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**Faces of Civic Engagement:  
Stories from CIVIS Open Labs Projects**

## The people behind CIVIS impact

As CIVIS celebrates seven years of collaboration, innovation and transformation, Faces of Civic Engagement shines a light on the individuals who bring CIVIS Open Labs projects to life.

Originally designed as a photo exhibition, presented during CIVIS Days 2026 at the University of Bucharest, this collection of portraits and personal testimonials showcases the experiences of researchers, students and community partners from across the CIVIS Alliance. Their stories reveal how collaboration beyond the university creates opportunities for learning, personal growth and meaningful societal impact.

Rather than focusing on statistics or project outputs, the exhibition highlights the human side of civic engagement. Each portrait is accompanied by a short reflection on what participation in a CIVIS Open Labs initiative has meant to the individual, offering a unique insight into the value of academic and community partnerships.

## Why this exhibition?

- CIVIS Open Labs connect universities with local communities to address societal challenges through collaboration, participation and shared knowledge. The exhibition demonstrates how these experiences:
- Strengthen civic engagement and social responsibility
- Foster personal and professional development
- Encourage collaboration across disciplines, institutions and communities
- Create lasting connections between academia and society
- Generate meaningful impact beyond traditional project outcomes

## A celebration of shared impact

By bringing together voices from different backgrounds and perspectives, Faces of Civic Engagement celebrates the shared values that define CIVIS: openness, collaboration, inclusion and engagement with society. As part of the "CIVIS is News: Seven Years of Shared Impact" theme, this exhibition offers a powerful reminder that behind every project are people, relationships and experiences that make change possible. Through their stories, the exhibition captures the lasting value of CIVIS Open Labs and the collective achievements of the CIVIS community.

**Discover the faces behind the projects and the stories behind the impact.**



# Oana Șerban

University of Bucharest



## Veris — Voices of palmyra

This project gave me a human context for valuing the privilege of not being uprooted. Working with refugees and seeing how many ways suffering and death can be narrated, I understood how culture frames moral realities such as dehumanization and resistance to violence—often aestheticized, but easily distorted. In this sense, CIVIS became a laboratory of truth, supported by a strong community of professionals. In the years to come, this will stand as one of the core vocations of our universities.



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# Wasfi Al Nassef

JRS Romania



## Veris — Voices of palmyra

Participating in events that revive the cultural heritage of migrants, especially Syrian refugees, holds a deeper significance, one that relates to personal identity, which is easily lost during the long journey refugees undertake in search of safety in other countries. It serves as a pleasant reminder, amid all the struggles we face, of where we come from and what our roots are. As is the case for most refugees, at the end of the day, they have fled the current situation in their country, not their identity.



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# Julien Rilliet

ASLOCA Vaud - Switzerland



## Generating shared knowledge on rent regulation

We rarely have opportunities to connect with associations in other countries working on the same issues. This CIVIS workshop made that possible. It combined valuable theoretical insights on rent regulation with practical perspectives, helping us reflect on the gaps in our own systems and explore concrete paths for improvement through structured exchange.



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# Lou Rouault

University of Lausanne



## Ageing as a journey

Participating in a CIVIS project gave me an experience I wouldn't have had otherwise: interacting with people from very different backgrounds, comparing international perspectives, and learning in a way I hadn't experienced before. It opened my eyes in a way I didn't expect to find in an academic setting.



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# Johanna Berglund

City of Stockholm



## Ageing as a journey

Working with CIVIS has been a valuable experience. As a development officer in the city of Stockholm, I was involved in *Ageing as a Journey* and led a local design thinking project, *Out into the Green – in an Age-Friendly City*. Participating has enabled us to focus more clearly on the issue, collaborate across departments, and gain important perspectives from across Europe.



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# Michael Kho Lim

University of Glasgow



## Staff Week on Participatory Research

This training provided a supportive and inspiring environment to delve into participatory research in more detail. It was particularly beneficial and enriching to interact with fellow participants across different career stages from different disciplines and contexts. The workshops made me rethink my research practice through a participatory lens and taught me how to engage with the communities involved in my research more meaningfully.



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# Timothy Peacock

University of Glasgow



## CIVIS Sustainability Challenge

This project, led by ULB, partnering with European/African institutions, brought together students from varied disciplines to brainstorm solutions to world sustainability problems. It has been valuable for participants, partner organisations, and my own opportunity to work again with CIVIS, leading the University of Glasgow's local 'Challenge' and contributing to the Project internationally. For me, CIVIS represents the harnessing of personal encounters across cultures to unlock innovative potential.



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# Daphné Parée

Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles



## YODA – YOUTH FOR OPEN DIGITAL ACQUISITIONS

I find this kind of set up absolutely fundamental because we can see how much our concerns are shared with people who live far away. It's something I was simply not aware of because I had never asked myself the question. But as is often the case when we share things, we're glad to no longer feel alone..



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# Javier Salido Dominguez

Universidad Autonoma de Madrid



## ArcheOPENLAB

My involvement in CIVIS as a member of the Task Force of Hub 2 "Society, Culture and Heritage", coordinator of the ArcheOpenLab Archaeological Citizen Science Project, and participant in three BIP courses has allowed me to actively contribute to innovative academic initiatives. Through these experiences, I have seen how CIVIS fosters collaboration, connecting archaeology with local communities and international students in a truly inclusive European project.



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# Lucia Grand

Universidad Autonoma de Madrid

## Contemporary Childhoods Youths

The discussion of highly diverse contexts sparked my intellectual curiosity for topics I had no previous knowledge of such as the relation between youth and urban space and the complex inequalities that emerge in different parts of the world. The team was also very friendly and open to answering questions. I had enlightening conversations that allowed me to reflect further and build connections. I recommend this experience to anyone who is curious!



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# Chiara Amatucci

Sapienza Università di Roma



## All year long CIVIS Open Lab Music Ensembles

I have participated in several Civis Orchestra projects, among the best experiences of my studies: performing semi-professional repertoire, meeting people from many countries, and travelling through music, my greatest passion. Through this Open Labs project, we explored music as a tool for inclusion and welcoming with the power to connect, heal, and overcome social and cultural barriers. In both Athens and Madrid it was moving to play for elderly people. I hope they enjoyed it as much as we did.



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# Monica Esteves Reis

Aix-Marseille Université



## **FARO project - Building community through FARO convention**

FARO brought together heritage specialists and educators to explore how the Faro Convention can inspire universities to bridge research with real communities. As a scientific researcher long familiar with the Convention, the project gave me the opportunity to translate it into a concrete reworking of amU's DESU programme (Guide-interprète & guide-conférencier). Personally, CIVIS represents the kind of collaboration that turns existing knowledge into pedagogical change.



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# Sana Benbelli

Hassan II Casablanca



## Ageing as a journey

Participating in the "Ageing as Journey" project within the CIVIS partnership was a deeply enriching experience. It allowed us to engage with diverse perspectives and experiences of ageing across different contexts. This exchange broadened our understanding and helped us develop a more nuanced view of ageing, both scientifically and humanly, fostering empathy, critical reflection, and a more inclusive approach to later life.



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# Marie Brezins

Aix Marseille University



## Sensing our environment

This OpenLab session offered a valuable platform for interaction and knowledge exchange among researchers from a wide range of interdisciplinary fields. It was also a pleasure to discover how these different disciplines integrate citizen science into their research, and we hope to incorporate similar approaches into our future projects.



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# Alain Sandoz

Aix-Marseille Université



## Exploring Biodiversity on Campuses

The CIVIS Biodiversity project has fostered a collective dynamic around the theme of biodiversity within our universities. This project has raised awareness among campus users by involving them in flora and fauna inventories and has developed relationships that will allow us to initiate strong partnerships in future projects.



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# Claudio Milanesi

Aix-Marseille Université



## Mediterranean Network of Small and Medium Publishing Houses and Literary Festivals

Effets réels, France's first festival of non-fiction writing, was made possible by a partnership between the organising association with Aix Marseille University OpenLab Civis department. The festival had a large and attentive audience and coverage in the local and international press.



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# Bertrand Soulcié

Eurasia net (Marseille - France)



## Service-Learning Awards

Eurasianet has participated in the OpenLab Project "SL Awards" as jury member representing Civil Society.

Our collaboration with AMU and CIVIS began with an OpenLab project in CIVIS1. Then, we developed an Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership programme on service-learning (2022-2024) and we are part of another one with CIVIS (2025-2027).



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# Maria Daskolia

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens



## CIVIS Sustainability Challenge 2026 at NKUA

Leading the CIVIS Sustainability Challenge 2026 at NKUA was an exciting and inspiring experience of true collaboration and shared purpose among a large team. Seeing students from diverse disciplines and study levels co-create innovative ideas for a more sustainable and decarbonised museum filled me with pride and optimism. Their genuine energy showed that meaningful change towards sustainability begins with collective engagement.



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# Symeon Moschidis

NKUA MSc student in Political Marketing



## CIVIS Sustainability Challenge 2026 at NKUA

The CIVIS Sustainability Challenge at NKUA was a truly enriching experience that connected my background in economic and regional development with my current studies in political marketing. Collaborating in an interdisciplinary team to reimagine a more sustainable museum broadened my perspective and strengthened my understanding of applied sustainability in practice



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# Emmanouil Zoulias

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens



## Combating Health Misinformation

Working on the CIVIS Open Lab, "Combating Health Misinformation", has been a genuinely formative experience for me. It's not just about collaboration across CIVIS universities; it's about building a shared European perspective against misinformation, where multidisciplinary views meet and grow. For me, CIVIS represents openness, exchange, and the feeling that education can truly connect people beyond borders.



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# Emma Blomquist

OpenLab Stockholm



## Ageing as a journey

In Ageing as a Journey within CIVIS Open Labs, I lead Design Thinking training on age-friendly cities. We work through this shared methodology where cities learn from and inspire each other. I see in participants a strong commitment to design better cities for all ages, co-creating solutions based on real citizen's needs.



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# Dragana Kazandjiovska

Sapienza Università di Roma



## **EUROTALES- Building a museum laboratory of the voices of Europe**

I've been part of the teaching staff in its last three editions including Faro Open Lab. Its success lies in the immediate and creative interaction and intrinsic dialogue between students and teachers, in the rich combination of different disciplines and skills of both teachers and students, and in the use of the work produced, when of the appropriate level, into the museum exhibits.



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# Bianca Verolini

Sapienza Università di Roma



## **FARO project- Building community through FARO convention**

Through the FARO Project—supported by the CIVIS Alliance—I was able to put into practice the principles of the Faro Convention, which I had previously only studied in books: to truly understand heritage, it is first necessary to learn about the communities that live it and the values they project onto it



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# Maria Chiara Verducci

Sapienza Università di Roma



## **FARO project- Building community through FARO convention**

Through the CIVIS Alliance, cultural heritage became my space for civic engagement: a bridge between academic knowledge and people from different backgrounds, diverse communities, ideas, and disciplines.



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# Natalie Lenhof

Tübingen University



## Civic by Design: Open Labs in Pop-Up Spaces

The Pop-Up Store ECKSTEIN was the public engagement space of the University of Tübingen, realized within the framework of the European CIVIS Alliance. As a co-organizer, I developed events and exhibitions that brought research and society into dialogue, with the aim of co-creating new knowledge — particularly during the thematic month “Democracy and Europe.



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# German Labrador

Universidad Autonoma de Madrid



## All year long CIVIS Open Lab Music Ensembles

This project gave us the opportunity to create connection, wellbeing and participation within the CIVIS community. Our Open Lab has had an impact we could never have imagined, enriching our surroundings while broadening our perspective and deepening our sense of purpose as musicians.



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# Francisco Fuentes-Antrás

University Autonoma of Madrid



## Migrant Storytelling on Home and Belonging

This project made us rethink the usual roles in academia. We did not enter the workshops as experts there to teach. Instead, we helped create a space where everyone could learn from each other. Listening to participants speak about home, belonging, and resilience changed our own perspectives in meaningful ways. For us, this is what civic engagement truly means: not outreach from above, but real collaboration.



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## Riadh Ben Mansour

University Hassan II Casablanca



### Staff Weeks Participatory Research and Collaborative Pedagogies

Participation in two CIVIS staff weeks: participatory research and collaborative teaching methods are transforming everything! Collective energy, a burst of ideas, innovative methods. Don't stay on the sidelines—dive into this European adventure. You'll come away enriched, inspired, and ready to take action! CIVIS embodies a true inter-university synergy, which is essential for research and educational innovation.





## Léa Moreau

University of Lausanne



### Supporting access and participation to lifelong learning for disadvantaged migrants

CIVIS is a wonderful platform for launching innovative projects across all areas of university life, whether in teaching, research or civic engagement. As part of the project I am coordinating, I realise just how valuable it is to be able to work with colleagues and stakeholders from very different social and political backgrounds. For a project focusing on the inclusion of migrants within universities, this is truly a great asset!



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# Patrick Michel

University of Lausanne



## Veris — Voices of Palmyra & YODA

My involvement in two Open Labs projects, a BIP, and CIVIS Hub 5 has provided me with a valuable opening into research and innovation across Europe and Africa. Through these experiences, I have developed complementary and stimulating approaches, while collaborating with committed colleagues and strengthening the social impact of my work.



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