



"RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR TOMORROW'S EUROPE"

FORUM ON EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP
WITH A EUROPEAN DIMENSION

13 – 16 November 2017
Ljubljana, Slovenia

CONCEPT NOTE

The attempt to advance European political integration further beyond intergovernmental cooperation leads to the question, to which extent civic identification and will for collective political action is possible at European level? Do young Europeans have opportunities to become socialized to European citizenship? How do we understand the concept and what are the mechanisms to practice it? Is the European dimension promoted using appropriate pedagogical approaches to citizenship at national level? Further on, what is today the role of youth work in developing young people's sense of civic engagement for Europe and current European concerns?

The aim of this forum is to promote the European dimension in education for democratic citizenship with young people and contribute to the recognition of European citizenship. The activity will gather various stakeholders –youth work practitioners and youth policy-makers, teachers, educators and activists– from the Erasmus+ Programme Countries and Partner Countries of the Western Balkan region to explore relevant policies and practices in the field, gain new insight on the topic and develop inspiring responses.

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP *IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE*

changing baselines

Citizenship is a notion, which can be hard to grasp entirely. In a legal sense, it frames the relationship of an individual and the society through institutionalized memberships and specific rights frameworks. Looking from a broader perspective however, citizenship can be understood as a dynamic practice of existing societal rights and roles in a sense of civic-mindedness, in which one takes an active role in shaping the society. Citizenship education therefore ideally pursues a learning process, which extends beyond acknowledgement and exercise of particular civic rights and aims at learners' empowerment to govern their lives and influence their surroundings through active participation. In the contemporary European context citizenship education takes a variety of forms, yet democracy remains an underlying value.

Today the conventional understanding of citizenship bound to a state has ceased to be sufficient, as the quest for recognition of universal human rights overlap national borders, and phenomena such as migration question distinct memberships and identities associated to them. "European citizenship" is one of the concepts, which has emerged to depict the global or "cosmopolitan" aspect of citizenship in Europe. The concept was first introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht on European Union in 1992¹, in which it referred to the complementary rights of the citizens of European Union member states. Today there is an increasing demand to bridge European citizenship as a passive set or civic rights in the European Union to actual practice of democratic participation in the European civil society. In the field of European youth work and youth policy the concept accordingly functions as an invitation to dialogue and action on political, social and civic matters in the European public sphere, leading also to the understanding of European citizenship beyond the political or geographical borders of the European Union.

¹ A treaty on European economic and monetary union, agreed by the heads of government of the twelve member states of the European Community at a summit meeting in Maastricht in December 1991.

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AS A MEANS TO RESPOND TO CURRENT CHALLENGES IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

The narrative of unified Europe with common values and objectives has for long been a crucial catalyst for integration and social cohesion in Europe, and it greatly derives from the efforts in the post-war Europe to ensure peace and social cohesion in the continent by fostering interdependency and sense of shared identity. However, following the recent economic and socio-political challenges, these commitments have begun to unravel, evoking societal instability, political polarization and xenophobia within Europe. Specific measures in the fields of education and youth by the European Union and its member states, as well as the Council of Europe aim at responding to these challenges.

The Paris Declaration² in 2015 placed citizenship in the focus of the European Union's education policy, whereas young people's acquisition of social, civic and intercultural competences through education was stated as one of the primary objectives in combating the contemporary challenges. The Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union was identified as the key instrument in achieving the Declaration's objectives in the European level complementing the efforts to be made by the member states in the national and local levels.

Further on, promoting active citizenship, young people's democratic participa-

tion in Europe and gaining of civic and social competences have for long been important elements in the Erasmus+ Programme and its predecessors, in particular in the youth field. Addressing young people's citizenship effectively however requires synergies across the relevant fields and frameworks; the priorities and objectives of citizenship education in Europe are still defined to a large extent in the formal educational curricula in the national level³.

Still at the European level, education plays an essential role in the promotion of the core values of the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as in the prevention of human rights violations. More generally, education is increasingly seen as a defense against the rise of violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance. This growing awareness is reflected in the adoption of the **Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education** by the Organization's 47 member states in the framework of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7.

The Charter is an important reference point for all those dealing with citizenship and human rights education. It is also a way of disseminating good practice and raising standards throughout Europe and beyond and it recognizes the role

of non-formal education and youth organizations in promoting young people's active citizenship and human rights. The Charter defines "education for democratic citizenship" as education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law". The main educational principles underpinning this type of education are: valuing diversity, inclusion, equal chances, respect for human dignity and life in peace.

This Forum will support the promotion and further development of the field of education for democratic citizenship. It will also introduce the training kit developed for practitioners by the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth. Specific focus in the forum will be on exploring the current developments and future perspectives in integrating the European dimension in practices and policies of education for democratic citizenship with young people.

² Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education – Informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers, Paris, 17 March 2015.

³ Citizenship education in Europe. Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission 2012.

THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITY

The aim of the activity is to promote the European dimension in education for democratic citizenship with young people and contribute to the recognition of European citizenship.

The specific objectives are:

- To map out recent trends, developments and policy processes related to the topic of the activity;
- To provide insight and stimulate discussion related to the concept of European citizenship;
- To provide space for exchange of participants' practices on addressing European dimension in the education for democratic citizenship, in particular through youth work and non-formal education;
- To identify challenges in approaching the European dimension in education for democratic citizenship and showcase inspiring practices and ways to address them;
- To encourage networking, new partnerships and cooperation among participants;
- To advocate for the recognition of the added value of the European dimension in education for democratic citizenship as a tool for addressing current challenges in the European societies.

TARGET GROUP

The activity gathers ca. 40 stakeholders (**educators, youth workers, teachers, education coordinators youth policy makers and researchers**) from the Erasmus+ Programme Countries and the Partner Countries of the Western Balkans working in the context of education for democratic citizenship with young people.

VENUE

The activity will be organised in City hotel, which is located in the heart of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia.

ORGANISERS

The activity is organised by:

- Institute MOVIT – SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre and the Slovenian National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of youth;
- Interkulturelles Zentrum, The Austrian National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of youth;
- JUGEND für Europa: The German National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of youth;
- Foundation for the Development of the Education System: The Polish National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of youth;
- The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.