Fundación Europea Sociedad y Educación
European Foundation Society and Education

ECEC NETWORK
EUROPEAN CIVIC EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

6th UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law
Geneva, 16 November 2026

Democracy in the classroom

Civic participation through education

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01

IDEA 1 OF 4

Civic education happens through relationships

Change happens when students meet a teacher or a classmate who truly sees them and recognises their intrinsic worth. That is when they discover that their voice counts, and that they have responsibilities towards others.



ECEC Network

3 years, partners in 6 countries, one question: what makes a civic experience transformative?

02

IDEA 2 OF 4

Where the conversation begins

Not from what divides us, but from recognising the other as a good in themselves, and a good for me and for society, even when we think differently.

Then difference becomes a space for mutual learning, discovery and questioning.

ACT · ERASMUS+ EVALUATION

312	secondary schools
4	countries
~9,000	students

Students who worked with classmates they did not usually interact with learned to listen to people who think differently.

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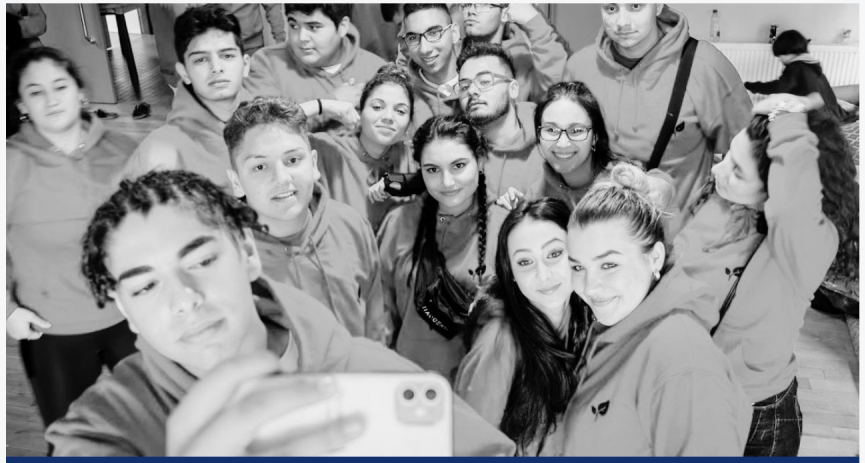
03

IDEA 3 OF 4

Trust your students, especially the most vulnerable

Their concern is not apathy: it is energy waiting for an opportunity. Give every student real responsibilities, in the school and in the community.

Above all, those from more vulnerable backgrounds, who rarely get that chance.



ACT · ERASMUS+ EVALUATION

The gap grows

Gains concentrated among students already involved, such as class representatives. For the rest, the effect was barely noticeable.

04

IDEA 4 OF 4

Servant leadership

In an increasingly individualistic age, schools can offer a different kind of leadership: leading change by serving others.

Service-learning and lasting partnerships with local councils, families, universities and civil society make that service part of everyday school life.



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WHAT WE RECOMMEND

Four recommendations

1

Prepare teachers to build relationships

Civic education happens through relationships, so teacher training must go beyond technical skills.

2

Make schools places of encounter and dialogue

Start from recognising the other, so real debate is possible and positions can be openly questioned.

3

Trust students with real responsibility, early

So they see themselves as citizens today, not someday.

4

Foster servant leadership

Commitment lived as service to others, starting with their own community.

Thank you

One day, when our students are asked what brought them here, may they too have a name and a face to answer with.

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