

Learning and Teaching Package 1

Democratic Citizenship Education and Education for Democratic Cultures.

Foundations for teacher educators, primary and secondary school teachers.

Teacher Academy Project
DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
Co-funded by the European Union

LTP 1 gives Foundations for Democratic Citizenship Education. It aims to provide the scientifically grounded and practical base upon which all other project activities are built. Secondly, it focuses on identifying state-of-the-art theoretical and pedagogical approaches to democratic education and nurturing democratic school cultures.

Democratic Citizenship Education Goals of LTP 1:



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1. Why Democratic Citizenship Education (DCE) and an emphasis on democratic school cultures?

Since 2009, the world has been going through an alarming shift away from democracy, with more people now living under authoritarian regimes than in democratic countries (Nord et al, 2025). Even long-standing democracies are facing serious challenges, as these are seen in declining trust in institutions (like the European Union), an increasing anti-immigration sentiment in Europe and growing economic inequalities that have triggered anti-democratic reactions among voters and political parties (Rau & Stokes, 2025). At the same time, today we see the spread of fake news and misinformation, increased hate speech and polarization, the rise of conspiracy theories and extreme ideologies, together with a decrease in political participation. Climate change demands difficult collective decisions that test democratic consensus-building. Additionally, artificial intelligence further erodes citizens' trust in democratic institutions when concentrating power in unaccountable hands (Runciman, 2018; UNESCO, 2024).

The crucial questions are therefore:

?

Can democracy survive without active and responsible citizens safeguarding not only democratic institutions but *an equal, inclusive and justful society*, necessary for a peaceful coexistence in Europe and globally?

How can schools act *as micro-communities* where young people can develop not only democratic competencies but also lived experiences of democracy through the formal regulations, decision-making processes and relationships that characterize daily school life?

How can teachers develop opportunities for students to *practice democracy* so that democratic values and processes do not remain abstract ideas but are enacted in real problem-solving and school relationships?

How can the classroom become a space where *democracy is learned (teaching about democracy), experienced (learning through democracy), and lived (learning for democracy)*?

The focus on democratic citizenship education and the focus on developing democratic school cultures is therefore very relevant for the future of Europe and its citizens.

At the same time schools face many institutional barriers such as centralized systems, overloaded curricula, bureaucratic processes, an emphasis on continuing monitoring and on outcomes and limited flexibility. Parallel to the awareness of these barriers, there is a need **to create spaces to support young people's experience of democratic values and processes.**

Building a democratic school culture requires moving beyond restrictions to implement collaborative methodologies that transform how schools operate at every level. A democratic school culture is built **through positive, participatory approaches** that engage the entire school community, rather than through restrictions and control. The key methodological approach is to view **the school as a learning community where democracy is practiced daily**, not just taught theoretically; democracy cannot remain abstract content to be taught (Biesta, 2011). In this way, the contemporary school can effectively respond to social challenges by adopting **a multi-layered operational model** that extends beyond traditional instruction and that transforms the school from a space of sterile knowledge transmission into **a vibrant democratic community**.



Learning Objectives: By the end of this foundational package, participants will be able to:

- ✓ **acquire** the basic knowledge about DCE and how to foster a democratic school culture
- ✓ **reflect** on their current practices based on democratic school values and practices
- ✓ **enrich** possibilities to practice democracy as a lived experience in their school through several approaches and examples that transcend school policy and regulations, teaching and learning, relationships and school climate as well as collaboration among school and other agents or communities.

2. What is Democratic Citizenship Education?



Democratic Citizenship Education is education, training, awareness-raising, practices and activities aimed at empowering students to exercise and defend their democratic rights and obligations in society, to participate actively in democratic life, with the aim of protecting and promoting democracy and the rule of law and to value diversity (Council of Europe, 2010).

Democratic citizenship education goes beyond the formal legal relationship between citizens and the state and encompasses **active participation in both political and social life**. It prepares learners not merely to understand democracy intellectually, but to live it actively in all spheres of life (Veugelers/de Groot, 2019).

Emphasizing that students must **learn to engage** regardless of cultural differences, challenges discrimination and works toward equity and inclusion, adopting **the critical role of intercultural education** (Banks, 2004; Banks; 2017) but also **the enactment of children's rights** (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The Council of Europe defines **citizenship education** as a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, placing "competencies" as a central concept (Council of Europe, 2018). Specifically, in terms of *knowledge*, learners acquire an understanding of democracy and democratic institutions, democracy versus an authoritarian regime, basic democratic concepts such as justice, equality and human rights; they develop knowledge about society and social and political movements of the past as well as present politics and political institutions, including the process of European integration. Regarding *skills*, learners develop critical thinking abilities to analyze information and evaluate arguments, communication skills to express opinions clearly and engage in constructive dialogue and decision-making and the willingness and ability to participate constructively in the community through cooperation, conflict-resolution and civic initiative. With respect to *attitudes*, learners cultivate a sense of belonging to society that motivates civic engagement, respect for democratic principles and diversity that values different perspectives while upholding human rights, and support for sustainable development that recognizes responsibility toward present and future generations. A fourth dimension involves developing commitment to democratic *values* such as valuing human dignity, justice, fairness, equality/equity, the rule of law and freedom while fostering respect for these rights in all educational interactions (Council of Europe, 2010; Council of Europe, 2018).

Even though this approach is widely acknowledged and has served as the basic orientation for teaching citizenship in Europe in recent years, it also presents specific shortcomings. In particular, an *emphasis on solidarity and social justice as well as a critical reflection for change and transformation* do not appear to be strong. At the same time, *social involvement or community engagement* do not seem to be prioritized. The Framework's approach seems to focus more on personal development and individual freedom rather than collective or social concerns (Strouni & Kesidou, 2023). Taking this into consideration, there is a need **to promote a balance between the social and individual spaces by highlighting humanity**.



A *critical-democratic citizenship* would be needed, focusing on society and the common good and paying attention to social values and critical reflection - helping students think deeply about values and their implications for society (Veugelers, 2019).

Therefore, in order to specify democratic citizenship education in the context of schools and avoid its misunderstanding as a process of individuals acquiring knowledge and competencies related to democracy, TAP-DCE puts forward the term *democratic school culture* to stress a holistic approach to practicing democracy in everyday school contexts.

3. What is a Democratic School Culture?

A democratic school culture is evident when the school functions as **a collaborative learning organization** in which all members of the school community are empowered to participate actively in its development as an accessible and inclusive space for all based on democratic values and processes in its daily practice (Carr-Hill et al., 2018; Korkmaz & Erden, 2014).

Strong indicators of a democratic school culture are:

- The **cultivation of a rights-respecting ethos** into the school, the principles of which will govern all relationships within the school community and the school's connection with the local and international community.
- **Participatory decision-making processes**, recognition of students as active and equal members of the school community, and purposeful encouragement of their participation in decision making. Providing meaningful opportunities for students to participate in formal decision-making, both within the school and at the local level (e.g. student councils, participation in working parties, etc.) is a pillar of democratic school culture (Carr-Hill et al., 2018 Pereira et al., 2024, Tabak & Karip, 2022).
- **Democratic school leadership** as well as shared/distributed leadership (Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2021). Power needs to be shared among leaderships, teachers and students (Liggett, 2025).
- The **creation of an open, safe and dialogic classroom environment** with ample opportunities for students' voices to be heard, where students can raise issues that concern them, discuss controversial topics, freely express their opinions, and listen to the opinions of others (Kim, 2024, Qin et al., 2025).
- **Sense of belonging and safety, relationships of trust and positive communication** among all school members, positive relationships among teachers and students and among students (Peras & Bezjak, 2025, Vieno et al., 2005).
- **Curriculum flexibility and adaptation** to match the specific educational context, thus students' background (Korkmaz & Erden, 2014).
- **School- family partnership** (Korkmaz & Erden, 2014) and **school-community connections** (Veugelers, de Groot & Stolk, 2017), such as the implementation of organised service-learning projects or action projects in their communities as part of formal education.

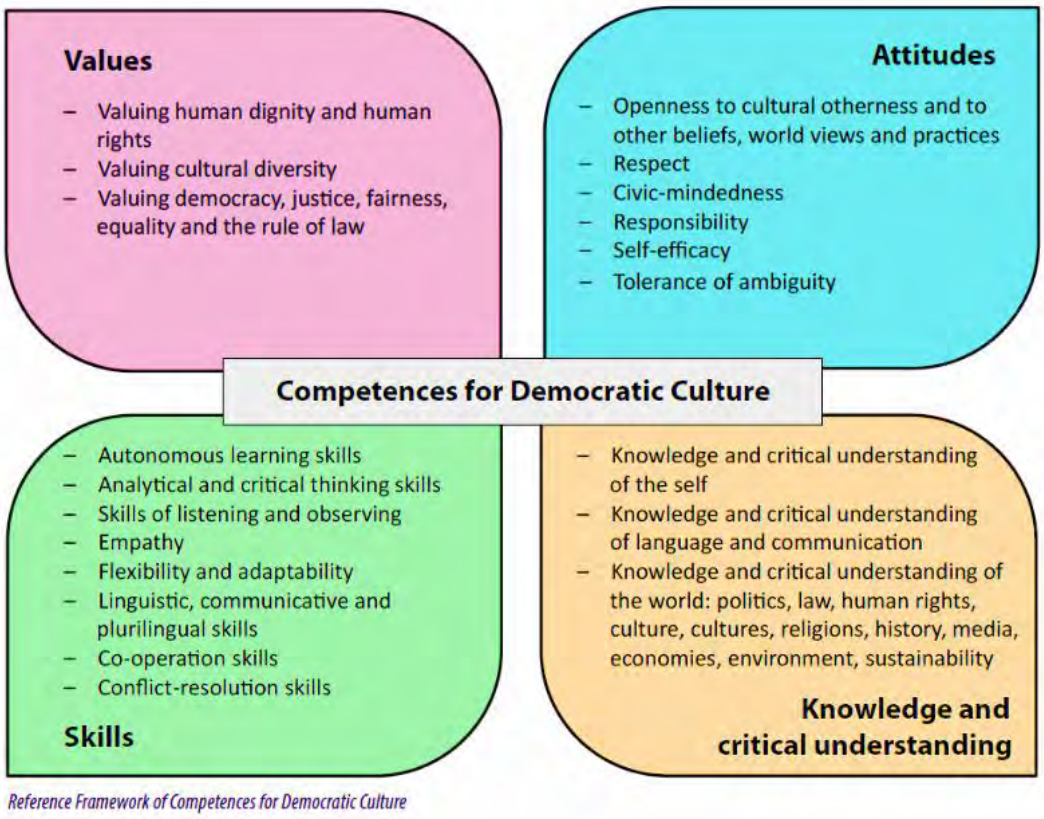
4. TAP-DCE Overarching Framework

In this section it is important to initially understand the basic principles of the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) as well as the critical approaches to it so as to avoid a fragmentary approach to DCE. RFCDC is also presented in relation to other frameworks, their principles and different emphasis of what needs to be supported in order to ensure a democratic school culture. Based on the above, **a relational and participatory approach** of DCE is proposed to promote education about, for and through democracy.

The Reference Framework of Competencies for Democratic Culture: short presentation and critical approach

The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), adopted by Council of Europe member states in 2016, provides a systematic way to help students develop the abilities they need to participate effectively in democratic and culturally diverse societies. At its center is **a model of 20 competences** organized into four categories:

- *values* (valuing human dignity and human rights, cultural diversity, and democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law),
- *attitudes* (openness, respect, civic-mindedness, responsibility, self-efficacy, and tolerance of ambiguity),
- *skills* (autonomous learning, analytical and critical thinking, listening and observing, empathy, flexibility and adaptability, communication skills, cooperation and conflict resolution)
- *knowledge and critical understanding* (of oneself, language and communication and the world; the latter includes politics, law, human rights, cultures, religions, history, media, economics, environment and sustainability). The Framework includes detailed descriptions at three levels (basic, intermediate, advanced) that turn these competencies into observable learning outcomes for all educational levels, from pre-school to higher education (Council of Europe, 2018).



Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

Intercultural education and human rights education are strongly linked to democratic citizenship education as approached by the Council of Europe.

Specifically, **intercultural education** scholars argue that *learning about, through, and for diversity and plurality is at the heart of citizenship education*, with Banks emphasizing that students must learn to engage regardless of cultural differences, challenge discrimination and work toward equity and inclusion (Banks, 2004; Banks; 2017). This is linked to the Council of Europe's view that intercultural competence is inseparable from democratic citizenship, recognizing that **intercultural dialogue** is crucial for equal participation in democratic life (Council of Europe, 2008; Barrett, 2020).

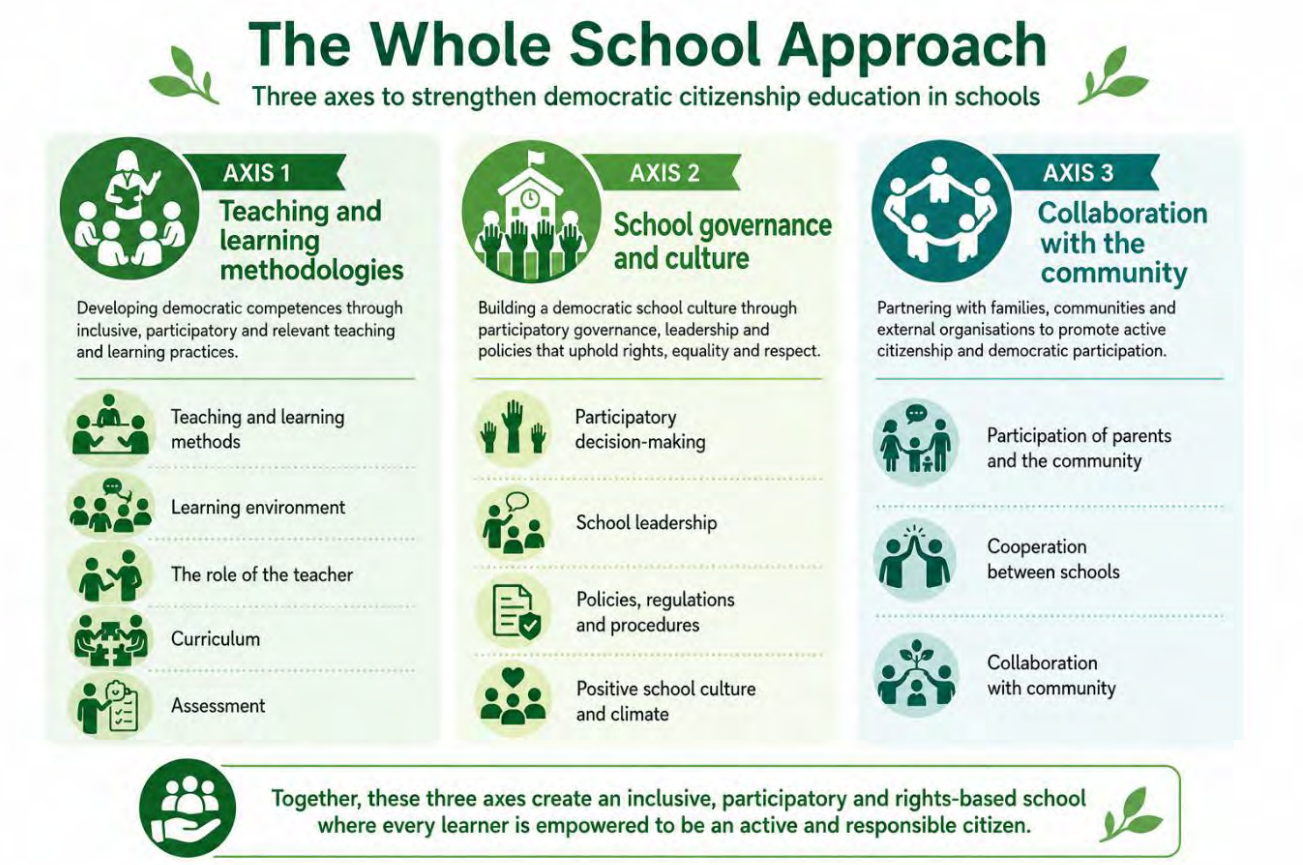
Intercultural dialogue also serves as a basis that can prevent violent radicalization, foster social integration and enhance intercultural understanding.

Human rights education scholars argue that human rights provide the essential foundation for democratic citizenship, emphasizing that learners must understand their rights and those of others and recognize human dignity as universal - a perspective that is also strongly supported by the Council of

Europe's integration of human rights education with democratic citizenship education (EDC/HRE) (Council of Europe, 2010).

> The RFCDC promotes a whole-school approach to democratic school culture, regarding how schools are governed, how decisions are made, what policies exist, how students participate, how teaching can foster the learning of all students and how schools connect with their communities - creating democratic learning environments where principles are lived rather than just taught.

The following infographic is an adaptation of the three axes of the whole school approach to specific areas of school practice. A more detailed description can be found in Appendix A.



Infographic "Whole School Approach: Three Axes to Strengthen DCE" created for TAP-DCE LTP 1 with ChatGPT

5. Different Approaches to Democratic Education

A comparison of different approaches to democratic education reveals several critical points for reflection regarding the RFCDC and its emphasis on the acquisition of specific competencies as the primary pathway to achieving a democratic school culture. The following table offers an indicative overview of a number of alternative approaches alongside the RFCDC.

Approach	Key points	References	Related Practices
RFCDC	20 competencies that students need to develop to be prepared for democratic knowledge, dispositions and practices. Intercultural competence is also among them.	Council of Europe (2018a) and Council of Europe (2018b).	Students engage in activities as well as teaching and learning processes to develop 20 core competencies, divided into values, knowledge, attitudes and skills for democratic citizenship education.
	Whole school approach	Council of Europe (2018c).	Schools develop practices related to ➢ school governance (democratic leadership, value-based policies and rules, student participation), ➢ teaching and learning (e.g. co-operative learning methodologies) ➢ school's relation to the community (e.g. collaboration with parents and local authorities) to achieve participatory and inclusive educational processes.
Rights-based approach	Students' voices are supported as a legal and moral right. Impactful students' participation is ensured. Students as co-creators of school life and active	Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Lundy (2007)	Teachers purposefully seek to collect and understand students' opinions and proposals regarding all school matters and take them into account to shape school policies, learning

	researchers (Fielding 2012).		processes and initiatives for collaborative projects.
Democracy as lived experience	Democracy as a set of democratic habits practiced daily and affecting all communication and co-operative practice.	J. Dewey (1916)	Connecting classroom learning to real-world community problems and social action (Tabak & Karip, 2022). Participation in collective bodies such as students' and school's boards.
Critical democratic citizenship education	Emphasis on solidarity and social justice, social involvement or community engagement as well as a critical reflection for change and transformation.	W. Veugelers (2019)	Teaching and learning are not just focused on personal development and individual freedom but also on collective or social concerns. Students focus on society and the common good, pay attention to social values and critical reflection and think deeply about values and their implications for society.
Critical pedagogy	Education is a non-neutral, deeply political act. Democratic education is education for emancipation. Acknowledgement of structural barriers that hinder democratic transformation within schools is a prerequisite for supporting students' emancipation (Sanal-Erginel & Kuter, 2023).	P. Freire (1970) H. Giroux (2005)	Teachers encourage students to challenge power relations and transform social norms through critical consciousness (Charest, 2025).
Intersectionality	Perceived homogeneity among students is doubted whereas students' multiple identities are recognised (based on	Garcia et al. (2024)	Students' identities and learning biographies are explored to detect inequalities and design appropriate practice.

	class, gender, ethnicity and disability) to shape their experiences of privilege or marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1989). Democratic schools ensure that social justice is a main pillar for designing school policy and practice.	Marginalised students' voices are purposefully supported with different methodologies and dialogue prevails among different perspectives (Varsik & Gorochovskij, 2023).

Table 1. Different Approaches to Democratic Education

The following reflective questions can help you detect similarities and differences among the above different conceptual frameworks.

- **How are the** structural**, institutional and socio-political dimensions taken into account in RFCDC as factors that** shape the conditions and the prerequisites for democratic participation**?** (Joris, Simons & Agirdag, 2021).
- **How are power relations and the social and structural inequalities acknowledged in the RFCDC** to shape school members' identities and practices? (Simpson, & Dervin, 2020).
- **Can individual competencies** such as intercultural competence be understood as independent skills **rather than as a part of a genuine intercultural interaction and dialogue** that can eliminate cultural stereotypes? (Simpson, & Dervin, 2020).
- **Are the competencies of individual school members an adequate condition to strengthen a democratic school culture?**
- **Is school culture a mere addition of the knowledge and skills of the school members or a system of relations** among them, influenced by specific policies, values and practices?

6. Principles and Strategies for DCE and Democratic School Cultures

Drawing on the frameworks and reflective questions discussed above, we suggest a practical synthesis of different approaches, **with specific examples of how a whole-school approach can help build a genuine democratic school culture.** This proposal is rooted in the RFCDC, but it also takes seriously the social and structural inequalities and the power dynamics that exist in everyday school life. With this in mind, **this foundation teaching and learning package offers practical, context-sensitive strategies** that can make DCE a meaningful, lived experience for every member of the school community. The proposal is built around the following key principles:



Infographic Principles of Democratic School Cultures, created for TAP-DCE LTP 1 with ChatGPT

7. Examples of Practice for Democratic School Cultures

The following examples are designed to illustrate what a whole-school approach to DCE can look like in practice, offering **a range of concrete actions** that can help lay the foundations of a democratic school culture.

The following four principles of creating and supporting a democratic school culture are evident in all examples:

- creation of collaborative spaces
- support of voices and systemic inquiry
- building relationships and shared decisions
- democratic governance and community participation

Every school is different and so these examples are not meant to be followed as a fixed recipe. Instead, teachers and schools are encouraged to use them as a starting point - adapting, reshaping and building upon them to suit their own context, priorities and the real challenges they face every day.

A democratic school policy based on inquiry and participatory design

The focus of this theme is on **developing democratic, inclusive, non-discriminatory school policies through participatory practices** that enact the values of equity, respect, justice and belonging. To achieve this,

A. **an inquiry of the school context** is firstly required followed by a reflection on the democratic school policies and practices.
B. secondly, **a participatory design approach** is proposed based on the outcomes of this reflection to ensure that students not only learn about democracy but also learn through democracy (based on the processes of participatory decision-making they experience) and for democracy (based on their commitment to ensure an improved school experience based on democratic values).

A. Inquiry into the school context and reflection

Teachers and other school staff complete the following tool having in mind the relationships among all members of the school community (teachers, children and parents), the problems that they face as individual teachers or/and as a whole school and the practices they choose to confront them.

Guidelines for teachers/school staff: When responding to these questions try and think of specific instances in the ways the school is governed and decisions are taken, teaching and learning is organised and relationships among teachers, teachers and students and teachers and parents are formed to document your responses.



Inquiry and reflective tool

Reflective questions for a democratic school policy	**Examples to document your response – challenges faced**
Do non-discrimination, right to difference, inclusion and justice transcend school practices and everyday school life addressing teachers, students and parents?	
Are the rights and responsibilities decided and implemented in your school policy addressing all school members?	
Have these rights and responsibilities been an output of discussion and negotiation among different opinions and proposals by all? If not, why is this the case?	
Does everybody know why rules are important and how they can be reviewed based on democratic values, practices and children's rights?	
Do students follow the rules only when they are monitored or controlled? If yes, why do you think this is happening?	
Has the school ensured a feeling of safety by all?	

Are relationships among school members based on acceptance and positive feelings?	
Are there practices in your school to proactively support non-violent communication? Do you teach and support non-violent conflicts?	
Has a relationship of trust and dialogue been developed among all school members as a strategy to decrease the number of conflicts?	
Does participation include participation of all in decision making in all matters of school life?	
Is participation supported by using different ways and means to include everybody?	
Do you ensure that the different life experiences and abilities that school members bring with them are recognised and taken into account in ways that can really support their participation?	
Does school members' participation actually affect the final decisions taken?	

B. Participatory design based on reflection and dialogue among different perspectives

Let's assume that after reflecting on these questions, a school realises that:

- Students follow the rules mainly when they are monitored or controlled and this does not help with the peaceful resolution of conflicts among them and among teachers and students.
- Because rules are not followed some students and teachers do not feel safe (welcomed, accepted, secure) in the school environment.
- School's decision to use strict measures for those who disregard school rules is ineffective because problems continue.

Based on a relational and participatory approach, teachers decide to involve students in **two actions**. These two actions are introduced to students based on the understanding that **school is a community** that faces various challenges and **it is the community members that should actively find solutions based on democratic values and practices.** To find solutions one should first identify what the problems are and why these problems exist. Since everyone experiences school life in different ways,

it is important to collect the views and proposals of all members of the school community and reach a consensus.



Teachers explain that for this collective and collaborative process to be effective, students should participate honestly and whole-heartedly in this process and that teachers will respect their views and proposals. Anonymity will be ensured. Students' voices will not only be heard but are expected to co-shape the final decisions through a dialogue and a negotiation process among students and among students and teachers.

1st action: Teachers ask **students to share their feelings about school, the challenges they face and their proposals for improving their school experience.**

They discuss with the students whether they prefer completing an anonymous questionnaire (e.g. a digital form) or using two boxes, one box for submitting their responses regarding their school experiences and a second one as a suggestion box. Students can also propose other ways to collect this information so that all students can participate in this process. In the case of the two boxes, teachers discuss with children where these boxes should be placed (e.g. in each classroom or in a specific space at the school). Last, either in the case of the questionnaire or in the case of the two boxes children sign a protocol to safeguard either process to achieve democratic decision making in their school.

Indicative questions / phrases for collecting students' experiences can be:
What I like best in my school is ……because
What I do not like in my school is ……..because
What concerns me most in my school is…..because
What I find difficult for me in my school is ……because

Indicative questions/phrases for collecting students' suggestions can be:

What I would like as a change in my school is…….
What I propose for this change to happen is…….

These questions are to be discussed with students so that they are comprehensible and new questions/ points can be added based on students' suggestions.

At the same time, the same process takes place among the teachers, so that the school staff reaches an agreement on the proposals to be discussed with the students during the 2nd action. Teachers can use the same questions as the ones proposed for the students or adapt them so that their experiences, feelings and proposals are clearly depicted.

2nd action: Teachers, after collecting and organising the results of this survey, present the outcomes initially in each classroom and then discuss with the students if they think these results reflect their own experiences as well as what are the proposals they agree upon.

Teachers should invest time in these discussions to **foster a consensus process rather than voting**. It is important to have democratic values and practices as a compass to discuss students' proposals. If, for example, students propose that all students that make noise during the lesson, should be punished or expelled from the school, the teacher may ask students to reflect how effective do they think their proposal will be for stopping the specific students from making noise after punishment or expulsion, what will be the students' feelings based on such decisions and how are these feelings expected to influence students' stance and attitude towards the school and, finally, ask them what else could they propose based on an understanding of the reasons these students make noise to handle the specific reasons.

Overall, during discussions, it is important to encourage multiple perspectives by asking students to view the issue through the eyes of different stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, teachers), helping them understand that "fairness" is often subjective and a common agreement based on a dialogue of different perspectives will be beneficial for all.

At the stage of the actual verbalization of the final proposed rules and practices by each classroom, students and teachers should reflect if they:

- ✓ Are clearly expressed for easy understanding
- ✓ have a positive expression (e.g. "Everyone should be allowed to…") rather than a negative one (what we do not want happen)
- ✓ describe specific practices (e.g. Any kind of discrimination is reported and immediately dealt by …(e.g. school management) according to our rules for non-discrimination).
- ✓ include the steps taken in the cases where the agreements are disregarded.

All classroom's proposals are then presented **to a joint school assembly of teachers and students.** If a joint assembly of teachers and students is challenging to organise, each classroom can decide to send three students to this joint meeting.

The results of this participatory process will lead to the school's policy and practice protocol (or regulation) with the aim of agreeing on the school rules and practices that secure equity, inclusion, justice and non-discrimination.

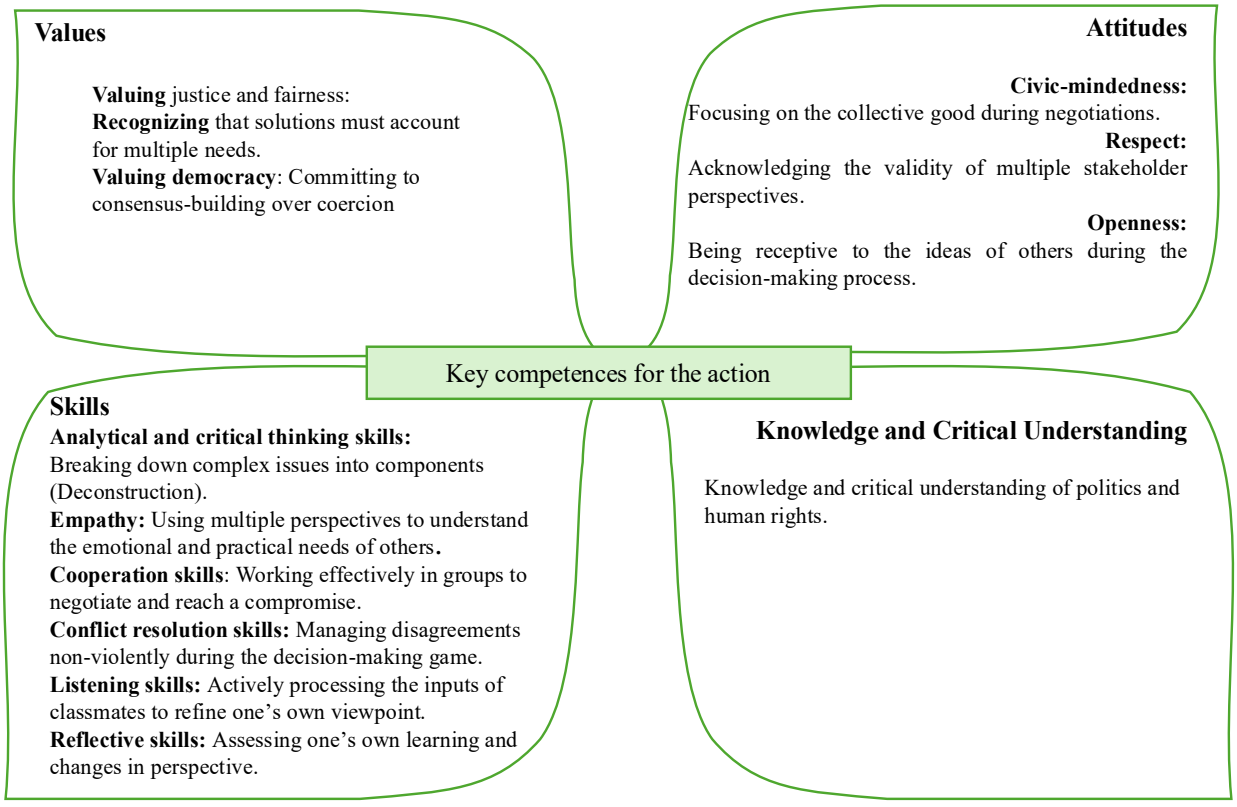
This school policy protocol /regulation is announced to all school members and teachers explain that it can be revisited within the school year in cases it needs revisions based on teachers and students' proposals. Finally, it is prominently displayed on the school website, in classrooms, and in any communication among school and other stakeholders.

The key messages of such processes and practices that students learn as a lived democratic experience are:

1. Every community faces challenges and difficulties. As members of our school community, we have built trust, open dialogue and a spirit of collaboration as our shared tools to address and respond to these challenges together!
2. The solutions and actions have been shaped by all of us. We are collectively committed to the decisions we have made together and we continue to reflect on and explore the best possible ways to make our life as a community a positive experience for all!

RELATED FRAMEWORKS:

RFCDC, DEMOCRACY AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE, LIVING DEMOCRACY (LEADERSHIP)



Students' learning is one of the school's important school aims. Usually, several dialogical, participatory and collaborative approaches to learning as well as the needs for continuous, formative and alternative forms of students' assessment (such as portfolios, interactive means or learning stories) are suggested to support all students' learning.



Besides these strategies, our proposal to foster learning for all is based on the need to support **teachers' critical consciousness of the structural and other learning barriers faced by students** as well as **students' active and emancipatory role in shaping the best ways for their learning**. Therefore, teaching and learning for all takes into account the differentiated students' biographies related to social and economic factors as well as their differentiated learning experiences and proposals.

Two interrelated practices are presented below for this purpose:

- teachers' reflection upon their teaching
- inquiry into students' biographies and proposals to co-shape teaching and the learning processes enacted in classrooms.

Teaching and learning for all! – Taking into account students' biographies and proposals

The starting points of these proposed practices are:

A. Teachers' reflection often needs guidance, and reflective tools can be useful for a critical awareness of what needs to be changed and why, especially when questions are targeted to issues such as students' participation in the learning that go beyond their mere response to teachers' actions.
B. Students are not passive recipients of knowledge, but active participants with the right to express themselves and to co-shape the learning experience. If their views and learning biographies are considered, teaching has better chances to address all students rather than only the ones already motivated and capable.

A. Teachers' reflection upon teaching and learning process

The following reflection tool can assist teachers to examine both their own practice and students' participation - who is actively involved, who remains marginalised, and which strategies are effective or need improvement.



Tool for teachers' reflection upon teaching and learning

Use the following statements to firstly depict the situation in your classroom by noting the frequency of each statement being valid. Use the outcomes of this completed table to identify what needs to change in your teaching and towards which direction.

Statements	Most of the times	Sometimes	Not at all
Do learners have an active role in the classroom?			
Do learners mainly respond to teachers' actions? (e.g. raising hands to answer questions, doing the activities planned by the teachers)			
Do I listen to students' emerging questions/issues they raise and adapt my teaching to them?			
Does my teaching encourage and facilitate collaboration among the students?			
Is the learning process structured in a way that promotes equal participation for each learner?			
Do students participate in decision-making about the methods/processes they think best for their learning?			
Do I offer a differentiated approach to learning to fit the different students' levels?			
Do I take into account students' learning biographies?			
Do I promote a dialogue among students' perspectives, ideas and proposals?			

B. Students' voices in shaping the teaching process

Let's assume based on the previous reflection tool that teachers realise that **students mainly respond to teachers' actions rather than shape the teaching process** and that teaching is mainly organized to address in the same way all children without taking into account their learning biographies.

Teachers decide to take two actions:



Initially, to explore students' beliefs and proposals about the best ways for their learning

Secondly to collect information about students' learning biographies. Both actions are presented below in detail.

1st action: Teachers use the following inquiry tool to collect anonymously students' ideas and proposals about their learning.

Before presenting this inquiry tool to their students, teachers explain that it is important to discuss the ways that help them best to learn and note what they find difficult and what kind of support they need. They promise that they will present the outcomes of this inquiry process and discuss with them the final decisions about how to organise the teaching process based on a dialogue with the whole classroom. Thus, teachers provide about 15 minutes in a lesson for children to write their thoughts and proposals and another hour after putting together the results of this inquiry process to discuss the issues raised by students and agree upon specific decisions to improve the learning and teaching process. Depending on the age of students they can use different inquiry tools (survey questions in a digital form or with handwritten responses, drawings of what children like best and what they do not during teaching or other).

Inquiry tool
Please describe what you think about what we already do in the classroom, that best helps you to learn.
Please describe what you find most difficult in our lesson/course and why.
What do you think will need to change in the way we do our lessons to help you better perform in our class?
Do you have any specific suggestions for making these changes happen?

Teachers read carefully students' responses and organize the information gained under **four categories**:

A) Like best, B) Difficulties, C) Proposed changes, D) proposed ways for change.

Repetitions of specific issues and proposals are expected, so it is important to group together students' responses, however without losing the authentic meanings of students' perspectives.

Teachers then present the results of this inquiry in the four categories and ask children **if they feel their views are represented in this presentation**.

They discuss each category of results trying to reach a consensus and at the same time discussing the co-existence of different perspectives and how these can become complementary to fit different children's suggestions.

Final decisions regarding teaching and learning are written down and a poster can be created that is announced in a visible space of the classroom.

2nd action: Teachers develop a proposal to discuss with students about how their learning biography can be depicted.

They can start a discussion by sharing their own learning biography (how they were as students, if they had older siblings that already conveyed an image about schooling and how did this affect them, if they had the same kind of experience in different levels of education, what were their strengths and what they found difficult and what helped them or became a barrier during their school experience). Especially, since classrooms are heterogenous in terms of students' socio-economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds or may have a refugee or migrant background, **it is important to have a basic knowledge of their previous learning experiences and their current living conditions.**

The following inquiry tool has indicative questions and has been inspired by the work of Van Avermaet & Gysen (2006). It can be adapted by teachers and students according to what they think best describes students' learning biographies in the specific school/classroom context.

Inquiry tool (learning biography)
What is the students' country of origin?
What is the family status of the student?
Is the student happy with his/her living conditions?
What were the students' experiences from school in previous years?
What is the student's linguistic background?
What is the student's exposure in native language and what in other languages? Which language dominates?

What are the student's interests?
What are the students' strengths?
What does the student need to improve in relation to his/her knowledge and skills or other domains?
How does the student respond when he/she has a goal, which he/she has to carry out on his own?
How does the student collaborate with other students in pairs or groups?

The assumption behind tracing students' biographies is that to develop trustful and positive relationships with the students, teachers need to have a basic knowledge of their background and take into account this knowledge to provide opportunities for communication and differentiated teaching.



The key messages of such processes and practices that students learn as a lived democratic experience are:

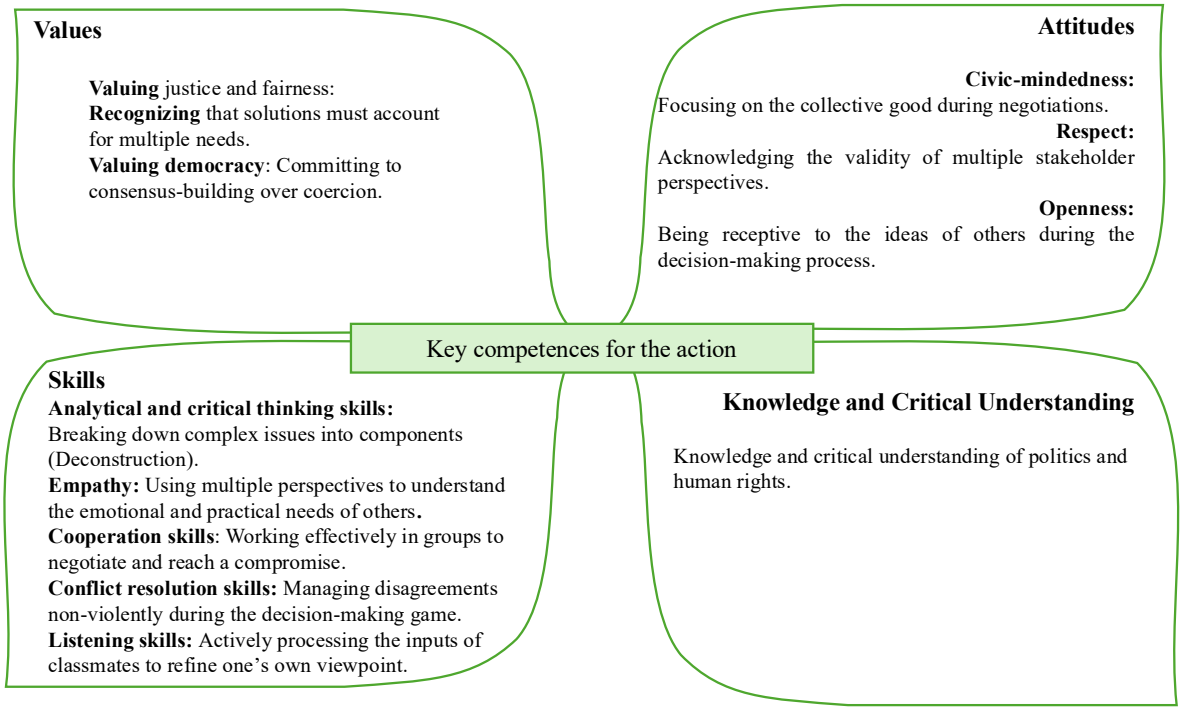
- ✓ Our teachers care and together with them, as students, we shape the best ways to support our learning.
- ✓ Our (students') opinions and proposals count and make a difference in teaching and learning.
- ✓ School provides systematic opportunities to co-shape the best ways for our learning.

Related reference links:

Council of Europe (2021). *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC): Teacher Reflection Tool, pp. 49-53*. Retrieved from https://rm.coe.int/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture-teacher-refl/1680a526ac

RELATED FRAMEWORKS:

RFCDC, DEMOCRACY AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE, CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, LIVING DEMOCRACY



Collaboration among schools, parents and the wider community

The focus on this area is to support the participation of parents and the community in school actions to facilitate democratic citizenship education and a democratic school culture. Several societal challenges influence the school's role and operation such as social inequalities, racism and hate speech as well as exclusion practices. School is not passive in view of these challenges confronted by our society. Taking an active stance and engaging in democratic action is something students learn when the school openly acknowledges existing inequalities and undertakes purposeful action to address them in collaboration with other agents such as parents' associations, other schools, universities, local authorities, youth organisations, NGOs. The purpose of these collaborations is, on the one hand to strengthen education for democracy and human rights, and, on the other hand, to enhance students' active participation in organized activities for the benefit of the community.

Taking a stance and initiating action for valuing human dignity and democracy

Regarding the school's active participation in confronting societal problems such as racism, that also affect school operation, we can think of the next example. In a school neighbourhood where stereotypes, hate speech and practices of exclusion are observed against refugee or migrant or Roma students, students are encouraged to think of ideas and organize actions against discrimination and prepare arguments that are for the benefit of all students to learn and to live in a society that ensures the acceptance of all despite differences in identities and backgrounds. **To support such a process, the school invites a network for human rights to enact relevant workshops with the students, teachers and parents.**

Students are encouraged to discuss and share through a brainstorming process their experiences of living and learning together in a democratic school.
They prepare posters and a short film regarding the benefits of the co-existence among students with different identities and how this favours their learning and progress.
Parents are encouraged to volunteer to help organise, in collaboration with the school and the local authorities, an event for the presentation of students' work.

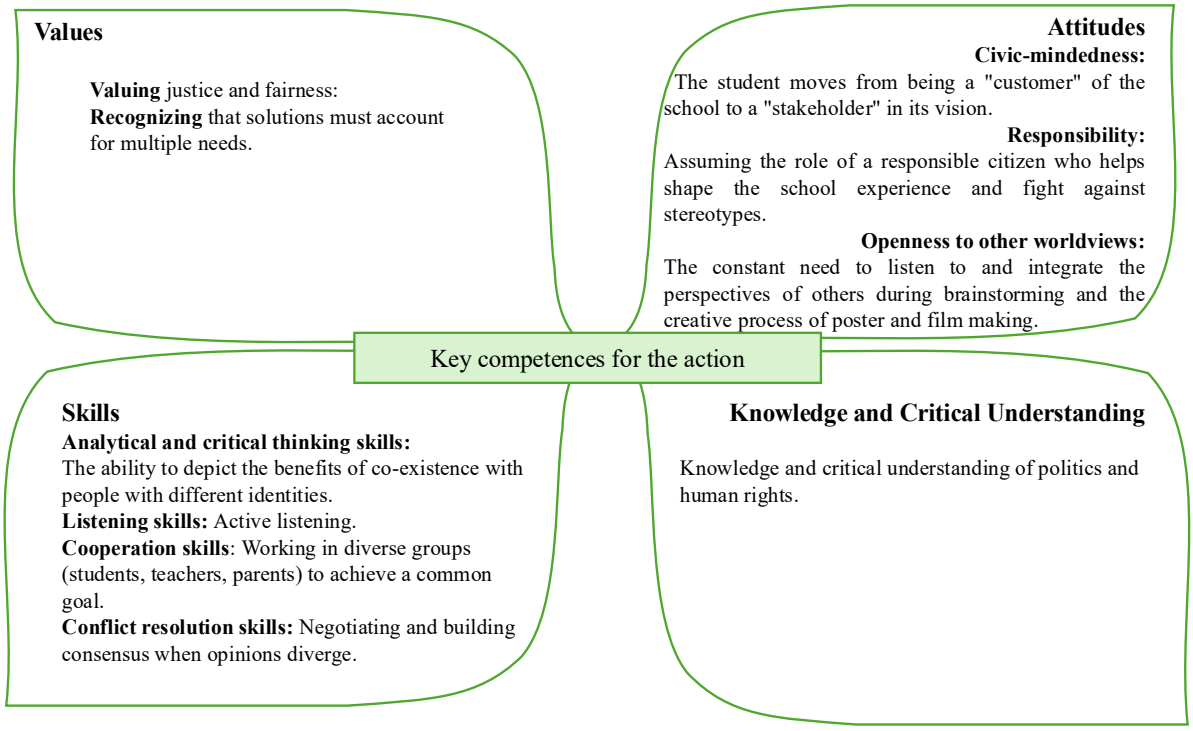
Through processes such as the ones described above, valuing human dignity and human rights is experienced through students' arguments that human rights should always be protected and respected irrespectively to whom they address. In addition, valuing democracy, justice fairness, equality are supported by a whole school approach advocating actively the view that all citizens should be treated equally and impartially.

Key messages:

1. All children's rights are valid and must be upheld, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, or social background- because a just and inclusive education leaves no one behind.
2. Knowledge and the ways in which it is shared are powerful tools in the fight against stereotypes and exclusion.

RELATED FRAMEWORKS:

RFCDC, CRITICAL DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION



Related reference links:

Council of Europe. (2018). Reference framework of competences for democratic culture: Vol. 3. Guidance for implementation. RFCDC Volumes - Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture https://rm.coe.int/prems-008518-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-3-8575-co/16807bc66e

Inclusiveness of my Human-Rights-Based School, p.6-7 HUMAN RIGHTS BASED SCHOOL - Living Democracy

More examples can be found in a review of existing educational materials on Democratic Citizenship Education collected and edited by TAP-DCE. See Appendix B.

8. Methodological Steps

A methodology is proposed here as a basic compass to design and implement practices that support DCE and a democratic school culture. **This methodology is based on an inquiry and reflective process** that assists in the understanding of the school context as well as of the educational practices that take place and probably need to change or improve. The examples provided in the previous section entail inquiry and reflective tools as the starting point for realizing what needs improvement and how to achieve it.

The results of this inquiry and reflection process held by different members of the school community can lead to a purposeful and collaborative design of the goals, content and processes that will promote DCE and support a democratic school culture.

This methodology is described in **three simple steps** that follow a continuous cycle rather describe a one-off process.

Step 1: Conducting an inquiry and reflection process to detect the current situation and plan ahead

This is an important first step because it assists in:



- ✓ **Documenting the current situation in your school** in terms of the existence of a democratic school culture as this is described in previous sections. Inquiry into teachers', students' and parents' perspectives is needed to detect possible differentiated experiences, feelings and proposals as a source for further dialogue and negotiation.
- ✓ **Identifying the external and internal barriers** to the school's current situation regarding democratic school culture. For example, external barriers can be pressure to teach to the test, limited pedagogical autonomy and over-crowded classrooms. The internal barriers can be that the decision-making process is hierarchical and non-participatory, especially in relation to students' participation or that problems are confronted based on sanctions rather than on dialogue. You can get more ideas about external and internal barriers by reading the next section.
- ✓ **Recognising possible issues** that need to be reconsidered and dealt with to achieve the enactment of a democratic culture in everyday school life.

Step 2: Design and implement a plan of action

This step promotes school's planning to firstly detect which practices or/and factors need to change to make a difference towards a democratic school culture.



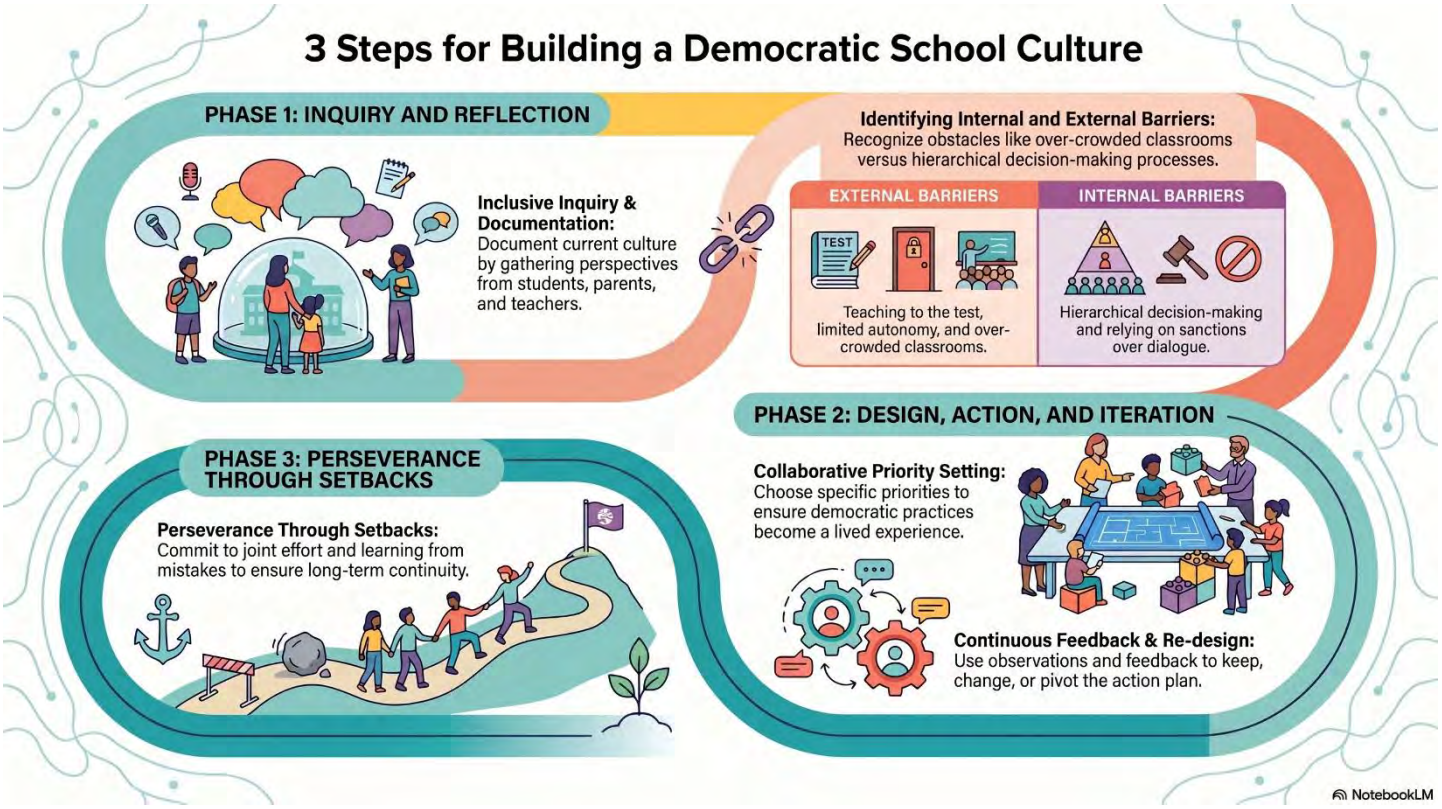
- ✓ It is important **for a school to choose priorities** and not try and solve every issue they detected. Specific aims are important to ensure that practices are designed to accomplish these specific goals
- ✓ Further to the use of teachers' resources and ideas, **students' (and parents') participation in the design of actions can ensure that all voices are heard and shape the final decisions.**
- ✓ In addition, **the use of theories and relevant research findings as well as advice** from other schools or/and external collaborators can enrich the design of an action plan.
- ✓ The design process can focus **on a specific area** (e.g. teaching and learning) or on a whole-school approach.

In any case, the design of democratic practices is **not just an add-on to existing curricula** but aims to form a lived experience for all school members. Taking into account that social inequalities can be transformed to educational inequalities, the support of families and children's living conditions as well as the collaboration with the community should be seriously considered in the design of an action plan.

Step 3. Follow up implementation, reflect and redesign (if needed) as a continuous process.

We all learn through mistakes and successes. **Following up the implementation of the action plan requires observations of its effects and feedback from teachers and students,** as well as parents. The results of this follow-up can help teachers decide what to keep and what to change as well as realise further, in some cases, that the aims of the action plan should change. Although sometimes improvement is not easy, it is important for the school to persevere for the sake of students and for the sake of a democratic and justful society. Setbacks are also expected but it is the joint effort and commitment of all school members to democracy that keeps the continuity of the process going in order to learn how to live together in a safe and inclusive educational environment.

A presentation of this 3-step methodology can be visualised in the following infographic:



FA Presentation Three Steps of Inquiry and Reflection to Build a Democratic School Culture, image created using AI NotebookLM

9. Challenges and Prerequisites for Supporting Democratic Citizenship Education and Education for Democratic Cultures

Schools are sites influenced by both external factors as well as internal processes. It is important to acknowledge **the structural, institutional, and socio-political barriers** that limit the educators' ability to establish a democratic school culture and at the same time to be aware of the possibilities to affect some of the decisions and practices taken at our schools.

The structural, institutional and socio-political barriers to democratic citizenship education are indicatively presented below:

- **Centralised educational system and emphasis on accountability** – **lack of spaces for teachers' adaptations** of curriculum (Veugelers et al., 2017).
- Structural barriers **for students from low socio-economic or refugee background** (Vieno et al., 2005).
- School organization around **competition, hierarchy and measurable outcomes** (Biesta, 2015).

Based on the above constraints, one can easily see that schools are caught between two conflicting expectations: **preparing young people for democratic citizenship while simultaneously operating under pressure to prioritize test results, learning outcomes and top-down compliance.** This contradiction is about a system that structurally often works against the democratic culture it claims to promote. When schools are organized around competition, hierarchy and measurable outcomes, democratic values get pushed to the margins.



Changing this means rethinking how schools are run and what we actually value in education - it is not about adding democratic activities onto an otherwise unchanged system (Biesta, 2015).

However, until new policies are established that foster schools to flourish as democratic spaces, it is important to reflect upon other factors that limit the possibilities of democratic school cultures.

Some of these factors can be influenced by school policies and practices.

- **Lack of teachers' preparation** to implement democratic and dialogic practices (Qin et al., 2025· Kim, 2024).
- **Distance among the rhetoric for democratic values and its daily practice** that create inconsistencies. For example, school emphasis is on discipline and compliance rather than participation (Sanal-Erginel & Kuter, 2023).
- **Lack of systematic opportunities for voicing students**. Some teachers are unwilling to share power with their students (Morrison, 2024).
- **School leadership** implements collective processes in an operational / superficial way while some of the school members are restricted from their participation (Sanal-Erginel & Kuter, 2023).
- **Democratic citizenship education is fragmented** into specific subject-matter content and teaching is often **monomodal and monological**, thus not addressing different students and enhancing their participation.
- The dominant image that teachers may hold of students is that of immaturity and incompetence. **Emphasis is given on the deficits rather on the strengths of students** (Avgitidou, Pnevmatikos, & Likomitrou, 2013), affecting possibilities for including them as active members of the school community.

Possible Supportive Mechanisms

1. **Critical consciousness** of the structural and social inequalities and how they affect students' school experiences.
2. **Commitment to democratic values and practices** for the benefit of students and an inclusive and justful society.
3. Detecting margins for making a difference and proceeding **to a context-based awareness based on inquiry and reflective processes** that assist in the understanding of what goes on in a school and why as well as what needs to be changed and how.
4. **Support of teachers' continuous professional learning.**

5. Building **trustful relationships** in the school community.
6. Supporting students' **participation** (e.g. students' councils and participation in decision making).
7. **Adopting a whole-school approach for democratic citizenship education** to be grounded in daily school experiences and experiential learning.

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Appendix A. Strengthening a democratic school culture: axes, practices and examples

This table has been prepared as an easy reference to a presentation of democratic school practices based on resources of the Council of Europe:
a. The whole school approach and other information presented in the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) and
b. The Living Democracy volumes.
The table aims to give an indicative overview of the different axes, possible practices and examples for enacting democratic citizenship education in practice with a focus on the development of democratic school cultures.

Axes	Sub-axes	Practices for strengthening a democratic school culture	Examples
AXIS I Teaching and learning methodologies	**Teaching and learning**	**Pedagogical approaches** 1. Active and participatory learning methods – participatory decision-making procesRFCDC, vol. 3ses (*regarding course content and learning methods*) (, chapter 2) 2. Creating opportunities for active student engagement in learning processes (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 3. Strengthening collaborative learning across all courses (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	Active participation of students in their learning: **1.** Group discussions (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 2) **1. & 2.** Dialogue processes within the course (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 2) **1. & 2.** Distribution of roles and responsibilities among students (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 2)

		4. Providing opportunities for students to discover alternative ways of perceiving the issues under discussion (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	
		Teaching and learning methods 1. Organising activities related to citizenship and human rights education outside the classroom (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 2. De-glamorisation of violent extremism and terrorism (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) 3. Cultivating a more complex and critical way of thinking (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) 4. Efforts to recognise and deconstruct propaganda (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) 5. Integrating digital literacy into teaching (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6)	**1.** Carrying out extracurricular group activities and projects for education on citizenship and human rights (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) **2.** Explaining how such organisations manipulate their members, incite them to commit violent acts, distort the truth and spread false information – Analysing their impact (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) **3.** Identifying multiple perspectives on an issue, examining the values that underpin each of them (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) **3.** Formulating an interpretative framework that explains why different views are held on the same issue (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) **3.** Encouraging openness, exploring diverse perspectives and critically evaluating them (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) **& 5.** Approaching online material in terms of its literal content and the communication purposes it serves Identifying fake news online by checking the source and identity of the author,

		6. Incorporating various forms of democratic expression by students into teaching (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6)	cross-checking the information with other independent sources (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) Voting procedures (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) Participation in peaceful demonstrations and marches (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) Signing petitions (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) Use of social media to promote political or social causes (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) Organising community action groups, voluntary work (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) Joining and becoming active in non-governmental organisations (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 6) **xamples from Living Democracy:** • Volume 1, Chapter 3, Work file 2: How can I support my students in judging political issues?, p.80 Educating for democracy - Living Democracy • Volume 3, Chapter 1: Individual and community, p. 17-108. Living in democracy - Living Democracy • Volume 6, Chapter 2, Exercise 2.1. – The raft game, p. 20. Teaching Democracy - Living Democracy • Volume 6, Chapter 2, Exercise 2.2. – Value systems, p. 21. Teaching Democracy - Living Democracy • Volume 6, Chapter 6, 6.2. Attitudes to power, p. 57 Teaching Democracy - Living Democracy
	Learning environment	1. Creating a safe and inclusive environment (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 2) 2. Ensuring that the classroom is a safe environment where students can freely express their opinions, even if they are controversial, their experiences, thoughts and feelings (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	1. **& 2.** Involving students in the formulation of school or classroom rules **Examples from Living Democracy:** • Volume 6, Chapter 1, 1.1. Matching cards, p. 12 Teaching Democracy - Living Democracy

	The role of the teacher in teaching and learning	1. The teacher as a 'democratic model' and mediator of learning (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 2) 2. Encouraging teachers to collaborate on integrating the Reference Framework into the APS and to participate in action research to improve their practices (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	1. Promoting dialogue with the aim of peaceful conflict resolution (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 2)
Curriculum	**Curriculum Design**	1. Integration of Competencies for Democratic Culture (IDC) and/or their clusters into all subjects (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 1) 2. Integration of democratic culture skills into the curriculum: - in the form of a new course - in various courses of the programme - as a cross-curricular theme integrated into all or some school courses (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	1. Cross-curricular projects on human rights or social issues (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 1) **Examples from Living Democracy:** • Volume 1, Chapter 1, Tool 5. Defining competence-based teaching objectives, p.132. Educating for democracy - Living Democracy
	Curriculum content	1. Linking learning to real social issues that concern students (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 1)	**1.** Approaching and examining social issues or cases of bullying, discrimination, violence and violation of rights (Chapter 1)
	Involving students in shaping the content of the curriculum	1. The design of the curriculum and its content is the result of student involvement and relevant participatory processes inside and outside the classroom (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 1)	**1.**Development of a collective and participatory climate **1.** Students' opinions are taken into account **1.** Conducting discussions and consultations between teachers and students on the selection of topics that concern the student community (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 1)
Assessment	**Assessment processes**	**Student assessment** 1. Formative and continuous assessment (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 3)	. Formative assessment and criteria-based assessment (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 3) Providing feedback during learning (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 3) **2.** Assessment based on individual portfolios (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 3)

		2. Alternative forms of assessment (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 3)	**Examples from Living Democracy:** • Volume 1, Chapter 5, Unit 5: Assessment of students, teachers and schools, Work file 3: Perspectives and forms of assessment, p. 100 Educating for democracy - Living Democracy Volume 1, Chapter 5, Unit 5: Assessment of students, teachers and schools, Work file 9: Working with journals, logbooks, portfolios, p. 109 Educating for democracy - Living Democracy
	Teacher reflection	**Teacher self-evaluation/reflection** 1. Encouraging teachers to assess how their teaching promotes or limits equality and access to learning (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 2. Use descriptors as a means of systematic self-evaluation and reflection by teachers on: (a) which skills are cultivated in the context of a course , a curriculum or a specific activity, (b) the level of development of their own skills, and (c) the actions they can take to further strengthen these skills (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 4)	**1.** Reflective learning journals (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 4)
AXIS 2 School governance and culture	**Participatory decision-making**	1. Providing opportunities for students to participate in decision-making at group and institutional level and to participate in actions aimed at achieving change in relevant issues (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 2. Establish participatory and inclusive decision-making processes that give teachers, students and parents a meaningful role in determining topics for discussion	• Representation on school councils • Focus groups • Consultation procedures • Student councils • Classroom discussions • Suggestion boxes • Participation in working parties (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)

		and shaping school policies (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 3. Creating opportunities for students to express their views on issues that concern them and to participate in decision-making within the school and the community (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	**Examples from Living Democracy:** • Leadership, Participation: Class council, p. 21 PARTICIPATION - Living Democracy
	School leadership	• Developing a leadership style based on respect for human rights, democratic principles, equal treatment, participatory decision-making and accountability (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) • Encouraging the participation of all stakeholders in evaluating the functioning of the school and the extent to which it promotes democracy and respect for human rights (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) • Establishing the cultivation of a democratic school culture as a key priority. (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 4) • Encouraging the creation of study groups to strengthen teachers' skills in democratic culture (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 4) • Regular discussion of issues relating to democratic culture at school teaching meetings and communication of relevant needs to the competent authorities (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 4) • Improving opportunities for participation in in-school/out-of-school training (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 4)	**Examples from Living Democracy:** • Leadership, Participation: Consider the stakeholders 9-10. PARTICIPATION - Living Democracy • Leadership, Participation: Reflection on participation opportunities, p. 13-14. PARTICIPATION - Living Democracy • Leadership, Participation: Reflection on the school atmosphere, transparency and initiative, p.17 PARTICIPATION - Living Democracy • Leadership, Participation: Reflection on decision-making, communication and power, p. 18-19 PARTICIPATION - Living Democracy • Leadership, Participation: Methods - Conflict resolution, world café, deliberation forum, p. 25 PARTICIPATION - Living Democracy • Leadership, Topic 1: A democratic style of school leadership, Action handout 1.1: Getting stakeholders involved in school governance, p. 7-8 LEADERSHIP - Living Democracy • Leadership, Topic 3: Democratic school leadership – a whole school approach to EDC/HRE, Action handout 3:1. Decision-making in democratic school leadership p.21-23 LEADERSHIP - Living Democracy

	Policies, regulations and procedures	1. Review school policy to reflect the values and principles of democratic citizenship and human rights through general policies (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 2. Co-develop school operating rules that guarantee equal treatment and equal access for all, regardless of their ethnicity, cultural identity or beliefs (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) Establish procedures for peaceful and participatory conflict resolution (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 3. Establishment of peaceful and participatory conflict resolution procedures (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	**1.** Integration of issues such as equality and sexual orientation (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) **1.** Targeted interventions with anti-violence programmes (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) **Examples from Living Democracy:** • Human rights based school, Topic 1: Inclusiveness of my Human-Rights-Based School, p.6-7 HUMAN RIGHTS BASED SCHOOL - Living Democracy • Leadership, Topic 2: Competences for democratic culture, Action handout 2.1: The school mission statement – a whole school project, p. 13- 14 LEADERSHIP - Living Democracy
AXIS 3 Collaboration with the Community	**Participation of parents and the community**	1. Encouraging parents or community members who have experience or knowledge of democracy and human rights issues to volunteer in teaching and learning processes (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 2. Supporting student projects that aim to solve problems affecting the community- Implementing organised social contribution activities as part of formal education, in which students actively participate in organised activities for the benefit of the community (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapters 5 and 6)	**Examples from Living Democracy:** • Leadership, Topic 2: Competences for democratic culture, Action handout 2.1: The school mission statement – a whole school project, p. 13- 14 LEADERSHIP - Living Democracy
	Cooperation between schools	1. Creating or participating in school networks to exchange resources/experiences (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	

		2. Connecting schools characterised by cultural/religious homogeneity with other schools so that students can interact with students from different ethnic/religious backgrounds (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 3. Facilitate online dialogue between students and schools in other countries to discuss social, cultural and global issues from different perspectives (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	
	Collaboration with community	1. Collaborate with NGOs, youth organisations, universities, etc. to strengthen education for democracy and human rights inside and outside school (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5) 2. Collaborate with local authorities so that students participate in bodies representing young people and so that authorities seek students' opinions on issues that concern them, promoting their active participation (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5). 3. Collaborate with religious communities in the local community to organise visits by students to religious sites and visits by community members to the school (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)	**2.** Organising youth councils (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5)

		4. Collaborate with human rights organisations on joint actions that are of interest to students (RFCDC, vol. 3, chapter 5).	

Reference Framework of Competencies for Democratic Culture

A whole-school approach

(A) TEACHING AND LEARNING

Curriculum

- Integration of democratic culture skills into the curriculum:
  - in the form of a new subject or course
  - into different curriculum subjects
  - as a cross-curricular theme incorporated into all or some school subjects.

Teaching and learning methodologies and learning environment

- Safe environment for students to freely express opinions, experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- Opportunities for students to actively engage in their own learning.
- Co-operative learning through group and team work.
- Teacher collaboration to include CDC across the curriculum and reflect on equity and equal access to learning.
- Opportunities for students to discover alternative perspectives, participate in decision-making and take action to bring about change.

Extracurricular activities

- Organising groups, activities and projects outside of class related to citizenship education and human rights (e.g. discussion group, debating society or young citizens' action group).

(B) SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE

Leadership and school management

- Develop a leadership style nurtured by respect for human rights, democratic principles, equal treatment, participatory decision-making and responsible accountability.
- Encourage the participation of all stakeholders in reviewing the whole-school environment.

Decision-making

- Establish participatory and inclusive decision-making processes that give teachers, students and parents a meaningful role in determining issues and shaping school policies (e.g. school councils, focus groups, consultations).

Policies, rules and procedures

- Draw up and revise school policy to reflect the values and principles of democratic citizenship and human rights (e.g. equality, sexual orientation; anti-violence programmes).
- Introduce rules that guarantee equal treatment and equal access for all, regardless of ethnicity, cultural identity, lifestyle or beliefs.
- Establish procedures for peaceful and participatory resolution of conflicts or disputes.

Student participation

- Create opportunities for students to express their views and participate in decision-making within the school and the community (e.g. student councils, classroom discussions, suggestion boxes).
- Ensure participative approaches are authentic—an exercise of power and responsibility—while clarifying conditions and limitations to avoid pseudo-participation or "just pretending".

(C) COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

Parents and community participation

- Encourage parents or community members with experience or knowledge of democracy and human rights issues to contribute to teaching and learning.
- Facilitate student projects that aim to solve problems affecting the community.

School to school partnership

- Set up or join a network of schools for sharing resources and experiences.
- Connect schools of different cultural/religious backgrounds so students can interact.
- Facilitate online dialogue between students and schools in other countries to discuss social, cultural and global issues from different perspectives.

Partnerships with community institutions

- Partner with NGOs, youth organisations, universities, etc. to strengthen education for democracy and human rights inside and outside school.
- Work with local authorities to enable student participation in youth bodies and to seek students' opinions on issues that concern them.
- Partner with religious communities: visits by students to religious sites and visits by community members to the school.
- Partner with human rights organisations on joint actions that are of interest to students.

Democratic culture is learned, lived and shared.

Together, we build inclusive, just and participatory schools and communities.



Strengthening a democratic school culture: axes, practices, created with ChatGPD prompted by the content of the table

Appendix B. A Review of Educational Materials on DCE

This table has been prepared to facilitate the awareness of existing educational materials on Democratic Citizenship Education (DCE) and support foundation LTP1 content in two ways. First, by identifying indicative good examples from these educational materials that can be adapted in educational practice to promote DCE and, secondly, by highlighting inquiry and reflection tools that can foster evidence-based decision making to enhance a democratic school culture. Thirty-two (32) educational materials are reviewed, and relevant information is presented and organized by the title, link to materials, date, publisher, appropriate age groups, selection of good examples and inquiry and reflection tools.

Responsible for the search, organization, description and editing of this information on existing educational materials were: Sarri, Ch., Avgitidou, S. & Kyritsi, A. (March, 2026). 

Publisher / Organisation	Ages / Educational levels	Selection of good examples for practice	Suggested inquiry and reflection tools
Council of Europe Publishing https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/	Primary and secondary education	1. Tool 3: Plenary Sessions (Discussion and critical thinking): The teacher acts as a 'facilitator', guiding students to share their ideas and reflect on their views. The process involves deconstructing dogmatic views and encouraging students to question the basis of their arguments (p. 126)	Reflection on the Learning Process (Tool 2): A booklet with self-assessment questions for planning their learning (p. 137)

		2. Tool 10: Holding exhibitions: • Before the presentation, the pupils carry out a form of internal research to establish the framework for their presentation: • They research and decide what the 'main message' they want to convey is and what the appropriate title should be. • They identify their audience (pupils, parents, experts or local organisations) to tailor the content. • They create lists of necessary materials, a budget (if applicable) and a detailed work schedule. • They look for ways to make the exhibition memorable, such as using models that visitors can touch, providing space for experiments, background music or creating a quiz/competition for visitors • Setting assessment criteria: Students are asked to consider and define the most important criteria on which	

		their exhibition should be judged. • Reflection through feedback: They decide who will take part in the assessment (teachers, classmates or the visitors themselves) • Reflection through experience: Through activities such as guided tours or discussions with visitors, pupils reflect in practice on how they communicated their knowledge and what impact this had on their work (p. 147)	
Council of Europe Publishing https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-2/	Primary education years	1. Lesson 4, Individuals and groups: Strengths of individuals as potential for society Students discuss and take part in a brainstorming session to identify situations where different democratic skills are needed for a group to succeed. • Students sit in their groups and list all the skills they identified and drew on their personal 'badges' during previous lessons. • They discuss and note down examples of specific	1. Reflection tools used by the pupils: • Lesson 4 'How did we do – what's the plan?': • The aim is for pupils to shift their perspective in order to understand what it means to take responsibility from different standpoints and roles • Reflection questions: 'Am I ready to take responsibility for something that "isn't my fault"?', 'How do I see

		situations where these strengths help their group • They consider situations in the wider community outside school where these skills help them as individuals or as members of a group • Role of the teacher: facilitator of the students' reflective dialogue (p. 22)	myself through this process?', 'What disappointed me and what pleased me?' • Worksheet 'Taking and Sharing Responsibility': Pupils use a form to compare the responsibilities of different roles or members (teacher, pupil, headteacher, head of state, citizens) at class, school and state level (p. 80)
Council of Europe Publishing https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-3/	Ages 12 - 15	1. Unit 1, Lesson 2 'How differently a person can be described... How to get a better picture of a person' • Pupils present their interpretation of the personality of a fictional character (Max) through posters and role-play. Their interpretation is based on various diary entries provided to the children. Subsequently, they compare the various perspectives (e.g. classmates, teachers, neighbours) in order to realise that a person's identity is multidimensional. The conclusion is that no	1. Tools for student reflection: • The 'Four Corners': Students physically position themselves in the room (in corners representing 'Agree', 'Disagree', etc.) according to their views on controversial issues. After positioning themselves, they reflect on and explain their position or change position (p. 70) 2. Research and Analysis Tools:

		single description constitutes the complete picture of a personality (or, by extension, of an issue), and so it is necessary to examine it through different perspectives and viewpoints in order to truly get to know a person (p.24)	• The Six-Step Approach is a structured tool for analysing and resolving conflicts (p. 90)
Council of Europe Publishing https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-4/	15 to 18+ years	1. Lesson 3.2, 'What goals do we want to promote? The students establish political parties' • The groups organise themselves within the classroom according to their priorities, so that the convergences/agreements or divergences/contradictions in their positions become apparent • Each group-party defines its name, profile (e.g. environmentalist, liberal) and strategy within the framework of a formal policy statement to the others • To ensure the exercise runs smoothly, pupils are assigned roles (Chair, Press Officer and Editors, Timekeeper) • Through a brief 'public event', party representatives	1. Tools – feedback activities • Flashlight Round: A quick method of oral feedback at the end of the unit, where each student completes the sentence: "The most interesting or important thing I learnt in this unit is..." (p. 100) 2. Feedback Questionnaires • Student handout 5.6: students note down what they liked, what they found difficult and what suggestions they have for the teacher (p. 273)

		attempt to persuade the undecided of their own vision • The students prepare for the 'Round Table' by preparing and prioritising their party's objectives and seeking points of convergence with other groups (p. 93). 2. Lesson 9.4, 'Do we control the media – or do they control us? The media as an instrument of communication and power' The activity focuses on reflection regarding the influence exerted by the media on democracy and society more broadly • Pupils present the newspapers they created in previous lessons, explaining the criteria they used to select the main story, the topics they included or excluded, and how they selected their material • Pupils realise that media messages and information are constructed.	

		• Creators select a limited set of information and are forced to omit facts or details • By selecting or omitting information, news editors realise that they influence public opinion and political decision-making depending on what they choose to include or omit from the news Suggested questions for students to consider: • Who created this message and why? • What techniques are used to grab my attention? • What lifestyles, values and opinions are represented by the message? • How might different people interpret this message differently from me? (p. 225)	
Council of Europe Publishing https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-5/	Primary and secondary education Ages 6 - 15	1. Case studies on breaches of school rules: Collection and analysis of data from pupils on instances where school rules were breached (p. 45)	Reflection practices for students, which are applied to all activities/practices: • Reflection Form (Reflective Matrix): This is the central

		2. Media research: Pupils analyse selected articles (real-life examples from newspapers or the internet) that discuss instances of violations or the defence of these rights (p.40)	methodological tool of the volume, applied across all units. It links theory with practice through three dimensions: • Experiencing: reflection on how democratic principles were incorporated into and relate to the activities • Getting to know: acquiring knowledge about the articles of the Convention. • Implementing: planning actions in which rights are applied in everyday life
Council of Europe Publishing https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-6/	Primary education (6–12 years). Secondary education (12–18+ years)	1. Exercise 3.4 'The balloon ride' The main aim of the exercise is for pupils to realise the universal values of human rights. Through this activity, they understand that certain rights are implicitly contained within others • The pupils are divided into groups of 5–6. Each group designs a hot-air balloon flying over the ocean or a landscape. They attach ten ballast sacks to the balloon,	1. Student reflection form • Questionnaire on attitudes to change: A tool for exploring political stances and issues that helps students become aware of their personal political and social stances (p. 66)

		each representing a human right. • The balloon begins to sink and the passengers must throw some of the sacks overboard to avoid an accident. • Prioritisation and decision-making: The pupils must decide which rights to keep and which to 'throw' into the sea. The criteria they use are: • Whether a right is already implicitly included in another. • Whether a right is of particular importance to democracy or their personal needs. • As the balloon continues to lose altitude, the pupils are forced to throw more bags at regular intervals, until they reach the ground safely (usually after throwing 4 or 5 bags). Reflection and discussion: • After the game has ended, a whole-class discussion follows: • The teams explain their priorities.	

		• They discuss how difficult it was to decide which rights to grant and which to withhold (p. 31) 2. 'Punishment versus positive conflict resolution' (Exercise 8.6.) The aim of the activity is for pupils to understand and accept the concept **of** group rules, to be able to accept differences, to participate in decision-making processes and to manage conflicts peacefully • Pupils list various forms of punishment based on their own experiences and observations. • The teacher distributes the 'list of punishments' • In small groups, pupils discuss which punishments make sense and which do not. • The groups are asked to decide what punishment (if any) should be imposed in specific situations, e.g. • A pupil is late for school. • A pupil has not done their homework.	

		• A pupil disrupts the lesson in class. • A pupil insults a classmate because of their ethnic background or religious beliefs. • A male pupil is harassing a female pupil. • A pupil uses violence in the classroom or during break time. Reflection: The groups present their findings to the rest of the class. They then reflect on whether there are alternatives to punishment (p. 86)	
UNICEF https://d21ipp77gdifnw.cloudfront.net/app/uploads/2022/11/CRS_Child_Participation_Toolkit-rev-1.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com	Children and young people up to 18 years of age	It proposes a) child-led learning, where pupils choose research topics and the method of learning, and b) as a means of involving children in school matters, the collaborative shaping of the school curriculum through voting (pp. 24–25)	1.Use of research questionnaires at the beginning and end of the year to assess changes (p. 21) • The 'Hitting the pause button' tool: this enables children to reflect on their progress and express any frustrations they may have experienced (p. 26)
CITIZED Consortium (Erasmus+) https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JxgCF-wmeIEyj1gXL56mZ_HWaNcA-qzN/view	Primary and secondary education	1. 'Tools for supporting schools in developing their own action plan' • Pupils and parents walk together in the local area and	The tools for reflection remain superficial (examples: p. 52)

		help to keep the natural environment clean. • As part of the holistic approach of the material, cross-curricular integration is also recommended a) in Science lessons, pupils analyse types of waste and pollution, b) in Citizenship Education, they discuss the responsibility of the authorities and citizens' right to a clean environment, and c) in Language, they write letters to the Mayor or articles for the school newspaper (p. 28)	
Democrat project – Horizon Europe https://democrat-horizon.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Democrat_D2.1_Conceptual-Framework_06_November_2024.pdf		The school organizes a Living Lab, a space where pupils, teachers, parents and local stakeholders come together as equal partners to co-create solutions (p. 7 ff.)	It is merely noted that, following the workshops, these function as cycles of reflective feedback between theory and practice (p. 58)
European Union https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/eci-school/eci-educational-toolkit_en	Secondary education – over 14 years old	1. Exit Quiz: a multiple-choice quiz on knowledge of the European Union and how it works	•
European Union https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/eci-school/eci-educational-toolkit_en	Secondary education over 14 years old	1. Ranking values (Class work: EU values) • Pupils work in small groups to rank six fundamental	1. Reflection tool: • Peer-to-Peer reflection: At the end of the lesson and the activity, students,

https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/eci-school/eci-educational-toolkit_en		democratic values (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, human rights) according to the importance they themselves attach to them (p. 2) 2. 'Class work: Finding common ground' (Class work: Finding common ground): analysis of specific 'personae' (student, politician or businessperson) with the aim of helping pupils understand what causes them concern and what gives them a sense of security. This understanding helps them tailor the message of the campaign-action to the audience they are addressing (p. 22)	working in pairs, ask each other questions both to confirm and to reflect on what they have learnt
Tilburg University & Wisamar (Erasmus+) https://democracy-education.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/European_values_made_tangible.pdf		1. INSERT (Interactive Noting System for Effective Reading and Thinking): This is a method of encoding texts with symbols or visual 'aids' whilst reading. Pupils are asked to identify key knowledge, express uncertainties and link the content to prior experiences, cultivating the	• Research and reflection are enhanced through teaching and learning practices; for example, the INSERT (Interactive Noting System for Effective Reading and Thinking) method emphasises critical reflection whilst reading texts (p. 27)

		ability to distinguish and evaluate values (p.27) 2. Snowball: Students begin individually by selecting key value statements and, through successive rounds of discussion in pairs and groups, arrive at a collectively agreed hierarchy. This process reinforces collaborative decision-making (p.29)	
European Heart Project (Erasmus+) https://training.european-heart.eu/act-game/	Teenagers and young people Aged 12–18	'Level 3 – ACT!' The activity includes 1. RESPECT (Recognising different needs): Students must show empathy towards the 3–4 most significant people involved in their story. • They analyse how each person feels, which of their needs are under threat and how they are trying to meet them. Finally, they summarise exactly what needs to be resolved or improved. 2. EXPLORE (Gathering information): gathering all the necessary information before planning a strategy.	At Level 3 (Action 4 – DECIDE), the Consensus Tool is used, which helps groups of students to reflect on the strategies they have chosen and the views they have expressed (p. 26)

		• They search for keywords online, figures, facts, reports of similar situations and legal regulations. They use sources such as experts, newspaper articles, QR codes and reliable websites. 3. PRIORISE (Strategy formulation): identifying 3–4 strategies/options to improve the situation (a strategy is considered good if it works positively for everyone in the future, without worsening the situation) 4. DECIDE (Identifying the optimal strategy): Use of the 'Consensing tool' • Procedure: Decisions are made through visual assessment using hand positions *(Both hands down:* Full agreement (consensus) – *One hand up, one down:* Agreement with reservations (objection – disagreement) – *Both hands up:* Unable to support due to violation of	

		core values (resistance/objection). 5. CONTACT (communication and taking action): • Steps in communication: students bring the original topic back into the discussion, describe the consequences, propose solutions and seek consensus. t this point, members need to create a climate of acceptance and understanding towards the person making the proposals, avoiding an aggressive stance (p. 15)	
Alexander Foundation https://www.erasmusplus.nl/sites/default/files/2024-11/Toolkit%20Inclusive%20Youth%20Participation%20-%20ENG.pdf	Adolescents and young people (aged 15 to 30)	2. 3.1.1 Image search The aim is to visualise the concepts of inclusion and participation, so that participants realise that these involve different social constructs, each with its own interpretations. • The groups search online or in magazines for images related to youth participation and inclusion.	3.4 Exercise for groups - evaluate inclusive participation is based on five dimensions that determine whether young people reflect on the possibilities for participation: • I can do it (can do): Young people must have acquired certain skills (e.g. obstacles here include lack of time or money) • I want to do it (like to): A necessary prerequisite is

		• Two contrasting images are selected: one of authentic participation and one of symbolic participation. • The group analyses the choices using questions (who is represented and who is missing?; who is in control of the situation?; is the participation meaningful or is it just for show?) (p. 17)	the motivation to participate and a sense of 'belonging' to the group • I am allowed/enabled to: The wider context needs to provide the necessary structures, tools and appropriate guidance • I was asked to: It needs to be made clear that participants not only have the right to participate but must also be involved in decision-making. • I responded to: Here, the importance of feedback is emphasised, so that all participants know what happened to their proposals or why some were rejected (p. 23)
Centre for Citizenship Education https://www.democracyandyouth.eu/activities/en/	Teenagers and young people Aged 13 to 30	1. Participatory Budget in School (Poland) Pupils propose projects to improve their school (e.g. new equipment, playground refurbishment, events). • The proposals are discussed and assessed in terms of their feasibility and cost.	1. 'Privilege Walk' activity: towards the end of the activity, the facilitator asks the children: • How did you feel once the 'race' was over? • How did you feel seeing the different positions people were standing in at the end?

		• All pupils vote on the most popular proposals. • The winning ideas are taken into account by the school management and implemented in collaboration with the pupils (p. 11)	• Would you like to make a change to give the people in your group equal opportunities? (p. 63) 1. Appendix 1 – Formulate your concern: a tool that helps students turn a general idea or complaint into a specific and well-founded proposal for participatory budgeting. The form asks for the following to be completed: • Title of the proposal: A short and appealing title for their idea. • Description of the problem or need: What exactly do the pupils want to change at school and why? • What are they proposing? What should be bought or done? (e.g. 'installing wooden benches in the playground'). • Who will benefit from this project (e.g. all pupils, the basketball team, etc.) (p. 42)

SÊ Association & The Smile of the Child https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/toolkit-in-education-for-citizenship.4058/	Secondary education 12–18 years	1. 'Family Diversity Workshop: the aim is to break down stereotypes surrounding gender roles and to recognise different forms of family • Discussion on gender role stereotypes and defining the concept of 'family' • Reflection on the different concepts of family. • Reflection on the discrimination faced by children from certain family forms • Linking the activity to Human Rights (p. 76)	1. The Debriefing Cycle (Post-activity discussion)(p. 7 of the 'Facilitation guide' section)
UNICEF https://www.unicef.org/documents/child-rights-education-toolkit	Pre-school, Primary and Secondary education 3–18 years	1. CHAPTER 10. Programme cycle management for child rights education initiatives: How can I take a more strategic approach? Analysis of the Stages (Programme Cycle Management) • Stage 1: 'Where are we now?' (Situation Analysis) Before the action begins, the children carry out research to identify potential gaps in the school community's observance of rights • Stage 2: 'Where do we want to go and how?' (Planning) This	1. Reflection questions at the end of the action Stage 4: Have we reached our goal, and how successful were we? (Evaluation) Questions: 1. Evaluation of the process – Did we do what we said we would do, on time? 2. Evaluation of the results – Did it achieve the desired objectives? What difference did it make? • Think about the future: Where should we go from here (recommendations)?

		is where the objectives are set, in collaboration with the school management and the student body • Stage 3: 'Getting there' (Implementation & Monitoring). Once the action is implemented, the community engages in a process of continuous monitoring to ensure the action is proceeding according to plan. This allows for the correction of errors or shortcomings • Stage 4: Have we reached our goal, and how successfully? (Evaluation): the community reflects on the results of the action (p. 135 onwards)	How can we ensure that this learning is shared with others? (p. 139)
ETV Eurotreviso & Young Agents of Change https://www.etveurotreviso.eu/beneficiary/2024/democracy-toolkit-en/	Teenagers and young people aged 13 to 25	1. 'The Wall of Silence': Aims to encourage students to reflect through the exchange of ideas and collaboration. Students express their thoughts on democracy during this process: • Working in groups, they write on the board 'silently' (within a set time) a sentence expressing an opinion, e.g. 'Democracy is...'. • Then each person (or each group) chooses a phrase or a	•

		word written by someone else to comment on (p. 9)	
Antigone, JHR, AMALIPE https://rm.coe.int/skhc-toolkit-handling-controversy-in-schools-english/1680a4a8e2	Primary and Secondary education Ages 6–18	Part 2: Handling Controversy in Schools through Human Rights and Citizenship Education, 2.3.1: Activities for upper primary school pupils, 'Back to Back' Two pupils stand back to back. The facilitator gives one of them a piece of paper depicting an irregular shape. Without looking at each other, one pupil tries to explain to the other how to draw the shape they received from the facilitator. The other pupil tries to draw the shape on a piece of paper according to the description.	Reflective questions and reflective dialogue based on these: Part 2: Handling Controversy in Schools through Human Rights and Citizenship Education, 2.3.1: Activities for upper primary school pupils, 'Back to Back' • Was the collaboration easy or difficult? • What do you think facilitated or complicated your communication? • Are there situations in your everyday school life where you feel that others do not understand you? • What are the prerequisites for effective communication with others? (Was it easy or hard to collaborate? What do you think facilitated or complicated your communication? Are there

			cases in your everyday school life when you feel you are not understood by others? What are the preconditions for communicating effectively with others?)
Equitas - Int. Centre for Human Rights Education https://equitas.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Equitas-PIF-Toolkit-2008_En.pdf	The material is divided into the following age groups: 6–8 years, 9–10 years and 11–12 years	1. Cooperative Musical Chairs: Unlike the classic game, the aim here is not to eliminate a player, but to find a way for everyone to fit onto the remaining chairs (e.g. by sitting in each other's laps), promoting cooperation and inclusion (p.65)	1.Reflection tools and activities: • Picture Talk: After each activity, the children draw what they have learnt or what they did not like. This tool gives a voice to children who may struggle with dialogue (p. 79) • The Thermometer: using an imaginary line on the floor where one end means 'I agree' and the other 'I disagree', the facilitator makes statements about the game and the children choose their position on the line, explaining their choice (p. 44) • All activities are based on the 'Feel, Think, Act' model, which runs through all the activities with the

			aim of facilitating reflective discussions
Amnesty International https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/POL3266092017ENGLISH.pdf	Primary and secondary education	1. Identifying 'Champions' Identifying individuals who will lead the development process It is recommended that a working group be set up with representation from all stakeholders (pupils, teachers, staff, parents). Schools choose to organise these champions through a 'Human Rights Club'. It is also recommended that a Steering Committee be established, in which students must make up at least 50% of the members to ensure their meaningful participation (p. 12 onwards)	• Taking your school's human rights temperature: A self-assessment questionnaire that allows pupils, teachers and parents to gauge the level of respect for rights in their school (p. 29) • SWOT Analysis: A tool for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (p. 37) • Brainstorming Sheet for Teachers: A worksheet encouraging teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and to think of ways to integrate human rights into their lessons (p. 32)
Lorraine A. Ustaris & Our Democracy Project https://teach.nwp.org/our-democracy-educator-toolkit/	Ages 12–18 (Middle school, High school and Further education)	1. 'Gallery Walk': this activity transforms the classroom into a space for exhibition and discussion. Young people	1. Reflection tool In the 'Gallery Walk' activity, the following questions are suggested to aid reflection

		observe the 'works' (visual material) which depict concepts of democratic values and discuss them. • The young people place their photographs in various spots around the classroom and along its perimeter. Each photograph is accompanied by an explanatory text (caption). • The young people move around the space as if they were in a real art gallery. They look at each other's work, read the explanations and reflect on the different perspectives and descriptions of the concepts • If a piece catches their interest, they can leave a sticky note (post-it) with a comment, a question or an observation • Once everyone has finished the tour, a discussion begins to identify the common themes that have emerged and to reflect on how their perspectives have changed (p.11)	(1. Which photo stands out most and why?, 2. Think critically: What does it reveal about democracy in the US?, 3. Define: Write a new definition., 4. Reflect: What did you learn about your own beliefs?) (p. 13)

Council of Europe https://rm.coe.int/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture-teacher-refl/1680a526ac	It is designed for teachers and educators across all educational levels Early Childhood & Primary (Ages 3-11) and Secondary (Ages 12-18)	1. "Making children's and students' voices heard" • Information and awareness: Students learn about their right to expression and participation. They understand that their voice matters and that the school is obligated to listen to it. • Creating Safe Spaces: The school creates "spaces" for expression (e.g., class councils, suggestion boxes, school magazines, or digital platforms), ensuring that all children (including the most hesitant) can speak without fear. • Consultation and Participation in Decision-Making: Students actively participate in discussions about school issues. They do not merely express their opinions but are involved in the process of finding solutions. • Feedback: The school administration informs students about how their suggestions were used. If an	1. "Making children's and students' voices heard" Guiding questions for the reflection process and beyond Teaching • Do learners have an active role in the classroom? • Do learners set their own goals? • Can learners make choices (content, methods and activities)? • Do I listen to emerging issues and react to them? • Does my teaching encourage and facilitate collaboration among the students? • Is the learning process structured in a way that promotes equal participation for each learner? • Classroom culture/school culture • How can I foster democratic culture in the classroom that gives students a voice? • How does decision making in the classroom

		idea cannot be implemented, they explain the reasons transparently (p. 49)	and in the school as a whole take place? • Own competences • Which competences do I need in order to fulfil my role in a democratic classroom? • What are my strengths? • What would I like to know more about in order to develop my CDC and my role as a democratic teacher? (p. 49)
ECOS – Cooperative of Education, Cooperation and Development, CRL (Erasmus+) https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-1795/Escala_EN_site.pdf	Secondary education Ages	1. 3.2. Guidelines for using the Scale • The process should not be done by one person. It is recommended to create a small team (working group) representing different members of the school community (teachers, students, staff, and even parents). • The use of the scale requires a climate of trust. It is a tool for improvement, not for	1. (4) The scale Tool Dimensions: • Learning and Teaching: Focuses on what happens in the classroom, on teaching methods, and on how students develop engagement skills through the curriculum. • Governance: Examines how decisions are made at the school, the functioning of student

		"judging" or "grading" the school or individuals. • The group must go through the different domains and sub-domains to understand what is being measured. • When choosing a level on the scale, the group should think of concrete examples or documents (evidence) that support their choice. • The most important part is the discussion. The goal is to reach a common understanding of where the school stands regarding participation. • After the assessment is finished, the school should not try to change everything at once. The guidelines suggest selecting 1-2 priority areas for improvement based on the results (p.12)	councils, and the role of teachers and parents in school administration. • Community: This domain concerns the school's relationships with the local community and other organizations, as well as how the school engages with social issues. • The Levels of Participation (p. 20)
UNESCO https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377068	Secondary and Higher Education Ages 12-30	1. UNIT 2 Audiences: National and Global Contexts is part of Unit 5 ("The Commons as Citizens") of UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy curriculum. The activity focuses on how citizens interact with media	Inquiry tools: • Various data collection methods are proposed: the use of questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation, and content analysis (p. 120).

		content at the national and global levels. Suggested practices: - Representation analysis: Examining how marginalized groups (e.g., indigenous peoples, LGBTQI+, ethnic minorities) are portrayed in the mainstream media and how the public responds. - Social media and participation: Discussion on whether engagement with social media leads to meaningful citizen participation or to "couch activism" (slacktivism), where actions are limited to simply "liking" or sharing - Advertising and data: An examination of the algorithms and digital footprints used to target advertisements without the public's awareness, as well as the economic dimensions of these models - Language and messages: Analysis of how language shapes	Tools for reflection and self-assessment: • The Critical Media Literacy (CML) framework provides questions that guide reflection: 1. Who are all the possible people who made choices that helped create this text? 2. How was this text constructed and delivered/ accessed? 3. How could this text be understood differently? 4. What values, points of view, and ideologies are represented or missing from this text or influenced by the provider? 5. Why was this text created and/or shared? 6. Whom does this text advantage and/or disadvantage? (p.176)

		content and how the dominance of certain languages influences local cultural values - Memes and culture: A study of memes as communication tools that require specific cultural knowledge to be interpreted, and a discussion of the implications of their widespread dissemination (p. 175)	
SALTO- Youth https://participationpool.eu/toolkit/	Aged 13- 30	How to create a participation experience for young people in a Youth Participation Activity? When designing a participatory initiative, it is essential to utilize every available communication channel to reach young people where they are: - In person: Through meetings and activities already taking place in the community - Digitally: Through social media and online communication tools used by young people - In physical spaces: Through announcements on bulletin boards	Inquiry tool: Designing participation experience • In which of those situations do you feel most comfortable? How would you like the decision-making power to be in your YPA project group? • Could you imagine challenging yourself and going for another degrees of participation compared to where you usually find yourself?

		in schools, youth centers, or cultural venues. The key to a successful participatory initiative is understanding the participants' motivations. Therefore, it is essential to explore what drives them to participate, what their actual needs are, and what obstacles or fears they face. This initial exploration through discussion lays the groundwork for the subsequent joint design of solutions that will ensure authentic participation (p. 84)	• Check the *Degrees of Participation* and see where you feel confident and what you would like to experience, test and improve when it comes to different participation opportunities in this YPA project. (p. 84) Reflection on learning about participation • Schedule specific reflection time slots during major activities and support project participants in discussing their participation experience. Support them in comparing their experience with what they decided initially (Identifying participation needs and interests tool in this module). • Propose that the group members and project participants create a learning diary. It can be in

			different forms – written in a notebook, scrapbook from activities with side notes and drawings, written in notes on a phone, recorded as audio or video on a phone, be physical or online in written, audio or video format, etc. A learning diary could serve as a good reference for discussions during reflection sessions or during meetings with a coach who is supporting you in implementing the YPA project (p.97)
DARE Network (Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe) https://dare-network.eu/engage-building-together-european-learning-material-on-citizenship-education/	Secondary Education- Aged 8-12	Activity: A Constitution for Our Group: Who has responsibility for my rights? The purpose of this activity is for students to understand the concept of a "contract," to connect individual rights with collective responsibility, and to practice making decisions by consensus. • Brainstorming: ask students to think "What do I need from others to feel safe, free, and	Activity: A Constitution for Our Group: Who has responsibility for my rights? Debriefing and Evaluation • Discuss the purpose of rules and responsibilities by asking questions such as the ones below, and recording their responses (What rules do you have in your life (e.g. at home,

		ready to learn within this group?" The answers are recorded (e.g., "not to be interrupted," "to have my opinion respected," "not to be mocked"). • From rights to responsibilities: For every right mentioned, the group must identify the corresponding responsibility. • Drafting the "constitution": Students are divided into small groups and try to formulate 5–6 basic rules (articles) that will constitute the class "constitution." These rules must be phrased positively • Negotiation and ratification: Each group presents its proposals. The whole class discusses them and reaches a common "agreement." The final "constitution" is signed by everyone (students and teacher) and posted in a prominent place in the classroom. • Reflection questions after the activity (p. 49)	at school, in other settings)?, Can you decide on these rules?, What responsibilities do you have? Who gave you these responsibilities? Do adults have rules and responsibilities too? Where did these come from?) • Discuss enforcement of rights and responsibilities, asking questions such as this: Now that you have agreed on rights and responsibilities, how will you make sure that everyone observes them? , Who has the responsibility to see that these rights are respected?. (p. 50)

DARE Network (Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe) https://dare-network.eu/tevip-transforming-european-values-into-practice/	Aged 13- 30	Values erosion at sea • Scenario: The participants are in a boat in the middle of the sea. The boat is overloaded and begins to sink. To save themselves, they must throw certain "objects" into the sea—which in reality represent fundamental values (e.g., Freedom, Equality, Justice, Solidarity, Security). • Procedure: First, participants individually choose which values they would "sacrifice." Next, they must reach a joint decision through consensus with the rest of the group (p. 51)	Reflection tool 1. General reflection on the game- Fierst part • How did you feel about playing the role? • What were the particularly controversial aspects? • Were you able to find a common ground for discussion? If so, why? If not, why? 2. Second part: Report by Value Watcher and discussion • Did you ever use values to support stakeholders' arguments on purpose? • If so, why? If not, why? • Did you ever observe conflicting interpretations of the same value? (for example, the use of the word "freedom" by different actors in different contexts and meanings?) • Did you notice any values that may be interdependent and / or conflicting?

			3. Third part: Personal reflection • Do you agree with what the Commission proposed? » In your opinion, is the European Union's border policy compatible with European values? • Do you think the agreement is consistent with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union? (p. 52)
Equitas - Int. Centre for Human Rights Education https://equitas.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SampleMan-SR-EN-2018.pdf	Secondary and Higher Education - Aged 12-25	Activity 5 - My lifeline (Participants create lifelines illustrating each participant's personal history and future) • Participants draw a horizontal line. On the left, they write their "date of birth"; three-quarters of the way across, the word "today"; and on the far right, a future goal (e.g., "in 5 years"). • They note (with words, drawings, or collages) significant events in their lives up to the present (memories,	Reflection tool: Activity 5 - My lifeline (Participants create lifelines illustrating each participant's personal history and future) 1. Feel: Did you find it easy or difficult to share your lifeline with other participants?, How does it feel to talk about your future? 2. Think: Do you have certain elements in common with other people? Which experiences seem the

		joys, challenges, mentors, moments of pride). • In the section after "today," that is, in the "future," they depict what they would like to have achieved or what they would like to have become • They present and share their "life line" with the rest of the group • The group discusses to identify common experiences and goals among its members (p. 111)	most significant and the most surprising to you? Which experiences most influenced who you are?, Can we have an influence on the direction our lives take? How? 3. Act: How can we reinforce each person's strengths? What can you do to reach your goals within 3 months, 1 year, 5 years, 10 years?, How can we support each other in reaching our goals? (p. 112)
SALTO – Youth https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/digiact-toolkit-for-digital-citizenship-literacy-education.4930/	Aged 6 -18	Fairytales and Propaganda The goal of this activity is to understand how "fake news" is created and how propaganda influences public opinion. - Participants are divided into groups and choose a classic fairy tale (e.g., Little Red Riding Hood or The Three Little Pigs).	

		- Each group must present the story from a specific perspective, using propaganda tools: 1. Demonization of the victim 2. Emotional manipulation through the use of words that evoke fear or anger. 3. Selective presentation of facts (concealing information that does not serve the narrative) - The groups present their "propaganda" version (e.g., as a social media post or breaking news story) (p. 16)	
SALTO – Youth (2026) https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/digiact-toolkit-for-digital-citizenship-literacy-education.4930/	Aged 13- 30	Activity 3: School values - Individual: Each participant traces the outline of their hand on a sheet of paper. On each finger, they write a value that they identified during the pair discussion (previous activity)	

		and which is important to them in their work. - School group: School group members share the values they wrote down and consider which values they share and which do not share in three aspects. • Meaning: What does this value mean to you? How do you understand it and how do you define it? • Behavior: What situations and behaviors constitute an expression of a selected value? What exactly do we expect from colleagues/children/parents in this context? • Consequences: What are the consequences of a specific behavior? How do we respond to desirable and undesirable behaviors related to a given value? School groups compare their list of personal/school values	

		with the RFCDC value sets to identify: values they recognize, values they did not mention in their previous assignment. - Each group discusses which RFCDC values are present in their school and which are not. - Finally, the school groups share their impressions in a plenary session (p. 56)	
DARE NETWORK https://competendo.net/en/Resources	This is intended for adults serving as facilitators and these practices are applicable to secondary school students (ages 12–18)		1.Self-assessment and reflection tools My developing goals (A7) Comparing your picture of a good facilitator with the competences, knowledge and personality you have, might show a gap you have to fll. • What do you need to develop? Please focus on concrete, practical goals for the next months. Skills and knowledge Skills and

			knowledge that you need for facilitation. • Attitude: Your way of feeling and thinking about participants, facilitation, civil involvement, democratic values. • Personality: General patterns in how you perceive the world and your behavior in reaction to these perceptions. • Style of facilitation Your style of moderation, inspiration, planning or evaluation during a training session. (p. 15) Bidirectional Feedback (B5) Steps Feedback It is a constructive tool that refects each of the following aspects: • Appreciation: What I liked... • Criticism: What I didn't like… • Inspiration: What I might propose.. How is it? • Receiving feedback…

			• Giving feedback… <u>Rules for giving feedback</u> • Your feedback should be relevant and useful for the other person • Represent yourself – Use "I" statements, do not use "we" or "one" • Separate feelings from observations • Describe, do not interpret • Show respect for the whole person • Keep in mind the position from which you give and receive feedback <u>Rules for receiving feedback</u> • If you have a specific question, ask. • Do not discuss or comment on anything • Decide silently which aspects or comments you accept • If you like, you can thank the other person (p.29)