



Co-funded by
the European Union



EuroCivic Lab

**Strengthening European Identity
and Citizenship through
SDGs, Social Activism and
Living Labs Methodology in
School Education**

WP2

**Teachers' Training Kit for re-supporting
European Identity through innovative
training approaches**

Module 3

EU Citizenship Education Handbook

The EuroCivic Lab project: Strengthening European Identity and Citizenship through SDGs, Social Activism and Living Lab methodology in School Education

2024-1-HU01-KA220-SCH-000251467

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ National Agency ŠMPF. Neither the European Union nor the administering body can be held responsible for them.

Creative Commons License



CC BY-NC 4.0

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International

This license requires that reusers give credit to the creator. It allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, for noncommercial purposes only.

Project Partners



universität
wien



Authors	Project Partner
Gergely Guszmán	Eszterházy Károly Catholic University
Margarida Amaral	Salesianos do Porto - Colégio
Sule Kirkmali	Torbalı Atatürk Anadolu Lisesi
Ilona Ragazinskiene	Siauliai 'Saules' primary school

Project Partners



universität
wien



Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 Purpose and Target Audience	5
1.2 Relevance to EU and Global Context.....	5
1.3 Connection to the SDGs and the Future of the European Union.....	6
1.4 Handbook Structure Overview	7
2. Objectives and Learning Outcomes	9
2.1 Learning Objectives	9
2.2 Core Competences	10
3. EU Citizenship.....	12
3.1 Key Definitions and Concepts.....	12
3.2 Comprehensive Examination.....	13
3.2.1 Context and Legal Framework	13
3.2.2 EU Institutions and Citizenship Participation	15
3.2.3 EU Citizenship and Identity	18
3.2.4 Active Citizenship and Participation Opportunities	21
4.1 Technological Advancements and Digital Citizenship	23
4.2 Environmental & Social Challenges	25
4.3 Evolving Role of the EU on the Global Stage	28
5. Building a Sense of European Belonging in Schools.....	32
5.1 Practical Classroom Integration.....	32
5.2 Long-Term Impact and Teacher Professional Growth.....	33

Project Partners



6. Educational and Methodological Recommendations	35
6.1 Teaching Strategies.....	35
6.2 Digital Tools & Resources	36
6.3 Innovative Learning Approaches	39
6.4 Assessment Methods.....	41
7. Summary and Key Takeaways	42
7.1 Recap of Key Concepts	42
7.2 Reflection Questions	42
7.3 Practical Applications	43
8. Self-Assessment and Test Questions	45
8.1 Self-Check Questions	45
8.2 Knowledge-Based Questions	45
8.3 Application-Based Exercises	49
9. Annexes	51
9.1 Glossary	51
9.2 List of Abbreviations	52
9.3 Further Reading	52
9.4 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	54
References.....	56

Project Partners



universität
wien



1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Target Audience

This handbook is designed for teachers, school leaders, and educators working in primary and secondary education across Europe. Its main objective is to provide practical tools and theoretical foundations to support the teaching of European Union (EU) citizenship in diverse classroom settings.

The content responds to the need for learner-centred, inclusive, and rights-based civic education that empowers young people to understand, express, and enact their European citizenship. It supports educators in guiding students to: - Navigate the legal and institutional frameworks of the EU; - Recognise and reflect on multiple levels of identity and belonging; - Engage critically with democratic processes and civic challenges; - Act as responsible and informed citizens, locally and transnationally.

The handbook is part of the EuroCivic Lab project's mission to bridge the gap between citizenship education policy and classroom practice, with a focus on promoting civic competence, social inclusion, and democratic culture.

1.2 Relevance to EU and Global Context

The European Union is facing a period of profound transformation—characterised by digitalisation, environmental urgency, demographic shifts, geopolitical instability, and renewed reflection on democratic values. In this context, EU citizenship is more than a set of rights: it is a civic resource for resilience, solidarity, and inclusive participation (Descamps, 2019a; Lisbon Declaration, 2022).

The handbook aligns with EU strategic priorities such as: - The European Education Area, promoting citizenship education as a core pillar of quality and inclusive schooling; - The Digital

Project Partners



Education Action Plan, emphasising digital citizenship and media literacy; - The European Green Deal, integrating ecological awareness with civic responsibility; - The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which underpin EU policies on social justice, human rights, and global cooperation.

At a global level, young Europeans are increasingly called to act on transnational challenges—from migration and disinformation to climate activism and technological ethics. Schools are therefore key spaces where students can develop the skills, attitudes, and knowledge to participate meaningfully in democratic societies.

1.3 Connection to the SDGs and the Future of the European Union

EU citizenship connects directly to many of the goals set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda. The right to move freely, to work and study across borders, and to be treated equally reflect wider commitments to inclusive education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work (SDG 8), and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). These rights help build a shared civic space where participation and fairness are not just national concerns but European ones. By promoting environmental protection, social justice, and democratic participation, EU citizenship contributes to global aims like climate action, peace, and strong institutions.

The European Union sees sustainability, innovation, and solidarity as part of its future direction. The Green Deal, the Social Pillar, and digital transformation strategies show how EU institutions link policy with long-term goals for people and the planet. These priorities are not separate from citizenship—they are part of how the EU defines its social contract. As the Union responds to global challenges, citizens are invited to take part in shaping decisions that affect public health, the environment, education, and digital rights. This shared responsibility supports the idea of a more connected and sustainable Europe.

Project Partners



Teachers can bring these themes into the classroom through practical tasks. Linking lessons to the SDGs—such as clean energy, sustainable cities, or quality education—can show students how EU citizenship is about real-life issues. Group projects might explore how school energy use relates to EU climate policy, or how local recycling connects to the circular economy. This approach helps students see how what they learn in school is part of a broader effort to improve life across Europe and beyond. It gives meaning to both citizenship and the SDGs by connecting them to everyday experience.

1.4 Handbook Structure Overview

This handbook is structured to guide educators step-by-step from foundational knowledge to practical implementation of EU citizenship education:

- Chapter 2 defines the core learning objectives and competences students should acquire, drawing from EU frameworks like the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and the Council of Europe's RFCDC. It clarifies what knowledge, skills, and attitudes underpin active and inclusive citizenship in the European context.
- Chapter 3 provides a clear explanation of the legal foundations, rights, and institutional architecture of EU citizenship. It covers key treaties, rights such as free movement and political participation, and the roles of EU institutions. It also introduces concepts like dual citizenship, European identity, and citizen engagement mechanisms like the European Citizens' Initiative.
- Chapter 4 focuses on emerging social and political challenges that shape what it means to be a citizen today. It explores how climate change, digitalisation, misinformation, and geopolitical shifts influence youth participation and inclusion. Teachers are supported to link these themes to students' lives using up-to-date case studies and cross-disciplinary activities.

Project Partners



- Chapter 5 explores how schools can cultivate a sense of European belonging, offering guidance on inclusive teaching practices, classroom culture, and whole-school initiatives. It encourages educators to support students in recognising diversity as a strength, connecting local experiences to European values and democratic traditions.
- Chapter 6 presents practical educational strategies, tools, and assessment methods to implement EU citizenship learning. This includes guidance on project-based learning, gamification, simulations, peer-led learning, as well as tips for digital tools, community partnerships, and formative evaluation.
- Chapter 7 offers a concise synthesis of key ideas covered throughout the handbook and provides reflection prompts for educators. It supports individual or team-based review of teaching practice and encourages integration of civic learning into various curriculum areas.
- Chapter 8 contains sample self-assessment prompts and test questions, enabling both students and teachers to track understanding and application of key concepts. It includes open-ended reflection items, multiple-choice knowledge checks, and scenario-based tasks tied to real-world EU contexts.
- Chapter 9 gathers supplementary resources, including a glossary of key terms, a list of commonly used abbreviations, curated readings for deeper exploration, and a FAQ section answering common implementation and policy questions.

The structure is designed to help readers move from the why to the how of EU citizenship education. Teachers are encouraged to consult the annexed materials throughout the handbook to clarify terms, explore examples, and adapt content to their classroom needs.

Project Partners

universität
wien

2. Objectives and Learning Outcomes

2.1 Learning Objectives

The learning objectives of this training material are outlined below. They refer to both cognitive understanding and teaching-related skills.

After studying this handbook, readers should be able to:

- Understand the legal foundations of EU citizenship and how they have evolved over time.
- Explain the rights and responsibilities that EU citizenship entails.
- Present concepts of EU citizenship in accessible ways that link legal structures to students' everyday experiences.
- Design learning environments that highlight European identity as both shared and diverse, grounded in inclusion, mutual respect, and equal participation.
- Connect EU citizenship to themes such as mobility, human rights, and cultural exchange, encouraging students to reflect on democratic values in their own communities.
- Apply practical tools for classroom activities that promote critical thinking and civic engagement at local, national, and EU levels.
- Integrate EU priorities—such as environmental sustainability, digital transformation, and social cohesion—into everyday teaching practice.
- Support students in recognising their roles as responsible and informed citizens within both European and global contexts.

Project Partners



universität
wien



2.2 Core Competences

The handbook promotes the development of competences based on the European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018), the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) (Council of Europe, 2018), and the overarching goals of the European Education Area.

Key competences include:

- Civic and Social Competence: Understanding rights, institutions, laws, and democratic processes; engaging responsibly in public life.
- Cultural Awareness and Expression: Appreciating European cultural heritage, linguistic diversity, and intercultural dialogue.
- Digital Competence: Using digital technologies ethically and critically to engage in civic activities and access information.
- Critical Thinking and Political Literacy: Analysing civic issues, evaluating information, and developing informed opinions.
- Empathy and Respect for Diversity: Recognising multiple perspectives, valuing equality, and supporting inclusive communities.
- Sustainability and Global Awareness: Connecting local actions to global challenges such as climate change and human rights.

For educators, the handbook strengthens professional competences in:

- Designing inclusive, participatory lessons based on EU values;
- Embedding EU citizenship content across subject areas;
- Adapting methods for diverse learners, including those with fewer opportunities.

Together, these objectives and competences provide a coherent framework for implementing EU citizenship education in schools—grounded in shared European values and oriented toward meaningful, student-centred learning. EU citizenship education builds a clear link

Project Partners



universität
wien



between civic knowledge at the European level and everyday engagement in local communities. Understanding how EU institutions work, what rights citizens hold, and how decisions are made across Member States helps students see how these structures connect to their own lives. Whether participating in a town hall meeting, joining a local youth council, or contributing to a community project, learners begin to recognise that democratic action is not limited to elections or national debates. It includes small, local efforts that reflect shared European values—such as inclusion, participation, and solidarity.

Project Partners

**universität
wien**

3. EU Citizenship

3.1 Key Definitions and Concepts

Before EU citizenship can be meaningfully introduced in schools, it is important to understand how it works—both as a legal status and as a civic idea. Established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, EU citizenship applies to anyone who holds the nationality of a Member State. It does not replace national citizenship but adds a layer to it. Citizens of the EU hold rights that allow them to live, work, study, and participate politically across the Union. These include free movement, residence rights, equal treatment, consular protection, and the ability to vote and stand in local and European Parliament elections, even when living in another Member State. The legal basis for these rights appears in Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which defines EU citizenship as complementary to national citizenship.

EU citizenship marks a transformation in the way political belonging is understood. No longer confined to the framework of the nation-state, citizenship in the European Union is shared across national and supranational levels. It is more than a symbolic concept; it redefines membership by introducing a post-national dimension that transcends traditional borders. Grounded in legal rights, civic participation, and cross-border opportunities, EU citizenship offers a tangible framework for engaging in European public life. This creates a multi-layered identity, in which individuals hold both national and European legal status simultaneously. EU citizenship is not merely an extension of national citizenship — it also stands as a distinct legal category in its own right (Descamps, European citizenship in practice , 2019).

Political science theories such as post-nationalism and multi-level governance help explain this arrangement. Post-national theorists see EU citizenship as a way of expanding civic identity beyond borders, where democratic legitimacy and participation are not limited to one state. Meanwhile, the concept of multi-level governance describes how decision-making powers are spread across different layers—local, regional, national, and European—requiring citizens to

Project Partners



engage in democratic life across more than one level of authority. Civic education frameworks build on these ideas by encouraging schools to equip students with knowledge, skills, and values to take part in diverse democratic settings. Concepts such as active citizenship, participatory democracy, and deliberative dialogue are often used in this context to describe how people can influence policies, engage with institutions, and act responsibly in shared civic spaces.

The development of EU citizenship is tied to major moments in the Union's history. The Maastricht Treaty laid the foundation, and later reforms—such as the Amsterdam and Lisbon Treaties—expanded its legal and political reach. The Charter of Fundamental Rights and rulings by the Court of Justice of the European Union have further clarified what EU citizenship means in practice. This history shows that EU citizenship is not static. It has grown over time, alongside debates about identity, inclusion, and democratic accountability. In education, this provides opportunities to connect abstract rights to lived experience—through mobility programmes like Erasmus+, school partnerships, or community projects that reflect shared European values. Rather than presenting citizenship as a legal term alone, this approach supports student reflection on what it means to live together in a diverse and democratic Europe.

3.2 Comprehensive Examination

3.2.1 Context and Legal Framework

EU citizenship, formally introduced by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, created a new legal and political relationship between individuals and the European Union. It grants every national of a Member State an additional status as a citizen of the Union, as confirmed in Article 9 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 20(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). While national citizenship remains the basis for legal membership in

Project Partners



a state, EU citizenship builds upon it, extending a set of rights that apply across all Member States. These include civil and political rights—such as free movement, residence, and equal treatment—as well as participatory mechanisms that allow individuals to engage in the democratic life of the Union. The Lisbon Treaty strengthened this framework by giving binding legal force to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which brings together civil, political, economic, and social rights applicable within EU law.

The fundamental rights of EU citizens go beyond those typically granted by national citizenship. Citizens can move freely, live, and work in any Member State without needing separate residence permits or visas. They are entitled to vote and stand as candidates in municipal and European Parliament elections in their country of residence, regardless of whether they hold its nationality. These rights would be unusual or unavailable under most national legal systems, where voting rights and access to public services are generally reserved for citizens of that specific country. EU citizens can also request consular protection from another Member State if their own has no representation abroad, and they can access public services, education, or healthcare in another EU country under conditions of equal treatment. These entitlements are legal in nature and enforceable through national courts and the Court of Justice of the European Union, which has played a central role in clarifying how EU citizenship rights function in practice (Maciejewski & Bux, 2024).

Alongside these rights come obligations—though less explicitly defined in EU law. Citizens are expected to respect the laws of host countries, contribute to the democratic life of the Union, and act in solidarity with others. While EU citizenship does not impose direct legal duties such as military service or tax obligations beyond those determined by national systems, it rests on the broader expectation of shared civic responsibility. Title II of the TEU further strengthens this connection by designating the European Parliament as the direct representative of EU citizens. It supports the development of participatory democracy through tools like the Citizens’ Initiative and access to institutional transparency. However, the Treaties’ reference

Project Partners

universität
wien

to the “peoples of Europe” in the plural reflects an ongoing tension between national diversity and a unified civic identity (Waele, 2010). Political science and civic education scholars describe this as a form of post-national citizenship, where legal identity and democratic participation are no longer confined to the boundaries of the nation-state. This model opens new ways of understanding belonging, allowing citizens to engage with institutions and communities beyond their country of origin. As a result, EU citizenship not only complements national frameworks—it redefines the scope and scale of citizenship itself.

3.2.2 EU Institutions and Citizenship Participation

The European Union is often seen as a complex system, but at its core are institutions designed to serve the people of Europe. These institutions not only make decisions on laws and policies but also offer various ways for citizens to participate directly in shaping the future of the Union. The European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Council of the European Union each play distinct roles in this structure, and together they form the backbone of EU governance.

The European Parliament represents EU citizens directly. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected every five years, giving citizens a clear opportunity to influence EU policy. Parliament debates and adopts legislation, often jointly with the Council, and holds the Commission accountable. Citizens can petition the Parliament on matters that affect them, giving direct voice to concerns and suggestions. The Council of the EU, which brings together national ministers, represents Member States. It is a key decision-making body that negotiates and adopts laws with the Parliament. The European Commission acts as the executive body. It proposes legislation, oversees implementation, and ensures that EU law is correctly applied. The Commission also organises public consultations and publishes draft proposals for comment, offering individuals and organisations the chance to contribute to the

Project Partners



universität
wien



legislative process before laws are finalised. Citizens and businesses can share their views on new EU policies and existing laws: HAVE YOUR SAY (https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say_en)

Beyond elections, the EU has developed a wide range of participatory tools. The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) a participatory-democracy instrument governed by Regulation (EU) 2019/788 (in force since 2020), enables one million EU citizens from at least seven Member States to invite the Commission to propose legislation within its competences. Citizens can also petition the European Parliament, lodge complaints with the European Ombudsman about maladministration, and request access to documents from EU institutions (Gamon, 2019). Public consultations allow individuals, civil society groups, and businesses to provide input on planned policies, helping ensure a broad range of views are taken into account. All these tools make it possible for citizens to engage with EU governance between elections, offering a more continuous form of democratic involvement.

While these mechanisms exist, they are not widely used. Awareness of the participatory tools is low, and many people are unaware of their rights or how to exercise them. The system is also fragmented, with little coordination between tools, which can leave participants confused about where to start. In many cases, those with more time, education, and financial resources are better positioned to take part. This means that EU participation does not always reflect the diversity of voices across the Union. Another challenge is that citizen input often does not clearly feed into policy outcomes, which may lead to disillusionment. These gaps have raised questions about how the EU can better connect participatory democracy to actual decision-making.

To address these concerns, there have been proposals to introduce permanent deliberative bodies into the EU institutional framework. Building on the experience of the 2021–2022 Conference on the Future of Europe, which involved hundreds of randomly selected citizens in structured debate, scholars and practitioners suggest a new model: a Citizens' Chamber.

Project Partners



This would be a standing body of randomly selected EU citizens with experience in deliberative processes, responsible for reviewing proposals from bottom-up initiatives like ECIs and petitions, or top-down proposals from the Parliament and Council. Based on this review, the Chamber could recommend setting up a specific Citizens' Panel—on electoral reform, climate, digital rights, or any area of Union action.

These Citizens' Panels would meet to deliberate in depth, assisted by a secretariat, and present concrete recommendations to the EU institutions. The European Commission, Parliament, and Council would be expected to respond to these recommendations and report on progress during the annual State of the European Union address. This model would bring citizens closer to the heart of decision-making and offer a clearer link between public input and institutional action. The Citizens' Chamber could also reconvene Panels when needed, such as during different stages of a policy's development or when follow-up input is needed from citizens.

The advantage of this model is that it does not require changing the EU treaties. Instead, it could be introduced through an Interinstitutional Agreement between the main institutions. It would bring a more visible, structured, and impactful form of public participation into the EU's democratic life. By connecting citizen participation with the legislative cycle and creating a standing mechanism for reflection, feedback, and accountability, this model could address both the current gaps in representation and the low public visibility of existing tools.

For civic education, these developments show how democratic participation in the EU is not limited to elections or high-level negotiations. Students and teachers can explore how laws are made, how citizens can raise concerns, and how they might influence EU action through petitions, consultations, and new deliberative structures. Understanding these institutions and mechanisms is not only about learning civics; it's about recognising that democracy in the EU continues to expand and experiment with new forms. In school, projects could include

Project Partners

universität
wien

mock ECIs, role plays simulating citizen panels, or local research into how EU policies affect everyday life—connecting classroom learning with the broader European civic space.

Citizen participation in the EU reflects both the challenges and the potential of democratic innovation. The system is still developing, and while it is not yet fully accessible or inclusive, steps are being taken to improve it. A more open, transparent, and accountable Union requires active citizens who understand the tools available and how to use them. As the EU continues to experiment with participatory models, it is creating new spaces for democratic life—spaces that schools, communities, and individuals can help shape (Alemanno, 2024).

To make EU institutions more accessible, teachers can design classroom simulations that mirror real decision-making processes. A mock Council of the EU negotiation on climate policy or a role-played European Commission hearing allows students to explore institutional roles, develop persuasive arguments, and experience the balance of power among EU actors. Debates around topics such as digital regulation or EU enlargement help students critically engage with current policy dilemmas while practicing civic dialogue. These methods not only clarify institutional procedures but also empower learners to see democratic participation as both knowable and achievable.

3.2.3 EU Citizenship and Identity

European identity has evolved in parallel with the process of European integration. In contrast to national identities—often shaped by shared language, ancestry, or historical narratives—European identity is rooted in cooperation, legal rights, and a commitment to shared values. As former European Commission President Jacques Delors remarked, “One does not fall in love with the Single Market.” His words highlight a key educational challenge: although the EU has built robust institutions and economic interdependence, these alone do not inspire the sense of emotional attachment typically associated with national identity. For educators, this

Project Partners



invites reflection on how to engage students with the human, social, and civic dimensions of belonging to Europe.

At its core, European identity combines national and EU-level belonging. Since the Maastricht Treaty introduced EU citizenship in 1993, people who are nationals of Member States have gained rights that cross national borders. These include the right to move and live freely in other Member States, vote and stand in local and European elections, seek help at another Member State's consulate, and petition EU institutions. However, these rights depend on having a Member State nationality. This model sits between national and federal traditions and does not fully reflect either, making it hard to call it a post-national identity in any full sense.

Many efforts have been made to strengthen a shared sense of European identity. In 1973, the nine Member States of the European Economic Community issued a Declaration on European Identity, which spoke not only of shared symbols but also of common values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. During that time, the EU adopted symbols to give its project a clearer public profile: a flag with twelve stars, Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" as an anthem, and Europe Day on 9 May. These symbols aimed to create a visible sense of community, similar to how national identities were shaped in the 19th and 20th centuries. Some scholars have described this approach as "Euro-nationalism," using the tools of nation-building to construct a cross-border European identity.

These symbols bring consistency, but they don't necessarily lead to deep emotional attachment. European integration lacks many of the cultural foundations that support strong identities: a shared language, common media, or widely accepted founding stories. Even the word "European" can be unclear. Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union says that any "European country" may apply for membership, yet discussions about Turkey's candidacy have shown how the definition of Europe can vary depending on politics and perception (Yeong, 2013).

Project Partners



universität
wien



How people relate to European identity also varies. Many people across the EU say they feel European, but this rarely replaces national identity. Instead, these layers of belonging tend to overlap. Access to EU-wide programmes such as Erasmus+, multilingual education, or cross-border digital tools often shapes whether people feel connected to Europe. The Lisbon Declaration (2022) notes that these opportunities are especially influential for young people who live, study, and work in different Member States.

Even without a single narrative, many people identify with the EU through their rights and everyday experiences. A 2013 Eurobarometer survey found that 81% of respondents were familiar with the idea of EU citizenship, and 78% knew that it is linked to national citizenship. But only 46% said they fully understood what it means. Awareness was highest in countries like Romania, Slovakia, and Poland, which joined in 2004 and 2007. In contrast, people in some older Member States—such as Germany and Belgium—reported lower levels of understanding and engagement (European Union Citizenship, 2013).

To reduce this gap, the EU has tried to connect identity with democratic participation. The 2013 European Year of Citizens marked twenty years since EU citizenship began and aimed to raise awareness of the rights it brings. It also encouraged people to vote in the 2014 European Parliament elections and to feel more involved at a time when trust in the EU had declined during the eurozone crisis. A 2012 report for the European Commission by Hoskins and Kerr highlighted the idea of participatory citizenship—not just engaging with institutions but taking part in local and civil society activities (Yeong, 2013). This view presents European identity not as something abstract or symbolic, but as something people can live through action and involvement.

European identity does not replace national identity. It adds another layer, offering shared rights and the chance to take part in democratic life across borders. It may not carry the same emotional weight as national identity, but it brings a civic structure based on values, protections, and cooperation. As integration continues, this identity is likely to stay diverse—

Project Partners



universität
wien



shaped by different histories and cultures, yet connected through the rights and responsibilities of EU citizenship (Yeong, 2013).

3.2.4 Active Citizenship and Participation Opportunities

Active citizenship means getting involved in the life of your community and society in ways that matter—voting, joining organisations, volunteering, or speaking up about things that need to change. In the EU, it's also about knowing and using your rights: as a citizen or resident, you can take part in local and European elections, join campaigns, or even propose new laws through the European Citizens' Initiative. An active citizen is a politically, democratically, and socially responsible individual who can articulate their will publicly and is eager to give alternative solutions to local, national, and global problems. This type of participation supports a more responsive and inclusive European Union, where people are not just passive observers but active contributors to shaping policy and community life (Guszmán, 2009).

Across Europe, the idea of active citizenship is part of how the EU supports inclusion. It sits alongside education, work, and social participation. Different countries measure it differently, but the focus is the same: how people take part in public life. This includes how many newcomers become citizens or get long-term residency, and how many end up in elected roles or positions of influence.

Young people today have many meaningful opportunities to engage with Europe. Programmes such as Erasmus+ enable them to study or volunteer abroad while experiencing life in another part of the continent. The European Solidarity Corps allows young people to contribute to causes they care about—from supporting local communities to taking part in environmental initiatives. These are more than chances to travel or develop new skills; they foster a sense of belonging and help young people understand that their voices count.

Project Partners



universität
wien



Digital platforms also support this engagement. Through youth portals, online surveys, public consultations, and social media campaigns, young people can share their views and raise concerns directly with EU institutions. These tools are not symbolic gestures—they are genuine channels for participation and influence.

In schools, active citizenship isn't only about lessons or facts. It's about preparing students to think, question, and get involved. This kind of learning helps them understand rights, responsibilities, and the value of living in a shared space with others who might think or live differently. Some countries teach citizenship as a separate subject; others build it into history or ethics lessons. However, the goal is the same: helping young people speak up, make informed choices, and play a part in the world around them. Active citizenship gives people a role. It's about having a say, taking part, and realising that you can help shape the future and not just in theory, but in everyday life (Quick guide to active European citizenship).

To embed citizenship as a lived experience, teachers can implement participatory activities that mirror democratic practices. Organising mock European Parliament elections, facilitating student-led social impact projects, or running school referenda on issues of local concern allow learners to experience the mechanics of civic life firsthand. These activities develop communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills while highlighting the values of fairness, transparency, and inclusion. Linking such exercises to real EU policies—such as the European Year of Youth or digital participation platforms—further reinforces their relevance and helps students see themselves as active contributors to the European democratic space.

Project Partners

universität
wien

4. Future Challenges and Perspectives

4.1 Technological Advancements and Digital Citizenship

Technological change is reshaping how people live, learn, and participate in democratic life across the European Union. From artificial intelligence (AI) to social media, digital platforms have become part of everyday experience—shaping how individuals connect, access services, express opinions, and take part in society. These tools offer new ways for citizens, especially young people, to engage with public life, but they also bring new responsibilities and risks, particularly around misinformation, data privacy, and the influence of algorithms.

AI is already used to support a wide range of areas, including healthcare systems, public administration, transport and education. In classrooms, for example, AI is used to personalise learning and automate feedback. In wider society, meanwhile, it helps governments to improve planning and service delivery. However, AI systems can also amplify bias, restrict access to information, and make decisions that are difficult to challenge. The European AI Office is launching a multi-stakeholder consultation on trustworthy general-purpose AI models under the AI Act. This initiative complements the call for expressions of interest to participate in drafting the first General-Purpose AI Code of Practice, scheduled to take place between September 2024 and April 2025. Based on the submissions and responses to the targeted questions, an initial draft of the Code of Practice will be prepared. It establishes clear regulations based on the level of risk involved. High-risk applications, such as AI used in recruitment or law enforcement, must meet strict requirements to protect people's rights. Less sensitive applications, such as product recommendations, are subject to less stringent regulation.

In addition to regulation, the EU invests in artificial intelligence that serves the public interest. Programmes such as Digital Europe and Horizon Europe fund research, support cross-border collaboration, and strengthen digital infrastructure across member states. This approach

Project Partners

universität
wien

promotes collective progress while helping to prevent a future where only major tech companies shape the direction of innovation. For this model to succeed, however, people must understand the technologies they use—and how these tools influence their daily lives (European approach to artificial intelligence, 2025).

This is where digital citizenship becomes essential. The EU views digital citizenship as more than digital skills—it includes the ability to think critically online, interact respectfully, protect personal data, and engage with digital democracy. The European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025, launched by the Council of Europe, aims to build these skills across education systems. It encourages schools to promote not only technical competence, but civic responsibility, inclusion, and democratic awareness in digital spaces (Unlocking the Democratic Power of Digital Citizenship: The European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025, 2025).

In schools, this means giving students time and space to ask questions: How do social media platforms influence what I see? What is misinformation, and how can I tell it apart from fact? How is my data collected and used? These discussions can be part of civic education, history, or ethics lessons. They can be supported by guest speakers such as IT professionals or e-safety advocates. Schools can work with local organisations, NGOs, or digital specialists to explore responsible digital behaviour and the role of technology in democracy.

Digital participation isn't just theoretical. Young people can take part in real EU-level initiatives like Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, or the European Youth Portal, which allow them to connect with others, shape policy discussions, or support social causes. Digital tools also make it easier to participate in consultations, sign initiatives, and express political opinions across borders.

For teachers, preparing students for digital citizenship means helping them make sense of the digital world and their place in it. This includes showing them how to take part responsibly in

Project Partners



public life—online and offline—and supporting their awareness of both the opportunities and the risks that come with technological change. In the EU’s vision, digital tools should not only serve economic goals but contribute to a more informed, engaged, and inclusive society.

To make digital citizenship more than a classroom topic, teachers can collaborate with IT coordinators, digital safety officers, or external e-safety advocates to co-design learning experiences. These partnerships can bring specialised knowledge into the classroom—from how data privacy laws function in the EU, to practical tips on navigating misinformation or managing digital footprints. Activities such as joint workshops, student-created digital charters, or scenario-based discussions on online ethics help ensure that digital competences are grounded in real-world relevance and protective awareness. This shared approach also models interprofessional collaboration as a democratic practice in itself.

4.2 Environmental & Social Challenges

Europe is experiencing profound environmental and social changes that are reshaping how societies operate and how citizenship is lived. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), climate change is advancing rapidly across the continent. Rising temperatures, more frequent droughts, floods, and wildfires, along with biodiversity loss and pollution, are placing growing pressure on both natural ecosystems and public health. From 2021 to 2023 alone, weather-related events caused economic damages exceeding €170 billion. These challenges are not distant or theoretical—they affect food production, urban infrastructure, air quality, and access to clean water. Furthermore, the impacts are uneven: vulnerable groups often suffer the most and take longer to recover, exacerbating existing social inequalities (State of Europe's environment, 2025).

The EU has responded by embedding sustainability into the core of its political and legal framework. The European Green Deal and the European Climate Law commit all Member

Project Partners



universität
wien



States to achieving climate neutrality by 2050. These policies signal more than just institutional targets—they express a commitment to future generations. Scholars describe this as a form of “transformative governance,” where systemic change requires democratic engagement and broad public support. EU citizenship is no longer only about legal status or mobility; it includes the right to live in a healthy environment and the responsibility to safeguard it (State of Europe's environment, 2025).

This evolving understanding of citizenship reflects a broader trend toward “ecological citizenship.” Here, participation means more than voting or obeying laws. It involves everyday decisions—how we consume, how we travel, how we organise our communities—and taking part in shaping environmental policies. In this context, the role of the individual intersects with the collective, as shared choices determine the long-term health of our societies.

Environmental justice cannot be separated from social justice. The EU’s vision of a “just transition” aims to ensure that the shift to a low-carbon economy does not deepen existing inequalities. Structural changes in energy, agriculture, and industry are supported by social measures designed to protect workers, low-income households, and rural communities. This dual commitment to ecological and social cohesion aligns with the EU’s founding principles of solidarity and inclusivity (Descamps, The European added value of Union Citizenship, 2019).

Europe is facing a series of interconnected social pressures that demand urgent attention and active public engagement. Across much of the EU, populations are ageing at a rapid pace, while birth rates continue to fall. This shift places growing strain on healthcare systems, pension schemes, and labour markets, raising fundamental questions about sustainability, intergenerational equity, and the future shape of European societies. At the same time, the growing presence of a new global middle class—particularly in Asia and parts of Africa—alters the geopolitical and economic landscape. European societies must adapt to remain socially resilient and economically competitive without reinforcing inequality.

Project Partners

universität
wien

Labour markets are evolving rapidly. Stable, full-time employment is increasingly being replaced by more fragmented forms of work, including platform-based jobs, short-term contracts, and freelance arrangements. Many young people find themselves excluded from stable career paths, while older workers struggle to adapt to digital tools or transitions in industry. These patterns fuel insecurity, reduce social mobility, and risk weakening confidence in institutions meant to protect basic rights.

Migration presents further challenges. While it remains a key factor in addressing labour shortages and demographic decline, migration also reshapes cultural and social relations. Many European communities have become more diverse, yet public discourse often struggles to reflect this diversity in inclusive and meaningful ways. Tensions can arise where integration policies are underfunded or where migrants face barriers in education, housing, or employment. Rather than seeing mobility as a strength, political narratives can turn it into a point of division.

Digital connectivity has transformed how people learn, work, and form opinions. It has empowered individuals to access information and mobilise around social issues. But this shift also deepens divides between those with digital skills and those without, and it amplifies the impact of disinformation, polarisation, and hate speech. Online spaces are increasingly central to civic life, yet often lack regulation that protects dignity and truth (Hoorens, S., Ghez, J., Guerin, B., Shatz, H., Kadl, 2013).

Teachers can help students explore the link between their immediate surroundings and broader EU policy by designing civic projects grounded in local environmental concerns. Whether it's mapping waste habits in their school, analysing the walkability of their neighbourhoods, or starting a biodiversity garden, students can investigate and propose improvements tied to EU strategies such as the European Green Deal or Climate Pact. By tracing how local actions relate to continental goals—through tools like the EU SDG tracker or EU-funded environmental case studies—students develop a stronger sense of agency and

Project Partners



universität
wien



understand that their participation contributes to collective, sustainable futures across Europe.

4.3 Evolving Role of the EU on the Global Stage

The European Union is gradually moving from a primarily economic actor to a more comprehensive global player. It pursues this shift through a combination of trade, humanitarian relief, diplomacy, and security efforts.

EU trade policy extends far beyond lowering tariffs. Over 70 trade agreements now bind partners—often including environmental and labour provisions—under a framework that links global trade with European values. The euro supports this influence by offering currency stability. After recent tensions in the global economy, commentators argue that Europe must step into the leadership void left by the United States, promoting a rules-based global economy anchored in long-term alliances and shared values (Butler, 2025).

European humanitarian and development aid operates at large scale. The EU provides financial and logistical support in crisis zones, and coordinates disaster relief through the European Peace Facility and its Civil Protection Mechanism. In crisis response, EU delegations—part of the External Action Service (EEAS)—play a key role by working directly on the ground across partner countries (European foreign and security policy, 2025). These offices serve not just diplomacy but also the promotion of democracy, human rights, and rule of law, both in and beyond Europe.

The EEAS, established in 2011, functions as the EU’s diplomatic corps, overseen by the High Representative. With more than 140 delegations worldwide, it coordinates policy across foreign affairs, defence, development, and climate action, creating a unified external voice for the EU (European foreign and security policy, 2025). This coherence supports a foreign policy that speaks with one voice in venues from peace negotiations to climate diplomacy.

Project Partners



Foreign and security decisions rest with the European Council and Council. These bodies determine EU strategy on migration, defence funding, and strategic deployment. The EU lacks a standing military, but under its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it launches civilian and military missions—guided by the Strategic Compass—to preserve peace internationally (European foreign and security policy, 2025). The new Readiness 2030 initiative aims to mobilise around €800 billion in EU and national spending for defence projects facing growing threats (Acting on defence to protect Europeans, 2025).

This shift in the EU’s external engagement is reshaping the meaning of EU citizenship. Rights such as shelter, consular protection, and travel safety are now influenced not only by national policies but also by EU diplomacy and international agreements. When the EU negotiates trade deals or promotes human rights abroad, it helps secure safer products and stronger legal protections for its citizens. At the same time, this outward-facing role brings new responsibilities. Citizens are increasingly called to uphold democratic values, sustainability, and solidarity—not only within the Union, but also in their awareness and actions beyond its borders.

The EU’s enhanced role highlights its citizens’ responsibility to stay informed, vote in European elections, and engage in policy debates. Trade openness, for example, depends on citizens’ support for ethical supply chains and global labour standards. Humanitarian aid mirrors a broader understanding that Europeans share backing vulnerable communities abroad.

Security and defence efforts, such as those under the CSDP, influence citizens directly through travel safety and consular assistance. As the EU strengthens its internal capacities, citizens are urged to consider how these efforts intersect with national decisions on military spending and civic commitment to global security.

Citizens today are engaging across multiple levels of civic life. Whether campaigning for fairer trade agreements, supporting democracy-building efforts by EU delegations, or showing

Project Partners



concern for international peace initiatives, Europeans increasingly take on global civic roles. The rights granted by EU citizenship—such as freedom of movement and equal treatment in other Member States—depend on citizens understanding how the EU represents and protects them on the world stage.

Schools and communities can help bring this expanded vision of citizenship to life. For example, students might investigate how a consumer product reaches European markets under EU trade regulations. Alternatively, classrooms could simulate EU foreign policy decisions, examining how initiatives like Readiness 2030 influence national defence policies and local priorities. Activities like these demonstrate how decisions made in Brussels or through EU missions abroad are directly connected to everyday life at home.

This evolving global role challenges EU citizens to think and act beyond national borders. Being an EU citizen increasingly means living in a Union that shapes—rather than reacts to—the world. Rights and protections no longer begin and end at national frontiers; they depend on European diplomacy, structured trade, humanitarian outreach, and collective defence. For schools and teachers, this means educating young people about the global dimensions of citizenship—and the part each individual plays in it.

The concept of strategic autonomy has emerged as a central theme in the European Union’s external action, especially in response to shifting global power dynamics and mounting geopolitical challenges. Initially rooted in military doctrine, strategic autonomy now extends across foreign, defence, and economic policy. It reflects the EU’s intention to strengthen its capacity to act independently when necessary and shape international relations, while maintaining openness to multilateral cooperation. This evolution became particularly significant following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The EU responded not only with a unified sanctions regime but also by accelerating measures to reduce energy dependence on Russia, launching the REPowerEU plan, and deepening security cooperation both internally and with NATO. Strategic autonomy in this context implies both inward-looking

Project Partners



universität
wien



resilience—strengthening the EU’s defence industry and supply chains—and outward-looking capacity to act globally in support of European values and interests. It ties directly into the growing use of “European sovereignty” as a term signalling the Union’s aim to exercise control over key policy areas.

Legally and politically, strategic autonomy prompts reflection on sovereignty and competence within the EU’s institutional framework. It does not challenge the source of sovereignty—which remains with the Member States—but focuses on ensuring the Union’s ability to carry out its external objectives independently. This is especially visible in economic and trade policy, where new instruments like the Anti-Coercion Instrument seek to protect EU decisions from foreign interference. Here, strategic autonomy blurs traditional boundaries between hard and soft power by extending the logic of independence to areas such as digital regulation, supply chain security, and sanctions. The development of this concept has brought the EU closer to a unified approach to external action, yet its success depends on the political will of Member States, especially in defence. While shared instruments now exist, including the European Defence Fund and coordinated industrial projects, integration gaps remain. Whether strategic autonomy leads to deeper legal unification or reinforces flexible cooperation will depend on how future crises are managed and how Member States reconcile national priorities with shared European goals (Beaucillon, 2023).

Analysing real-time developments—such as the EU’s responses to humanitarian crises, trade negotiations, or global environmental summits—helps students link abstract civic principles to real-world contexts. By working with reliable news sources, EU press releases, and digital platforms like the EU Academy or the European Parliament’s live feeds, educators can support students in critically examining how the EU aligns its internal values with its external actions. This also develops media literacy, critical thinking, and an understanding of global interdependence—essential attributes of informed European citizenship.

Project Partners



universität
wien



5. Building a Sense of European Belonging in Schools

5.1 Practical Classroom Integration

For students to feel they belong to Europe, they must first see how the EU relates to their own lives, values, and communities. Schools are uniquely placed to help bridge this connection—not by abstract teaching, but by weaving EU citizenship into everyday learning.

This begins with making EU identity visible and tangible. Teachers can:

- Mark Europe Day (9 May) with a week of themed lessons and creative activities.
- Create a “European Wall” featuring students’ family histories, languages spoken, or travel/mobility experiences within Europe.
- Run cross-curricular projects: link maths to EU budgets, geography to cohesion policy, or arts to Erasmus+ storytelling.

Example: In a literature class, students read a story by a European author and discuss themes of identity, migration, or belonging—then map where the author lived and the policies that made their mobility possible.

Citizenship should not be siloed in civic education alone. Whether in biology, language arts, or technology, lessons can incorporate:

- Rights and responsibilities from a European perspective.
- Awareness of solidarity and diversity as classroom values.
- Participation in digital platforms like eTwinning, where students collaborate across countries.

One powerful way to build belonging is through student agency. Let students lead:

Project Partners



universität
wien



- Organise a school-wide EU awareness campaign or student podcast on “What being European means to me”.
- Plan mini referenda on local issues, comparing them with how EU decision-making works.
- Simulate an EU Council session addressing a topic they care about—such as mental health or digital well-being.

Belonging is not about passive identity. It’s about seeing oneself as a contributor—someone who can shape the community they are part of, including Europe.

5.2 Long-Term Impact and Teacher Professional Growth

For schools to sustainably cultivate a sense of European belonging, it must go beyond one-off activities. The school culture—from leadership to classroom climate—should embody values of inclusion, curiosity, and connectedness.

Professional development (PD) is essential. Teachers need:

- Opportunities to exchange practice with European colleagues (e.g. through Erasmus+ teacher mobility).
- Access to practical toolkits and CPD modules on how to teach European citizenship in a locally relevant way.
- Encouragement to reflect on their own European identities and classroom assumptions.

Here are a few actions schools can take:

- Set up a European Identity Working Group among staff to co-develop a long-term vision.
- Include EU themes in school strategy—from sustainability plans to digital inclusion.

Project Partners



- Integrate student voice mechanisms, like councils or assemblies, that mirror democratic practices at EU level.

When teachers feel supported in this journey, students benefit. They experience school not just as a place of instruction, but as a microcosm of Europe—diverse, respectful, participatory, and future-focused.

Project Partners



universität
wien



6. Educational and Methodological Recommendations

6.1 Teaching Strategies

Teaching EU citizenship effectively requires moving beyond transmission models toward transformative pedagogy. This includes dialogic methods, inquiry-based learning, and critical reflection. Based on current research and EU guidance (Descamps, 2019b), four overarching strategies are recommended:

- **Project-Based Learning (PBL):** Encourages student-led exploration of real-world challenges (e.g., designing a school-wide campaign on European values or sustainability).
- **Case-Based Reasoning:** Using contemporary EU case studies—such as climate negotiations, citizens’ initiatives, or migration policy—students develop analytical skills grounded in legal and civic frameworks.
- **Deliberative Dialogue:** Structured discussions where students weigh evidence, negotiate differing viewpoints, and co-create understanding around contested issues like digital rights or identity.
- **Simulation and Role Play:** Offers embodied experiences of EU decision-making, enhancing institutional familiarity and democratic empathy.

To maximise impact, strategies should be linked to competency frameworks, such as the Council of Europe’s Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC).

Incorporating project-based learning activities such as a mock “EU Youth Council” can provide students with meaningful, hands-on experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world democratic processes. In this exercise, students take on the roles of representatives from various EU member states and Türkiye, engaging in structured debates and collective decision-making on youth-related policy issues such as environmental protection, migration,

Project Partners



or employment opportunities. Through these simulated negotiations, learners gain insight into the complexities of consensus-building, diplomacy, and policy formulation within the European context. This approach not only deepens their understanding of EU institutions and civic participation but also resonates strongly with the Turkish curriculum's emphasis on "Active Citizenship" and "Democracy and Human Rights." By bridging textbook theory with contemporary European civic challenges, teachers can cultivate students' critical thinking, empathy, and sense of shared responsibility as active citizens in a democratic society.

6.2 Digital Tools & Resources

Digital environments open new spaces for participation, collaboration, and knowledge construction. However, digital integration should be guided by critical awareness and inclusivity.

Digital Tools and Resources for EU Citizenship Education (with Classroom Use)

- **EU Academy**

<https://academy.europa.eu>

What it is: A free learning hub from the European Commission featuring online courses on EU governance, citizenship rights, inclusion, and digital participation.

Classroom use: Use short video modules to co-learn with students (e.g., "How the EU works") or assign micro-certifications to older pupils as part of project-based learning.

- **European School Education Platform (ESEP) — eTwinning**

<https://www.etwinning.net>

What it is: A platform that connects schools across Europe for collaborative projects

Project Partners



universität
wien



in real time.

Classroom use: Launch a shared EU citizenship project with a partner class abroad — on topics like youth voting, identity, or climate action—using shared virtual spaces, journals, and media.

- **Europeana**

<https://www.europeana.eu>

What it is: A multilingual digital archive of over 50 million cultural items from European museums, galleries, and libraries.

Classroom use: Explore artefacts, images, and exhibitions related to European history, identity, and human rights. Great for visual storytelling, timeline projects, or “European Memory Walls.”

- **Eurodesk**

<https://www.eurodesk.eu>

What it is: A youth information network helping young people discover EU-funded programmes and mobility opportunities.

Classroom use: Set up a “Mobility Corner” where students research and present opportunities for volunteering, travel, or civic participation across Europe.

- **EU Youth Portal**

<https://youth.europa.eu>

What it is: A central platform for youth-focused news, policies, funding opportunities, and democratic engagement.

Classroom use: Use it as a launching point for discussions on youth priorities, access rights, or organising mock campaigns based on real EU initiatives.

Project Partners



universität
wien



- **Mentimeter**

<https://www.mentimeter.com>

What it is: A real-time interactive tool for polls, word clouds, quizzes, and Q&A.

Classroom use: Run opinion polls during a debate on EU values, check understanding after lessons on institutions, or let students anonymously submit questions during a digital citizenship lesson.

- **Padlet**

<https://www.padlet.com>

What it is: A visual platform for collaborative boards where students can post thoughts, media, and links.

Classroom use: Use Padlet to collect student reflections on “What does being European mean to me?”, track classroom pledges during an SDG week, or co-create a glossary of civic terms.

Tips on Building Online Communities Across Europe

- **Start with eTwinning:** Use eTwinning to register your school and explore existing project forums. Join themed groups (e.g., “Youth Participation” or “SDG Education”) to connect with like-minded educators.
- **Co-develop a Project Charter:** With your partner school(s), co-create a short agreement outlining shared goals, themes (e.g., climate justice, human rights), and student roles. Use this to guide collaborative planning.
- **Use Common Platforms:** Combine tools like Padlet (for student reflections), Google Docs (for shared writing), and Zoom or eTwinning Live Events (for real-time dialogue).
- **Design Cross-Border Challenges:** Develop interactive activities such as a “Virtual EU Parliament Debate” or a digital SDG scavenger hunt. Rotate student leadership roles to enhance equal participation.

Project Partners



universität
wien



- **Build Trust and Visibility:** Encourage students to post weekly updates, photos, or short videos. Consider a joint blog or digital exhibition to showcase outcomes and reflect on learning together.
- **Evaluate Together:** Use Mentimeter or Kahoot! to run joint quizzes or feedback sessions. Invite cross-peer reviews to deepen intercultural understanding and collaborative ownership.

6.3 Innovative Learning Approaches

Innovation in citizenship education involves not only new tools but new mindsets. The following pedagogical orientations support inclusion, agency, and democratic learning:

Gamification for Civic Understanding

Introduce game mechanics (e.g., points, roles, timed missions) to help students explore EU institutions, legal rights, or human rights frameworks in an interactive way. Example: simulate a European Parliament debate where students earn badges for effective negotiation or consensus-building.

Experiential Civic Learning

Engage learners in hands-on projects that address real issues in their school or community—such as accessibility, environmental justice, or youth participation—while linking them to EU policy themes like the European Green Deal or Fundamental Rights.

Peer-led and Intergenerational Democratic Learning

Facilitate peer teaching and dialogue between students and community members (e.g., local officials, older voters) to explore civic life across generations. This nurtures

Project Partners



universität
wien



active listening, critical questioning, and a deeper understanding of civic traditions and innovation in the EU.

Civic Design Thinking

Apply design thinking processes—empathise, define, ideate, prototype, test—to democratic challenges. Students might redesign their school council processes or propose a local sustainability initiative inspired by EU cohesion goals or SDGs.

“Youth for Green Europe”

Allowing students to design and lead social initiatives—empowers them to become proactive contributors to their communities while exploring contemporary EU priorities. By addressing issues like climate change, gender equality, or digital rights, students experience how civic values translate into tangible social action. This experiential learning process strengthens their capacity for leadership, teamwork, and advocacy, as they take responsibility for planning, implementing, and reflecting on their projects. Such activities closely mirror the Turkish Ministry of National Education’s vision for cultivating 21st-century competences, including collaboration, problem-solving, and digital literacy. More importantly, these initiatives nurture a spirit of volunteerism and public engagement, reinforcing the national curriculum’s objective of educating responsible, participatory citizens who can connect local community needs with broader European goals.

Innovation also means adapting teaching for diverse learners. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can ensure accessibility and engagement for all students, including those with SEN or from migrant backgrounds.

Project Partners



universität
wien



6.4 Assessment Methods

Assessment in EU citizenship education should prioritise formative, reflective, and participatory models. While knowledge of institutional facts remains essential, equal emphasis should be placed on dispositions, values, and competencies.

Recommended methods:

- Reflective Journals: Allow students to process evolving views on citizenship, identity, and participation.
- Portfolio Assessment: Tracks multi-dimensional learning through written work, creative products, and self-assessments.
- Peer and Self-Assessment: Encourages metacognition and civic responsibility.
- Competency Rubrics: Align with RFCDC or similar frameworks to assess intercultural understanding, empathy, and critical thinking.

Summative tasks might include:

- Analysing a real European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling.
- Debating EU enlargement scenarios.
- Designing an awareness campaign aligned with an SDG or EU policy goal.

Project Partners



universität
wien



7. Summary and Key Takeaways

7.1 Recap of Key Concepts

European Union citizenship is more than a legal framework—it is a participatory, ethical, and inclusive identity anchored in rights, responsibilities, and shared values. Introduced by the Maastricht Treaty and expanded by subsequent legal instruments and case law, EU citizenship provides individuals with rights that transcend national boundaries.

Key dimensions explored in this handbook include:

- The legal and institutional framework of EU citizenship (TFEU, Charter of Fundamental Rights).
- Rights to freedom of movement, political participation, consular protection, and petition.
- The evolution of citizenship from market-based rights to a quasi-constitutional status.
- The role of EU institutions in facilitating civic engagement (e.g., ECI, European Parliament).
- The concept of European identity as multi-layered, civic, and inclusive.
- The relevance of active citizenship in both analogue and digital public spheres.
- Environmental and digital challenges as integral to the future of civic education.

These elements combine to form a complex and dynamic model of citizenship that requires both understanding and action—within and beyond the classroom.

7.2 Reflection Questions

To support professional growth and critical engagement, teachers and learners are encouraged to explore the following questions:

Project Partners



universität
wien



- What does it mean to be both a national and an EU citizen in today's Europe?
- How do digital and environmental challenges reshape the rights and responsibilities of citizens?
- What structural barriers prevent young people from engaging fully in EU democratic life?
- How can schools act as incubators for inclusive, critical, and participatory European citizenship?
- What aspects of EU identity are most meaningful to my students—and how can I bring these into dialogue with local or national narratives?

7.3 Practical Applications

- Use the handbook as a scaffold for designing interdisciplinary units that connect civic education, history, digital literacy, and environmental science.
- Embed reflective and participatory assessments into civic learning (e.g., student portfolios, EU-themed debates).
- Connect students with real-life platforms and participation tools (e.g., ECI, EU Youth Portal, Erasmus+).
- Share learning outcomes with the broader school community through exhibitions, public speaking events, or collaboration with local government.

Above all, the goal is to build confidence in educators to facilitate citizenship learning that is:

- Rights-based
- Student-centred
- Future-oriented
- Inclusive of all learners

Project Partners



universität
wien



By situating EU citizenship within the lived realities of young people, schools can play a transformative role in preparing the next generation of democratic, active, and resilient Europeans.

Project Partners



universität
wien



8. Self-Assessment and Test Questions

8.1 Self-Check Questions

These open-ended prompts help learners assess their evolving understanding of EU citizenship in relation to personal identity and civic engagement.

1. How do I understand the relationship between national and EU citizenship?
2. In what ways do I feel part of a European community? In what ways do I not?
3. Which rights of EU citizenship have I used—or would like to use—and why?
4. How do I think the EU supports inclusion and democratic participation for young people?
5. What challenges do I see in exercising digital or environmental citizenship?
6. How can I contribute to shaping my local or school community as an active EU citizen?
7. What does solidarity mean to me in the context of European citizenship?
8. How do I recognise and respond to misinformation or bias in online civic discussions?
9. Which EU programmes or opportunities (e.g., Erasmus+, youth forums) would I be interested in joining, and why?
10. In what ways can my identity—cultural, linguistic, or social—enrich the idea of a diverse European citizenship?

8.2 Knowledge-Based Questions

These questions test learners' recall of core legal, institutional, and policy-related information.

1. When was EU citizenship formally introduced?
 - a) 1957
 - b) 1986

Project Partners



universität
wien



- c) 1992
- d) 2007

2. Which article in the TFEU establishes the legal basis for EU citizenship?

- a) Article 15
- b) Article 20
- c) Article 45
- d) Article 25

3. What is the European Citizens' Initiative?

- a) A platform for youth exchanges
- b) A right to vote in all national elections
- c) A mechanism for citizens to propose EU legislation
- d) A tool for regional development planning

4. Which of the following EU institutions allows citizens to participate directly in decision-making?

- a) Court of Justice of the European Union
- b) European Central Bank
- c) European Citizens' Initiative
- d) European Investment Bank

Project Partners



universität
wien



5. What is the role of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union?
- a) It provides guidance but has no legal status
 - b) It is only applicable to candidates for EU membership
 - c) It enshrines binding rights and principles for EU institutions and Member States when applying EU law
 - d) It only applies to EU citizens when travelling abroad
6. What treaty clarified that EU citizenship complements but does not replace national citizenship?
- a) Amsterdam Treaty
 - b) Maastricht Treaty
 - c) Lisbon Treaty
 - d) Nice Treaty
7. Which EU institution is directly elected by EU citizens?
- a) European Commission
 - b) European Parliament
 - c) European Council
 - d) Council of the European Union

Project Partners



universität
wien



8. What right do EU citizens have when outside the EU in a non-EU country?

- a) Access to EU embassies
- b) Diplomatic protection from any EU country's consulate
- c) Automatic visa exemptions
- d) Free legal aid from the Commission

9. Which of the following is *not* a right conferred by EU citizenship?

- a) Right to petition the European Parliament
- b) Right to diplomatic immunity
- c) Right to vote in European Parliament elections
- d) Right to contact the EU Ombudsman

10. What is a key feature of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights?

- a) It only applies to national governments
- b) It is non-binding and symbolic
- c) It has full legal force within the EU legal order
- d) It only applies to EU Parliament members

Project Partners



universität
wien



Answer Key (For Teachers Only)

1. c) 1992
2. b) Article 20
3. c) A mechanism for citizens to propose EU legislation
4. c) European Citizens' Initiative
5. c) It enshrines binding rights and principles for EU institutions and Member States when applying EU law
6. c) Lisbon Treaty
7. b) European Parliament
8. b) Diplomatic protection from any EU country's consulate
9. b) Right to diplomatic immunity
10. c) It has full legal force within the EU legal order

8.3 Application-Based Exercises

These activities encourage critical thinking, collaboration, and the application of knowledge in practical scenarios.

Activity 1: Citizenship Audit Students complete a personal or classroom audit on the accessibility of citizenship tools (e.g., voting rights, information platforms, language support). Results can be shared in a short presentation.

Project Partners



universität
wien



Activity 2: Treaty Timeline Working in groups, students create a visual timeline of EU treaties (from Maastricht to Lisbon) and highlight how each one expanded citizenship rights.

Activity 3: Simulated Citizens' Initiative Students draft a mock proposal for a European Citizens' Initiative on a youth-relevant issue (e.g. climate action, mental health, digital privacy), including title, objectives, and argument.

Activity 4: Identity Mapping Using a template, students map out how they see their personal, national, and European identities interacting. Reflection follows on inclusion, diversity, and belonging.

Activity 5: Global Challenge Debate Divide the class into delegations representing EU institutions. Debate a recent global challenge (e.g., humanitarian aid, migration policy) through the lens of EU citizenship and values.

Project Partners



universität
wien



9. Annexes

9.1 Glossary

Active Citizenship – Taking part in the life of a community through volunteering, voting, public discussion, or organising projects to address shared concerns.

Charter of Fundamental Rights – A document that outlines the basic rights and freedoms of everyone living in the EU, including dignity, equality, justice, and education.

Citizenship Education – Teaching and learning about rights, responsibilities, participation, and identity in a civic and political context.

Digital Citizenship – The responsible, ethical, and informed use of digital technologies for communication, participation, and activism.

European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) – A tool that allows EU citizens to propose new EU laws by collecting at least one million signatures from across seven Member States.

European Green Deal – The EU's strategic roadmap to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and promote sustainability across all policy sectors.

Freedom of Movement – The right for EU citizens to live, work, study, or retire in any other EU Member State without requiring special permits.

Inclusion – Educational and civic practices that ensure all individuals, regardless of background or ability, can participate fully in social and democratic life.

Lisbon Treaty – A 2007 treaty that reformed the institutional structure of the EU and strengthened the legal basis of EU citizenship.

Multi-Level Governance – A system in which political authority is shared across local, national, and supranational levels (e.g., EU institutions).

Project Partners



universität
wien



Transformative Pedagogy – Educational approaches aimed at promoting critical awareness, agency, and democratic values among learners.

9.2 List of Abbreviations

AI – Artificial Intelligence

CJEU – Court of Justice of the European Union

ECI – European Citizens’ Initiative

ECJ – European Court of Justice

EU – European Union

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

MEP – Member of the European Parliament

PBL – Project-Based Learning

RFCDC – Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

TEU – Treaty on European Union

TFEU – Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

9.3 Further Reading

- European Parliament Think Tank – Civic Engagement Briefing

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747459](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)747459)

A policy briefing on civic engagement in the EU, exploring youth participation, democratic challenges, and institutional responses.

Project Partners



universität
wien



- Eurydice – Citizenship Education Overview

<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/topics/citizenship-education>

Offers comparative data on how EU countries structure citizenship education in schools, including curriculum content and national strategies.

- Council of Europe – European Space for Citizenship Education

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/european-space-for-citizenship-education>

Supports the development of democratic competences in education, including teaching tools, policy frameworks, and intercultural dialogue.

- EERA – Citizenship Education in Europe and Beyond

<https://eera-ecer.de/ecer-2023-glasgow/ecer-programme/eera-sessions/citizenship-education-in-europe-and-beyond-the-role-of-research>

Session archive from the European Educational Research Association focused on how research informs civic education practice and policy.

- Bauböck, R. (2019). *Debating European Citizenship*. Springer.
- Council of Europe (2018). *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)*.
- European Commission. (2020). *EU Citizenship Report*.
- European Liberal Forum. (2019). *To Be or Not to Be – EU Citizenship*.
- Kochenov, D. (2017). *EU Citizenship and Federalism: The Role of Rights*. Cambridge University Press.

Project Partners



universität
wien



- Shaw, J. (2018). *The Transformation of Citizenship in the European Union*. Cambridge University Press.

-

9.4 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: Do all EU citizens have the same rights regardless of where they live?

Yes, but the practical implementation of these rights can vary depending on national procedures (e.g., registration for voting).

Q2: Can students who are not EU citizens take part in EU citizenship education?

Absolutely. EU citizenship education promotes understanding of democracy, rights, and identity—concepts relevant to all learners.

Q3: What's the difference between EU citizenship and national citizenship?

EU citizenship complements, but does not replace, national citizenship. It provides additional rights that apply across EU Member States.

Q4: How can teachers stay up to date on EU citizenship-related resources?

The EU Academy, European Commission websites, eTwinning, and national Europe Direct centres offer regular updates and training.

Q5: Is there a central curriculum for teaching EU citizenship in schools?

No, education is a national competence, but EU-funded projects, like EuroCivic Lab, provide harmonised resources and guidance.

Project Partners



universität
wien



Q6: Can EU citizens vote in national elections when living in another Member State?

No, they can vote in local and European Parliament elections in their country of residence, but national voting rights remain tied to their country of citizenship.

Q7: Does EU citizenship apply to children and young people?

Yes, all nationals of EU Member States—including minors—are EU citizens and entitled to the same rights, though some (like voting) apply only from a certain age.

Q8: What happens to EU citizenship if a country leaves the EU?

Citizenship is linked to Member State nationality. If a country exits the EU, its nationals would generally lose EU citizenship—unless new agreements are made.

Q9: How is EU citizenship connected to everyday life?

It shapes rights such as working in another EU country, accessing healthcare abroad, using a mobile phone across borders without extra charges, or studying with Erasmus+.

Q10: Can non-EU nationals ever benefit from EU citizenship rights?

Not directly, but some rights—like equal treatment in schools or access to public services—are extended through national laws and EU anti-discrimination principles.

Project Partners



universität
wien



References

- Acting on defence to protect Europeans.* (2025, March 28.). Retrieved from European Commission: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/future-european-defence_en
- Alemanno, A. (2024, June 04). *Citizen participation in the EU's democratic life.* Retrieved from Elcano Royal Institute: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/citizen-participation-in-the-eu-democratic-life/>
- Beaucillon, C. (2023, July 27.). *Strategic Autonomy: A New Identity for the EU as a Global Actor.* *European Papers* (ISSN 2499-8249 - doi: 10.15166/2499-8249/664), 417-428.
- Butler, C. (2025, March 27). *Europe must forge a new role in the global economy.* Retrieved from Chatham House: https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/europe-must-forge-new-role-global-economy?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Descamps, C. (2019). *European citizenship in practice* (Vol. To be or not to be). (C. Descamps, Ed.) ELF.
- Descamps, C. (2019). *The European added value of Union Citizenship* (Vol. To be or not to be). (C. Descamps, Ed.) European Liberal Forum.
- European approach to artificial intelligence.* (2025, April 09). Retrieved from European Commission: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-approach-artificial-intelligence>
- European foreign and security policy.* (2025). Retrieved from European Union: https://european-union.europa.eu/priorities-and-actions/actions-topic/foreign-and-security-policy_en

Project Partners



universität
wien



European Union Citizenship. (2013). Retrieved from Europa.EU:
<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/1042>

Gamon, C. (2019). *Leveraging EU citizenship* (Vol. To be or not to be). (C. Descamps, Ed.) ELF.

Guszmán, G. (2009, June). *Enhancing Active Citizenship through Educational and Local Governmental Issues.* Retrieved from Promoting active inclusion:
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2010_kss_bookletfinalcompiled.pdf

Hoorens, S., Ghez, J., Guerin, B., Shatz, H., Kadl. (2013). *Global societal trends to 2030: Thematic analysis (RR-479-EC.* RAND Europe.

Lisbon Declaration: Education for Inclusion and Democratic Citizenship in Europe. (2022).

Maciejewski, M., & Bux, U. (2024, May). *The citizens of the Union and their rights.* Retrieved from Fact Sheets on the European Union:
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/145/the-citizens-of-the-union-and-their-rights>

Quick guide to active European citizenship. (n.d.). Retrieved from European Democracy Passport:
<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/eptac/en/quickguide-to-active-citizenship.html>

State of Europe's environment. (2025, April 23). Retrieved from European Environment Agency:
<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/at-a-glance/state-of-europes-environment#:~:text=Climate%20change%20poses%20risks%20to,billion%20between%202021%20and%202023>.

Strumia, F. (2019). *Brexit and the static citizens: the forgotten side of citizenship loss* (Vol. To be or not to be). (C. Descamps, Ed.) EFL.

Unlocking the Democratic Power of Digital Citizenship: The European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025. (2025, January 02). Retrieved from Council of Europe:

Project Partners



universität
wien



<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/unlocking-the-democratic-power-of-digital-citizenship-the-european-year-of-digital-citizenship-education-2025>

Waele, H. (2010). EU Citizenship. Revisiting its meaning, place and potential. *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 11(3), 319-336.

Yeong, L. (2013, October). *EU citizenship Citizenship and identity beyond national borders*. Retrieved from <https://aei.pitt.edu/47402/1/BB10-EU-citizenship-and-identity.pdf>

Project Partners



universität
wien

