



Democracy Defenders Accelerator

20 JAN - 17 NOV 2023

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Foreword

Democracy is in danger, and urgently needs people to defend it.

Over recent years, rising inequality, war, natural disasters and the Covid 19 pandemic have spurred the decline of democratic governance around the world—with many countries witnessing a rise in autocratic decision-making and the suppression of civil liberties.

This startling trajectory has shown the importance of having strong civil society. We have seen courageous citizens standing up for freedom of speech, justice and law, and protecting the interests of minority groups and the environment. Inspiring civil society groups have been fast and effective in stepping up to deal with food shortages, supporting refugees and organising powerful debates and demonstrations.

To support and empower even more people to take action in the face of the democratic decline, we have developed the Democracy Defenders Accelerator (DDA). This 10-month programme will bring together young activists from diverse backgrounds to learn, exchange and grow together. Through hands-on learning both online and offline, participants will be skilled-up and mentored to maximise their impact in solving the stark social and environmental challenges of our time.

Together, we will become the defenders of democracy.

What is the Democracy Defenders Accelerator?

The Democracy Defenders Accelerator (DDA) aims to create a world in which active young citizens are empowered to defend the principles of an open society, democratic values and a well-functioning civil society. In this immersive, hands-on programme, participants will learn how to design and deliver civic engagement projects and practise participatory leadership skills—through both the running of a fictional organisation and real-life projects. The entire ten-month learning process will be supported by mentors and facilitators.

The main goals of this programme are:

Open Society and Democratic Values:

Discuss and explore democratic values, as well as potential threats and opportunities to democracy in international contexts.

Empower Civil Society: Design highly innovative, bottom-up civic engagement initiatives. Gain the confidence to test these ideas in real life to solve communities' issues on a local, national or global level.

Qualitative Participatory Leadership:

Learn about participatory leadership principles and values by practising leading a (fictional) organisation.

More Collaborative Decision-Making:

Learn different decision-making methods to be able to make better collaborative decisions.

The DDA consists of 20 online training sessions, held every two weeks for 10 months (20 January - 17 November 2023), **and a 10-day Democracy Defenders Bootcamp, which takes place in Estonia** (27 March - 5 April 2023). In total, there are 160 contact hours of workshops and mentoring.

By the end of the programme, participants can expect to have gained the tools to initiate effective participatory civic engagement projects. **All participants will be welcomed into our global network for young activists, for ongoing support.**

Who is this Accelerator for?

The DDA is aimed at active citizens and community leaders aged 20-35 (though exceptions may be made) who have participated in at least one civic initiative, community project or other initiative aimed at solving a social or community problem. We expect participants to have a strong interest in the functioning of an open society, democracy and civil society.

There will be 30 participants, primarily from Indonesia, the United States, Albania, Georgia, Estonia and other EU/EEA countries. Participants from other countries are also welcome to apply.

The DDA will be delivered in English, and we therefore expect participants to speak English to at least intermediate level.



Costs and Training Contract

Upon acceptance into the programme, participants will be expected to purchase return travel tickets and visa (where required) from their country of residence to Estonia, for the Democracy Defenders Bootcamp, 27 March - 5 April 2023. Participants will therefore need to confirm in the application form that they are willing and able to cover this cost.

Participation in this programme is otherwise free of charge. The cost of the 20 online training sessions and 10-day Democracy Defenders Bootcamp in Estonia, including the venue, accommodation, meals and local transportation, is covered by Citizen OS Foundation and Active Citizens' Fund of EEA grants.

It is required that all participants will attend at least 80% of the online training sessions and 100% of the Democracy Defenders Bootcamp in Estonia. Training Contracts between all participants and Citizen OS Foundation will be signed, and if participation requirements are not being met, Citizen OS will have the right to ask the participant for a reimbursement of the cost of the training.

The DDA is financed by the ACF Fund and the Citizen OS Foundation. ACF's operator in Estonia is Open Estonia Foundation in cooperation with the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO).



Application Process

Application Timeline

- **1 October 2022:**
Applications open
- **1 November 2022:**
Information seminar for interested participants.
Sign up.
- **10 November 2022:**
Applications close
- **2 December 2022:**
Announcement of short-listed candidates
- **6-22 December 2022:**
Interviews with candidates
- **28 December 2022:**
Announcement of selected candidates

Apply online at

citizenos.com/DDA

In order to be accepted into the DDA, willing participants will be able to apply through a competitive selection process.

A selection panel will review applications. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted for a phone interview, and the final candidates will be announced via email and on Citizen OS channels.

Participant Criteria:

- **An intermediate level of English** (at least B2), both written and oral. This will be demonstrated during interviews.
An active citizen or leader in a community, civil society group or NGO.
- **Ideally a resident of one of the target countries of the DDA:** Georgia, Albania, Indonesia, the United States, Estonia and other EU/EEA countries. A limited number of places are also available to residents of other countries.
- **Highly motivated to join the full 10-month programme** including both the online sessions and the 10-day Bootcamp in Tallinn, Estonia.
- **Willing to pay for the travel ticket and visa** (where necessary) to enter Estonia for the Bootcamp.
- **Have the strong commitment required** to maintain the networking and team work with youth from other countries, as part of a global network.
- **Committed to equality** (race, religion, gender, sexuality, etc).
- **Aged between 20-35 years old.** (Exceptions may be possible).

How to Apply

In the application, prospective participants will be required to provide:

- **Personal details** (name, age, contact details, etc.)
- **Educational background**
- **Relevant experience** (in an organisation, community, etc.)
- **Responses to 4-5 provided questions** (up to 150 words each)
- **Description of a civic engagement project** to be developed through the DDA.

Programme Agenda

Design Thinking, often applied to great effect in the private and public sectors, has also proved effective in improving the design of civic engagement projects. The Democracy Defenders Accelerator has adapted the five step process by the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school) to suit the programme's needs.

In the first phase, we will learn to notice and define problems in our local communities, countries and society overall. The second phase focuses on research—gathering ideas on the best solutions for solving the issue. By the end of the second phase, participants will have designed their civic engagement projects. The third phase is the testing and learning phase, in which these projects will be implemented in real life. The fourth phase is for measuring the impact of the projects that were delivered.

Phase I: Research

Defining the problems for the civic engagement projects

The programme starts with online meetings, in which we will learn about the concept of open society, democratic values, and get an overview of the global situation for civil society. In this phase, participants will research a problem they have noticed in their community or society that they want to solve.

Location	Date & time (Tallinn time, EEST)	Programme
#1 online	20 January 2023 14:00 - 17:00	DDA kick-off meeting. Open society and values of democracy.
#2 online	3 February 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Civic engagement project examples. Researching and defining the problems.
#3 online	17 February 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Qualitative and quantitative research methods in civic engagement projects.
#4 online	3 March 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Analysing the results of research. Developing project ideas.
#5 online	17 March 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Pitching the projects. Forming the teams.
6# online	31 March 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Practical information about the upcoming Democracy Defenders Bootcamp

Phase II: Bootcamp

Designing the civic engagement projects

Democracy Defenders Bootcamp: 27 March - 5 April 2023, Tallinn

For this phase, we will meet physically for the Democracy Defenders Bootcamp in Estonia, to learn, test and improve the civic engagement project ideas. We will practise participatory leadership in real-life by leading a fictional organisation, working in teams on the projects that we will have previously defined.

The 30 participants will collectively form the fictional democratic organisation, whose name will be voted on, whose statutes, governance system and action plan will be co-created, and whose leaders will change on a daily basis. Each night, the representatives of this organisation will come together to make a retrospective of the day, hear out all the pros and cons of their work so far, refer back to the timeline and action plan, and vote on who will represent the organisation on the following day.

Throughout this process, there will be 6 to 8 civic engagement project teams working within the organisation. They will each be tackling an issue that can only be solved well in collaboration with the best knowledge and wisdom of people from diverse cultures and experience.

Location	Date & time (Tallinn time, EEST)	Programme
#1 Estonia	27 March 2023	Arrival at the venue. Getting to know each other. Welcome party and mingling.
#2 Estonia	28 March 2023	Participatory leadership. Value- and mission-driven organisations.
#3 Estonia	29 March 2023	Argumentation and critical thinking.
#4 Estonia	30 March 2023	Design thinking and digital transformation.
#5 Estonia	31 March 2023	Design thinking and digital transformation.
#6 Estonia	1 April 2023	Day off to discover beautiful Estonia.
#7 Estonia	2 April 2023	Marketing and communication of civil engagement projects.
#8 Estonia	3 April 2023	Financing the projects.
#9 Estonia	4 April 2023	Project impact and Theory of Change. Pitching the ideas.
#10 Estonia	5 April 2023	Working with the projects. Pitching the ideas. Giving and receiving feedback.

Phase III: Implementation

Implementing the civic engagement projects

After the Bootcamp, the teams will start engaging new team members and stakeholders as well as a wider audience into the implementation of the civic initiative projects, using digital engagement platforms and other communication and marketing channels. During this period we will continue with online workshops and mentoring sessions.

Location	Date & time (Tallinn time, EEST)	Programme
#7 online	21 April 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Storytelling. Finding your story.
#8 online	5 May 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Mentoring session.
#9 online	19 May 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Engaging team and stakeholders.
#10 online	2 June 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Mentoring session.
#11 online	16 June 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Marketing and communications plan.
# 12 online	14 July 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Mentoring session.
#13 online	28 July 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Engaging the wider public.
#14 online	11 August 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Mentoring session.
#15 online	25 August 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Moderating public discussions (online and offline).
# 16 online	8 September 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Teams present their projects. Giving and receiving feedback.

Phase IV: Impact

Measuring the impact of the civic engagement projects

In this phase we will have four online meetings, at which the impact of the projects will be evaluated and the teams will present their results. As a group, we will all share our personal experience of participating in the programme, and discuss the future of the civic engagement projects.

Location	Date & time (Tallinn time, EEST)	Programme
#17 online	6 October 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Measuring the impact of the projects. Qualitative and quantitative research methods. Theory of Change.
#18 online	20 October 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Teams present their results on the impact of their projects. Giving and receiving feedback.
#19 online	3 November 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Presenting project results to a wider audience. Graduation ceremony.
#20 online	17 November 2023 14:00 - 17:00	Sharing personal experiences. Discussing the future of the projects. Joining the alumni network.

Supporting materials

During the programme, each participant should read at least three of the programme's recommended books as supporting learning. Additional supportive learning materials will also be provided, in the form of articles, blog posts, videos and podcasts. After each online session, participants will receive individual or group work. Participants are encouraged to keep a learning diary that will help them reflect on their learning experience.



Outcomes

The main outcomes participants can expect as a result of this programme are:

- **Knowing the principles of an open society**, knowing the values of democracy and being aware of both the problems and opportunities of Western democracy and civil society;
- **Acquiring the practical skills of participatory leadership** and having an overview of different methods of engagement and decision-making;
- Having knowledge and skills in **designing, implementing and evaluating the impact of civic engagement projects**;
- **Being aware of the principles of digital transformation** and various digital solutions that can help them involve people in civic engagement projects;
- Having knowledge and experience of how to **reflect on one's own activities and how to give feedback to other's projects**.

At the end of the Democracy Defenders Accelerator, **participants will receive a certificate stating the amount of attended hours**, and be **welcomed into the Citizen OS Alumni network**.

The Citizen OS Alumni Network



The Citizen OS Alumni Network is our new global participatory network for activists aged between 18-35 who have taken part in Citizen OS civic engagement programmes. This volunteer-driven network will help build confidence in young activists, encouraging and supporting them to take on leadership roles and start their own initiatives.

Through the alumni network, young activists will be able to give and receive feedback about their civic initiatives, form teams and collaborate on similar projects, and share knowledge and experiences. Network activities will include structured participatory processes to help participants reflect on their leadership and problem-solving skills. There will also be periodical support in assessing innovations and milestones.

Project Team, Facilitators and Mentors



Sara Sinha, project manager, facilitator and mentor.

Sara Sinha is the Partnerships and Community Lead at Citizen OS. Sara has expertise in digital governance and accessibility in design.



Agustina Iskandar Crombach, participant onboarding lead, facilitator and mentor.

Agustina is the Partnerships Lead in Indonesia. Agustina has coordinated and led high impact projects and successfully manages a large network of volunteers.



Wawan Putra, facilitator and mentor.

Wawan is an expert in programme monitoring, evaluation and capacity building in the areas of sustainability, gender equality and social inclusion.



Fara Olivia Rumere, facilitator and mentor.

Fara is an expert in Gender and Statistics. As a UN Women National Youth Gender Activist and a founder of the online platform Sa Perempuan Papua, her focus is on supporting women's wellbeing and entrepreneurial capacity.



Margo Loor, facilitator and mentor.

Margo Loor is the co-founder and technology evangelist of Citizen OS. Margo is highly skilled in discussion design and coordinating discussion initiatives on an international scale.



Anett Linno, programme coordinator, facilitator and mentor.

Anett Linno is the CEO of CitizenOS. Anett has over fifteen years of experience in the field of civic initiatives around the world and specialises in the development of education programmes.


About Citizen OS

Citizen OS is a non-governmental and nonprofit organisation that aims to raise awareness about online civic engagement through a dedicated software-as-a-solution (SaaS) platform, and various participatory e-democracy projects around the globe. The aim of the platform is to empower citizens and communities to make high-impact decisions in a democratic way. A special focus of Citizen OS are grassroots organisations and youth communities who follow a bottom-up participatory approach.

Contacts

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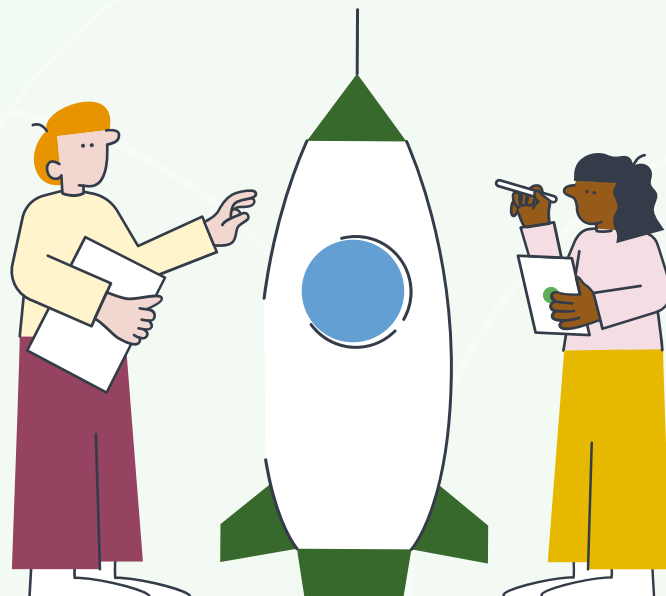
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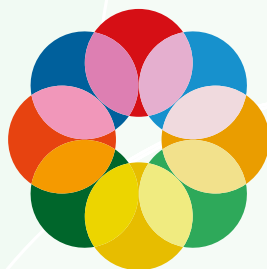
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