

# Monthly Topic What's This Thing Called Society? (Governance)

## YOUNG CITIZENS OF ARMENIA

October 2013- n °4

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the current edition of the Newsletter of “Young Citizens of Armenia” (YCA) project. We are happy to inform you that we have relaunched the project since 1st October, 2013 aiming to encourage autonomy, initiative taking and critical thinking of Armenian young people within the over-arching goal of creating a participative and democratic society in Armenia. In this edition we present you the following:

- YCA's news
- Animators about the monthly topic. “What is this thing called Society? (Governance)”
- Animators and club participants about YCA
- Examples of civic activism
- Youth events, grants, scholarships

We wish you a pleasant reading.

YCA project team

### YCA's NEWS

With the start of its youth clubs on 1st October, 2013 the “Young Citizens of Armenia” project was relaunched for the 3rd time already. The start of the clubs was preceded by the first training of animators which took place in Gyumri on 28-30 September, 2013. The training had brought together the animators from both Gyumri and Yerevan and was aiming to educate them in volunteering, team work and club management through the methods of non-formal education. The animators started working right after the training. They worked out the subtopics of the monthly topic (What is this thing called Society? (Governance)) for their clubs.

The subtopics for each club were very diverse, educational and engaging. For instance, the participants of the Art Club in Yerevan had the chance to create their own leaders after getting acquainted with the topic of the day “The leaders through our eyes”. The participants of the English Club in Gyumri, found themselves in an “inhabited island” and had to create their own models of governance. Very interesting and unpredictable. So we look forward to seeing you in our Gyumri or Yerevan clubs. **You have a big potential, but you are unaware of how to make use of it? Are you in search for new ideas? Do you want to develop your communication skills? Do you need changes? Then your place is here, at our youth clubs.** By the way, the topic for November is “Ethics”. There will be lots of educational presentations, interactive discussions, movies and games. The entrance is free.



“Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government”. Thomas Jefferson

## SOCIETY & GOVERNANCE

Each of us thinks at least once in our lives who or what, actually, rules themselves. This kind of questions always give rise to resistance inside ourselves, as we think that it is only us who rules ourselves. But if we think deeper, a person can be ruled by a number of inner and outer signals. And which forces are governing the society? The society can be ruled by positions, which afterwards give birth to public opinions. The latter directs the society. Even the positions are created under the influence of certain signals. And who is the one transferring these signals? Here we come to the answer of the first question, namely, we are often ruled by outer signals both as a member of the society and as an individual. Who is the ruler? To my opinion, on the one hand, there are people who always unconsciously seek for someone who'd rule them, and on the other hand, there are those who seek people to rule. As I participated in the meetings of different clubs of YCA project and heard many opinions regarding the monthly topic of “What is this thing called Society? (Governance)”, I managed to develop a clear understanding about the topic. I present below the viewpoints which were expressed during clubs and gave quite a food for thought:

- *Usually, I'm the one ruling myself, but there are certain cases when I prefer to choose the one to lead me and those like me*
- *We choose Government in order to be able to blame someone for the wrong situation*
- *The Government may be a bad one, but the people are even worse if they do not make an effort to change something. Every nation deserves its government.*
- *It's the inner aspiration of each person to become one of the authorities one day.*
- *I'm very often afraid of speaking as I have a fear of being silenced by the Government*

I became very interested in one fact. When we say the word “governance”, it's immediately associated with governance on political level. This means that we avoid to recognize that governance starts from a person-to-person relationship and only then it comes to political level. It depends on the situation who is ruled by who.

### Tuesday

English Club, 18:00, Yerevan  
Art Club, 15:30, Gyumri

### Wednesday

French Club, 18:00, Yerevan

### Thursday

Intercultural Club, 18:00, Yerevan  
Art Club, 18:00, Yerevan  
Human Rights Club, 15:00 Gyumri

### Friday

Psychological Club, 18:00, Yerevan

### Saturday

Human Rights Club, 15:00, Yerevan  
Cinema Club, 17:00, Yerevan  
French Club, 13:00, Gyumri  
Cinema Club, 14:00, Gyumri  
English Club, 14:30, Gyumri



**Nane Norekyan, Animator of Cinema Club**

### ONE DAY OF MY LIFE



I'm a student. Today I build my tomorrow's day. I'm full of many dreams. I need an inspiration. I want to share with YOU the story of one day of my life.

It's a wonderful and sunny morning. I hurry to the University. I am in a good mood. I take a minibus. Everybody is standing and the minibus is gradually getting crowded. My hands are lost somewhere behind somebody's back. Somebody's head has got separated from the body of its owner and is lost somewhere. Three friends are persistently trying to fit on one seat. It's a real chaos. All are obedient. This is so natural and usual to everyone as if it was to be like that. I get off the minibus, fix my neck and think. "Oh, this Government. Is it so difficult to solve the problem of transportation?"

I go to the University. The bell rings. The professor enters the classroom and starts lecturing. Then we start a small and innocent talk. And here I hear my professor's desperate words: "This is not a country, you should leave it with Narek in your hearts and Komitas in your souls". And these words sound right in front

of 80 young people, 80 citizens of Armenia. All are silent, only a few of them oppose passively.

I go out of the University and wander through the streets. I become the witness of a conversation of two kids (5-8 years old), who are having a role play and argue who will be their hero. What I hear is shocking me: "Hey, boy, you cannot know that. My dad's friend is his bodyguard. Nobody can resist him. If you tell something to him, he will kill you. So I will simulate him, besides, his guys are very strong. All the "Cities" (supermarket) in the city are his". Here are the new heroes of our times.

I walk to "Espaces" with the hope to find optimism, motivation, enthusiasm, energy and new ideas. Here we watch an educational movie in the frames of the CineClub of the YCA project and then discuss it through an exercise. The animators divide us into two groups, one of them is the Government, and the other one is the People. The People should present its complains to the Government. The Government leaves the room and the People start writing down their complains. Then the Government enters the room. And right here I witness something fantastic happening. The Government is very confident, the People, on the other hand, are not confident at all. The People start presenting the complains. The Government answers to the People with a happy and confident smile: "We are not guilty in anything", "Everybody is guilty except us". Then the roles change. The Government takes the role of the People, and the People become the Government. I was one of the People before and now I am representing the Government. Here I witness another fantastic thing happening. The Government starts defending itself intensively. We, the former People, are now able to find answers to all of the accusations of the People. We are creating our own Truth. We present this Truth in such a way, that we also start believing in it. Neither side is listening. And, all of a sudden, I catch myself on the thought that now, being part of the Government, I'm trying to justify the inefficient and sometimes even sinful activities of the Government. And for a moment I stop playing the game. Those in my team still continue presenting their justifications. What happened? What was that? The role? Does this evil role matter? Are we just toys in the hands of this role? Does the role create our viewpoints? Does it mean that if you give the chance of governing to any Armenian citizen, they will do the same? And then I find my Truth. We deserve our Government. It's the reflection of us. The problem is in ourselves. There cannot be a diamond on the top of the pyramid the base of which is a swamp.

**"The best government is that which teaches us to govern ourselves". Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**





**Nelly Srapyan, Club participant**

### **1. Which clubs do you attend? What is your motivation?**

I attend English club almost every Tuesday. At the beginning my main motivation was to practice my English, but I revealed much more than it at English club, because the topics for discussions are mainly chosen to implant a sense of citizenship in each of participants. Sometimes I attend Intercultural club as well, because it's quite close to my profession.

### **2. How has the "Young Citizens of Armenia" project impacted you and your perception of civil society in Armenia?**

I think the first step to achieving a developed civil society is the importance of being informed and to have certain perception of what it is and how we should achieve it in our society, and I think Espaces gives this opportunity to everybody through interesting clubs, presentations, interactive games and tasks which help participants to shape creative and critical thinking.

### **3. If you could change one thing about Armenian society, what would it be?**

Unfortunately, in every step I face situations of intolerance and non-respectful attitude among people towards each other, law, discipline, different types of cultures. I would like to have society with proper understanding of how important it is to be tolerant, to listen to each other, to keep the individuality and to live in harmony. I have an impression that we often lack the ability to enter into healthy debate. I think we should become a bit self-critical and consider the opinions of the others also worthy to be listened to.

### **1. What club do you animate and how and how did you come to animate this club?**

I'm one of the animator of the CineClub in Gyumri. I'm a movie fan and when I heard about the opportunity of being an animator I decided to apply. On the one hand, it is a good chance to tackle vulnerable topics through films and, on the other hand, it is a nice opportunity for self-development, self-criticism and communication. I think very often what I can contribute to the project. I already have some ideas but they still need to be developed.

### **2. How has the "Young Citizens of Armenia" project impacted you and your perception of civil society in Armenia?**

It is already one month that I am involved in the project, and I already notice some changes in my inner world, in my viewpoints. I have become more modern, active and ready to take risks. Also, I have become more free in my communication with the opposite sex. There is a big problem in nowadays society of young Armenians. They spend hours in front of computer seeing no other interest in life than that quadrate screen.

### **3. If you could change one thing about Armenian society, what would it be?**

I always say the Armenian society needs to get rid of Soviet mentality, the society needs to overcome the feeling of fear. I want to see this changed in my society. The majority wants everything ready without working for results.

**Vahe Mkrtchyan,  
Animator of  
Cinema club**



# Youth Events, Grants, Scholarships Examples Of Civic Activism

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Up to USD50.000 for young entrepreneurs wishing to launch their own start-up. [Click here](#) to apply. Deadline for applications is 1st December, 2013.

Theatre/Dance Performance on Otherness in Germany. [Click here](#) to apply. Deadline for applications is 30th December, 2013.

2014 applications for peace study program of Association "Rondine Cittadella Della Pace" is now open. [Click here](#) to apply. Deadline for applications is 31st January, 2014.

OneBeat cultural exchange program is now accepting applications. [Click here](#) to apply. Deadline for applications is 15th January, 2014.



The initiative "100 degrees: the boiling point" was created several days ago as a new phase of "We pay 100 AMD" movement. The "100 degrees" symbolize both the boiling temperature, and the 100 days of strike, and finally, the fee for public transport. The main idea of the group is the fight against the violation of public benefits in the field of public transportation and the fight against the endangering of the health and lives of the citizens of Armenia. Source: Tert.am.



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