STUDENTS
AS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

SDCE OERS MODULE 1:
DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT- THE POTENTIAL AT THE INTERSECTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND NEW MEDIA
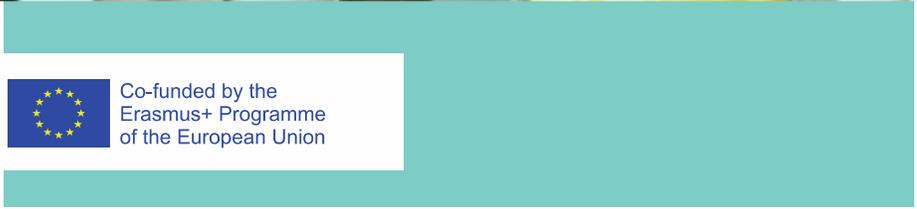
Module 1

Be empowered through this learning module by exploring the concept of student digital civic engagement, what it is, why it is good for your student advancement and our societies. You will also learn the competencies can be acquired when students practice civic engagement. The final section of Module 1 inspires through examples of impressive civic engagement projects.

Contents

Topic 1: What is Student Digital Civic Engagement?

Topic 2: How is Digital Civic Engagement Impacting Universities (and Beyond)?

Topic 3: What Competences do Student Civic Engagers Develop?

Topic 4: What Does Student Digital Civic Engagement Look Like in Practice?

Video Links and Exercises

A note on the terms we use

Before we start your Civic Engagement journey, we need to explain what some of the abbreviations are that we will use throughout these Modules:

HEIs- Higher Educational Institutions.

SDCE- this is the name of the project that created these materials.

DCE- Digital Civic Engagement

The Guide to DCE- this is a guide surrounding information about Digital Civic Engagement and students. You can find a link to the toolkit here

The DCE Toolkit- Our Student Digital Civic Engagers' Toolkit is designed to teach you about relevant digital tools that you can use for your own civic engagement.

WHAT IS STUDENT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Learner level: Beginner

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WHAT IS STUDENT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Civic Engagement can be seen as an activity undertaken by an individual or group that implies a civic action in areas such as active citizenship, civil society or civic skills. It can be conducted either online or offline.

Digital civic engagement refers to civic engagement activities that happen through the use of digital tools. It covers areas such as digital literacy, digital citizenship or computational participation (solving problems, designing systems, and understanding human behavior in the context of computing).

WHAT IS STUDENT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Student digital civic engagement marries civic and digital: It refers to civic engagement activities carried out by students as they use digital tools to convey and perform their civic action.

Student civic engagement occurs when students engage in civic activities within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Participation in these activities can occur either within study programs (e.g. service-learning) or in extracurricular activities (e.g. volunteering in a student union).

WHAT IS STUDENT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Students who engage in civic activities increase their civic responsibility. They become aware for diverse community needs and social problems and develop the necessary competences for facing societal challenges.

The digital component of students' civic engagement addresses the use of digital tools for students' civic actions. Digital civic engagement focuses on the development of students' digital competences and ensures that they can utilize digital technology to help address the issues that they are trying to help.

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Some of the reasons that students undertake civic engagement activities:

Reason 1

For participants to gain experience in relevant skills

Reason 3

Out of necessity to fix a problem

To help volunteer for a cause

Reason 2

Mandatory participation through a course

Reason 4

These reasons have been developed from the case study research conduced as part of the SDCE- Guide to Digital Civic Engagement

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LEARN MORE ABOUT STUDENT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Journal article on Higher Education Civic Engagement: Project or Orientation (15 min read)

Digital Civic Engagement in the age of Covid-19, BLM, and Economic Recovery (6 min read)

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02 | HOW IS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IMPACTING UNIVERSITIES (AND BEYOND)?

Learner level: Intermediate

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HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING THE WORLD

The way that people communicate, consume information and interact with each other has changed. This has been all the more evident as our lives and learning has become more digital.

Social media technology has had a large impact on bringing like-minded people together, providing a cost-free platform that people can plan together on.

Indeed, even in terms of activism these platforms can empower people to help enforce positive change.

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Source

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THE POTENTIAL AT THE INTERSECTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND NEW MEDIA

The way that students can become civically engaged is also changing due to the types of digital technologies that are available to us now.

As early as 2014, protesters were using encrypted apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram to spread information about the protests in Hong Kong. When police decided to limit the use of data in areas holding protest, protesters responded by using apps that used Bluetooth to connect rather than an internet connection. This was also repeated during protests in India in 2019.

Source

ORGANISATIONS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Organisations are also finding different ways that they can use technology to help people become civically engaged, by creating purpose-built platforms.

For example, Amnesty International has created civic hackathons where volunteers were asked to go through satellite images to help determine the locations of missile attacks in Syria.

Find out more by clicking on this link

WHAT IS A CIVIC HACKATHON

At a civic hackathon, people who know and love technology come together with people who know and love urban issues to use technology and their collective skills to build solutions that matters to our city, and other cities too.

Civic hackers are engineers, technologists, civil servants, scientists, designers, artists, educators, students, entrepreneurs. Everyone collaborates with one another to create, build, and invent open-source solutions using publicly-released data, code and technology to solve challenges relevant to our neighborhoods, our cities, our regions and our country.
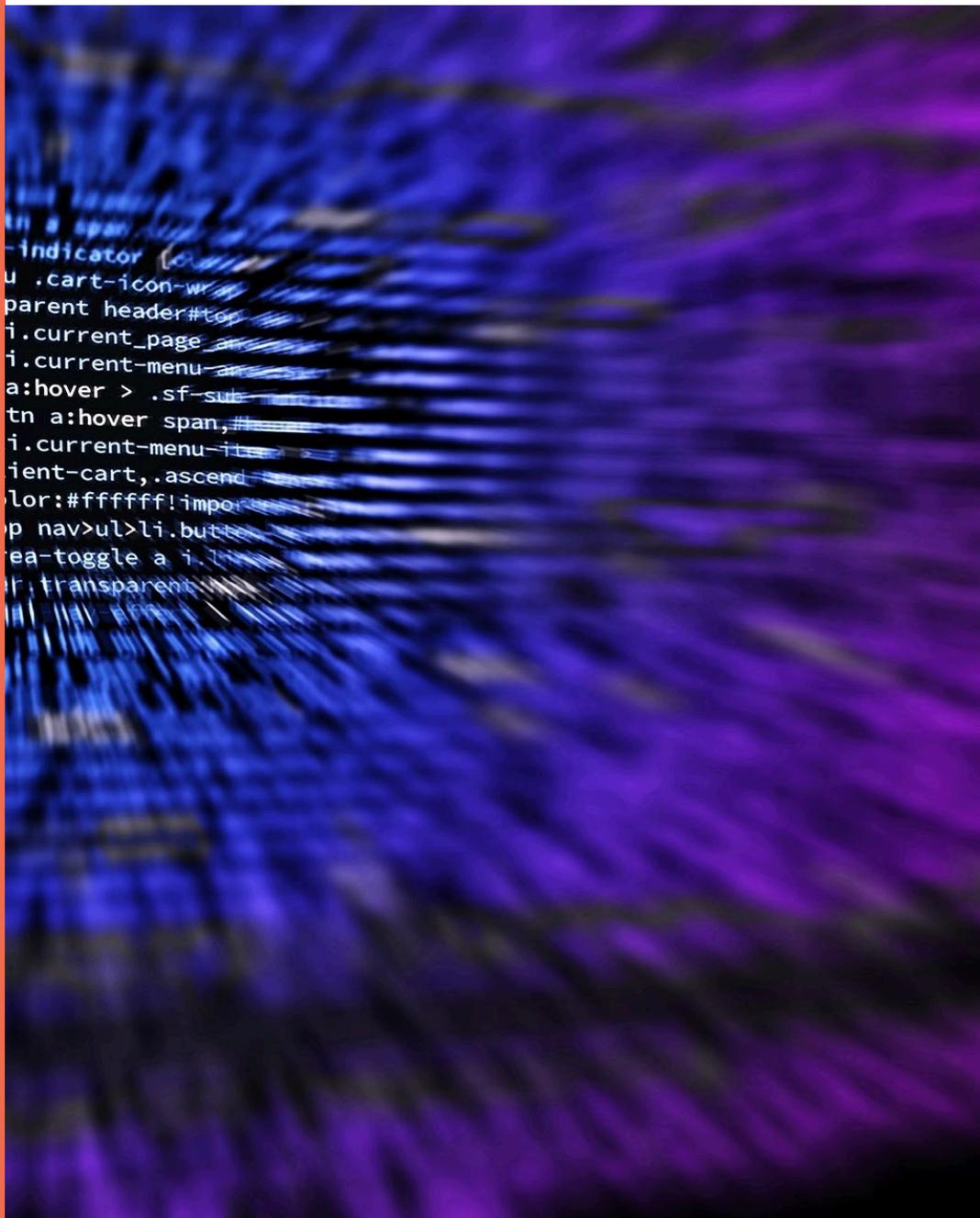
LOOKING AT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FROM A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

How have other students been involved in other projects throughout Europe?

In the rest of this topic, we examine how and why European students have become involved in their own Digital Civic Engagement (DCE) projects.

Within these examples we will see the benefits of why students might want to partake in a DCE project, and what benefits it brought to their local community.

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GUIDE TO DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

(101)

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GUIDE TO DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

The SDCE team conducted research in HEIs throughout Europe, to gather DCE best practices and share them between European countries.
The Guide identifies the uses of digital technology in civic engagement projects in the case study section of the Guide.

As more restrictions were brought in to manage the impact of Covid-19, the way that we used digital technology in our universities and community projects changed to even more digital emphasis.

DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE

https://www.studentcivicengagers.eu/guide-to-digital-civic-engagement-en/

HOW DID DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY BECOME INCORPORATED?

Our research verified that there are two main ways in which the use of digital technologies came to the fore:-**Purpose Digitalization** and **Emergency Digitalization.**

1. **Purpose Digitalization** occurred when the creators of the project used digital technology from the initial development of the project.

2. **Emergency Digitalization** occurred as a reaction to the necessary changes that occurred due to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.

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EXAMPLES OF PURPOSE DIGITALISATION :

Purpose Digitalization occurs when digital technology is used from the beginning of the process, and when digital technology will be utilised as a core tool in the design of a Digital Civic Engagement project. Examples of this within the case studies include the Dementia Awareness Game at Queens University Belfast, and the Virtual Student Service-Learning Programme at UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia).

Dementia Awareness Game was a civic engagement project that designed a game available on tablets and phones to spread awareness of the symptoms and signs of dementia. Conducted by Queen's University Belfast on its impact showed that after playing the game, a person's knowledge and attitudes to people living with dementia improve.

To find out more about the Dementia Awareness Game, please click on this link

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EXAMPLES OF PURPOSE DIGITALISATION :

The UNED Virtual Student Service-Learning Programme was designed as a Service-Learning project based on virtual exchange. It involved Spanish students from the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) Faculty of Education and African students from the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) of Porto Novo in Benin enrolled in second- and third-year teacher-training courses for Spanish-language teachers. The project aimed to strengthen the oral proficiency of the Spanish-language students from Benin, since they did not have options (scholarships and grants) to travel to Spanish speaking countries.

To find out more about the UNED Virtual Student Service Learning programme click here

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EXAMPLES OF EMERGENCY DIGITALIZATION:

Emergency Digitalization occurred when digital technology was used as a necessary reaction to problems due to Covid-19. As people could not meet face to face anymore, digital tools were used as a method to get around this. Examples from the case studies included AIT FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres) Society to move to online meetings, as well as the University of Klagenfurt Student Volunteer Projects for Caritas.

The main purpose of the AIT FLAC societies was to operate information clinics where the student population can come and receive once-off legal information from qualified practitioners who supervise law students. With the problems that Covid-19 brought in regarding face-to-face meetings, the FLAC society wanted to continue to operate. The only way they could do this was by hosting their clinics virtually.

For more information on the FLAC Society of Ireland, please click on this link

For more information on this Case Study, please click on this link

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EXAMPLES OF EMERGENCY DIGITALIZATION:

In the University of Klagenfurt Student Volunteer Projects for Caritas, the aim of the project was for students to learn how project management works in practice and what challenges they are confronted with in future from planning to completion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization became more important in the project when students found out that it was impossible to meet in person.

For example, one idea was to bring older people food, such as chicken. However, with the covid restrictions this mean that this idea could not go ahead. Instead, they developed a project to support homeless people together with social workers from Caritas. Due to the restrictions, the student group members had to communicate and complete work (such as a fundraising activities) digitally.

For more information on this case study, please click on this link.

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FUTURE OUTLOOK

HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AFFECTS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The European Parliament published a very interesting paper on whether the future of civic engagement will be online. We recommend you read and consider its scope and conclusions:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646161/EPRS_BRI(2020)646161_EN.pdf

EXTRA RESOURCES ON HOW DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IS IMPACTING UNIVERSITIES (AND BEYOND)

For more information & resources, check out the following links:

Civic engagement: How can digital technologies underpin citizen-powered democracy? (10 min read)

Civic Engagement: How Can Digital Technology Encourage Greater Engagement in Civil Society? (10 min read)

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03 | WHAT COMPETENCES DO STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGERS DEVELOP?

Learner level: Advanced

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COMPETENCIES OF SUCCESSFUL CIVIC ENGAGERS

The good news is that there are many skills that can lead to student civic engagers becoming successful. Throughout participation of civic engagement project, certain competencies and skills will be developed.

The following section identifies which competencies emanating from digital civic engagement activities that are aligned to the EntreComp framework and the DigComp framework which students who participate in DCE will become more competent.

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A NOTE ON THE ENTRECOMP AND DIGICOMP FRAMEWORKS

Within this section we explore the EntreComp and DigComp frameworks. Several of the main competencies are explored in this topic, however, there are more competencies explored throughout all of the modules in these OERs. Take a look at Module 2 Topic 4 for more information on this.

Click on this link for more information on the EntreComp Framework

Click on this link for more information on the DigiComp framework

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ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCES FRAMEWORK (ENTRECOMP)

EntreComp is the existing European Entrepreneurial Competences Framework approved and used by the European Commission as a key tool and source of inspiration to help Europe become an entrepreneurial society.

As such, it is important to highlight which competences could be utilised and furthered when students partake in digital civic engagement.

THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETENCIES YOU WILL ACQUIRE WILL ALIGN TO:

The EntreComp Framework identifies 15 competences across 3 competence areas:

- Competence area 1: **Ideas and Opportunities**
- Competence area 2: **Resources**
- Competence area 3: **Into Action**

Students that participate in digital civic engagement activities will be afforded the opportunity to develop a wide range of entrepreneurial skills, this could begin with spotting an issue in the community which needs resolved, to then working with others to think of creative solutions to solve the civic issues.
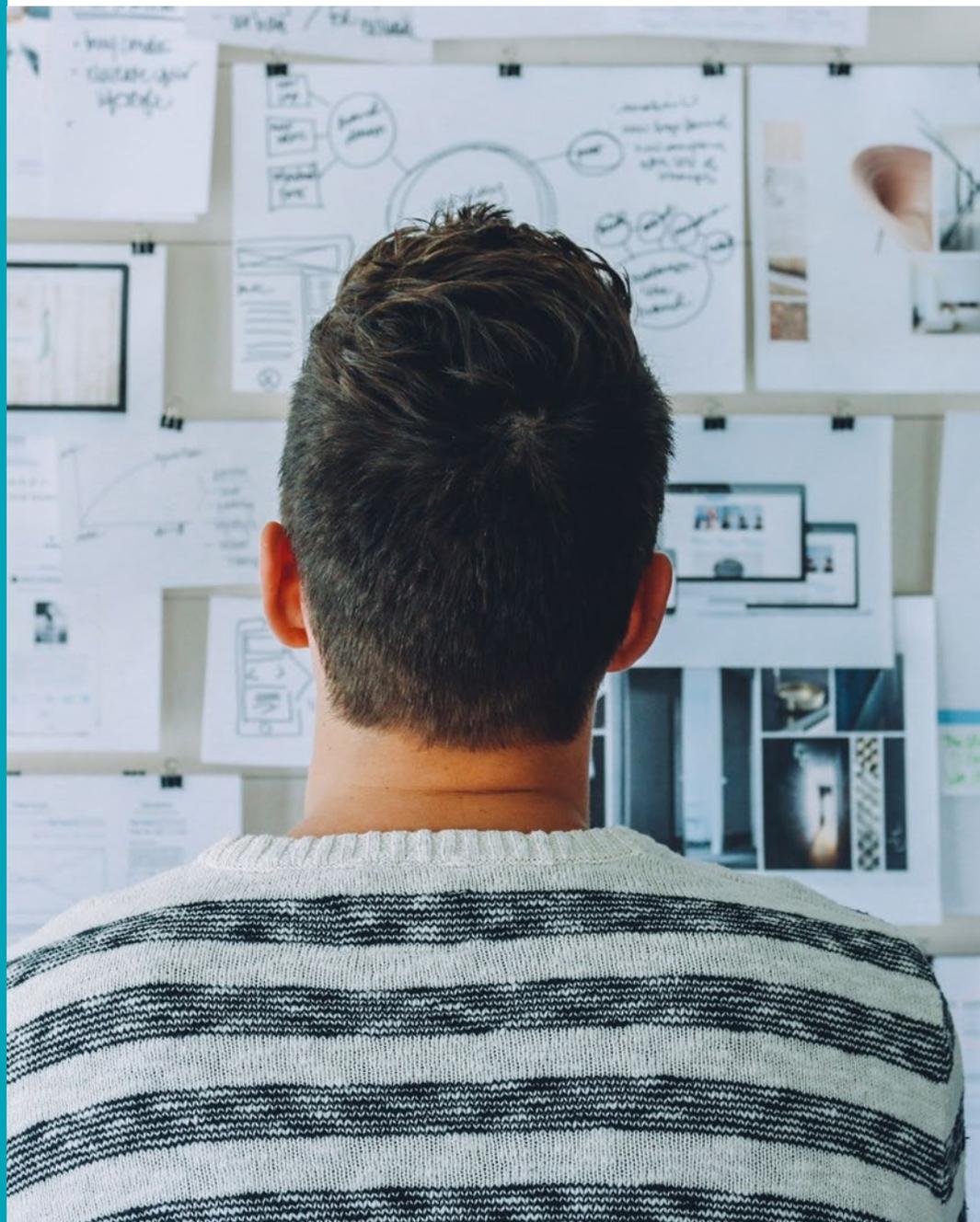
ENTRECOMP COMPETENCES FOR DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

- Spotting opportunities
- Vision
- Creativity
- Ethical and sustainable thinking
- Self-awareness and self-efficacy
- Motivation and perseverance
- Mobilising resources
- Mobilising others
- Taking initiative
- Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk
- Working with others
- Learning through experience
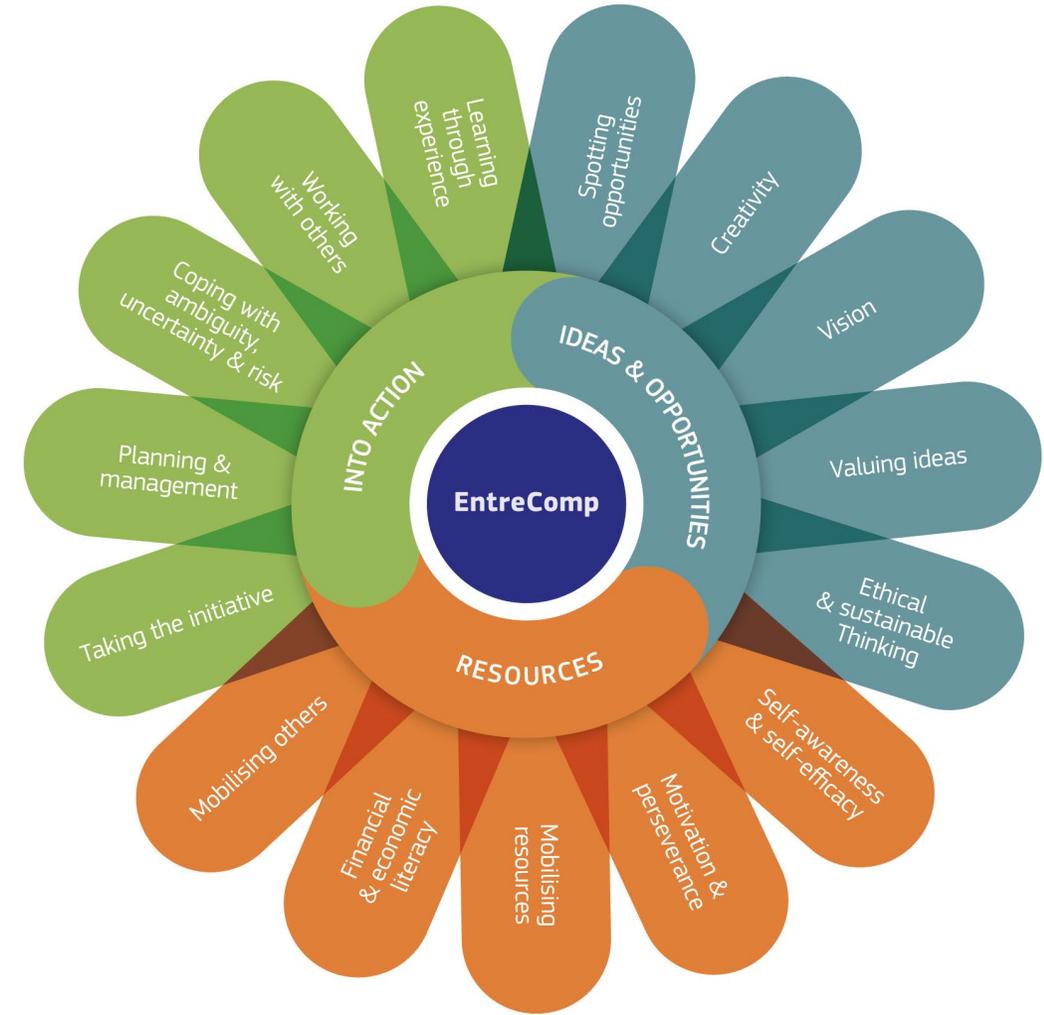
Please click here for a link to the framework

COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK

This competence leads to being able to make decisions when the result of that decision is uncertain, or when the information available is partial or ambiguous, or when there is a risk of unintended outcomes.

By practicing this competence, you will be more likely to be able to handle fast-moving situations promptly with flexibility.

One way of increasing this competence is to include structured ways of testing ideas or prototypes, which can help to reduce the risk of failing.

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DIGITAL COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

DigComp 2.1 or DigComp– is the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens as approved and used by the European Commission.

It is important to highlight which competences could be utilised and furthered by digital civic engagement.

Students that partake in digital civic engagement activities will gain the opportunity to develop and upskill on a wide range of digital competences.

DIGITAL COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

Students who participate in digital civic engagement activities enables them to utilise the digital competences they possess and refine them to meet the needs of the civic engagement issue they are working on. This could be researching information on the community needs, to creatively developing content online to share with others.

Throughout these resources, there will be core competences which are highlighted in each section.

Please click here for a link to the framework

9 OF THE MOST RELEVANT COMPETENCES FOR DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

1. Creatively using digital technology
2. Identifying needs and technological responses
3. Protecting the environment
4. Integrating and re-elaborating digital content
5. Developing content
6. Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
7. Sharing through digital technologies
8. Interacting through digital technologies
9. Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content

BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT

This competence leads to being able to articulate information needs, to search for data, information and content in digital environments, to access and navigate between them, and to create and update personal search strategies.

Civic engagement activities often require participants to undertake research in the field which they are responding to.

DCE enables students to develop their ability to effectively browse and search for data that is most appropriate for their needs.
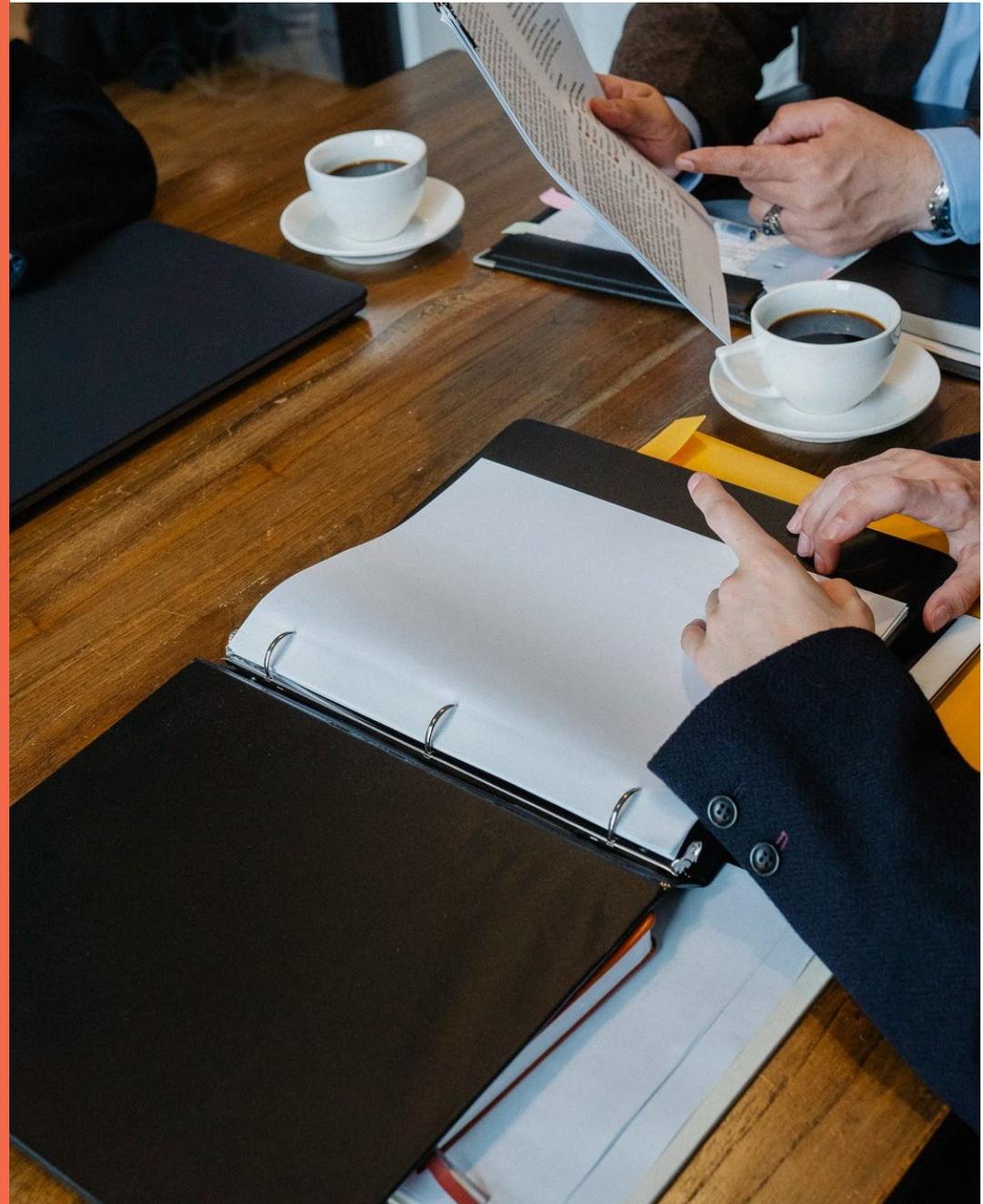
DEVELOPING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN STUDENTS

There are many reasons how Digital Civic Engagement can occur and develop among individuals and groups. Take a look at Module 3 and Module 6 for more information on this.

These modules explore ideas on how to create a civic engagement project, and how to cultivate a civic engagement community within your own university.

WHAT OTHER BENEFITS ARE THERE FOR STUDENTS?

Partaking in a Digital Civic Engagement as a student can provide many benefits. While these reasons are covered later on in the modules (module 2 for more information on how DCE can benefit students), some benefits include:

- Fix problems you face in your community

- Learning opportunities to practice skills that will help

- Provide experience that can help towards career progression

- Positive experiences giving back to your community

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AS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

EXTRA RESOURCES

Core competencies in civic engagement

Check out this article on civic skills

The Role of Civic Skills in Fostering Civic Engagement

Link to more information on the EntreComp model

Link to more information on the DigComp Framework

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04

WHAT DOES STUDENT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

Learner level: Beginner

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STUDENTS ARE LEADING THE WAY

Active students form the backbone of strong and democratic universities, contribute to sustainable growth and an inclusive society.

Researchers have found a statistically significant relationship between civic engagement and academic engagement.

Student engagement can take place either within study programs (e.g. service-learning) or in extra-curricular activities (e.g. volunteering in a student union).

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Source

COMMUNITY AND STUDENTS

Within the case studies conducted for the **Guide to Digital Civic Engagement,** we learned of the many positive results to the participation of civic engagement projects, not only for the students, but for the community too.

Reasons ranged from helping small businesses to become a success, to providing services to those in need.

Let's learn from student experiences ....

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GMIT- MARKETING AND DESIGN MODULE

The Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), in Ireland developed a module for their marketing orientated courses. This module equipped marketing and design students with the skills necessary that help to develop a volunteer or community project.

Students provided their skills and expertise and offered it to their local communities. The module addressed the need for digitising community-based programmes, especially in times of digital networks.

GMIT- MARKETING AND DESIGN MODULE

An important factor is that the students involved in this programme helped to ensure the success of the community projects- with participants highlighting that they felt it may not have been a success if the community project had not had help from the students.

It is important to be aware that students can gain practical experience whilst helping out their communities, providing a win-win on both a community level and personal level.

"Having this opportunity to give such support to communities is such an amazing feeling. I feel that I've been in several situations where the community group would have collapsed if it hadn't have been for our expertise, especially in the current environment, increasing digital skills in communities has been such a wholesome thing"
GMIT Student, Ireland
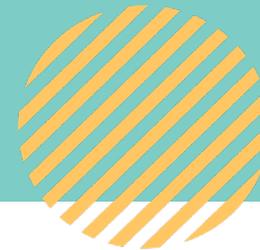
UNIVERSITY OF TARTU WELCOME CENTRE

The Tartu Welcome Centre was a non-profit association operating in the public interest. Their goal was to help new immigrants arriving in Tartu and Southern Estonia to adapt smoothly and settle into Estonian society.

The Welcome Centre provided the services for newcomers in Tartu and South-Estonia area which were free consultations, registry services, cultural and networking events, and useful information. Students could help on a voluntary basis.

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU WELCOME CENTRE

The events were organised by students, under supervision of staff with the aim to help foreign community members to get familiar with Estonian culture and habits, as well as give tips on how to cope with different everyday situations and bureaucracy. Students were helping new immigrants to belong and adapt to Estonia.
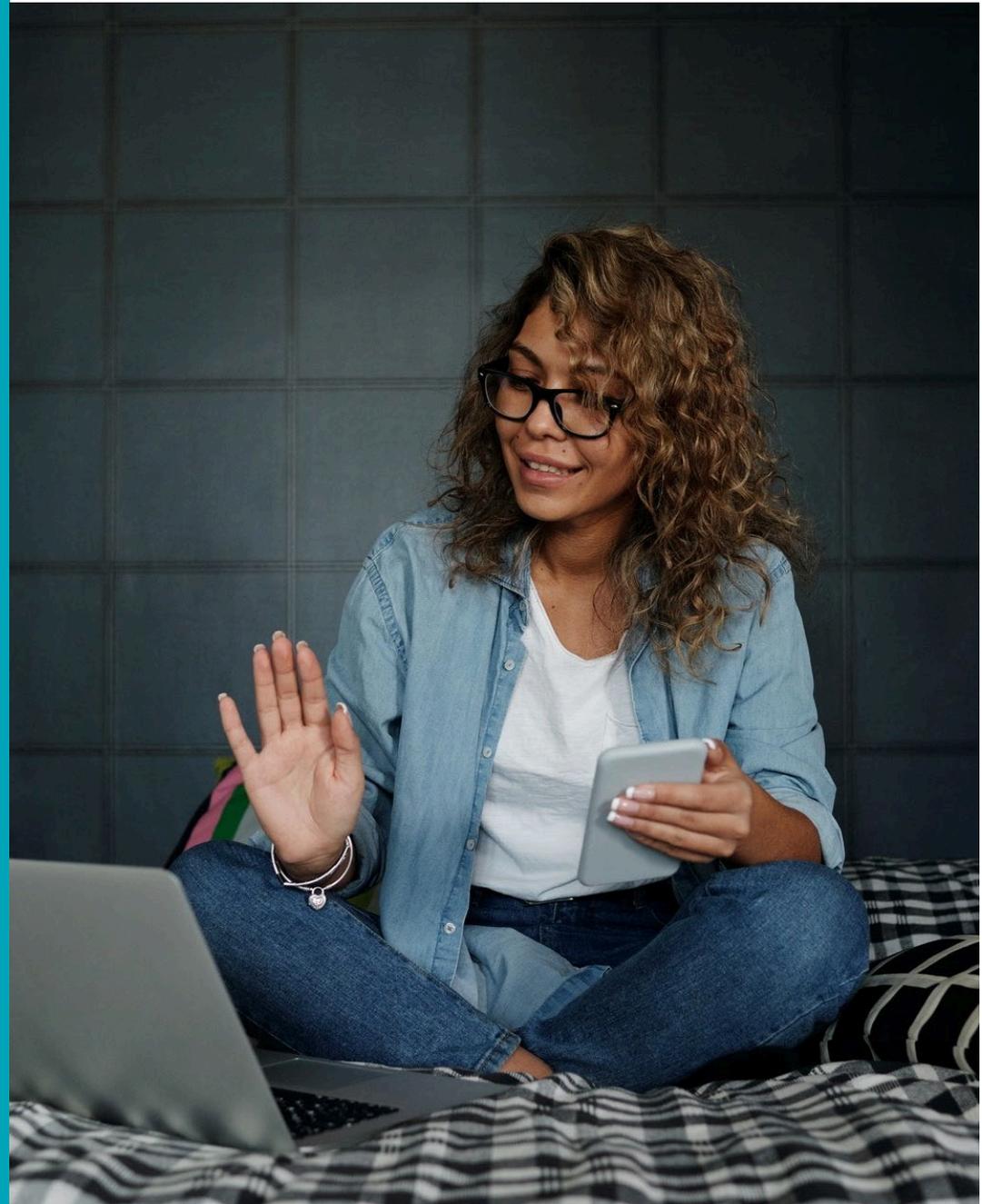
HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES WERE USED IN THE WELCOME CENTER

At the start of the project, students used digital skills needed for the promotion of different events (for example designing flyers, creating FB events, posting information), communication using different channels (messengers, mailing lists etc).

However, due to Covid19 all of the meetings and events were moved to virtual rooms. Students needed to develop their digital skills needed for the creation of digital rooms for seminars using Zoom and other digital skills such as filming and editing videos, taking photos etc, needed for delivering events in online digital rooms.

Find out more about the Tartu welcome centre by clicking on this link
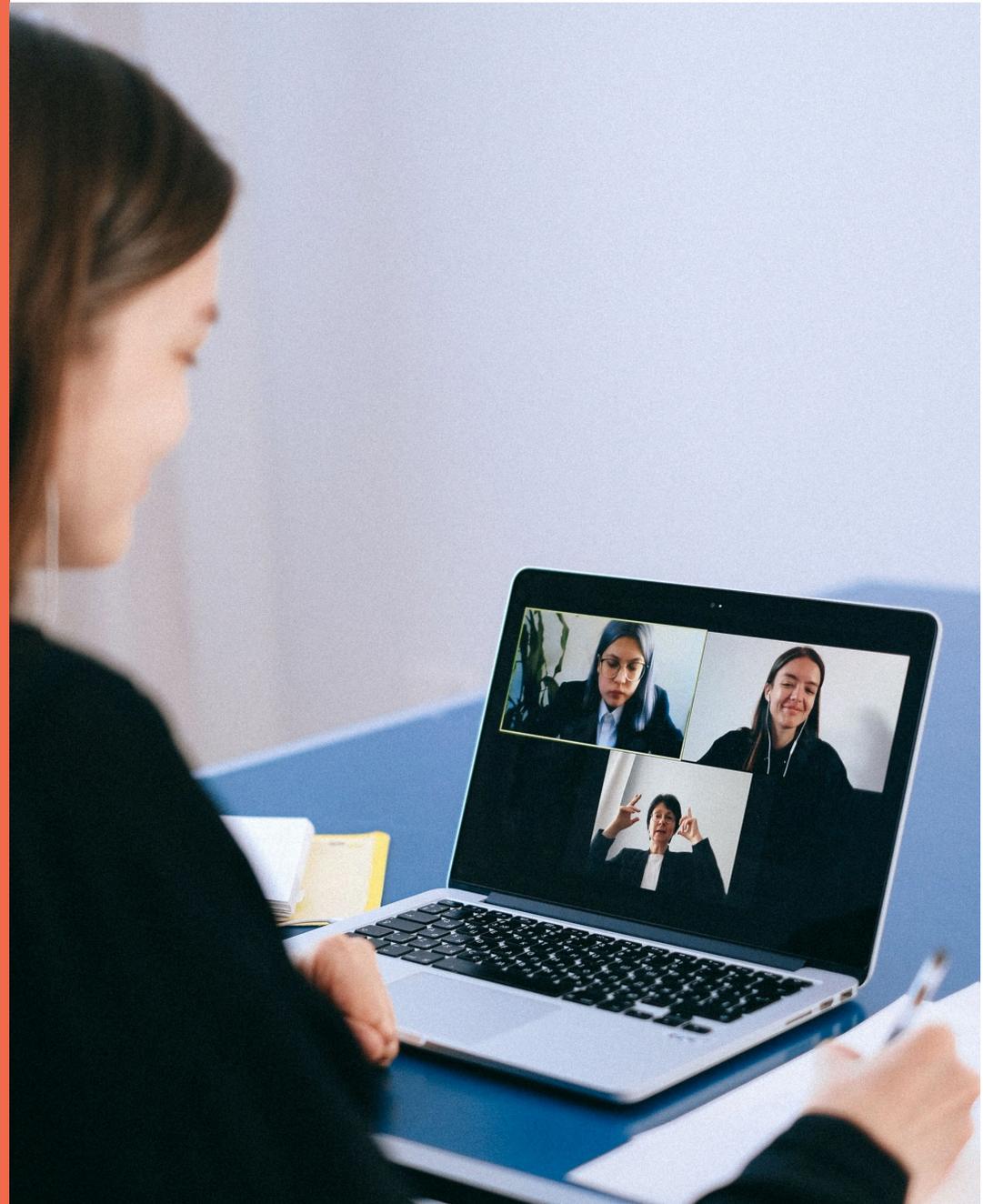
Resources

[Students will build back community better – if we support them to do so](#) (6 min read)

[Building Resilient Communities with Students at the Center](#)
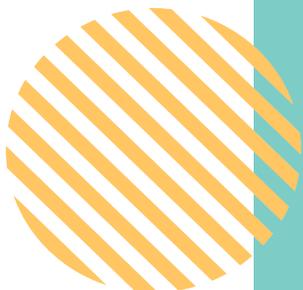
05 | MODULE 1 EXERCISES
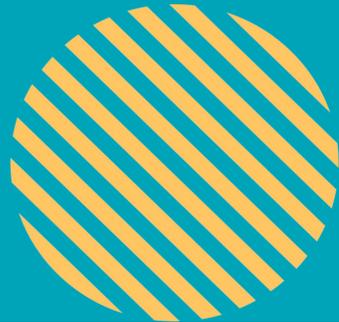
WATCH

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Click on the video to find out more about civic engagement and what it is.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6bNwmrBPXl

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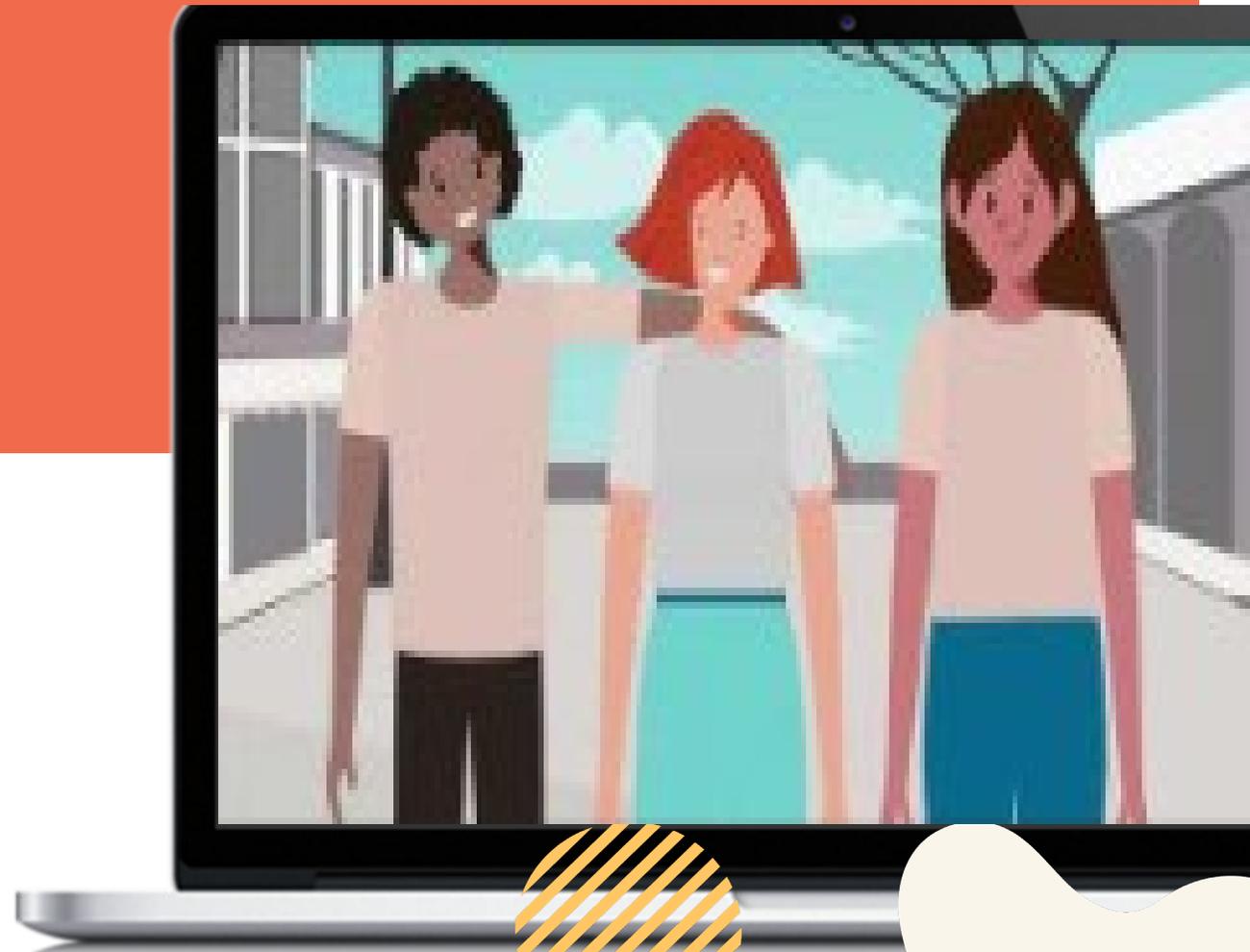
WATCH

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Find out more about community engagement by clicking on the video link!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eqwxife716M

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WATCH

TED TALK ON PROBLEM SOLVING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Check out the following video:

Problem solving and civic engagement | Nandini Ranganathan | TEDxPortland

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfZsC7lfqjo&t

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TASK 1: SELF-FOCUSED LEARNING

This task will take approximately 45 minutes.

Step 1: Watch the videos that have been linked within this section.
Step 2: Answer the following questions:

1. How would you apply some of the information contained in the videos?
2. Have you ever been involved in civic engagement? If yes, what kind of activities have you done?
3. Can you see how digital technologies may have impacted your own experiences of civic engagement?
4. Are there any experiences you have had where you think digital technologies made a civic engagement activity worse?

Tip: Struggling to come up with ideas? Think about everything that you have learned in this module and from the YouTube videos and apply this to your answers. You can also think about experiences and opportunities you have had in your life so far that may have involved civic engagement.

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TASK 2: GROUP LEARNING - DEVELOPING IDEAS FOR A DCE PROJECT

This activity should take approximately 30 minutes.

Step 1: Break up into teams of between 4-6 people.

Step 2: Create a conversation with your teammates, highlighting experiences they have had regarding civic engagement. For example, have you or your teammates ever attended a protest or volunteered for something they are passionate about?

Step 3: Using these experiences, try and develop your own idea for a DCE project. Brainstorm ways that you can apply or use digital applications to assist with the project. For example, you could create a Facebook event for a volunteering project, or a planned protest.

Step 4: Present your DCE project to your lecturer and other classmates to gain feedback and ideas.

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