

## EDUCATION INFO NOTE n° 6

### Shaping Europe's Democratic Future: Building a European Space for Citizenship Education

#### Introduction:

The European Space for Citizenship Education is a flagship initiative to strengthen democracy across Europe by ensuring that quality citizenship education becomes a defining feature of European education systems. Endorsed by the 46 Ministers of Education and set to launch in 2027, this initiative responds to the pressing need to equip young people with the competences required to actively engage in democratic life and contribute to resilient, inclusive societies.

Rooted in the Council of Europe's long-standing commitment to democratic values, the initiative is being developed through a co-creation process involving a wide spectrum of stakeholders—governments, educators, youth, civil society, and academic experts. It is built on strong political momentum, including the Reykjavik Declaration and the Secretary General's Pact for Democracy, both of which reaffirm the central role of education in sustaining democratic culture. The European Space offers a common framework to guide policy and practice, ensuring that all learners in Europe grow into informed, responsible, and empowered citizens.

#### Why it matters

The need for a European Space for Citizenship Education has never been more urgent. As democratic values face increasing challenges, societal tensions grow, and many young people feel disconnected from democratic processes, there is a clear call to action. Competences for Democratic Culture—such as critical thinking, empathy, and civic responsibility—are essential to prepare learners to become active, informed participants in a cohesive and democratic society.

Fulfilling this mission requires sustained, long-term commitment. Education for democratic citizenship cannot be reactive or limited to moments of crisis—it must be a continuous effort, deeply embedded in the fabric of education and society. As Albert Camus warned in *The Plague*, danger never truly disappears, and vigilance is always necessary. Indeed, the full weight of this task is a shared responsibility of education systems and the whole society. It must involve a range of different actors.

This is why the European Space for Citizenship Education is being developed through a two-year, inclusive co-creation process. A dedicated working group and broad consultations with ministries of education, parliamentarians, the Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN), educators, academics, youth, parents, and civil society are working together to shape a shared vision for citizenship education across Europe.

#### Highlights

Since 1997, solid foundations have been laid for the concept of education for democratic citizenship to be anchored in European education systems including the Council of Europe *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* and the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, but there are still challenges in

the practice of citizenship education within and outside education systems. There is a clear need to consolidate the principles of quality citizenship education into one single framework to renew the democratic mission of education. To achieve this goal, the European Space for Citizenship Education is being built around **three key areas**:

### European Space for Citizenship Education Key Areas



#### Implications

The European Space for Citizenship Education will provide clarity and meaning to ministries, education institutions and their education communities to best support learners to develop their full potential while at the same time contributing to a more cohesive society. A society in which dialogue among people with different viewpoints is valued, a society where misinformation can be identified and called out, whether it be in traditional media or online.

Each member state will be able to adapt the European Space for Citizenship Education to their own needs based on an agreed set of underlying principles.

#### Ministries of Education

Ministries of education can build on the political momentum created by the European Space for Citizenship Education and revise and/or develop national education policies to integrate the principles of the European Space. The national quality assurance and accountability frameworks can be revised and/or developed and aligned with the European Space quality assurance framework. They will be able to fully engage with the peer exchange and peer learning co-operation platforms provided within the European Space.

#### Education institutions and educators

Education institutions will take an active role in the national implementation of the European Space principles by developing quality citizenship education through a learner centred and whole school approach. Meaningful practices by education institutions in this process will play a key role in advancing quality. Education institutions will also be able to engage in national and transnational co-operation initiatives and projects, including with non-formal education actors, to build a democratic culture based on the European Space principles.

#### Learners

As the final beneficiaries of the European Space, learners will be able to fully engage in learning and practicing democratic citizenship and living democracy in their education institutions and in local and global communities.

**Civil society organisations** will play a key role in co-creating and ensuring the application of European Space principles in non-formal education and connecting non-formal and formal education as one continuous process of developing young people’s competences for democratic culture.

## Key steps

### Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU)

As laid out in point VI of its mandate, the Steering Committee for Education and its Bureau are regularly consulted through bureau meetings and plenary sessions. The CDEDU and its Bureau will play a crucial role in supporting and providing direction and guidance to the creation of the European Space for Citizenship Education.

### European Policy Advisors Network (EPAN)

EPAN is a network of representatives of member states from ministries of education who are responsible for furthering a democratic culture in education policy and practice. They are a key driver in developing the European Space. All EPAN meetings will have a dedicated part of the meeting programme to co-create the European Space.

### Working group

A working group of high-level consultants is working on the texts of the future European Space. They are from the following countries: Austria, Germany, Georgia, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

### Thematic conferences



The first event of the co-creation process of the European Space for Citizenship Education was held in Berlin from 17-18 October in Berlin entitled [“Sustaining Democracy through Quality”](#)

[Citizenship Education](#)” and involved high level participants, renowned academics, and civil society organisations. This event marked a crucial milestone in advancing European citizenship education to make the European Space for Citizenship Education a reality. A comprehensive report is available which also includes best practices.

In October 2025, a multi-stakeholder conference will be organised in Montenegro.

### **Key documents**

[Council of Europe \(2023\), Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg](#)

[CM/Rec \(2010\)7 on the CoE Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#)

[Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, 3 volumes](#)

[CM/Rec \(2012\)13 on ensuring quality education](#)

[CM/Rec \(2019\)10 on developing and promoting digital citizenship education](#)

[Competences for Democratic Culture and the Whole-School Approach](#)

[Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 “Learners First”](#)

### **Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 “Learners First”**

The preparation of the European Space for Citizenship Education is part of the Education Strategy “Learners First” adopted at the 26th session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe in September 2023 and falls within Pillar 1 of the Strategy: Renewing the Democratic and Civic Mission of Education

[Education website](#) and social media channels