



Joint Statement on Citizenship Education & EU Common Values

A joint initiative on promoting EU Common Values and Inclusive Education



In associated partnership with





Joint Statement on Citizenship Education & EU Common Values by the EU CONVINCe project partners

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In the light of the [Paris Declaration](#) on *Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*¹, the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning, and the recently proclaimed European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU CONVINCe partners underline that the promotion of shared fundamental values in and through education needs to include democratic citizenship principles. Living in a constantly changing world does not only mean adaptation and assimilation to change. Active citizenship² based on democratic principles entails that citizens can actively shape and change society. Each generation needs to learn and have opportunities to exercise democratic principles, values, ideas and underlying concepts of rights and responsibilities.

EU CONVINCe partners believe that education could play a stronger role in promoting shared values and educating committed, critical-thinking and active citizens.

Human rights education is fundamental. However, a common definition and shared relevance of “Citizenship and EU common values” such as democracy, freedom, tolerance, non-discrimination, equality and solidarity, is particularly challenging due to the variety of political, historical, religious, cultural and social national contexts in Europe. Citizenship education is defined by UNESCO as “*educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society*”³. Furthermore, the European reference framework on key competences for lifelong learning⁴ stresses that civic competence “equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation”.

EU CONVINCe partners consider essential to:

- Promote sufficient and sustainable investment in teacher initial education and continuous professional development, in order to provide support to teachers on citizenship education-related subjects.
- Ensure equal access to high quality and inclusive education and equal opportunities for all regardless of students’ gender, sexual orientation, abilities and educational needs, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship status.
- Better equip school leaders, teachers, and other educational staff to be able to promote critical thinking, democratic values and human rights, civic engagement and a responsible use of new technologies, Recognising particular challenges that exist in local communities in regard to these topics is important.
- Respect the educational project of each school and the recognize the value of diversity within the school systems.
- Encourage the development of pedagogical approaches, methods and practices that can function as examples for teachers for the promotion of social inclusion⁵ and non-discrimination, in particular, via peer learning and exchange and dissemination of “best practices”.

1 As well as UNESCO Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1995); Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education; European Commission Communication Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture - The European Commission’s contribution to the Leaders’ meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017; Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’); and other documents.

2 Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy (Hoskins, B. A framework for the creation of indicators on active citizenship and education and training for active citizenship. Ispra, European Commission DG Joint Research Centre, Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning, 2006).

3 UNESCO Citizenship Education for the 21st Century. 1998.

4 Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December on key competences for lifelong learning, OJ L 394, 30.12.2006.

5 The World Bank defines social inclusion as “the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity.”



- Promote teaching by leading by example to create open and safe school environments so that students and school staff can freely discuss and share experiences.
- Provide autonomy for teachers and other education personnel to manage diversity. More diverse teachers, school leadership and academic staff should be encouraged to facilitate the promotion of mutual respect and to influence schools and educational institutions' ethos in valuing differences and diversity with the view to achieving inclusive education.
- Help teachers to define the competences that are needed to work in culturally and socially diverse classrooms (e.g. students with disabilities or with a migrant background) and give them the opportunity to identify and accommodate their own professional needs.
- Develop a clear vision of the whole school community, based on dialogue and constructive discussions and on participatory approaches among all school actors, including parents and student associations on how to deal with radicalisation and extremism in the educational context.
- Focus on acquiring social, civic and intercultural competences, including learning about how to practice these competences in the particular national and political contexts.
- Promote community-based learning taking into account that schools and learning institutions are an integral part of local communities which can provide students with the opportunities to practice their acquired social, civic and intercultural skills.
- Take into account the value and usefulness of the work of other stakeholders in promoting inclusive education in general and citizenship values in particular (e.g. teaching assistants, social workers, school students organisations and education mediators/mentors from the community to work together with schools).

EU CONVINCING partners advocate for:

- The empowerment of school leaders, teachers and other education personnel to transmit shared values and to deal with intercultural dialogue and diversity inside and outside the classroom.
- Further support and guidance to teachers and school leaders in having access to innovative pedagogical approaches and methods.
- Learning content should be culturally sensitive and reflect diverse perspectives, adjust the content of teaching according to the local needs and supporting, in particular, inclusive extra-curricular activities.
- Supporting initiatives from civil society within the national school systems that are value based.
- A stronger involvement and networking of teachers and educators, school leaders, parents and learners within the school life ('whole-school approach') so as to support more democratic learning environments to allow learners to experience democracy and mutual respect ('democratic school culture').
- Supporting research as well as sufficient and sustainable investment in quality school leadership and a teaching profession that is based on excellent initial teacher education, teamwork, and continuous professional development when dealing with teaching EU common values and education to citizenship.
- Strengthen international, national and regional programmes relating to mobility and exchange of teachers, academics and students to help them experience different articulations of EU values such as democracy, freedom and tolerance in other learning environments and in other EU Member States.



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