

Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values

The CitEdEV Project Handbook

Handbook of the ERASMUS+ JEAN MONNET NETWORK
Jean Monnet Network Project: **CitEdEV**
Citizenship Education in the
Context of European Values: **Citizenship Education in the
Context of European Values**
CitEdEV

Compiled by
Peter Cunningham
London Metropolitan University, UK

ISBN: 978-80-7603-415-0

DOI: 10.14712/9788076034150

Introduction

This handbook provides a brief overview of the *Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values* (CitEdEV) project. It aims to present to a non-academic audience, the context for the project, the scope of its work, and some of its recommendations.

It is arranged in the following short sections:

1. An overview of the CitEdEV project
2. CitEdEV: a Jean Monnet Network
3. European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).
4. The European Commission
5. The European Union
6. EU Strategy
7. The EU Executive
8. The EU and European Values
9. European Values and the Council of Europe
10. The Paris Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and Common Values

11. The CitEdEV Project – in more detail
12. Why are European Values important?
13. Young people’s understanding of European Values
14. Educational responses to the covid-19 pandemic
15. Young citizens online
16. European Values and populism
17. Young people on the Margins
18. Tolerance and History Teaching and Learning
19. Global Citizenship Education
20. Summary

The content is designed to show how the work of CitEdEV fits with the workings of the European Union and its policies and initiatives. In doing so it quotes from official EU websites, the idea being to give ‘official representation’ rather than to provide commentary on, or criticism of EU institutions. It also allows readers to follow links to sites which give further detail.

1. An overview of the CitEdEV project

Led by Charles university, Prague, the CitEdEV project is a network comprised of 29 universities from 19 countries across Europe, with its members drawn from the Children’s Identity and Citizenship: European Association (Cicea).

Cicea is an association focusing on citizenship education and identity formation in young people in Europe and the world. It is made-up of academics from across Europe, all engaged in research and scholarship on young people's social learning and their construction of identities. Detail about the association, its publications and activities can be found here: <https://www.cicea.eu/>. Cicea takes a broad definition of citizenship that goes beyond narrow legal definitions, to include all people, including children and young people, who live in Europe, and as such is very much concerned with issues of social justice.

CitEdEV made a successful application for funding to the European Commission through the Jean Monnet funding stream, with the project funded from October 2020 until March 2024 (the original funding period was for three years, but a short extension was granted because of the impact of the covid pandemic on its activities).

2. CitEdEV – a Jean Monnet Network

Jean Monnet (1888-1979) is considered to be one of the founding father's of the European Union. He was a French politician who worked at the forefront of European reconstruction after the devastation of World War II. He envisaged European integration as the way forward, with increased cooperation both seen as a means to bring greater economic prosperity, and also to help avert the possibility of future war within Europe.

Most famously he was the architect of the European Coal and Steel Community, which was formally established in 1951 by a treaty to which Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany were signatories. It established a common market among member states that stipulated free movement of goods (without customs duties or taxes) and prohibited states from introducing unfair competitive or discriminatory practices. Later expansion of its membership and duties led to the creation of the European Union.

Memory of Jean Monnet is kept alive by the European Commission who describe him as 'the unifying force behind the birth of the European Union' (see [161223ac-085d-481d-a694-78ef625b19e9 en \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/education/cit-ed-ev/jean-monnet)). They have established what they call Jean Monnet Actions, and award grants in honour of his name.

The Jean Monnet actions offer opportunities in the field of higher education and in other fields of education and training, and include the establishment of networks with the aim to share research and good practice in relation to European matters. To this end, in addition to numerous on-line meetings, CitEdEV have held conferences and seminars in the Czech Republic, Turkey, and Spain, which have attracted participants from across Europe and beyond.

Jean Monnet actions are implemented by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

3. European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

Since 2006, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) manages funding for education, culture, audiovisual, sport, citizenship and volunteering, on behalf of the European Commission. A flavour of what they do is given by this promotional statement by Themis Christophidou, Director General, EACEA:

The European Union is built on the pillars of education, culture, citizenship and solidarity. Never before have these areas been of greater importance than they are today: the war of aggression against Ukraine has shown us once again that we have to keep investing in our shared culture, in quality education for all, and in promoting active citizenship and solidarity

Whether supporting exchanges through the Erasmus+ programme for citizens of all ages to study, train or gain experience abroad, safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage through Creative Europe, promoting open and democratic society under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, or fostering solidarity through the European Solidarity Corps, the projects that EACEA supports will continue to promote the values that we, as Europeans, build our lives around.

The work of Executive Agencies such as EACEA breathes life into the Commission's policies and brings them closer to Europe's citizens. (see [European Education and Culture Executive Agency - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#))

4. The European Commission

In the above section Christophidou is quoted as saying that the EACEA 'breathes life into the Commission's policies'. In this section, a brief overview of the European Commission's role is given.

The European Commission (EC) is part of the executive of the European Union (EU). It is a cabinet government comprised of a team of Commissioners and a President (the current President is Ursula von der Leyen).

Each member state proposes one Commissioner, with all Commissioners and the President subject to approval by the Council of the European Union and European Parliament (see below). Commissioners are required to act independently – free from other influences such as those governments which appointed them, though in reality they also raise matters of national interest. However, in the main, their role is 'to think European', to consider the wider interests of the European Union as a whole (Also see section 7, below).

In terms of organisation it is divided into departments known as Directorates General (DG), and these can be likened to departments or ministries, each headed by a Director-General who is responsible to a Commissioner.

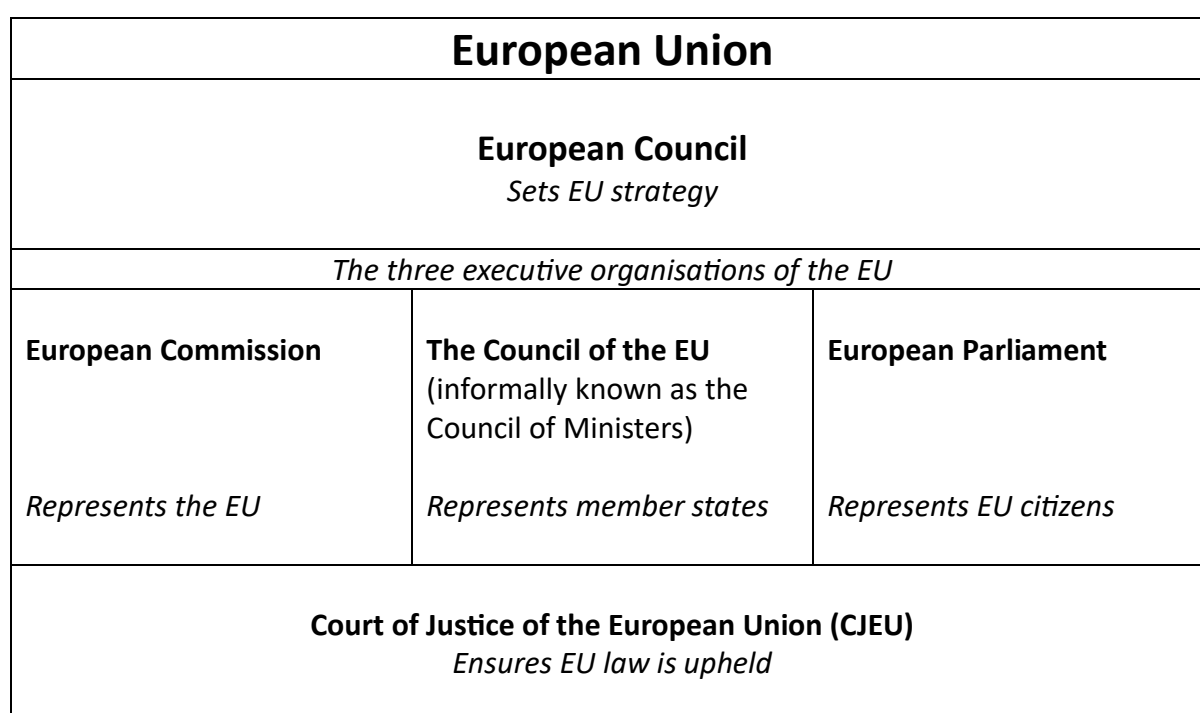
To help ensure a holistic approach to EU policy and laws, agencies may work under several so called 'parent DGs'. So for example, the EACEA works closely with six supervisory Directorates-General in the Commission to help ensure they deliver a comprehensive service. Since April 2021, its parent Directorates-General are - DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; DG Justice and Consumers; DG Communications Networks; Content and Technology; DG International Partnerships; DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations; and, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

(see [What the European Commission does - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#))

5. The European Union

In the section above it was noted that the EC is part of the executive of the European Union (EU).

The EU is a hugely complex organisation, incorporating many institutions with different roles and representations. At the risk of over-simplification, following sections in this handbook outline the role of some of the key EU institutions, and the diagram below illustrates how these institutions fit together.



Before looking at these institutions, a more general overview of the EU is presented with a quotation the EU website, which states:

The aims of the European Union within its borders are:

- promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens
- offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders, while also taking appropriate measures at its external borders to regulate asylum and immigration and prevent and combat crime
- establish an internal market

- achieve sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability and a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress
- protect and improve the quality of the environment
- promote scientific and technological progress
- combat social exclusion and discrimination
- promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, and protection of the rights of the child
- enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries
- respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity
- establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro

([Aims and values | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#))

The European Union is based on the rule of law. This means that every action taken by the EU is founded on treaties that have been approved voluntarily and democratically by all EU member countries. For example, if a policy area is not cited in a treaty, the Commission cannot propose a law in that area.

A treaty is a binding agreement between EU member countries. It sets out EU objectives, rules for EU institutions, how decisions are made and the relationship between the EU and its member countries.

Treaties are amended to make the EU more efficient and transparent, to prepare for new member countries and to introduce new areas of cooperation – such as the single currency.

Under the treaties, EU institutions can adopt legislation, which the member countries then implement. The complete texts of treaties, legislation, case law and legislative proposals can be viewed using the EUR-Lex database of EU law - [EU law - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

6. EU Strategy

Central to the functioning of the EU, is the **European Council**. Its membership is comprised of heads of state or government of EU countries, the European Council President, and the European Commission President, and as such It represents the highest level of political cooperation between EU countries.

The Lisbon Treaty describes the European Council as a body which "*shall provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development*". Its role is to set the EU's political agenda. It decides on the EU's overall direction and political priorities, and deals with complex or sensitive issues that cannot be resolved at lower levels of intergovernmental cooperation.

Although the European Council does not make laws it can on any issue ask the European Commission to make a proposal to address it, and/or pass it on to the Council of the EU to deal with.

([European Council – role and powers | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#))

7. The EU Executive

As noted above, three institutions make-up the executive of the European Union. These are, the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP), and the Council of the European Union.

The EC represents the EU, the European Parliament represents the citizens of the EU, and the Council of the European Union, represents the governments of the member states.

These three organisations each have executive roles crucial to the functioning of the EU, and in terms of legislative processes agreement between these executive branches must be reached. Negotiation is done through what are termed trilogue meetings, which involve all three executive branches.

European Commission

European Union legislation is proposed by the EC but must be approved by the Council of the European Union and European Parliament before it becomes law.

The European Commission then has a role in enacting EU law and in progressing EU policy. In order to do this the EC has an administrative body of about 32,000 European civil servants.

European Parliament

Since 1979, the EP has been directly elected every 5 years by the citizens of the EU through universal suffrage. It is composed of 705 members (MEPs), with an electorate of 375 million eligible to vote in 2009. ([Organisation \(europa.eu\)](#)).

MEPs oversee the work of EU institutions, notably the European Commission. Parliament also has shared responsibility with the other executive bodies, for adopting EU legislation, and for agreeing the annual budget.

Through its committees it reports on, and can also propose amendments to, legislation presented by the EC.

Council of the European Union

The Council of the EU, is also known as the Council of Ministers.

Ministers from each country (depending on the policy area) meet to discuss, amend and adopt laws, and coordinate policies.

The ministers have the authority to commit their governments to actions agreed on.

[Council of the European Union – role | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)

Court of Justice of the European Union

It is also important to note the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), which is the judicial branch of the EU. The CJEU is the chief judicial authority of the EU and oversees the uniform application and interpretation of European Union law, in cooperation with the national judiciary of the member states. It also resolves legal disputes between national governments and EU institutions, and may take action against EU institutions on behalf of individuals, companies or organisations whose rights have been infringed. In short, its mission is to ensure that "the law is observed" "in the interpretation and application" of the Treaties of the EU.

8. The EU and European Values

In section 5 it was noted that the EU is founded on the basis of the rule and on its treaties. Underpinning these are the founding values, which are laid out in article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and described as:

Human dignity: Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected, protected and constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.

Freedom: Freedom of movement gives citizens the right to move and reside freely within the Union. Individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Democracy: The functioning of the EU is founded on representative democracy. A European citizen automatically enjoys political rights. Every adult EU citizen has the

right to stand as a candidate and to vote in elections to the European Parliament. EU citizens have the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in their country of residence, or in their country of origin.

Equality: Equality is about equal rights for all citizens before the law. The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration. It applies in all areas. The principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

Rule of law: The EU is based on the rule of law. Everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by its EU countries. Law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. The EU countries gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice - its judgments have to be respected by all.

Human rights: Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. These cover the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the right to the protection of your personal data, and the right to get access to justice.

[\(Aims and values | European Union \(europa.eu\)\)](#)

9. European Values and the Council of Europe

Hand in hand with the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, member states within the EU are also signed-up to the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) (1950). In short, we can say that the EU and the Council of Europe have shared values.

Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe (CoE) aims to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. Every European state is a member of the CoE (with the exception of Belarus, which was never a member, and the Russian Federation, suspended from membership in March 2022, no longer a member from September 2022).

Perhaps the best-known body of the Council of Europe is the European Court of Human Rights, an international court that interprets and makes judgement on the basis of the European Convention on Human Rights.

While in this handbook we discuss 'European Values' it is recognised that these values are not unique to Europe, and can be seen in many states outside Europe, unique quality is that they are supranationally agreed and regulated under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. These rights are interpreted by the Court in a dynamic way: they extend and

develop our understanding and implementation of values as circumstances change. They are therefore continually being contested and developed.

(see [The Council of Europe at a glance - Portal \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int))

NB Do not confuse *The Council of Europe* with the EU's *European Council* or *The Council of the European Union*.
Or the *European Court of Human Rights* with the *Court of Justice of the European Union* (CJEU).
However, it is easy to do so as they have such similar names!

10. The Paris Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and Common Values

Following violent extremism and terrorist attacks across Europe, an informal meeting of EU Education Ministers and Commissioner Navracsics adopted in Paris on 17 March 2015 the 'Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education'

Such extremism was interpreted as a threat not only to the safety of its citizens but also to its fundamental values of freedom, democracy, equality, respect for the rule of law, human rights and dignity, and stood in direct opposition to the vision of a European society characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and gender equality.

The Declaration defined common objectives for Member States and urged the EU to ensure the sharing of ideas and good practice with a view to:

- Ensuring that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship;
- Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the Internet and social media, so as to develop resistance to all forms of discrimination and indoctrination;
- Fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs;
- Promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.

The European Commission moved on this declaration, with, for example, the EACEA providing funding opportunities through Jean Monnet Actions.

[\(Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)\)](#)

European Union educational policy builds on the Paris Declaration, with emphasis placed on:

‘Fostering the development of citizenship competences with the aim of strengthening the awareness of common values, as referred to in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union’ (European Commission, 2018)

‘Citizenship competence’ is described as ‘... the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability’

11. The CitEdEV Project – in more detail

The CitEdEV Jean Monnet Network was established to address the call of the Paris Declaration to promote citizenship and common values in higher education, with particular reference to teacher education and allied professional courses.

The main focus for CitEdEV is on sharing of good practice, including through conferences seminars, workshops and publications. Within this it highlights democratic values, fundamental rights, and active citizenship.

To do this a number of Working Groups were established to explore different aspects of the topic. These included:

- Young People’s Understanding of European Values
- Educational Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Young Europeans as citizens online
- Populism and its impact on young people
- Young people on the margins
- Tolerance and History Teaching and Learning
- Global Citizenship

Each Working Group compiled a report with recommendations for education and the following sections give a very brief snapshot of these reports.

12. Why are European Values important?

These values underpin the nature of civic society in Europe in particular ways. They apply to all inhabitants – citizens, temporary residents, visitors, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and so-called ‘illegal’ residents. They are not only common across nearly all European states, but they are synchronised so that they are applied and upheld in very similar ways. They thus underpin the peaceful relationship between signatory states and confirm the territorial integrity of these states.

[See Ross, A. (2024) What are ‘European’ Values, and how do they relate to Citizenship Education in Universities *in*: Cunningham, P. (ed) (2024), Citizenship in the Context of European Values: Recommendations for teaching in higher education (Report of Working Group 12 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV)]

CitEdEV describes children and young people as being on a ‘civic journey’ and that social institutions have a responsibility to help guide them on this journey. They argue that to maintain and develop a healthy democracy in Europe, it is important for all children and young people to have an understanding of European Values, and that all educational institutions have a role to play in developing this understanding with their students.

The recommendations that CitEdEV has proposed fit well with EU strategy which aims to develop mechanisms to engaging in dialogue with young people and to support ways of ‘learning to participate’ from an early age ([Participation in civil society | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infographic/Pages/Participation-in-civil-society-Infographic-2022-2023.aspx))

13. Young people’s understanding of European Values

The Working Groups research into young people’s understanding of European Values, showed that young people are constantly experiencing and negotiating values in their everyday lives.

Their report stresses the importance for young people to understand - not simply to ‘know’ the particular values, but to appreciate their complexity, and their significance in European safety and development. In respect of this, they recommend a deliberative approach to teaching and learning, that necessitates discussion, listening to others, making suggestions, and considering and changing ideas.

See: Ross, A, Loughan, T. et al (2024) *Young People’s Understanding of European Values: Enhancing abilities, supporting participation and voice* [Report of Working Group 1 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV]

14. Educational responses to the covid-19 pandemic

Whilst the pandemic may be considered an unprecedented event that required extraordinary measures, there are lessons to be learned from the experience. While not diminishing the

efforts made at ministerial level in countries across Europe, this Working Groups' research highlighted that some educational responses to the covid-19 pandemic disadvantaged particular groups, notably those that were already disadvantaged in society.

Their report stresses that every child's right to education is enshrined in the European Convention for Human Rights, and recommends that all policy is informed by an assessment of its impact on vulnerable groups.

See: Oprescu, M. *et al*, (2024), Educational Policies and Social Responsibility in Education during the Covid-19 Crisis: Three Case Studies of Romania, Greece, and Ukraine (Report of Working Group 10 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV)

15.Young citizens online

The Working Group looking into online citizenship, recognised that issues such as online privacy, cyberbullying, digital rights, and the proliferation of misinformation require ethical awareness and responsible decision-making.

The report argues that education must foster ethical values, promoting respect, empathy, honesty, and digital responsibility to guide individuals in their online interactions and engagements, and that Citizenship education must adapt to the challenges posed by the online world, and help to prepare individuals to be active and responsible citizens.

See: Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, B. (ed) (2024), Young Europeans as citizens online (Report of Working Group 2 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV]

16.European Values and Populism

The CitEdEV project identified populism as a challenge to democracy, tolerance, and European values, and established a Working Group to explore populist forms of politics and the potential implications for education.

The Groups' report notes that the educational landscape, marked by societal distrust, economic challenges, and the adaptability of populist narratives to diverse value systems, demands vigilant efforts by researchers, policy makers, and teachers to instil critical thinking, democratic values, and media literacy across Europe.

See: Gifford, C. (ed) (2024), Populism and its impact on young people (Report of Working Group 2 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV]

17.Young people on the Margins

The Working Group defined the marginalised as individuals or groups prevented from full or active participation in social, economic and/or political life. Within this broad definition they explored educational policy and practice with respect to marginalisation from diverse perspectives.

The reports argues that marginalised voices need to be heard and that universities have an important role to play in this as part of their community engagement responsibility.

See: Spinthourakis, J. A. (ed.) (2024). *Young People on the Margins*. (Report of Working Group 2 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV]

18. Tolerance and History Teaching and Learning

The Working Group define tolerance as a form of justice, arguing that being tolerant does not mean being able to respect others in a generic sense, but, rather, trying to behave justly towards those who think or do something that we cannot share or accept.

The report argues that in History teaching, controversial issues need to be addressed. This is exemplified by presenting a range of historical events from across Europe, with teaching and learning activities designed to encourage students to critically examine historical narratives with emphasis on tolerance as a European Value.

See: Verkest, H. *et al* (2024), *Traces of tolerance in European history: a student-oriented and educational approach* (Report of Working Group 5 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV]

19. Global Citizenship Education

This Working Group stress the importance of global citizenship education. Their report reminds us that values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, human rights, solidarity, community, *etc*, exist beyond the borders of Europe.

The report argues that global citizenship education not only enriches understanding of the world, but also has the potential to enhance citizenship competencies, and to help further develop understanding of European Values.

See: Zemanova, B. *et al*, (2024) *Global Citizenship Education in Cunningham, P. (ed) (2024), Citizenship in the Context of European Values: Recommendations for teaching in higher education* (Report of Working Group 12 of the Jean Monnet Network Project: Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: CitEdEV]

20. Summary

European Values are set out in the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and are reflected in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, and laid out in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty.

European Values underpin the work of the EU at every level. Education Ministers, for example, adopted the Paris Declaration, which promoted citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

CitEdEV responded to a call by the European Commission (Jean Monnet Actions) to progress the Paris Declaration. It is hoped that the activities and reports of the CitEdEV network will help move this agenda forward, that recommendations will be taken-up, and that guidance for teaching and learning will help give children and young people better understanding of European Values, and support them as citizens in Europe.

All publications arising from the Citizenship Education and European Values Project

- RESEARCH REPORT** Young People's Understanding of European Values: Enhancing abilities, supporting participation and voice
ISBN 978-80-7603-412-9
DOI 10.14712/9788076034129
- TEACHERS GUIDELINES** Citizenship in the Context of European Values: Recommendations for teaching in higher education
ISBN 978-80-7603-414-3
DOI 10.14712/9788076034143
- HANDBOOK** Citizenship Education in the Context of European Values: The CitEdEV Project
ISBN 978-80-7603-415-0
DOI 10.14712/9788076034150
- CASE STUDIES** Casebook
ISBN 978-80-7603-465-5
DOI 10.14712/9788076034648
- WORKING GROUP REPORT** Young Europeans as citizens online
ISBN 978-80-7603-413-6
DOI 10.14712/9788076034136
- WORKING GROUP REPORT** Populism and its impact on young people
ISBN 978-80-7603-466-2
DOI 10.14712/9788076034662
- WORKING GROUP REPORT** Young people on the margins
ISBN 978-80-7603-467-9
DOI 10.14712/9788076034679
- WORKING GROUP REPORT** Educational Policies and Social Responsibility in Education during the Covid-19 Crisis: Three case studies of Romania, Greece, and Ukraine
ISBN 978-80-7603-468-6
DOI 10.14712/9788076034686
- WORKING GROUP REPORT** Traces of tolerance in European history: A student-oriented and educational approach
ISBN 978-80-7603-469-3
DOI 10.14712/9788076034693

