com/?cat=1">https://www.spaghettipolitics.com/?cat=1</a>

<b>Title</b>	Youth Dialogue for Change
<b>Description</b>	The project aims to promote the active participation of young people in democratic life and foster debate around the major issues affecting LGBT youth. Specifically, the activities aim to bring young people and decision makers into discussion to help develop policies in the youth sector
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2019-2-NL02-KA347-002631">https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2019-2-NL02-KA347-002631</a>





<b>Title</b>	Bossy
<b>Description</b>	Digital activism on intersectional gender education and LGBTQI+ rights through articles on the Internet, events, campaigns and school engagement. Fundraising is done through urban clothing as well
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.bossy.it/">https://www.bossy.it/</a>

<b>Title</b>	WACIT
<b>Description</b>	The company raises awareness on youth mental health worldwide, and to establish a sustainable model of helping children who suffered trauma and live in the most adverse life circumstances. A part of the project is providing training for youth to become peer mental health educators.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.wacit.org/">https://www.wacit.org/</a>

<b>Title</b>	#BeTheKey
<b>Description</b>	The campaign is run by university students from Spain against online and offline Islamophobic hate speech, and to raise awareness around migration, change narratives among others.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/bethekey">https://www.instagram.com/bethekey</a>





## Conclusion

The “Creative Digital Activism, Digital Inclusion, and Active Youth Citizenship” educational resource goes through the most important concepts related to digital activism and describes the state of the art of digital youth activism in Europe. It also provides an overview of several digital technologies that can be used in digital activism projects, focusing on blogging and social media usage. This resource also presents a step-by-step guide on blogging and vlogging and how to develop an individual activism project—finally, 17 best practices and examples of earlier digital activism projects from the European Union.



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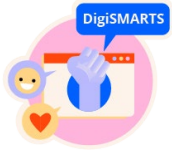
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