



## **CISOMO II: Civil Society Solidarity Movement II**

**PROJECT NUMBER: 101148054**

**Advocacy Toolbox for empowering  
Migrant and Refugee Citizens' Advocates**

**Lead Organization:  
ASSE**

**[www.cisomo.eu](http://www.cisomo.eu)**



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



|                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| • About CISOMO II                        | 03 |
| • Purpose of the Advocacy Toolbox        | 04 |
| • Why Advocacy matters                   | 05 |
| • The CISOMO II approach to advocacy     | 06 |
| • What is advocacy                       | 07 |
| • Why advocacy matters                   | 08 |
| • Advocacy and active citizenship        | 09 |
| • Active Citizenship & Steps to advocacy | 10 |
| • Advocacy in Practice in CISOMO II      | 14 |
| • Key takeaways and conclusion           | 15 |



# INTRODUCTION

## About CISOMO II

The CISOMO II project (Citizens' Solidarity in Motion) was developed in response to the growing need to strengthen solidarity, social inclusion, democratic participation, and active citizenship across Europe. In an increasingly diverse and interconnected society, migrants, refugees, and vulnerable groups continue to face barriers to participation in social, economic, and political life. At the same time, local communities are challenged to develop inclusive approaches that promote mutual understanding, social cohesion, and respect for fundamental rights.

CISOMO II brings together civil society organisations, local authorities, educational institutions, community stakeholders, migrants, refugees, and citizens from different European countries with the shared objective of fostering solidarity-based societies where every individual has the opportunity to contribute, participate, and be heard. Through thematic Living Labs, stakeholder consultations, awareness-raising activities, capacity-building initiatives, and transnational events, the project has created opportunities for meaningful dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and the exchange of experiences and good practices.



## Purpose of this Advocacy Toolbox

This Advocacy Toolbox has been developed as a practical resource for migrants, refugees, community leaders, volunteers, civil society organisations, educators, youth workers, and active citizens who wish to promote positive change within their communities. It aims to provide knowledge, skills, practical tools, and guidance that enable individuals to participate effectively in democratic processes, advocate for their rights and interests, and contribute to more inclusive and resilient societies.

Advocacy plays a critical role in strengthening democratic participation and ensuring that diverse perspectives are reflected in decision-making processes. For migrants and refugees in particular, advocacy can serve as a powerful mechanism for overcoming barriers, increasing visibility, promoting inclusion, and fostering meaningful engagement with local communities and institutions.

The toolbox is designed not only for experienced advocates but also for individuals who may be engaging in advocacy for the first time. It provides accessible explanations, practical methodologies, ready-to-use templates, and examples drawn from real experiences and activities implemented through CISOMO II.

# Why Advocacy Matters

Across Europe, migrants and refugees contribute significantly to the social, cultural, and economic life of their communities. However, many continue to face challenges related to social exclusion, discrimination, limited representation, language barriers, and restricted access to participation opportunities. These challenges can reduce their ability to influence decisions that directly affect their lives.

Advocacy provides a pathway for individuals and communities to express their concerns, identify solutions, and engage constructively with decision-makers. Effective advocacy can contribute to:

- Increased participation in democratic and civic processes;
- Stronger representation of migrant and refugee voices;
- Greater awareness of community needs and challenges;
- Improved policies and services that support inclusion;
- Enhanced cooperation between citizens, civil society organisations, and public authorities;
- Stronger social cohesion and mutual understanding;
- Promotion of European values, human rights, equality, and solidarity.

Advocacy is not limited to influencing policymakers. It can also involve raising awareness, educating communities, building partnerships, sharing personal experiences, organising community initiatives, and creating opportunities for dialogue between different groups.



## The CISOMO II Approach to Advocacy

The advocacy approach promoted through CISOMO II is based on participation, collaboration, and empowerment. Rather than speaking on behalf of migrants and refugees, the project seeks to create opportunities for individuals to speak for themselves, share their experiences, and actively participate in shaping solutions to the challenges they face. This approach was reflected throughout the project's activities. During the Living Lab and panel discussion organised in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, participants engaged directly with four migrant speakers who shared their personal journeys, experiences of integration, and perspectives on solidarity and participation. Similarly, discussions with Ukrainian refugee students in Poland provided a platform for young refugees to express their experiences and aspirations while engaging directly with local stakeholders and community members.

These activities demonstrated the transformative power of dialogue, storytelling, and participation. They showed that advocacy becomes most effective when it is grounded in lived experience, supported by evidence, and connected to constructive engagement with communities and decision-makers.

Through this toolbox, CISOMO II seeks to build upon these experiences and provide practical guidance that can help migrant and refugee advocates continue promoting inclusion, participation, solidarity, and positive social change long after the project's



## What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the process of supporting, promoting, and influencing positive change on behalf of individuals, groups, or communities. It involves raising awareness of issues, identifying solutions, engaging stakeholders, and encouraging decision-makers to take actions that improve people's lives and strengthen social inclusion.

Advocacy can take many forms. It may involve speaking at public meetings, participating in consultations, sharing personal experiences, conducting awareness campaigns, collaborating with local authorities, engaging with the media, or working collectively to influence policies and practices. At its core, advocacy seeks to ensure that people's voices are heard and that their concerns and needs are taken into account when decisions are made.

For migrants and refugees, advocacy can play a particularly important role in overcoming barriers to participation and ensuring equal access to opportunities, services, and rights. Advocacy empowers individuals to move from being passive recipients of decisions to becoming active contributors to their communities and democratic processes.

# Why Advocacy Matters

Strong and inclusive societies depend on the participation of all citizens and residents. When individuals are excluded from decision-making processes, communities may fail to address important challenges or benefit from diverse perspectives and experiences.

Migrants and refugees often possess valuable knowledge, skills, and experiences that can contribute significantly to social, cultural, and economic development. However, they may face obstacles such as language barriers, discrimination, lack of information, limited access to institutions, or insufficient opportunities to participate in public life.

Advocacy helps address these challenges by:

- Increasing visibility of migrant and refugee experiences and perspectives;
- Promoting equal participation and representation;
- Building trust between communities and institutions;
- Encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding;
- Supporting social inclusion and community cohesion;
- Influencing policies and practices that affect daily life;
- Strengthening democratic participation and active citizenship.

Advocacy is therefore not only about solving problems; it is also about creating opportunities, building relationships, and contributing to stronger and more resilient communities.

# Advocacy and Active Citizenship

Active citizenship refers to the ability and willingness of individuals to participate in the social, civic, and democratic life of their communities. It involves taking responsibility, engaging with others, and contributing to the common good.

Advocacy is one of the most effective forms of active citizenship. Through advocacy, individuals can:

- Express their views and concerns;
- Participate in public discussions;
- Influence local and national policies;
- Promote social justice and equality;
- Support vulnerable groups;
- Contribute to community development.

The CISOMO II project demonstrated that active citizenship is not limited by nationality, origin, or migration status. Every person can contribute to building more inclusive societies when provided with opportunities, support, and meaningful channels for participation.



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### **Step 1: Identify the Issue**

The first step is to clearly define the problem or challenge that needs to be addressed.

Questions to consider:

- What is the issue?
- Who is affected?
- Why is it important?
- What evidence exists to support the concern?

Examples may include:

- Difficulties accessing language courses;
- Barriers to employment;
- Limited participation in community activities;
- Discrimination or social exclusion;
- Lack of information about available services.

## **Step 2: Gather Evidence**

Strong advocacy relies on evidence. Decision-makers are more likely to respond when concerns are supported by reliable information and real-life experiences.

Evidence can include:

Surveys and questionnaires;

Interviews and focus groups;

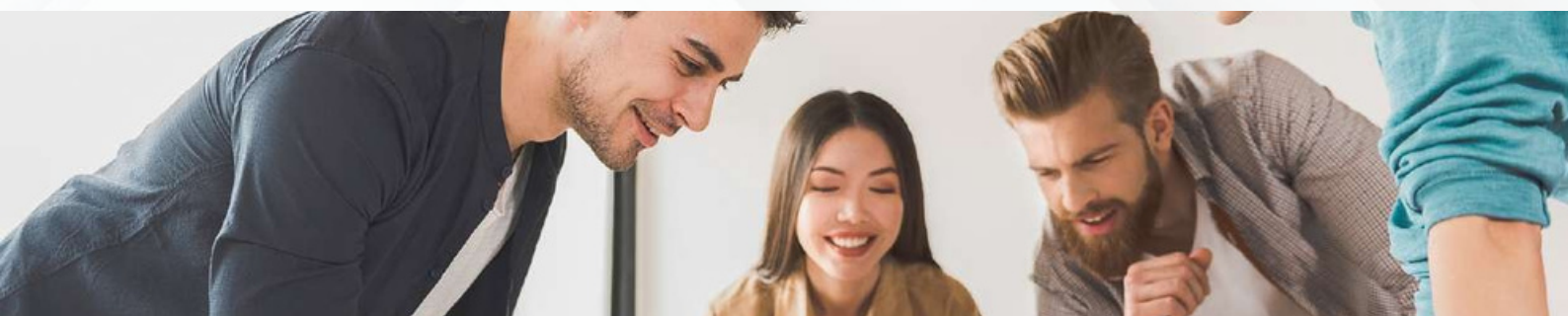
Personal testimonies;

Research findings;

Statistical data;

Case studies and good practices.

The experiences shared during CISOMO II Living Labs and stakeholder consultations demonstrated how personal stories, when combined with evidence, can become powerful tools for change.





### **Step 3: Define Objectives**

Advocacy efforts should have clear and realistic objectives.

A good objective should answer:

- What change do we want to achieve?
- Who has the power to make this change?
- When should the change happen?

For example:

"Increase the participation of migrant and refugee youth in local community consultation processes within the next year."

### **Step 4: Identify Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are individuals or organisations that can influence, support, or be affected by the issue.

Stakeholders may include:

- Local authorities;
- Municipalities;
- Schools and universities;
- Civil society organisations;
- Community groups;
- Policymakers;
- Media organisations;
- Citizens and volunteers.

Understanding stakeholders helps advocates identify potential allies and develop effective engagement strategies.

## **Step 5: Develop Key Messages**

Key messages communicate the issue clearly and persuasively.

Effective messages should be:

- Clear and concise;
- Evidence-based;
- Solution-oriented;
- Relevant to the target audience.

For example:

"Providing additional language support programmes will improve educational participation and employment opportunities for refugees while strengthening community integration."

## **Step 6: Take Action**

Advocacy actions may include:

- Organising meetings with decision-makers;
- Conducting awareness campaigns;
- Participating in public consultations;
- Hosting community events;
- Producing policy recommendations;
- Using social media and digital communication tools;
- Building coalitions and partnerships.

Different situations require different approaches, and successful advocates often combine several methods.

## **Step 7: Monitor and Evaluate**

Advocacy is an ongoing process. After implementing activities, it is important to evaluate results and identify lessons learned.

Questions for reflection include:

- Were the objectives achieved?
- What worked well?
- What challenges were encountered?
- What could be improved in future actions?

Evaluation helps strengthen future advocacy efforts and ensures continuous learning and improvement.

# Advocacy in Practice: Lessons from CISOMO II

Throughout CISOMO II, advocacy was demonstrated through dialogue, participation, and the sharing of lived experiences. Activities such as the Living Lab and migrant panel discussion in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, and the engagement of Ukrainian refugee students in Poland highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces where people can share their experiences and contribute to discussions affecting their communities.

These activities showed that effective advocacy does not always begin with formal policy proposals. It often starts with listening, dialogue, trust-building, and the willingness to engage constructively with others. By creating opportunities for participation and amplifying underrepresented voices, communities can develop more inclusive solutions and strengthen social cohesion.

Advocacy is therefore both a right and a responsibility. It empowers individuals to influence change while contributing to stronger, more democratic, and more resilient societies.

## Key Takeaways

Effective advocacy combines evidence, planning, collaboration, and action. By identifying issues, gathering information, engaging stakeholders, and developing clear strategies, migrant and refugee advocates can become powerful agents of positive change within their communities.

The experiences generated through CISOMO II demonstrate that meaningful change often begins with dialogue, participation, and the willingness of individuals to work together towards common goals. With the right tools and preparation, advocacy can contribute to stronger democratic participation, greater social inclusion, and more resilient communities across Europe.

## Conclusion

Advocacy plays a vital role in promoting inclusion, participation, and equal opportunities within diverse societies. For migrants and refugees, advocacy is not only a means of addressing challenges and barriers but also a pathway towards active citizenship, empowerment, and meaningful engagement in community life. By ensuring that diverse voices are heard and represented, advocacy contributes to stronger democratic processes, greater social cohesion, and more resilient communities.

The CISOMO II project demonstrated the importance of creating spaces where citizens, migrants, refugees, civil society organisations, educators, and public authorities can engage in dialogue, exchange experiences, and collaboratively identify solutions to common challenges.



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SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT**

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