



Erasmus+

FutureMinds: Cultivating Innovative Leaders in STEAM and Active Citizenship

Project n° 2024-2-BE01-KA210-SCH-000286437

Activity Template **My Voice, My Community**

School: Topelius School

Teacher Name and surname: Erasmus team

Activity objectives:

- Understand what active citizenship means in practice, beyond voting
- Practice democratic deliberation, active listening and evidence-based argumentation
- Identify a real issue in the students' own municipality/school and propose a concrete solution
- Build confidence in public speaking and collaborative decision-making

General framework: This activity is linked with the FutureMinds project's goal of cultivating innovative leaders in STEAM and Active Citizenship, and connects to the Finnish National Core Curriculum's transversal competence area "Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future" (T7), as well as social studies (yhteiskuntaoppi) learning objectives on democracy and civic participation.

Cross-curricular subjects involved: Social studies (yhteiskuntaoppi), Finnish/mother tongue (argumentation and rhetoric), ethics/religious education, and optionally geography or environmental studies if the chosen issue is environmental.

Material needed to develop the activity:

Flipchart paper or large sheets / whiteboard

Sticky notes (3 colors)

Markers

Printed "role cards" (stakeholder roles, e.g., student, parent, local shopkeeper, city councilor, environmentalist)

Timer/stopwatch

Ballot slips or a simple digital voting tool (e.g., Mentimeter, if devices available)

Optional: local newspaper clippings or printouts about a real municipal issue

Timing:

Total 2.5 hours, structured as:

- 15 min – Warm-up and framing
- 20 min – Input: what is active citizenship? (mini-lecture + discussion)
- 15 min – Break/transition into groups
- 20 min – Issue identification & stakeholder role assignment
- 40 min – Small group deliberation (role-play negotiation)
- 25 min – Plenary: each group pitches their proposal
- 15 min – Class vote and results
- 10 min – Debrief and reflection (includes a short 10-minute break not counted separately, can be inserted after the mini-lecture)

Groups:

Whole class divided into groups of 4–5 students, each group representing a mix of stakeholder roles on a chosen local issue (e.g., "Should the schoolyard install a skate ramp or a green garden?" or "Should the town center become car-free on weekends?"). 6–7 groups depending on class size, or fewer, larger groups (6–7 students each) if the class is small.

Procedure to develop the activity:

- Warm-up (15 min): Ask students to stand along an imaginary line in the room based on how strongly they agree/disagree with a provocative statement (e.g., "Young people should be allowed to vote at 16"). Brief discussion of why they positioned themselves there.
- Input (20 min): Short interactive presentation on active citizenship — what it is, examples from Finland and abroad (youth councils, participatory budgeting, school student unions), and why it matters. Encourage questions.
- Issue identification (20 min): Present 2–3 real, age-appropriate local issues (ideally something genuinely relevant to the school or municipality). Class votes on which issue to explore. Assign stakeholder role cards to each group member.
- Small group deliberation (40 min): Each group must, in role, discuss the issue from their assigned stakeholder perspective, negotiate trade-offs, and co-create one concrete proposal that balances different interests. Teacher circulates as facilitator, not decision-maker.
- Plenary pitches (25 min): Each group presents their proposal in 2–3 minutes, followed by 1 minute of questions from classmates.
- Vote (15 min): Students vote (secret ballot or digital tool) on which proposal they find most convincing/balanced. Announce results.
- Debrief (10 min): Guided reflection questions: What was hard about representing a view different from your own? What compromises were needed? How could you take real action on this issue outside school?

Competences and skills to be acquired:

Democratic participation and deliberation skills

Perspective-taking and empathy for differing viewpoints

Persuasive and evidence-based communication

Negotiation and consensus-building

Critical thinking about local governance and civic structures

Teamwork and collaborative problem-solving

Pitfalls and strengths:

Strengths: Highly experiential and student-centered; gives a genuine sense of agency; adaptable to any locally relevant issue; naturally differentiates by role complexity; builds real democratic skills rather than abstract knowledge.

Pitfalls: Requires the teacher to remain strictly neutral as facilitator, which can be challenging; some students may dominate discussions if roles/turn-taking aren't actively managed; timing can slip if debates run long — a visible timer and clear signals for phase transitions are essential; choosing a genuinely relevant local issue (not a "toy" topic) is critical for authentic engagement, and may require some advance research by the teacher.