

If not in Schools, where?

Learn and practice
Democracy
with eTwinning



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eTwinning is a vibrant community that has involved, in its 14 years of existence, more than 700,000 teachers working in 195,000* schools. More than 93,000* projects have been run, involving many students from all educational levels across the continent (*cumulative data as of September 2019)

eTwinning – the Community for schools in Europe and neighbouring partner countries – is an action for schools funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. It involves teachers from 36 European countries and 8 neighbouring countries.

eTwinning is a digital platform available in 31 languages. Browsing visitors can access a range of public information about how to become involved in eTwinning; explaining the benefits the action offers and providing information for collaborative project work. Registered teachers have access to a restricted area called eTwinning Live, which is the individual teacher's interface with the community: it enables users to find partners, interact, collaborate in projects and participate in professional development activities organised at European national, non-European national and European central levels. Finally, when teachers work together in a project, they have access to a private collaborative space, which is unique to each project, called TwinSpace.

eTwinning offers a high level of support for its users. In each of participating countries (currently 44) a National Support Service (NSS) or a Partner Support Agency (PSA) promotes the action, provides advice and guidance for end users and organises a range of activities and professional development opportunities at national level. At European level, eTwinning is coordinated by the Central Support Service (CSS) which is managed by European Schoolnet (a consortium of 34 Ministries of Education), on behalf of the European Commission. The CSS liaises with the NSS and is responsible for the development of the platform, as well as offering a range of professional development opportunities and other activities such as an annual European Conference and a Prize Event which awards teachers and students for their involvement in outstanding projects.

Foreword



Tibor Navracscis
Commissioner for Education,
Culture, Youth and Sport

Democracy is one of the founding values of the European Union. But it is not a given. It must be learnt and understood, and, most importantly, practised by every citizen. Today, this is even more important than ever. Change in our societies and in the world around us creates many new opportunities. It also creates challenges. We need to address the fears of people who feel overwhelmed or left behind. We need to empower people, equipping them with the competences and the mind-set they need to engage in society and make the most of their lives. And we have to build cohesive

communities and a shared sense of belonging.

I consider it a core mission of our education systems to support students in developing an understanding of democratic decision-making processes and in encouraging them to take an active role. Citizenship education in all its forms and at all levels, even from an early age, plays a pivotal role in this. The objective is to help everybody act as a responsible citizen and to participate fully in civic and social life, based on an understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures.

Citizenship cannot just be learnt as a subject in class. It requires practical learning, allowing pupils to observe, reflect, compare, research, and experiment for themselves and with others. Clearly, the role of teachers is crucial in this, and so is a democratic school climate.

eTwinning projects offer excellent opportunities to put this into action. They give students, teachers and head teachers the chance to work together across borders. This book presents a selection of excellent eTwinning projects and activities promoting values, human rights, critical thinking, and developing a democratic culture both in class and in schools.

I would like to express my warm thanks to all the teachers and students involved in the different activities presented in this book. I trust their example will inspire other students and teachers towards living the fundamental values of our European Union. I would also like to thank the eTwinning community as a whole for their indispensable contribution towards ensuring high quality and inclusive education in Europe and in our partner countries.

Introduction

eTwinning: Building a democratic environment at school

“Students should not only be trained to live in a democracy when they grow up; they should have the chance to live in one today.” — *Alfie Kohn, author and lecturer*

In democratic societies, all members have, by definition, a social and political role to play. There is a consensus among Education authorities in Europe that young people therefore need to acquire the necessary competences to perform these social and political duties.

The European Union has expressed its commitment to citizenship education through a number of initiatives. Promoting active citizenship is one of the four objectives of the European policy cooperation in Education and Training¹; it states notably that education should promote intercultural competences, democratic values and respect for fundamental rights, prevent and combat all forms of discrimination and racism, and equip children, young people and adults to interact positively with their peers from diverse backgrounds. The ET2020 Working Group on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, also agreed, in their recent report², that the acquisition of shared values and social and civic competences is best enhanced by an interdisciplinary approach in a mix of dedicated subjects, combined with their integration into other subjects and embedding them into a democratic school culture and ethos.

In their 2017 report on Citizenship Education, the Eurydice experts network³ found that public expectations of citizenship education have grown, as a result of significant and increasing challenges in our societies. It has thus become a higher priority at European level and is also in the spotlight in a number of countries. Their conceptual framework is based on four citizenship education competence areas (i.e. areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes):



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- 1 Referred to as “ET2020”: see the framework at: <https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework>; and Council Conclusions at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN)
- 2 ET2020 Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination through Education in 2016-2018, “Elements of a Policy Framework”
- 3 Eurydice is a network of 42 national units based in all 38 countries of the Erasmus+ programme

- interacting effectively and constructively with others;
- thinking critically;
- behaving in a socially responsible manner; and
- acting democratically.

The EU was also actively involved in the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴. The 2030 Agenda issues a call to action to promote all people’s prosperity and the protection of the environment. It recognises that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that address a range of social needs including education, and health, while tackling climate change and promoting peace, and identifies young people as “critical agents of change”. But for them to take this active and leading role, they need the right support and tools. Education has an important role to play in providing young people with the tools to harness their creativity and innovation and, to engage and participate actively in their community.

Likewise, the Council of Europe, in its Report on State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe (2017), notes that education is increasingly recognised, across its 47 member states, as a tool for tackling radicalisation leading to terrorism, for successfully integrating migrants and refugees and for tackling disenchantment with democracy and the rise of populism. International cooperation in education for democratic citizenship and human rights is growing, supporting national approaches by raising standards and allowing states to learn from each other’s experiences.



“eTwinning Galaxy” EPAL Nafpaktou, Greece

But despite this growing understanding of the relationship between education and Europe’s overall democratic health, the Report signals that challenges remain. In many countries [...] citizenship and human rights education are not sufficiently mainstreamed. In some areas of learning, such as vocational training, they are often absent. Where they are present, in many cases not enough is being done to monitor their impact, meaning that they do not receive sufficient priority, with resources geared instead towards areas of education that are evaluated and ranked.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ratified by over 100 nations,

4 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

has significant implications for the improvement of young people's participation in society. It makes it clear to all that children are independent subjects and hence have rights. Article 12 of the Convention makes a strong, though very general, call for children's participation: *"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."* It goes on to argue in Article 13 that: *"The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."*

Only when these rights are met, can we expect young people to take a leading role, even using forms of action including signing a petition, protests, social media campaigning etc. Schools, as an integral part of the community should be an obvious venue for fostering people's understanding and experience of democratic participation.

eTwinning fosters the democratic participation of teachers, students, parents and the local community by giving them the opportunity to participate actively in projects, campaigns and professional development opportunities. The eTwinning School Mission, developed over the past two years, puts an emphasis on the concept of **shared leadership** and **students as agents of change** *"acting both as drivers and as a sounding board for all innovations taking place in pedagogy and use of technology."*

The theme chosen for 2019 is "Democratic Participation". In eTwinning, everyone has the opportunity to participate equally in all activities as the teachers and students have the power in their hands to design projects to meet the specific needs of their classroom. Teachers encourage their students to have an active role in the planning and implementation of the projects and special talents are rewarded. For example, a student who is good in drawing has an active role when they create the logo of the project or a poster for an activity. All opinions are valued. It is thus no surprise that many projects on topics related to democracy, values, human and children rights, hate speech, media literacy, bullying and fake news have already been implemented through eTwinning in previous years.

To emphasise the importance of democratic participation and facilitate the work of teachers, eTwinning offers a variety of material and resources like the eTwinning kits, which are step-by-step guides to eTwinning projects.

A few examples on the eTwinning portal:

- Have your say on your education
- Living in Harmony!
- Too young to vote, old enough to make change
- Transmission for the Global Goals
- Your Voices Count!

The eTwinning Spring Campaign 2019 was an example of how eTwinners can address democratic participation with creativity. In an imaginary universe, teachers and students travelled through the five planets of the eTwinning Galaxy, the Planets of: Human Rights; Law and Decision-Making; Environment; Media and History and participated in collaborative



"The eTwinning Galaxy", Student's drawing from Romania

activities and online seminars. The Campaign dealt with topics such as: Learning Media Literacy and Fake News with Lie Detectors and Discussing Diversity and Discrimination - How to use the online tool "Stories that Move".

Democratic participation is not just a topic to study, it is also an attitude, a way of acting and living, and, as already mentioned, a good place to practice democracy in school. From this perspective, the aim of this book is to introduce and explore the various aspects of democratic participation and offer examples of eTwinning projects as well as ideas for activities related to the topic.

The first section introduces the main elements of democratic participation and the role of education in triggering the active engagement of young people.

The second section focusses on the role of teachers to develop democratic competence and the importance of active citizenship.

The third section introduces a tool to help students develop critical thinking skills to tackle stereotypes and prejudices.

The fourth section gives the floor to young people who took the lead and made their voices heard. They are examples that can inspire your students.

The last three sections are also enriched with eTwinning projects on the topics of democracy, human rights, values, bullying, hate speech, fake news, volunteerism, active citizenship and media literacy, complemented by activities that teachers can use as inspiration for their own projects.

If it's true that democratic participation is about having the rights, knowledge, tools and support to understand our society and take action to influence its future, we hope that this book will offer teachers a starting point, guidance and inspiration to support their students to become better citizens. The world needs them now, more than ever.

“The secret message communicated to most young people today by the society around them is that they are not needed, that the society will run itself quite nicely until they — at some distant point in the future — will take over the reins. Yet the fact is that the society is not running itself nicely... because the rest of us need all the energy, brains, imagination and talent that young people can bring to bear down on our difficulties. For society to attempt to solve its desperate problems without the full participation of even very young people is imbecile.” — *Alvin Toffler, writer and futurist*

1. Schools as democracy labs



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Back in 1916, in *Democracy and education*, John Dewey challenged the role of education as preparation for life. He did so by considering that “the learning in school should be continuous with that out of school”. But he also assumed that education should aim to promote the “capacity to live as a social member so that what [the person] gets from living with others balances with what [s/] he contributes”. In his view, however, “education is not a mere means to such a life. Education is such a life”.

In this sense, education should not be conceived as being outside of one’s own life. An education that does not consider life as a fundamental part of its daily educational practices is easily vulnerable to arguments that question the political and social mandate that has been attributed to it and which give rise to criticism. Education should also not take students as passive consumers without agency (Biesta, 2011; Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Hedtke, 2013).

In fact, we learn quite a lot about democracy just by being at school: we learn about justice and injustice, equality and inequality, participation and alienation, power and powerlessness but we also learn to express one’s ideas, to debate and discuss, to negotiate and be flexible, to oppose and confront others, to argue and advocate in favour of those who are treated unfairly. As such, the school experience is inevitably a political experience.

There is a long tradition of research that demonstrates that education is a key predictor of civic and political participation, including not only conventional (e.g. voting) but also emerging (e.g. signing online petitions, demonstrating, boycotting) forms (e.g. Hadjar & Beck, 2010; Quintelier, 2010; Stockemer, 2014). This is not surprising as schools do provide a lot of opportunities for students to live democracy – and experience its imperfections –, in and out-of-class. In a recent European study, Catch-EyoU⁵, young people stress, during focus groups discussions, how these diverse experiences are important:



Marta: *Maybe because I went for other things that exist here in school: Young Parliament; European Club, all these things. And I feel it is a great opportunity for young people to participate in the affairs of the community, not just school, but in terms of politics in our country and in Europe. I think we have a lot of opportunities ... (Portuguese student, female)*

Linda: *I think the school is the most important (institution to foster an active citizenship), because it's where we're raised in school, so if you get information early in your life and you know it's a place where you're often, you might not get that at home, so it's important that you get it somewhere else. (Swedish student, female)*



Georg: *politics should be brought more into the school, because when talking about all the things we have been talking about today, the only way to get rid of them [the problems such as youth disinterest in politics] is that young people [acquire] an understanding of politics as something where their voice really counts, where their opinion counts; as something that is not distant, strange and incomprehensible, but close". (Estonian student, male)*

Petr: *The students' council meets here, the school representatives, some teachers and students and there are usually about 30-40 people here in the meeting room, talking about various topics. People say what bothers them, what they want, and the director talks to us, expecting that we bring it directly to the classes. (Czech student, male)*



5 Constructing Active Citizenship with European Youth, a research project co-funded by the EU Horizon 2020 Research and innovation programme: <http://www.catcheyou.eu>

These findings resonate with other research we have been conducting in schools for the last decade (Malafaia, Teixeira, Neves & Menezes, 2016; Menezes & Ferreira, 2014; Ribeiro, Neves & Menezes, 2017). A first and especially significant tendency is the noticeable trusting, yet critical, relationship students maintain with school. They insist, again and again, that schools are the only context where they can learn about politics: “if not in schools, where?” they keep asking. However, as a second trend, there is a recognition that while there are many opportunities, in and out-of-class, for students to participate, many rest on tokenistic and top-down approaches – an illusory access to citizenship that risks having pervasive effects – and are largely dependent on individual teachers who may, or may not, be willing and able to contribute to a plural, democratic and participatory school culture.

So, while schools are inevitable contexts for living and learning (about) politics, the quality of democratic life within schools should be scrutinised. Are students encouraged to express their opinions, even when they disagree with colleagues and/or teachers? Do they have room to discuss the implications of the knowledge they are learning in their lives? Are there opportunities for them to get involved in solving real-life school and community problems? Are their opinions about the way schools are organized and run taken seriously? On the whole, our argument here is that there is no way to advocate for the role of the school as a context for democratic learning if we take the living component out of the equation, i.e. unless we invite democracy and politics in.

2. Democratic Participation at school

2.1 The role of teachers in developing democratic competence



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Building democratic school environments is the responsibility of all stakeholders

A democratic school does not just happen, it is an ongoing process, and one that may not run smoothly or be harmonious or devoid of conflicting views and opinions. A truly democratic environment is one in which individuals can constructively interact with others and where people can agree to disagree on issues within a framework where human rights and the rule of law are upheld and respected. While the immediate responsibility of establishing a democratic school environment may be that of the school principal or leader, in a democracy, there are other stakeholders who have a vested interest in the success of the school - the students, teachers, parents and the wider community (Bäckman & Trafford, 2007). Democratic environments are the result of a collective effort.

Education has an important role to play in countering the challenges of today's complexities and uncertainties

The European policy cooperation framework ("ET2020", see footnote1 introduction) emphasises that education and training have a crucial role to play in meeting the many socio-economic, demographic, environmental and technological challenges facing Europe and its citizens today and, in the years, ahead. The primary goal of

European cooperation should be to support the education and training systems in the EU Member States, aimed at ensuring:

- (a) the personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens;
- (b) sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue.

These purposes echo the vision of education developed by the Council of Europe (in Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6), that includes four major purposes:

1. Developing a broad knowledge base,
2. Preparing for the labour market,
3. Preparing for life as active citizens and,
4. Personal development

The first two areas are largely the ones state schools focus on. Yet, increasingly, perhaps under the pressures of the conditions of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) we live in today, education for democratic citizenship and personal development are receiving more attention. Shared responsibility for education and deciding what is important for children and teenagers to learn is possible with stakeholders cooperating towards common goals: parents, educational institutions, civil society and young people themselves.

An increasing number of educators experiment within the curriculum to create learning activities that teach values, attitudes, skills and knowledge that learners need to contribute to a democratic culture. They instil democratic processes in learning activities and classroom settings such as democratic classroom management, cooperative learning structures, participative (self- and peer-) assessment, and participation of civil society throughout young people's education journey.

With the growing awareness of education professionals that needs in education are changing, we are entering a 'ripe moment'.

Rethinking education: growing recognition of the importance of teaching and learning active citizenship

The need for change in education has been widely recognised in recent years. Several international associations and organisations have published important documents to this effect. In addition to the references provided in the introduction, it is also worth noting that the Council of Europe's *Manifesto: Education for Change - Change for Education* (2014) highlights the importance of rethinking education: "The models of schooling we inherited from the past tend to be elitist, hierarchical and exclusive; features which have perhaps softened over the years, but which have

not really been challenged by the democratisation of the secondary and tertiary education that many countries have experienced in recent decades” (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 21).

Based on a review of employers’ 21st century expectations of school leavers, we find that: cooperation, complex problem solving, critical thinking, autonomy, creativity, empathy, accountability, emotional intelligence, multiperspectivity, cognitive flexibility, entrepreneurship, ICT literacy and readiness for life-long learning are all vitally important skills. However, hierarchical relationships in schools and traditional frontal methods of teaching compartmentalised school subjects are unlikely to develop these skills and qualities sufficiently in learners. The *Manifesto* points this out very clearly: “In order to change behaviours and favour the integration of new concepts and values, learners would benefit from experiential learning within a socio-constructivist approach, allowing them to observe, reflect, compare, research, experiment – all activities that are not often integrated sufficiently into traditional choices such as “learning by heart” and frontal approaches where there is one “educator who knows and talks” and a “learner who does not know and listens” (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 20).

Concluding a project started in 2013, the Council of Europe adopted a *Reference Framework of Competences for a Democratic Culture* (2017), developing non-prescriptive guidelines that national authorities and education stakeholders can use and adapt as they see fit. The framework provides a comprehensive model of the competences that learners need to acquire if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, with descriptors and guidelines for implementation.

In order for their learners to develop these skills, the role of teachers needs to evolve. “Teachers as facilitators of learning in an interconnected world will be encouraged to develop particular transversal competences in themselves on top of the competences specific to their academic subject” (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 24). This has become all the more important since the *Global Competence Framework* (OECD-PISA, 2018) was launched. According to the OECD-PISA website “Global competence is the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development” (2018).

With these developments the question arises how we can best support teachers to develop these competences in themselves and their learners so they can learn to change and change to learn.

Enabling teachers to develop 21st century competences

Beijard, Meijer, Morine-Dershimer and Tilemma (2005) call for a redefinition of teacher professionalism with an emphasis on improving the quality of teacher thinking and learning in an ever-changing context. They call for a dynamic approach to teaching and teacher learning, in which the development of the teacher's identity becomes crucial. This teacher identity requires the development of what Mockler (2011) describes as the teachers' "political edge", or their ability to support a critical and reflective education for democracy. This is work that is never completed: commitment to lifelong learning perspective, and experiential learning are of the essence.

Learn to Change, an international NGO supporting the development of the whole person, within a framework of social justice and creative human emancipation, have developed *Cards for Democracy for All*. A set of 60 cards intended for individuals or groups, to self-reflect on their attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding so that they can better contribute to creating democratic spaces and improve their own practices and behaviours. The competences we need for democracy are sought after in changing workplaces: 21st century skills such as adaptability, ability to cooperate with others across borders and complex problem solving are in demand.

The *Teachers' Edition of the Cards for Democracy* is designed specifically to help teachers reflect on, examine and improve their attitudes, skills and knowledge in implementing democratic processes and/or experiences in the classroom and improve their own practices. The cards identify and describe key actions that people who are facilitating learning can develop to promote inclusive and democratic learning environments.

Learn to Change has developed a series of activities that use the *Cards for Democracy* to engage stakeholders. These activities are available online on the NGO's [official website \(www.learntochange.eu\)](http://www.learntochange.eu).

- [Assessment and evaluation revisited](#)
- [My journey - Student-teacher's self-assessment with Cards for Democracy](#)
- [Speed dating for democracy](#)
- [Seven ideas for a more democratic year at school](#)
- Webinar 'Developing the entrepreneurial citizen' for the School Education Gateway
- Webinar on *Cards for Democracy*

Some other free resources that support the creation of democratic school environments and the development of democratic competences include:

- **Compass:** a manual on human rights education providing youth leaders, teachers and other educators, concrete ideas and practical activities to engage, involve and motivate young people.

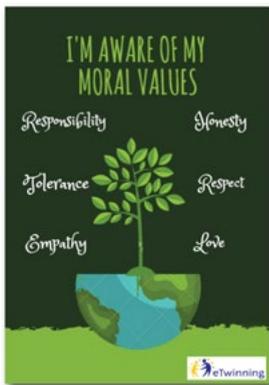
- **Composito:** provides children, educators, teachers and parents activities and methods to introduce children to human rights in creative and attractive ways.
- **TASKs for democracy** – 60 activities to learn and assess transversal attitudes, skills and knowledge in a handbook for practitioners in formal and non-formal educational settings developed within the Pestalozzi Programme Community of Practice of the Council of Europe.

Our hope is that access to such resources will encourage teachers to experiment with new ideas, supported by relevant teacher education opportunities.

2.2 Inspiring eTwinning Projects

In eTwinning students and teachers regularly deal with topics related to human rights, values and democratic culture. Here are some examples of recent eTwinning projects on these topics:

☰ "I am aware of my moral values"



Age of students:
4 - 15

Countries:
Greece, Romania, Tunisia,
Turkey

As described in the introduction, education is a tool to better identify and understand which values are important and relevant to convey. This project focused on universal moral values such as tolerance, empathy, love, respect, responsibility and honesty. Students and teachers worked collaboratively to raise awareness of active citizenship and to improve their English language skills through monthly activities. These activities included the production of a magazine describing each moral value and its importance, a collaborative website, online discussions and a collaborative patchwork, which each school contributed to. Other activities included arts and crafts such as, creation of paper flowers and t-shirts designed by the students.

The project concluded with an exhibition in one of the Turkish schools where the work done by students and teachers was showcased.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/57121>

☰▶ “Myriem and friends: citizens of a better world”

MYRIEM
AND
FRIENDS

CITIZENS
OF A
BETTER
WORLD



Age of students:

5-17

Countries:

Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland,
Portugal, Romania, Slovenia,
Spain, Tunisia, Ukraine

Myriem is a doll from Tunisia and the central character in this project. Students from the other countries created friends for her at their schools and then Myriem and her friends travelled across the 10 countries, being hosted for three months in each country serving as a starting point for students to work on universal human values. The dolls were used as tools to promote values like tolerance, friendship, equality, peace, respect, and responsibility. Students created an international calendar, including festivities and commemoration days of all countries, so they could get to know the different cultures. Students were also inspired to take initiatives linked to these values into their local communities and beyond. Myriem and her friends returned back home but before that, they all met together in “Concordville”, an imaginary ideal country designed by the students. “Concordville” included the values and behaviours students decided were indispensable for a fair society. These were then documented in the collaboratively written manifesto: *“Concordville is the community of our dreams, beyond national borders”*. The manifesto was created by the students through a treasure hunt game of values where students used QR codes to fill in a crossword and used these words to assemble the manifesto. The manifesto exemplifies the human rights and values that were taught and discussed during the project. The students also created a Thinglink interactive image with the human values and wrote a collaborative story “A boy from Syria” and a refugee’s diary, working on shared Google Doc incorporating drawings made by the youngest partners in the project. This project created opportunities and encouraged students to discuss “difficult” issues such as human trafficking, hunger and unequal distribution of wealth, inclusion and more.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/9507>

"Sparks"



Age of students:
11-18

Countries:

*Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, France,
Georgia, Germany, Italy, Malta, Norway,
Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Tunisia,
Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom*

In this project the students learned, researched and explored the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, which, as mentioned in the introduction, are a great starting point to re-think education and its role in modern societies. The project raised awareness of sustainable development in their schools and communities. Students started with collaborative research on each one of the 17 goals: No poverty, Zero hunger, Quality education, Gender equality, Reduced inequalities, Climate action, Peace, justice and strong institutions and Partnership for the goals. They created a European dictionary, so all students could understand what the goals are. Focusing on Quality of Education goal, students learned about the challenges that children face worldwide to attend school and the difference of education quality across the world. Focusing on the goal Reduction of Poverty, students were asked to complete the task of "Living on \$1.25 a day", taking photos in their local supermarket and asking in local cafes and restaurants to see what they can buy for this amount. Throughout the project, students worked collaboratively in national and international groups, tackled the challenges of implementing the goals and discussed the action they could take in their local communities to be more sustainable. Students also improved their English, Maths and ICT skills, as well as their communication and presentation skills and became global citizens trying to find solutions to some of the most important global issues of today.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/43401>

☰ "Herit@ge Matters"



Age of students:
12-15

Countries:
Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Greece,
Portugal, Republic of Moldova,
Romania

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, educating young people to be active citizens starts in school. Teachers play an important role in building democratic school environments, encouraging students to take the lead and express their opinions constructively. This is what happened in the project "Herit@ge Matters": students examined values such as equity, respect, tolerance and diversity. From these basic values, students then explored topics of justice and speaking out against discrimination and injustice. Students created a collective Human Rights panel where they worked collaboratively to explore each human right in the human rights declaration through replicas of art works. As a reminder for all students, the following quote from Anne Frank's diary was selected and projected during the project: *"How wonderful it is that nobody needs to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."*

During the course of the project, students jointly produced a collaborative e-magazine tackling issues of democracy, democratic values and related issues in Europe and beyond. In the magazine, called 'Our Heroes', students chose and learned about personalities connected with rights, values and democracy. Anne Frank's diary was read and studied in an alternative way, so students developed critical reading skills, practiced creative writing and learned about democratic consciousness today in relation to the past. They wrote to Anne as an imaginary friend Kitty. These writings were later adapted into a show by the other partners to positive reviews by other partners, parents and local media. The partners created a website about cultural heritage in relation to human rights and democracy to disseminate the project outcomes to the world. The website showcases the views of the young people involved in the project as well as pieces of artwork, lifestyle, history, poetry and gastronomy that they share and cherish.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/50844>

☰▶ “Expressing the Way We Are”



Age of students:
15 - 17

Countries:
Denmark, Poland, Romania, Turkey

Re-thinking education, as introduced earlier in this chapter, is one of the objectives of the Council of Europe’s Manifesto on Education for Change. This perspective is widely applied in the project “Expressing the Way We Are” whose genesis stems from the understanding that the current student’s generation is completely different from previous ones. Students are continuously presented with an overwhelming amount of information through various media and entertainment. Teachers from Denmark, Poland, Turkey and Romania devised this project to increase tolerance of different cultures, improve critical thinking and deepen understanding of concepts like human rights, democratic duties, internet safety and decision making.

Online and offline activities took place throughout the project starting with students working in teams to create posters to illustrate democratic topics and the meaning of democracy. The posters were handmade, painted and created online through photo collage tools. Students were challenged to write articles as investigative journalists reporting on issues prevalent in democracies. This collaborative activity was initiated by the students who chose the topics and worked together to write the articles in international teams. The articles were collected and published in an online magazine called “Democracy in our lives”. Lastly, during their Erasmus+ mobility, when students met in person, they participated in a series of debates where groups explored relevant topics, proposing solutions collaboratively, expressing opinions and being challenged by other groups, raising arguments for and against.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/11338>

2.3 Suggested eTwinning Activities

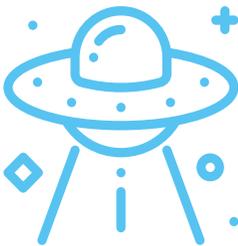
Children must be taught to value democracy as a way of life; the necessary skills for building democracy do not develop automatically so teaching democracy means preparing children to become citizens who will preserve and shape democracy in the future. Therefore, democracy should be a key aspect in every form of education from the earliest age possible. Democratic education is about promoting curiosity, discussion, critical thinking and learning to take responsibility for your actions. Such educational outcomes are best achieved through action. While key concepts of democracy should be understood by children, living and acting in a democratic environment is the best exercise. Schools, institutions, children's clubs, organisations and families that respect democratic principles and have real democratic structures, function as the best role models to help children learn what democracy is.

"It is vital to promote a culture of democracy and human rights among children and young people, as attitudes and behaviour are shaped at an early stage and can be decisive in determining their future involvement in public affairs." *Conclusions of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy, June 2007*

Human rights and democracy are reciprocal concepts. Human rights form the basis of any democratic system, but they need this system to defend and guarantee them.

The following are activities that can be integrated into eTwinning projects to develop students' understanding of democratic participation.

"A visitor from another planet"



Students are encouraged to use their imagination and creativity to design and create a puppet from another planet to exchange with their partner schools. Teachers ask their students to consider what a visitor from a different world would want to know about humans and to draw pictures to explain to them what it means to be human. The drawings and reflections from each partner school are shared on the TwinSpace and the different perspectives discussed in class.

Age: 4-7 | **Tools:** craft material, crayons, pencils, paint, paper

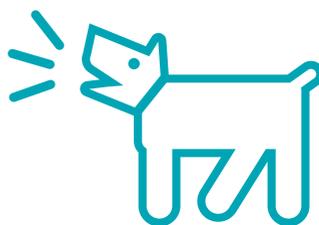
“Celebrating the Universal Children’s Day”

Every year on 20 November we celebrate International Day of Children Rights. In each class, the students discuss the Convention on the Rights of the Child and make a list of the 10 most important to them. The partners then work together to reach agreement on a list of 10 children’s rights that they all agree on. After this, each class picks one of the rights and draws something that represents it either on paper or using an online tool. All drawings are shared to the TwinSpace and printed by the partners. Finally, students create videos where they say the rights in their own language. All videos are gathered to make a common video where we can see and hear the rights in different languages.

Age: 4 -7 | **Tools:** YouTube, paper, Colorillo

“My doggy’s rights”

Partner classes use soft toy dogs as mascots and send them to each other. Teachers get the students to name the dog and think about the things it needs to be happy, healthy and safe focusing on who is responsible for ensuring that it gets the things that it needs. Once the class defines the needs, the teacher asks them if the dog has a right to those needs.



After taking care of the toy dog for several days, teachers ask the class to reflect on what children need for a happy, safe and healthy life and who is responsible for ensuring that they get those things. Students talk about children’s rights and share their answers with their partners. The children can then choose a right, create artwork which is uploaded to the project’s TwinSpace. Each school can then hold an exhibition of the artistic creations as the culmination of the project.

Age: 5-10 | **Tools:** papers and crayons, Artsteps

“Advertising human rights”

After learning about and discussing the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child⁶, students from all partner schools are asked to choose a right that they would like to explore further. According to their selection, mixed-nationality groups of 4-6 are created and tasked with making a short television advert, that makes people aware of the specific right. They approach their advert in different ways for example: a story

6 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>



they act out, a song they sing, a cartoon which they draw the storyboard for, or an interview with an expert. Once they have decided on the concept, an online meeting of the partners can be organised to share ideas and feedback. After the meeting, the groups can start working on their advertisements and, when finished, they can be published on the TwinSpace and a vote conducted to determine the most popular.

The project can end with an online debrief meeting to discuss questions like: who needs education about children's human rights, why it's important for people to know about their own rights and are advertisements a good way to share this important message?

Age: 8-15 | **Tools:** videoconferences, PollEverywhere, Dotstorming

“Deprivation of human rights”

Teachers share the following story with their students: *“Yesterday a journalist wrote a story that made a prominent political figure angry. The next day, three men broke into the journalists house and took them. No one knows where the journalist is and there is no official help to find them”*. Students are asked to read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷ and determine which specific articles have been violated. They then work in mixed-nationality teams to write to the Minister of Justice highlighting the violation of these rights and asking for action or a newspaper article describing what happened. The students should focus on the language and tone of voice they use depending on the audience they are writing for.

Age: 10 -14 | **Tool:** MeetingWords

“Guessing Rights game”

Partners familiarise themselves with what is meant by human rights by reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Choose a time to connect with their partners on the videoconferences to play a guessing game. A student from each partner class is given a human right and has to draw it while the students in the partner class try to guess which human right it is. If they answer correctly, they earn a point. In the second round a student from the other class draws a human right and the classes take turns giving each student the chance to draw. The winner is the class who score most points.

⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

They may only draw images; no numbers or words and no speaking is allowed.

Age: 10-15 | **Tools:** paper, pens, pencils, crayons, videoconferences

“Your rights end where mine begin”

Each partner organises a debate on the merits of freedom of speech and the right to protection from discrimination. Students are encouraged to share their opinions and discuss experiences from their own lives.

The teacher opens a TwinBoard and ask the students from all partner schools to express their opinion by answering the following questions:

- Where do the rights of the individual end and those of the group begin?
- Can the boundaries between these change?
- In which cases?

Teacher encourage students to write collaborative poems, plays or short stories about incidents involving human rights issues, that they or their friends and family have encountered. Students can work in mixed-nationality groups and the outcomes can be presented in an eBook.

Age: 12 -18 | **Tools:** TwinBoard, MeetingWords, Issuu, Calameo

“Human Rights and decision making”

The teacher creates a Padlet with three columns: 1. In every case, 2. In most cases, 3. In some cases and creates a series of statements that students will have to categorise in mixed-nationality groups of 4-6 people. The students have to discuss within their groups using TwinSpace Chat and reach a consensus on each statement. They should add the statements to the Padlet without having sight of the other groups' selections.

A week later, all classes meet online and discuss the statements to which the groups have reached different conclusions. They then discuss and debate until the whole group reach a consensus. They can be given the freedom to re-write the language of the statements in order to reach a consensus.

Age: 15-18 | **Tools:** chat, videoconferences



3. Critical thinkers in a safe school

3.1 Mastering the media: developing critical thinking skills with regard to stereotypes and prejudices

In 2016, the Network of Experts working on the Social dimension of Education and Training reported on some of the challenges and opportunities Europe is facing in relation to growing ethnic and religious diversity. A key conclusion was that school curricula need to reflect more diversity and be more inclusive. Peer education was mentioned in the report as one of the relatively new and effective methods for creating inclusive classrooms. One of the pre-requisites for inclusive classrooms is to engage young people to be active in our societies, to contribute as citizens to democracy. And all this starts with the development of their critical thinking skills⁸. As a first step, it is important for them to reflect on their own place in society, the choices they make and the effects their choices have on others. Developing critical thinking skills begins with educators not wanting to give students their own answers to complex questions related to diversity and discrimination.



Karen Polak
International project leader of
Stories that Move: Toolbox against
discrimination, Anne Frank House,
Amsterdam

There are no simple or 'right' answers to give our learners. They need to discover for themselves why people have different opinions and feelings about identity and diversity, and different responses to discrimination. Well-managed discussion has been shown to engage learners and trigger self-discovery, yet most teachers are not given training to guide conversations about sensitive and complex subjects.

Monique Eckmann, professor emeritus at the School for Social Work, University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland in Geneva, has written extensively about the importance of acknowledging an individual's social position in relation to discrimination. It was with her input that we started thinking about a concrete initiative to address these issues, and which resulted in the project "Stories that Move".

⁸ This was also recommended by the EU Council ("Recommendation on promoting common values...", 22 May 2018) to the Member States: that they should continue enhancing critical thinking and media literacy (...) so as to raise awareness of the risks related to the information sources and to help young people exercise their critical thinking.

Stories that Move

The initiative “Stories that Move⁹” was developed to create safe spaces, online and offline, for dealing with the complexity and sensitivity of topics such as discrimination, lack of inclusion and diversity.

Stories that Move as an online tool evolved from printed teaching materials on antisemitism and other forms of discrimination developed by the Anne Frank House in cooperation with the ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights/OSCE)¹⁰. Between 2007 and 2017 the project expanded to 15 countries that each produced national versions of the materials, with a common core but country-specific content. These materials took the voices of young people speaking about their identities and their experiences as a starting point, connecting past and present to challenge learners to think about continuity. Assignments were added that encourage learners to reflect on the choices they make when faced with discrimination.

Moving against stereotypes: the role of media

In the project ‘Stories that Move: Toolbox against discrimination’ nine organisations from seven European countries worked together to create a multilingual online tool consisting of five modules that lead students through a series of activities. Broadly, the project aims to *move* students – to feel empathy for others, to gain new perspective on the world around them, and to be active contributors to change; there are also notes and expert advice for teachers.



The international group of experts (history and language teachers, human rights educators and social psychologists, among others) soon discovered there were many key topics that the project team could not agree on - mirroring the situation in our societies and classrooms. Dealing with a diversity of

opinions became an integral part of how Stories that Move works.

⁹ Stories that Move is an international project aimed at age 14 and older, initiated by the Anne Frank House and eight partner organisations, and supported by Erasmus+ and EVZ Foundation. Available free in English, German, Hungarian, Slovak, Polish, Ukrainian and Dutch.

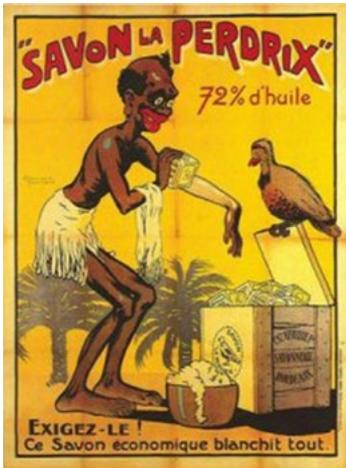
¹⁰ See <http://tandis.odihhr.pl/> for online publications of most language versions.

Topics addressed in the online tool include how stereotypes are used in the media, how prejudices are reproduced and how this can affect the way we look at the world around us.

The *Mastering the media* section begins by asking learners to look at their own 'consumption' of the media:

Every day we make choices about the media we 'listen to', which influence how we see the world around us. But sometimes they close us off, too. Let's look at the 'bubbles' we create. How can we filter messages and be critical?

Students are asked to evaluate the credibility of their information sources and are often unexpectedly critical. Yet they might not find it easy to voice their opinions, or concerns about their identity and how to respond to discrimination. Stories that Move creates the safe space needed for an exchange of opinions, online and off.



Advertisement 19th century

One of the media lessons involves students examining advertisements featuring a range of sexist, antisemitic, racist, anti-Roma and anti-LGBT+¹¹ images. It is important to acknowledge that some of these images can be hurtful, but also that opinions may differ. Students work with a 'visible thinking' routine. This methodology helps them to slow down, see more and understand their own learning process.

In the case of the advertisements, which include a racist 19th century soap advert, Stories that Move asks:

- Which stereotype is used in this image?
- How is the stereotype portrayed?
- Why do advertisers use stereotypes?

Working with historical advertisements illustrates social change, but it can also highlight to students that there has not been as much change as they might assume.

From the glossary provided on www.storiesthatmove.org:

Stereotypes - Widely held but oversimplified image of a particular group. They can be positive, negative or neutral. Stereotypes can cause people to exaggerate differences between groups, either by falsely seeing them as homogeneous or by focusing only on differences.

11 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender + other groups of sexual and gender minorities

Prejudices - Preconceived opinions based on attributes such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or religion. Prejudices are not based on reason or actual experience; they are mostly negative; and they are often used to justify discrimination. In contrast to stereotypes, prejudices are emotionally charged. People often have unconscious prejudices, which are therefore hard to overcome.

3.2 Inspiring eTwinning projects

The European Working Group on Citizenship¹² noted that a democratic and inclusive school culture that values diversity and actively provides a safe space for dialogue and discussion on controversial issues is essential for socio-emotional learning, intellectual development and acquiring social and civic competences.

Against this background, it should be highlighted that the eTwinning community is particularly sensitive to issues such as e-safety, bullying, hate speech, and fake news. Numerous projects in the platform deal with these topics, by encouraging reflective thinking and empowering students to share and explore their opinion, in an inclusive classroom atmosphere. eSafety in particular, is integrated into most projects as a starting activity where students are introduced to project netiquette and often the students are the ones that create the rules of online behaviour for their project.

Below, you can find some examples of projects that tackle these issues:

☰ "Take Care of me-Take Care of you"



Age of students:
10 - 15

Countries:
France, Italy, Poland,
Portugal, Ukraine

As we learned in the introduction, creation of opportunities for students to reflect upon diversity, providing opportunities where students can learn from peers and discuss sensitive issues such as bullying, are essential elements for inclusive classrooms. "Take care of me- take care of you" provides an opportunity to do

¹² ET2020 Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination through Education in 2016-2018," Elements of a Policy Framework"

exactly this. During the project students were asked to promote positive behaviour through anti-bullying activities, getting to know other cultures, languages and traditions. Working in mixed nationality groups, the students created two eco trees with rules for positive behaviour which served as a reference point for students in the whole school. The various activities, together with video conferences, the exchange of letters, posters and an English summer camp focused on anti-bullying activities, while also promoted cultural tolerance and linguistic skills. The students also created an anti-bullying comic book and videos to showcase the emotional impact of bullying. The summer camp was an excellent opportunity to bring all the students together and work in mixed level groups. The students were able to work with others with a variety of levels of language skills collaborating and learning from each other and practicing democracy. Students had the opportunity to take decisions during the different phases of the project from the material they would use to the final structure of their work.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/23318>

☰▶ “Media education: From passive consumers to active creators”



Age of students:
12 – 20

Countries:
Greece, Italy, Portugal,
Slovakia, Spain

As we learned from the “Stories that Move: Toolbox against discrimination” project, exploring one’s consumption of media is important in order to evaluate the credibility of the information sources we use, whether that be social media, movies, news channels, songs etc. By evaluating these information sources students have an opportunity to critically think and analyse difficult topics, engage in discussion and understand what constitutes their identity and system of values and beliefs. The

project was inspired by Scott Jason, the managing editor of The Orion at California State University, who claims that a democracy that does not have an informed public is destined to decay, strengthening the fact that literacy and democracy interact in dynamic reciprocity. Five classes joined forces in the project focusing on media education, using hands-on approach as the main teaching method. Students learned how to use simple media production technologies and techniques by creating media outputs in the form of videos, a joint newspaper, a website and counter advertisements on three main subjects: gender stereotypes, health and lifestyle and global issues. They compared and shared their different views and usages of media resources from their national point of view, learning to think critically and be an active, thinking and reflecting agent, contrary to the passive consumer that is easily manipulated. Throughout the project students created posters, videos, cartoons, trailers, book covers, games, ad leaflets that raised awareness of the issue. Teachers also created a large bank of lesson plans, presentations and accompanying material for teaching Media Education and Literacy with a hands-on approach.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/940>

☞ “Be a buddy, not a bully”



Age of students:
13 - 15

Countries:
France, Greece, Italy, Poland,
Romania, Turkey

As we learn from “Stories that Move”, well managed discussion has been shown to engage learners and trigger self-discovery, that in turn helps young people speak about their identity and experiences. Moreover, exploring how sensitive topics are presented in various media is an interesting exercise that enables students to create their own content with greater awareness. In the “Be a buddy, not a bully” project, students explored topics of hate speech, physical violence and cyberbullying through the creation and review of various media sources. Students collaboratively explored the problem, its reasons, types and definitions of bullying and how it is presented in songs, films and other media. Students then organised an anti-bullying campaign,

drawings, presentations and a narrated game-story of women, who broke free and reported the violent aggressor. The online magazine includes articles with “inspiring women in the present and past, touching testimonies and striking speeches”. The magazine was produced collaboratively using Padlet, where students could share, comment and vote for the best articles.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/52985>

3.3 Suggested eTwinning activities

School plays a crucial role in students’ lives and should provide an environment where students feel safe to express their opinion and be respected. Teachers should motivate their students to participate actively in school life and to reach a consensus on common rules. Cultivating students’ ability to think critically is crucial and it comes easier when students talk and interact with each other. By working together to solve problems, sharing thoughts and debating topics, they can make connections between ideas, spot errors or inconsistencies in reasoning and evaluate arguments. Below, you can find some activities that can help you develop the critical thinking skills of students of all ages.

“Our words and our behaviour can hurt others”



Each class cuts out a large paper heart to use during a live event through videoconferences. Each partner class shares examples of things or words that people do or say that hurts their feelings. For each example, the students fold their heart. Then, students share positive words or things that make them feel good. For each of these examples, they unfold the heart. In case of young students, the teacher translates the examples in the language of communication.

Once all classes have shared their examples, the teachers ask the students how the heart looks. Students will realise that hurtful behaviour leaves marks that are not always visible on the outside.

After the online meeting, the students can share kind behaviours that will make their peers feel positive.

Age: 5 - 8 | **Tools:** videoconferences, paper

“Bullying matching game”

Teachers and students discuss different forms of bullying such as physical, verbal, social and provide some examples for each type. A teacher collects the examples of bullying behaviours from all partners and creates a matching game, where students must define the examples of behaviour with the type of bullying e.g. regularly hitting or punching someone is a physical bullying while teasing someone for not being good at sport is verbal bullying. Students can play the game and check the behaviours that their peers have added. In an online meeting, they can reflect on possible actions to take when they come across incidences of bullying.

They can also share this online game with other classes at their school to raise awareness.

Age: 8 - 15 | **Tools:** ClassTools.net, videoconferences

“Your words can hurt my feelings”

Teachers create a two-column Padlet and ask all students to write down hurtful comments they hear at schools. They need to decide if the comment is “Teasing/Playful” or “Extremely Painful” and put them in the corresponding column. Once all partners have added their comments the teachers will organise a discussion with their students at class and check if the same words have been put in both columns. Then, they ask their students to categorise the words according to appearance, ability, sexuality, ethnic background. Once their students have reflected on the topic, they ask them to work in mixed-nationality groups and propose ways to stop hate speech at school. They will need to think of a creative way to present their suggestion for example a poster, a video or a comic.



Age: 8 – 15 | **Tools:** Padlet, Canva, ToonDoo, Thinglink, Blaberize

“Labels and Stereotypes”

Teachers have a discussion with their students about the impact of stereotypes and labelling on individuals and groups of people. The two partner teachers select some photographs that show people in different countries and settings and share them with each other, so their students won't be familiar with the images. Then, during an online meeting partners take turns to place a picture on the forehead of one of the students, the students from the partner class then look at the photo and say words that express

the general opinion of society about the person in the photo. These words might be positive or negative. All the words are written down and the student is asked to guess the identity of the person in the photo based on how the others responded.

Once all photos are used, students can have a discussion why labels and stereotypes are unfair, and the role of media in perpetuating labelling and stereotyping. Students can go further and develop a survey of how other people in their community respond to the same photos. Based on their findings, they can decide how to address the issues in more depth.

Age: 10-14 | **Tools:** photographs, videoconferences

“The Fake News Detectives”

After a class discussion about fake news, its consequences and how to assess what is true and what is not, the students of each partner schools prepare a quiz for their peers. The questions should include real and fake images and stories that ask their peers to decide what is true and false. Once the quizzes are ready, they are published on the TwinSpace and students are invited to take them. The winners from each class will receive a certificate naming them the Distinguished Fake News Detective! In a follow-up activity, the students can discuss the truth behind the fake photos and stories.



Age: 12-18 | **Tools:** Kahoot, Quizziz

“What does hate speech mean to you?”

All partner schools discuss online hate speech and share any incidents that have happened to them or other people. Teachers ask students to check the definitions of “Online Hate speech” and share it in a forum.

Once they have explored the various definitions of hate speech, teachers ask them to collectively create their own definition. They could start by exploring what online hate speech is not. For instance: Online hate speech is not when someone Tweets a supportive statement like “you did great work, I’m super proud of you!” or “Online hate speech is not crude or offensive”.

It may be easier to produce an extended definition: one that exemplifies the term and provides clarity to everyone about what online hate speech is. This definition is unlikely to be a single, short sentence.

Teachers create mixed-nationality groups and ask students to re-create/communicate the definition in a more interesting and engaging manner. They should choose the media that they most enjoy working with like animation, meme, poem, rap etc. At the end, the students can vote for the best ones in each category. Finally, teachers get the students to discuss how this piece could be promoted to raise awareness of what hate speech is.

Age: 12-16 | **Tools:** Biteable, Kapwing, Haiku or Acrostic poems, Rhymezone (Activity from Selma, hacking hate project: <https://hackinghate.eu/>)

“Media: rights, freedom, propaganda”

Teachers ask their students to monitor the media’s coverage of current affairs on television, radio, newspapers and online and to collect and post articles/videos/texts they find most interesting on a Padlet. What is the relationship between propaganda and the rights and freedoms of individuals? Teachers discuss this with their students and organise an online session with their partners. They can also invite an expert to further discuss the topic.

Age: 13 – 18 | **Tools:** TwinBoard, videoconferences, Padlet

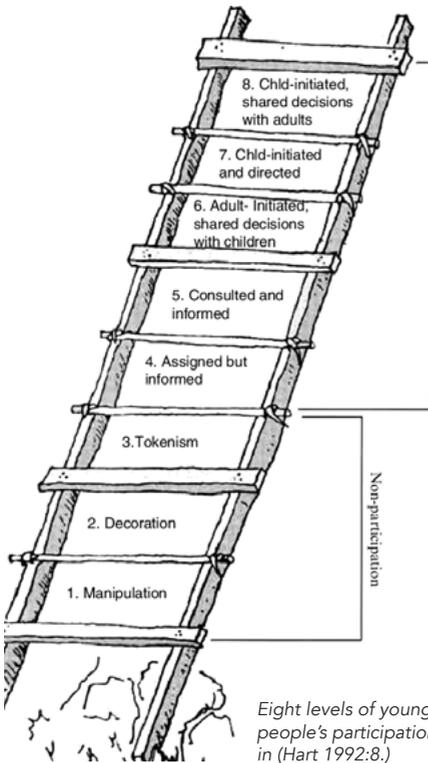


4. Young leaders, thinkers, change-makers

4.1 Empowering young people to participate in society

“As the years progress, what women and men will discover is that the most lasting and rewarding educational experiences come not from specific information provided in classroom lectures or assigned textbooks, but from the values obtained in active engagement in meaningful issues. We achieve for ourselves only as we appreciate the problems and concerns of others - and only as we see our own lives as part of a much greater social purpose”
(Manning Marable, 1997)

Children’s fundamental right to participate in events concerning their own lives has relatively recently been recognised, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).



Adults have an important role to play in ensuring that children are encouraged to freely express their views on important issues to them. Children’s right to be heard extends to all actions and decisions which affect children’s lives: within their family, their school, their community and at national policy level. Proper consideration should be given to children’s views when decisions are being made.

In his paper “Children’s Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship”, published by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Roger Hart adjusted the Ladder of Participation, a concept developed by Sherry Arenstein referring to involvement of citizens in decision making (1969) to include children. The ladder explains the various degrees of participation in projects, ranging from Manipulation

instead of real participation at the bottom of the ladder to Child- initiated, shared decisions with adults at the top (see image).

We learn that as a fundamental right of citizenship, participation is defined as “The process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives” (Hart, 1992). According to Hart, we should not expect young people to suddenly become engaged citizens at the age of 16, 18 or 21, without having prior experience of what it means to use their voice, organise themselves and influence their lives. That means that an understanding of democratic participation and the confidence and competence to participate, can only be acquired gradually through practice, and this practice needs to be embedded in learning.

The ladder has done much to raise awareness about tokenism¹³, decoration¹⁴, manipulation, exploitation and abuse of children by adults in the name of child participation. Nevertheless, there are still too many occasions where children are stuck on the bottom rungs of the ladder. For example, children are used to expressing the opinions of adults or are asked to say and do things that benefit adults rather than children.

Young people should be able to make choices as much as people of any age (Chanoff, 1981). However, the purpose of education is not just providing students with choices, but also concrete opportunities to act on their knowledge, to create solutions and to change and transform existing structures so that the world becomes a better place for everybody (Westheimer & Kahne, 1998).

In that case, the role of teachers is crucial. Teachers should ask for students’ opinions and give them a voice and the space to express their views and act upon them. Young people are the leaders of today, not tomorrow. There are numerous examples of young people who raised their voice, actively engaged in their society and created change. In this chapter we share two of these examples.

13 Tokenism is used in Hart’s ladder to describe „those instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions“ (p.9, Hart, 1992)

14 Decoration, refers according to Hart, to those „frequent occasions when children are given goodies such as T-shirts related to some cause, and may sing or dance at an event in such dress, but have little idea of what it is all about and no say in the organizing of the occasion“ (p.9, Hart, 1992)

Europe on Track 6: Which Track?



Sandra Kebede
Interviewer/blogger
of Team Blue

Europe on Track (EoT) <https://www.europeontrack.org> is a project that aims to raise awareness, create a space for discussion and to capture the opinions of youth in Europe on important social issues. Initiated by AEGEE Europe it is under the umbrella project “MyEuropeMySay”, an AEGEE external project about youth participation, capacities of youth organizations, European citizenship and values, and formal means of participation. The first edition of the project was launched in 2013.

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme, the Europe on Track project gave the opportunity to six ambassadors in two teams (one videographer, one photographer and one interviewer per team) travel by train across 20 cities in one month to deliver workshops, interview young people and organise events in cooperation with 200 volunteers from over 20 cities in Europe. As the local organisers are AEGEEans, there is close cooperation in the organisation of the steps to ensure relevant links between EoT’s topics and those relevant to the community of the youngsters that are visited. The project benefits from its grassroots approach and the diversity of the ambassadors and organisers that provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities for one another.

This year is the sixth edition, entitled “Europe on Track 6: Which Track? Looking for Future of Europe through Youth Participation”. It aimed to identify and discuss the critical issues in Europe and to empower young Europeans to be the actors of today’s democracy. EoT leads by example: the project team and ambassadors consist of young people that actively create tangible outcomes at each stop such as statistics on the participating youngsters’ sense of (European) citizenship, and videos, pictures, and blog posts. Furthermore, workshop participants are introduced to their local AEGEE branch and various youth participation methods, building capacity in each local community visited. Finally, a week after the European Parliament elections, the results and the future of Europe were discussed during an open conference in Alicante, and with this, the knowledge transfer for the next edition starts.

More about MyEuropeMySay: <https://myeuropemysay.eu/>

More about AEGEE: <https://www.aegEE.org/>

Seeds for Integration



Judit Lantai
Project and Policy Officer, OBESSU¹⁵

To foster the inclusion of students with a refugee and migrant background, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) has been running a programme called “Seeds for Integration”. Students and student unions all over Europe, who are interested in taking an active role and make their voice being heard and/or take action, can apply for micro-grants to carry out projects to meet this goal.

During 2015 when coverage of migration across Europe became prominent, the Irish Second-Level Students’ Union (ISSU), member of OBESSU, noted that refugee and migrant students who were in the Irish education system faced a number of barriers when attending school. The view of ISSU was that both the Irish education system and the school environment were not equipped to support these students to fully integrate themselves. Barriers such as the opportunity to participate in student councils and extracurricular activities meant that these students could often not voice their concerns and wishes.

ISSU applied for a grant under the “Seeds for Integration” programme to work on that issue. They started by leading a consultation where students from migrant and refugee backgrounds were invited to share their thoughts on inclusion in schools. Titled “ISSU’s Tools for Inclusive Schools”, the event was sponsored so that all students could take advantage of free transport to the venue. In fact, an entire analysis of barriers within the organisation itself ended up taking place, aiding schools to become more inclusive for the future. Many Irish students who were interested in the topic also attended, and a clear consensus was reached on what standards were needed from schools to create a more inclusive environment.

ISSU’s Charter for Inclusive Schools was created as result of this process, and, with the project funding received, the organisation was able to share the charter with every school in Ireland. It is a document imagined, written and designed by students to focus on the integration of migrant and refugee students in second level schools in Ireland. The charter outlines a pledge that schools and students should uphold to make the school environment more inclusive, both for migrant and refugee students

¹⁵ OBESSU is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe

and Irish students alike, where everyone can express their opinion and take part in all democratic procedures at school. Politically, the charter also received attention, the Minister for Integration attended the launch of the charter, and a larger discussion on inclusion in schools was sparked by the project.

More about the Seeds for Integration Programme: <https://seedsforintegration.org/>

More about OBESSU: <https://obessu.org/>

4.2 Inspiring eTwinning Projects

In line with Roger Hart's call to give young people opportunities to make decisions and play an active role in school and society, eTwinning projects empower students to play an active role in deciding the shape and direction of their projects. Taking this into account, the eTwinning Schools Mission underlines that:

Students have a role to play in the development of the eTwinning School. They promote eTwinning to teachers (both already engaged or who are not yet involved) and parents, acting both as drivers and as a sounding board for all innovations taking place in pedagogy and use of technology.

This can happen by students' active participation in projects, where they can examine different societal issues, debate and propose solutions to problems. This is also in line with the European Council Recommendation (2019) that emphasises the importance of providing opportunities for young people to participate in democratic procedures and engage in community activities being critically aware and responsible. In this section, you can find some projects where students take the lead and their voices are heard at school and in their community.

⇒ "Through Democracy to Literacy"



Age of students:

3 - 12

Countries:

Iceland, Poland, Slovenia,
Spain

As we learned in the introduction to this chapter, participation does not start at the age of 16 or 18, and this project demonstrates that democratic participation can start as early as preschool. The project explored the understanding of democracy and literacy in preschools. Themes of democracy were approached on daily basis and was a whole-school approach in the case of the Spanish school as four classes

from four villages participated in the project. The four classes are in a rural area and they have 38 students from 3-12 years old. This project gave them the opportunity to connect and work together in collaboration with their partners.

The project was divided into four different areas of focus: teachers' role as facilitators of the learning process; students' agency in leading and designing their own learning process; parental and community involvement; and lastly, how daily routines and environment can support students' learning through democracy improving their literacy. During the project children explored a variety of topics through experiments, free and guided play, and excursions and field trips visiting different institutions in their communities, frequently working in pairs or teams. Following children's ideas, teachers were open to more untypical activities such as: collecting smells of a dragon's den, creating the "How to Meow?" book or making tornado and clouds, illustrating stories through recyclable materials and many more. Democratic values such as respect, collaboration, support, wisdom, peace, friendship and more were practiced and discussed through the creation of a video called "Building Values". Children also participated in "the Children's Council", where they took on the roles of adults in school and discovered the responsibilities and needs of their society, offering solutions and initiating actions such as collecting goods for an animal shelter.

Children had many opportunities to develop their literacy skills by working with syllables, extending their vocabulary and working on their background knowledge and comprehension.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/36323>

☰ ➔ "I'm in Love with the Green Earth"



Age of students:
7-17

Countries:
Croatia, Italy, Romania, Tunisia

Providing students with concrete opportunities to act on their knowledge, and creating solutions to make their world a better place is at the core of student participation and engagement. In this project students showed that *love* is not only about words but is first and foremost about action, and loving a green earth means taking concrete steps to make it such. Putting an emphasis on active citizenship, students took part in volunteering activities acting as positive role models for their schools and communities. These included cleaning school gardens and planting trees to celebrating Tree Day in order to raise awareness of ecology in their schools. Students created anti-pollution campaigns working in collaborative international teams. Each team tackled a specific aspect of pollution, exploring the causes, effects and possible solutions. Through research, dances, planting trees and exchanging ideas students had a unique opportunity to inspire their colleagues and the whole community to take action for a greener world.

All the work can be found in an e-book produced by the students, where the school community and parents can take inspiration from the creative solutions students proposed.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/70029>

🚩 "URRRGENT! Europe is knocking at the door!"



Age of the students:
9-11

Countries:
Greece, Spain

As we learned from the *OBESSU's* project *Seeds of Integration*, open discussion and raising awareness of societal issues are often the first step to initiating change to one's environment. This project shows how this is implemented in practice. Students firstly explored how waste is treated, how recycling works, what is depletion of natural resources and how landfills work. Then, they collaboratively participated in European campaigns on the topic of nature conservation. In the first campaign,

“Climate Change Action”, students created a collaborative e-book of posters, where they showed the world the causes and effects of climate change. Moreover, they produced collaborative videos presenting actions that each of us can take to reduce our ecological footprint. In the second campaign, “European Week for Waste Reduction” (EWWR), students worked in transnational teams to produce an Eco Calendar for 2018 with suggestions and anecdotes about ecology and the environment, raising awareness of the importance of reducing, reusing and recycling. Finally, in the third campaign, “Let’s Clean Europe”, students spread the message of environmental consciousness globally by collaboratively producing a music video of a song based on a well-known melody which they danced in parallel in each class.

Through these hands-on activities, students engaged in active citizenship and contributed to making their communities greener and more environmentally conscious.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/45884>

⇒ “WHF: With a little help from my friends”



Age of students:
10 -15

Countries:
Greece, Turkey, Ukraine

As we learned, key competences for active citizenship such as problem solving, critical thinking and self-organisation can be acquired through participation in school projects. This project was designed in the spirit of this idea and engaged students through a blend of problem-solving tasks and communication challenges. In order to develop the students into active citizens they were tasked with identifying and solving real problems in their communities collaboratively with their partners. The project was organised in four phases: Get engaged: Map it: Take Action and; Celebrate, following Dr Jane Goodall’s “[Roots and Shoots](https://www.rootsandshoots.org/)”¹⁶ formula. First, students shared inspirational stories about national change-makers, and got involved in field and online research of local and global problems. Then, they participated in democratic

¹⁶ <https://www.rootsandshoots.org/>

processes such as voting and working in transnational groups to discuss problems, suggesting courses of action and reaching a consensus on their joint action. Finally, they collaborated to realise their common plans and proposals to solve the problems “with a little help from” project partners, family and experts.

After being inspired by each other’s national change-makers, project partners identified local and global problems, described them in a Tricider where they also added arguments to those they considered most serious. After discussing the problems online, they voted for the problem they would tackle together. At an online meeting, students proposed solutions to the problem of stray animals. Each transnational group decided on a different solution and put it into action in their local community aided by local animal welfare organisations. The actions taken by students were published in a Sway presentation entitled “Stray Animals: A problem to fix”. This project nurtures a European democratic culture through voting and discussions with international partners during online meetings. The project also attempts to develop a social entrepreneurial mindset in the students and foster entrepreneurship as the transversal competence “to turn ideas into action, to plan and manage processes to achieve objectives which applies to actively participating in society and ... starting up ventures of ... social value” (EntreComp, 2016).

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/28045>

☰ “The Truth Behind Palm Oil”



Age of the students:

13 - 15

Countries:

Italy, Lithuania, Spain

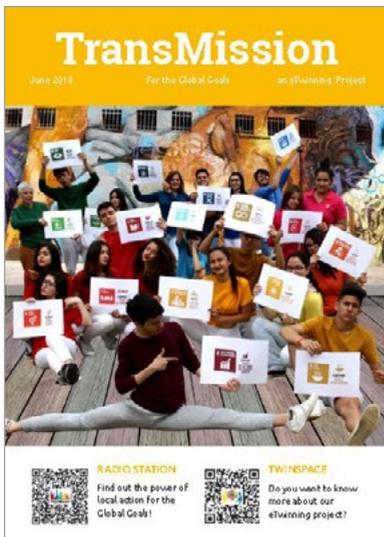
Being informed is an essential step in active participation, as only through acquiring knowledge one can decide on actions to take. In this project students delved deeper in the issue of the production and use of palm oil in everyday products. Students were encouraged to research the usage of unsustainable palm oil in their countries

and worked collaboratively to create an action plan. They also took different roles like palm oil plantation owner, human rights activist, environmentalist, beautician and had to analyse the views of these people on topics such as: human rights abuse of the workers, environmental issues, health risks and benefits etc.

The most successful result of this project was the design and realisation of an International Convention on Unsustainable Palm Oil. In the convention, students designed programmes, created presentations and gave speeches according to their given role.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/47543>

☰▶ “TransMission for the Global Goals”



Age of students:
14 - 17

Countries:
*France, Greece, Italy, Ireland,
Poland, Spain*

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are world-changing objectives that will require global cooperation in the years to come. Adopting the idea that children are the leaders of today, six schools joined forces to promote the idea that students have a crucial role to play in contributing to a sustainable future. During the project, students explored questions regarding proactivity and sustainability of our planet, for example: what can we as citizens do? How can we have an impact in our community to make the world a better place? Students worked collaboratively in international groups where they exchanged ideas and came up with practical solutions to these questions and other challenges they face by 2030. As a result, a collaborative

e-magazine and a radio channel were produced. Both enabled students to share their ideas and provide hands-on solutions to various problems in their communities. The message of sustainability and environmental consciousness was then shared with their communities.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/46178>

☰▶ “School 21, Digitally and Socially Yours”



Age of students:
15 - 17

Countries:
*Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary,
Poland, Romania*

This two-year project started with preliminary research on the different practices and methods used to incorporate community service in the participating countries' school curricula. As practices of volunteering and community services vary in each country, partners decided to create a common framework where students could develop their collaborative, digital and language skills together while actively contributing to society. During the project, students participated in a variety of community services, including working with refugees, supporting children with disabilities, visiting orphanages, animal shelters, rescuers and socially excluded children. In each phase of the project, students researched the application of human rights in extreme situations and acted as volunteers in their or in their partners' communities. Furthermore, students shared presentations about refugees and the way their countries deal with migration, participation of athletes in the Paralympics, inclusion of young people with disabilities in schools and how local organisations implement corporate social responsibility actions in their regions. During the project, teachers facilitated the process of active learning and participation. Students and teachers participated in fund raising actions and were involved in common activities together in their communities.

The most notable events were published in a bimonthly project newsletter that summarised recent project activities as well as giving updates on current school life and other events in partner countries. At the end of the project, all the newsletter content was consolidated into a brochure available in digital and printed format.

Link to the TwinSpace: <https://twinspace.etwinning.net/44282>

4.3 Suggested eTwinning Activities

Democratic principles should permeate school structures and the curriculum and be considered as standard practice in schools. Educators should demonstrate respect for children's opinion and let their voice be heard by establishing children's decision-making bodies and peer mediation, trusting children to organise events and empowering them to organise themselves in a democratic way. It is essential that educators provide children with concrete learning opportunities to explore issues, discuss, formulate opinions, debate and propose strategies to deal with conflict and achieve reasonable goals. Such experiences of participation are especially empowering, helping children to understand that participation is a worthwhile effort. Building meaningful participation requires building the leadership skills of children, to give them the opportunity to develop their abilities and equip them with tools to become meaningful social actors.

"Seeds of responsibility"



Teachers have a discussion with their students about the plants and flowers of their country. Then, they check the weather conditions in the countries of their partners and according to their research, they send them seeds that can grow in their location. Once they receive the seeds, they have another discussion with their students about the importance of the needs the seeds and later the plants will have and share the different responsibilities among their students. As the plants begin to grow, the partners create an online journal where they share photos and information about the progress of the plants.

Age: 4-6 | **Tools:** Storybird, Storyjumper

“From inspiration to action”

Teachers start with getting their students inspired by important historical figures that changed the world through action. Working in international groups, students can explore the lives of heroes (national or international) that contributed to make their society a better place. Teachers can start by encouraging them discuss the meaning of some notable quotes of these important people.

For example: Martin Luther King Jr: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?”

After collaborative research work in international teams and presentation of the lives and actions of these inspiring people, students can explore concrete ways in which they can contribute to their communities: visit an elderly home, clean a public area, plant flowers, organize a bake and sell fair, collection of toys and clothes to be donated etc., students can then exchange their experiences from these volunteering actions and create a “handbook of volunteering” that gathers tips on how to find opportunities to contribute to their communities.

Age: 6-18 | **Tools:** videoconferences, Twinboard, Google Docs, Madmagz

“Creating our own micro country”

Partners start by exploring what the main common elements that countries have are:

Sovereignty: Having status as a sovereign nation, including exchanging ambassadors, acceptance of passports, membership in international organisations. This usually includes possession of actual territory (land).

Flag and national anthem: accepted and used to represent the state.

Constitution or a set of basic laws on which the legal system of the country is operated on.

Government: elected and structured according to the constitution.

Students can work in international groups, each group focusing on one aspect of the imaginary state. At the beginning of the project students and teachers discuss and decide which values are important to them in their imaginary state. Students can create their own constitution and even vote for their leaders. At the end of the project a discussion on how we can make our communities similar to the ideal society and state created in the project can be conducted.

Age: 6-18 | **Tools:** videoconferences, TwinBoard, Google Draw, Canva



“The international human rights club”

Once the students are aware of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, teachers invite them to take action by establishing an international human rights club. The students can vote for their international council, define the purpose of their club, run a competition to select the club symbol, create membership cards and begin holding online meetings. The club can have a number of roles and carry out a variety of activities such as: inviting experts to school to talk about human rights, collaborating with other organisations, taking part in volunteering initiatives, informing other classes about human rights etc.



Age: 10 -18 | **Tools:** Canva, TwinSpace, videoconferences

“Sharing is caring”

Students identify issues that their local community faces for instance: homelessness; poor quality roads, a dirty beach etc. They then discuss the local issues with their partners and help each other to find ideas for solutions. They also try to find ways to promote their actions and attract more people to participate through posters, posts on social media, collaboration with the local authorities and other NGOs. Schools construct action plans and they start implementing them. Students organise monthly online meetings to report and plan what’s next.

Age: 10-18 | **Tools:** videoconferences, Spark, Canva

“Mock Elections: Every vote count”

Teachers explain to their students that this activity will involve them participating in democratic methods of decision making. Mock elections are designed to mimic real elections and are often used to teach students or new voters about the election process. Teachers should always have a discussion about why voting is important and stress that every vote does matter.

The students of all partner schools will vote for the candidate that has the best plan for their school. Every partner school can have two representatives that will need to prepare their campaign. With a longer term project, teachers could have students join teams behind each candidate and make posters, flyers, and position statements and have an online candidate debate or rally, where the candidates present their plans.



Partner classes can create an actual polling station, setting up the class accordingly. They can even create IDs that students can have as voter identification registration material, sample ballots, campaign literature, and other educational materials. Once all schools have voted, teachers organise an online meeting to announce the results and identify next steps.

Age: 12-18 | **Tools:** videoconferences, papers, polling station

“Summit discussion on a critical issue”

Students select a critical topic for their debate, for instance “rapid reduction of emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by transitioning to clean energy sources”. One of the partner schools takes a position in favour and the other against. The two partners investigate the topic, role-play the process of law-making and prepare their case. During the online meeting, the two partners share their position and see how they can work together to come up with feasible action.

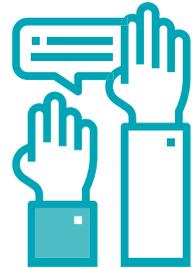
Age: 14-18 | **Tools:** videoconferences

“The power of Petitions”

After a group discussion with their students, teachers get them to agree on an issue to support, that will get the attention of the community and decision makers. Teachers should help the students find a common issue and a proposed solution and then help them to create an effective petition, considering the appearance, the title and the purpose statement. Once the petition is ready, a special online training session provide students with advice about how best to approach people to sign the petition, for example, students should be ready to explain their ideas and remain polite and respectful even if some people disagree and to approach people with a smile etc.

Students could also organize an online petition. Once, they have gathered enough signatures, they choose the recipient carefully, one in each partner country and arrange to present it in person.

Age: 14-18 | **Tools:** Avaaz.org, Change.org



Conclusions

The topic of this year's eTwinning theme – Democratic Participation – comes at a very important moment in time. If it's true that democratic processes have never been merely confined within the boundaries of formal elections, it is also more and more evident that people's voice –so-called *public opinion* - is formed, represented and sometimes misused in novel and unpredictable ways. Political representation, especially in the past two decades, has dramatically shifted from traditional parties and organisations to scattered movements sometimes manipulated by social media, making our society *liquid* – to paraphrase *Zygmunt Bauman* – as is the way consensus is achieved.



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What is the role of younger generations in all of this? How can education, our schools, our teachers, contribute to empowering students so that they will be able to play a role in our society? Are schools able to address students' legitimate expectations? Interestingly, the renowned activist of climate crisis, the young Swedish student Greta Thunberg, has started her battle via a 'school strike', probably feeling that she could make her voice heard by *not going to school*, and instead standing in front of her country's Parliament with a big signpost reciting "skolstrejk för klimatet". Thousands of students followed her example, again deserting schools and contributing to putting this topic on the political agenda. But, did education have a role in this process? Was Greta's engagement triggered by a discussion with her teachers, by a lesson she took part in, by a project she was engaged in? Did education create the right context for the thousands of Greta who manifest in the streets, calling for action against the climate crisis? We do not have an answer to this, but we hope that the school system laid the foundations for this young generation to roll up their sleeves and *do something*. This *do something* spirit is, in a nutshell, *democratic participation*.

As we have seen in this publication, there is a renewed commitment by the European Union and the education authorities in the member states, by other institutions such as the Council of Europe, formalised in conventions ratified by hundreds of states, in initiatives at local and national level, to strongly **support citizenship education**. Schools are in the front-line to make sure that the young generations 'learn and practice democracy'. This means building the knowledge, developing the skills

and attitudes underpinning the citizenship competence, including the respect for democratic values and fundamental rights. This also means 'learning by doing'. Everyone at school has a role: school leaders should allow for shared leadership and prepare the conditions to go beyond traditional teaching methods and subjects; teachers are called to develop professionally and find the links between the curriculum and societal trends, students should act – and be recognised – as agents of change. The local community also plays an essential role to support this process: schools, parents, associations, municipalities are all part of the same eco-system, which grows taking into account everyone's contributions. As a collective effort, we need to work on a more **inclusive, democratic, authentic** education which deals with what really matters (climate crisis, tolerance, respect, multiculturalism, and more) and prepares these young citizens for tomorrow.

This book demonstrates that there are schools, teachers and projects which prepare the ground for young people to become thinkers and engaged citizens, ready to go beyond their school's comfort zone. **eTwinning** provides these teachers with the tools, the context, the inspiration and the recognition needed. What you read in this publication are just a few of the many successful activities which cultivate **individuals into a community**, creating the pre-requisites for young people to say: "yes, I do matter". Because scattered schools, teachers and projects risk remaining isolated, sterile attempts if they do not have a systemic impact. Hundreds of eTwinning projects have the strength of a democratic movement if they move in the same direction, share their practice and capitalise on their successes. If they nurture each other, get visible and recognised, they can become mainstream.

This book is dedicated to all the dreamers, and there are many, out there, who every day make a difference in this world.

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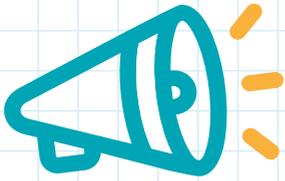
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