

YOUTH ATTITUDE TOWARDS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THREATS AND BENEFITS

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of active citizenship is important in modern societies. Particular attention is paid to the promotion of youth civic activity and the creation of a positive experience. Research shows increasing engagement among young people in various activities, but also shows more visible threats to citizenship among young people. *The aim of research* is to explore young people's attitude towards the evaluation of active citizenship in the society, and the threats and benefits it poses. In the article we raise *problematic questions*: how do young people perceive society's attitude towards active citizenship, what threats and benefits of citizenship do they see? *Research methodology*. Qualitative methods were applied in the research: analysis of scientific literature, group discussion, content analysis. The empirical research was carried out in the framework of the project "Know Citizenship". The participants of the research were young people (14-29 years old) living, studying or working in Klaipėda. The invitations to participate in the focus group and project were published on the project's Facebook page and sent to various Klaipėda youth organisations' by e-mails. Informants' opinions were collected in group discussions as qualitative data. 4 discussions were held; 12 informants participated in each discussion. The research sample consisted of 48 informants. 7 questions were asked to the participants during the discussion. The discussions were recorded; the recordings were transcribed into minutes. The informants' responses were categorised into categories and subcategories.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Table no. 1. Informants' opinion about active people evaluation in the society

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Positive and negative societal evaluation	"Most of the time it's because you're not doing it the right way, because you're not doing it according to other persons dictates, that's the biggest condemnation, but those who understand what you're doing, they don't condemn you ..." (inf. no. 1). "... wise people will not condemn, but those who are already difficult to talk to, they will say whatever they want..." (inf. no. 2). "... an active person expresses his/her opinion and some people will support him/her because they agree with his/her opinion and others will condemn him/her because they disagree with his/her opinion" (inf. no. 13). "I think both are supported and condemned" (inf. no. 18). "...as far as political activities are concerned, they are condemned by some and very much supported by others" (inf. no. 19). "To some, your good work seems ... really good. And the other will say that maybe you did something worse here, you could have never even touched your fingernails at all. It depends very much on the other person" (inf. no. 22). "Everybody has their own opinion and everybody has their own opinion about something that has happened and sometimes it's acceptable to them and sometimes it's not..." (inf. no. 23). "There will always be those who condemn and those who support. <...>, for example, some people may think you are doing a good job ..., but others may think that you are not needed here..." (inf. no. 24).
Negative societal evaluation	"Condemned" (inf. no. 1). "...when you are active on an issue, they condemn you because you want to dismantle what might be comfortable..." (inf. no. 18). "If you are too active, you will be condemned by many people, especially by people who are inactive by the nature and do not like people who are too active" (Info 20). "...most of the time you will get criticism from people who express themselves in society..." (inf. no. 31). "...if they don't conform to the Lithuanian standard and appearance..., and ... they are civic-minded, people just condemn them because they say you are not a real Lithuanian..." (inf. no. 32). "...always the people who are the most vocal will always get that criticism ..., you can't do without it..." (inf. no. 34). "...if they are active and they express their opinion constantly, I think a lot of people don't like it..." (inf. no. 43).

Table No. 2. Informants' attitude towards threats active citizenship

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Physical threats to the person	"...if you disagree with others person's opinion, it depends on how each person accepts that opinion, whether person accept it tolerantly, or person get bitter, get angry and move on to other actions that are dangerous for you" (inf. no. 3). "... when voluntary military service is performed, all volunteers and civilians would be at risk during war" (inf. no. 11). "...volunteering for military service can be dangerous to health" (inf. no. 12). "...rallies can be dangerous, because historically speaking we can give the example of 13 January, when active citizens gathered at the TV tower to defend their country, but were injured or even run over by tanks as a result" (inf. no. 14). "...there is quite a risk to health at rallies when two groups of different minds meet and that citizenship and desire to help everyone to be free becomes exaggerated and leads to aggression ..." (inf. no. 47). "I think that volunteering for military service can be hazardous to health" (inf. no. 48).
Transition from citizenship to criminality	"...if you harm another person with your opinion, with your citizenship, then you are no longer a citizen, you are a In my opinion, this is already an anti-state activity..." (inf. no. 1). "All the riots, when they broke out, it was brutal here" (inf. no. 31).
Confrontation between different groups	"But still, people who are maybe fighting against a certain thing, they are interested in that policy and that's why they are active." (inf. no. 34).
Spreading disinformation	"...there are many books, ..., where older people express their opinion about all kinds of rallies and Russian provocations. They just spread fake information here" (inf. no. 3). "...when it is excessive activity and maybe some kind of overstepping of boundaries, then the people who are unhappy with that may come up with some kind of harm to that person, and in terms of a situation that is dangerous to the society, I think it would have to be something to do with other countries, some kind of an action that is threatening to create a threat of war." (inf. no. 13).
Attraction of intolerance	"...when it comes to today's issues, vaccinations, orientation, I think it is those who are from older generations ... who are doing the damage here." (inf. no. 3). "... Maybe sometimes you don't have to contradict the opinion of the majority, but sometimes it's enough to touch, to catch, to trip up a person who I don't know, but who's not very tolerant, who's not very calm, who's not very willing, in general, to accept the opinion of others, and then it's maybe dangerous" (inf. no. 5).

Table No. 3. Informants' attitude towards citizenship benefit for society

Subcategories	Supporting statements
Helping specific groups of people facing difficulties	"...the association of young deaf people didn't existed, and now it is one of the most active associations in Klaipėda with the help of citizenship" (inf. no. 1). "... helps to identify the needs and priorities of the community" (inf. no. 17). "... let's say people can achieve something, let's say with a rally, when people rally they want to achieve some kind of transformation, to adopt something new or to change something <...> people help the poor and they want to benefit from it, to have something to eat, to have something to wear etc. The benefit is simply to help and assist, to change things for the better" (inf. no. 25).
Building the foundations of the state	"... let's take a basic look back at history, let's look at 13 January. We all know how citizenship benefits society" (inf. no. 6). "... we can include voting as active citizenship, the benefit to society is that active citizens are interested in the country and have thought things through before they vote <...> the benefit is that those who will improve the country and solve problems are elected and the society benefits" (inf. no. 18). "The more we are involved in the governance of the state, the more we can perhaps help the state: what we don't like, what we need. This might make it easier for MPs to navigate and legislate accordingly" (inf. no. 34).
Creation of better environment	"... citizens contribute to environmental stewardship" (inf. no. 24). "... keeping the city clean" (inf. no. 43). "... picking up litter" (inf. no. 45). "... serving in the army is citizenship because it helps society. In the event of war, society will feel protected in its environment. Service provides a better environment and lets the public know that they are safe" (inf. no. 46). "...when we report about the drunk driver, so we are really protecting the people around us, so that nobody gets hurt, and ultimately the driver himself, who thinks he can drive drunk. It is here to protect people's health. Let's say even for the protection of the city's property, because a drink-driver can also be hit" (inf. no. 23).
Creation of sense of community and tolerance	"... encourages everyone to be a better citizen" (inf. no. 15). "... It would be really hard to imagine if we all lived just thinking about what we need, always ignoring the troubles of others, because if trouble would happen to us that we need help too, and if we meet someone who is just as ignorant as we are, say, we would feel that this citizenship is really necessary" (inf. no. 22). "... citizenship has the benefit of making people friendlier and ..." (inf. no. 26). "... others are taught to behave well and to take example from those who encourage citizenship and make our country better" (inf. no. 47). "... citizenship encourages others to be more courteous and helpful and to take better care of their country" (Info 48).

CONCLUSIONS

During the discussion, young people noted that active citizens are positively perceived in society. A very large number of informants identified a dual attitude of society towards active citizens, that they are both supported and condemned. Some informants noted condemnation of activism itself, and identified that certain forms of civic activism, such as politics, rallies, etc., are condemned. Part of discussion participants also thought that civic activism is viewed negatively in society, and sometimes even the "traditional" Lithuanian origin of active people is questioned. Some of the young people who identified a negative perception noted that the majority of the society is inactive and therefore active citizens annoy them, while some of the statements mentioned the desire to protect their comfortable or passive position.

The survey revealed that when discussing the threats of citizenship, young people most frequently mentioned physical threats to the health and life of an active citizen when performing compulsory or voluntary military service in a particular capacity. However, some informants also expressed fears of physical threats from taking a proactive stance in the face of a wrong situation and trying to do something good. And some felt that even the verbal expression of an opinion could lead to physical threats. Several informants identified rallies as a place/time that poses many physical threats. Informants noted that in certain situations, citizenship becomes a criminal activity and defending one's own opinion turns into spreading misinformation. Two other threats were identified during the discussion: provoking intolerance and encouraging confrontation between different groups.

The discussion also identified the benefits of active citizenship as noticed and perceived by young people. Most of the informants made statements that can be summarised as helping groups of people or professions in difficulty. Another part of the informants mentioned building the foundations of the state through basic everyday expressions of citizenship or actions requiring great sacrifices. Another benefit observed and identified by the informants was the creation of a better environment through basic tidying up of the environment and the performance of duties. Some of the statements identified by the informants reveal that examples of active citizenship create a sense of community and tolerance, as well as being 'contagious' and encouraging young people to join various organisations, or at least improve the psychological well-being of the individual.