



Teaching EU Values in Schools through European programs. The “Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” Program

Authors: Foteini Asderaki¹, Olga Sideri² and Kristina Zharkalliu³, Department of International and European Studies, University of Piraeus, Greece

Who is this aimed at?

This policy brief is aimed at policymakers and stakeholders on European, national, regional, and local level.

Recommendations:

Teaching EU values at school could be enhanced by:

- Fostering the quality of training activities for both teachers and students, pedagogical methods and educational material on the EU and its values.
- Supporting skills development with an emphasis on encompassing EU values in the school curriculum.
- Enhancing the synergies between all levels of education.
- Redesigning initial and in-service teachers’ training through distance learning and educational platforms so they acquire the flexibility required and incorporate their knowledge into actions.
- Developing and supporting interaction between European and international teachers’ networks as a common understanding of EU values.
- Highlighting best practices on teaching the EU values, along with OER in a platform in which teachers across the EU and beyond can have access to.
- Working toward the implementation of the EU values, in the school environment.
- Increasing funding opportunities for European programs including teachers and student’s mobility.

Key words: European Union, EU values, teachers, Erasmus+

¹ Associate Professor, Jean Monnet Chair on European Union’s Education, Training, Research and Innovation Policies, Academic Coordinator-Erasmus KA3 2018 – 2021 / “Teachers4Europe: setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” (2018-2021), Chair of the European Security and Defence College Doctoral School on CSDP/European External Action Service (2019-2021).

² Msc in International and European Policies in Education, Training and Research, University of Piraeus

³ MA in Public Administration and Governance, Central European University

Executive Summary

The establishment of the European Education Area is fundamental for the development of the European Union of Values. As President Juncker said, "Education and culture are the key to the future – both for the individual as well as for our Union as a whole". The importance of education is the basis of active citizenship and fundamental values that should lie at the heart of the EU as stated in the Paris Declaration 2015. In order to achieve this goal, special attention must be paid to human resources, especially teachers, who as the main pillars of education are the key-actors to promote European values. This policy brief outlines the importance of teaching EU values in schools through European Programs and focuses on the Erasmus+KA3 "Teachers4Europe setting an Agora for Democratic Culture" program which establishes a European network of teachers. Teachers4Europe network will become the driving force for the promotion of the EU values. A prerequisite for strengthening the role of teachers in promoting EU values lies in the continuous training of teachers and students on issues related to the EU, the reshaping of the curricula, and the participation in European programs which offer the opportunity to teachers and students to interact with their peers and stakeholders. Through this bottom-up process, effective policy recommendations and good practices would emerge.

Where is the problem located?

Education and teachers are important factors to promote understanding of the European Union and

construct the European identity. The European Union is not only an economic community but also a community of values. Despite the European Union's 70 years of history and the significant normative and legal acquis based on democracy, non-discrimination and human rights, teaching values lies mainly in national perceptions and curricula, which not necessarily include the teaching of European Union values as outlined in Article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁴. Moreover, many of these values are at risk⁵ as a consequence of the European crises (BREXIT, euro crisis, migration crisis) and the rise of Euroscepticism, nationalism, xenophobia and populism.

"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

Article 2 Treaty of the European Union

The 2018 Council Recommendation on Common values, Inclusive Education, and the European Dimension of Teaching encouraged the Member States to promote EU values and active democratic citizenship from an early age and at all levels and types of education and training⁶.

⁴ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, OJ C 326, 26.10.2012.

⁵ Erasmus+ KA3 "Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture" (2018 - 2021)., "Needs Assessment Report for Stakeholders", Chapter 3.2: "European Values at Risk", Page:9, edited by Leibniz University Hannover.

⁶ Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching ST/9010/2018/INIT, OJ C 195, 7.6.2018

The Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 encouraged the Member States to continue to implement the commitments of the Paris Declaration, notably through:

- (a) promoting active citizenship and ethics education as well as an open classroom climate to foster tolerant and democratic attitudes and social, citizenship and intercultural competences;
- (b) enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the internet and social media, so as to raise awareness of risks related to the reliability of information sources and to help exercise sound judgment;
- (c) using existing or, where necessary, developing new structures that promote the active participation of teachers, parents, students and the wider community in schools; and
- (d) supporting opportunities for young people’s democratic participation and an active, critically aware and responsible community engagement;

Source: Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching ST/9010/2018/INIT, OJ C 195, 7.6.2018

Teaching EU values in schools requires a common understanding of their significance for inclusive societies and their promotion through interactive and innovative pedagogical methods. The lack of courses on the European Union, including a strong dimension of education for democracy and human rights, within schools’ curricula limits the emergence of active European citizens. In addition, insufficient teachers’ initial and continuous training on European issues,

weaken their roles as mediators of the European values towards students and society.

It is widely acknowledged that the EU through Erasmus+ programs promotes the European dimension in education and teachers’ professional development⁷. However, the overloaded school curricula restrain teachers’ and students’ participation in the European projects, and consequently the interaction with peers which contributes to shared understanding of EU values. In addition, despite the important role that stakeholders could play in fostering dialogue on the EU issues, their role is rather limited within Member States’ educational frameworks; in most cases the education policy is strictly within the remit of national member state governments to determine.

The Council in 2018, following a proposal made by the Commission, revised the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and the European Reference Framework initially adopted in 2006, which includes active citizenship as a key competence throughout life⁸. Moreover, the Council stresses that since the penetration of technologies in both work and life has been significantly increased. In addition, it encourages the creation and interaction of networks of teachers and other stakeholders through the eTwinning platform.

Table 1: Teachers4Europe consortium

The T4E consortium consists of:

1. University of Piraeus Research Center-Greece, Coordinator of the Project
2. St Margaret College, Malta
3. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover - Germany
4. Universitatea Babeş - Bolyai – Romania

⁷ Symeonidis V., (2018), “Revisiting the European teacher education area: the transformation of teacher education policies and practices in Europe”, CEPS Journal 8, 3, S. 13-34

⁸ Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (Text with EEA relevance.) ST/9009/2018/INIT, OJ C 189, 4.6.2018

5. EURACTIV – UK
6. Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO
7. Pedagogical Institute - Cyprus
8. Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Greece
9. Learn to Change – Change to Learn[L2C]

The Erasmus KA3+ Teachers4Europe: Setting up an Agora for Democratic Culture (T4E) Program which consists of nine partners from European countries, aims to create a cross-border, sustainable and long-lasting teachers' network, which will promote social and civic competences of pupils and advocate democratic values, fundamental rights, and intercultural understanding. The participation of over two hundreds stakeholders and policymakers will increase the positive momentum of the program on a social and policy level; it will improve the quality of training and learning through synergies increasing knowledge about the European Union and its democratic culture.

- The Teachers4Europe program focuses on
- a. fostering knowledge about the EU, its origins, functioning, policies and strategies
 - b. promoting the significance of participation at the local, national and European elections and the decision-making processes,
 - c. enhancing understanding and ownership of the EU values and fundamental rights and
 - d. appreciating democracy and solidarity as basic EU values with the ultimate aim to become mainstreamed in the curriculum.

The above issues will be accomplished through practical activities and knowledge in the following six areas:

1. Knowledge on EU issues to enhance active citizenship and European identity,
2. The EU democratic values,
3. Global Citizenship

4. Human and fundamental rights,
5. Digital literacy to enhance civic competences and
6. Inclusion in Diversity.

Overall, Teachers4Europe program will evolve as a European learning network involving schools, teachers, policy representatives and community stakeholders that will be committed to act in favor of EU values. In this way, not only the teachers' role will be upgraded but also inclusive and democratic multi-actor learning environments will be established. As an output the dissemination and exploitation not only of the directly involved target groups, but also of the stakeholders in politics and the community, will be promoted. Through its implementation, Teachers4Europe program aims to promote a bottom-up policy reform, which starts from the educators, engages social stakeholders and policy representatives and reaches the educational curricula of the partner countries involved with a relevant impact on the European Education Area.

Do all Europeans understand European values in the same way?

The Teachers4Europe program aims to support and train teachers on how to approach and teach the EU fundamental values, active citizenship and democracy. But do all Europeans, including teachers and stakeholders, perceive the European values in the same way? Do they rank the European values just the same?

To answer these vital questions, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover along with the programs' partners conducted two Needs Analysis Surveys. The first Survey explored teachers' understanding of the EU values and respective teaching needs; questionnaires have been answered by one hundred twenty-three teachers who work and live in ten different European countries. The second

Survey has been answered by fifty-six stakeholders, and investigates stakeholders’ understanding of the EU values. The Needs Analysis results shared Bellamy’s view for the meaning of citizenship which has been linked to the participation of a particular type of political community. People who participate in the community are equal and they have internalized the EU values⁹.

Teachers and stakeholders defined the EU values and what they mean to them both on a personal and social level. On a personal level, a significant share of teachers answered that EU values help them to understand their role in society as European citizens and as a way of life. On a social level, most of the teachers perceived the EU values as a common communication code and they also stressed that they are the core elements of the European citizenship.

Table 2: Teachers’ ranking of the EU values

Greece	Germany	Cyprus	L2C	Malta
Democracy	Human rights	Human rights	Love	Human rights
Equality	Freedom	Democracy	Freedom	Respect
Freedom	Peace	Freedom	Tolerance	Freedom
Respecting human rights	Democracy	Equality	Solidarity and cooperation	Equality
Respecting human dignity	Equality	Respect	Equality	

Source: Erasmus+ KA3 “Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” (2018 - 2021), Needs Assessment Report for Teachers”, Chapter 3.2: “Most important European values in the partners’ countries”, Page:11, Edited by Leibniz University Hannover.

Regarding the EU values teaching and the preferred educational methods most teachers answered that have already integrated the EU values in class through projects. Further to that, most of them

choose experiential and interactive learning methods for interaction with their students.

Teaching EU values, educational methods and approaches

Regarding the EU values teaching and the preferred educational methods, most teachers answered that they have already integrated the EU values in the classroom through projects. Further to that, most of them choose experiential and interactive learning methods for interaction with their students while teaching in foreign languages and treating everyday European policies in their classroom is rather unlikely. Moreover, teachers rarely have the opportunity to discuss methods and approaches and exchange good practices.

Table 3: Teaching methods on the EU values

Teaching method / type of teaching	Examples
Interactive and experiential methods	Simulations, role plays, educational games, animations
Learning through projects	Cross curricular projects, telephone conferences with pupils from other countries, visiting institutions or NGOs, sporting events, intercultural and international projects, school exchanges
Pupils Discussions in class	Different types of debates, presentations, forming an opinion in class, fish bowl
Using true-to-life material/media	Storytelling, videos, multimedia tools, documentaries
Teaching in foreign languages	----
Engaging pupils to articulate their own opinion through certain institutions	Students’ council, simulation of the EU parliament, developing class rules

⁹ Bellamy, R. (2008). *Citizenship, “A Very Short Introduction”*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Teaching knowledge about the operating principles of the European Union	Working with schoolbooks, developing a chart with the title “House of Europe”, arrange the EU in higher-level relations
Using biographies to explain European ideas such as rapprochement and integration	Referring to own (teacher’s) biography
Treating everyday European policies in class	----
Creative tasks	Theatrical plays, drawing comics
Enhancing social competences in class	Games, group work, jigsaw method

Source: Erasmus+ KA3 “Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” (2018 - 2021)., “Needs Assessment Report for Teachers”, Chapter 3.3: “Teaching European Values”, Page:11, edited by Leibniz University Hannover.

The stakeholders’ views

The second questionnaire which has been answered by fifty-six stakeholders, explores their understanding of the EU values. Most of them believe that EU values have been a catalyst in the way in which the economic cohesion of the Union has been promoted, but also in the way in which peace and social relations have been organized. The second part of the survey was related to the classification of the EU values regarding the level of its importance. In the table below it is evident that there are many similarities between the answers, but freedom and human rights rank on the top. Furthermore, stakeholders mentioned peace, tolerance, respect, social justice, and diversity.

Table 4: Stakeholders ranking of the EU values

Greece	Germany	Cyprus	L2C	Malta	Romania
Equa-lity	Demo-cracy	Demo-cracy	Human Rights/ Dignity	Human rights	Prosperity
Educa-tion	Freedom	Human Rights	Freedom	Democracy	Freedom

Freedom	Peace	Equality	Diversity	Equality	Democracy
Respect	Human Rights	Respect	Social justice	Respect	Tolerance
Peace	Equality	Freedom	Tolerance	Freedom	Human Rights

Source: Erasmus+ KA3 “Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” (2018 - 2021), “Needs Assessment Report for Stakeholders”, Chapter 3.1: Definition and Meaning of European Values”, Page:9, Edited by Leibniz University Hannover

The results prove that each person classifies differently the importance of the EU values, depending on their professional situation, the place where they live and work and their experiences. Nevertheless, the differentiation of answers works positively, as in this way several actions are planned and implemented, which includes the full range of EU values. In addition, the differentiated teaching methods chosen by teachers show that mostly individualized teaching methods of the EU values are used to achieve their best promotion to students.

“Teachers 4 Europe” program contribution to teaching EU values

To encourage the EU values teaching, Teachers4Europe program will further exploit, expand, and scale up the Teachers4Europe network which has proven quite effective at national and local level implementing successful EU projects in Greece since 2011. Generally speaking Teachers 4 Europe transnational network act as an inspiring social and cultural incubator that will foster the dialogue with relevant stakeholders on a social and policy level; in addition, the program will contribute to building synergies between institutions at all levels of education and improving the quality of training and learning on EU issues.

The first step to achieve all the above is the implementation of a platform designed for the program requirements; Teachers4Europe Academy includes online training (MOOC) and educational

material and in particular a Handbook on Teaching EU values and a Handbook on EU. It also includes on site annual training activities and two summer schools named “4EU Values” in Malta and “Learning4Europe2Change” in Cyprus. The Teachers4Europe Academy provides teachers with the necessary training, and guidance tools to help them create democratic and inclusive learning environments that will enhance their student’s social skills, democratic thinking, and active citizenship. At the same time, educational material embeds civic education with a particular focus on democratic values, tolerance, non-discrimination, gender issues and social inclusion. The educational material for the training of the Ambassadors has been based on context analysis and the methodology guides; The material includes both conventional and non-conventional methods, extracurricular activities as well as best practices emerged on the European level on the teaching of EU values and active citizenship. In addition, concrete proposals for new school curricula and out of school educational activities will be formulated. In the long-term, European Union itself will be the recipient of the program. Addressing discrimination as well as promoting active citizenship, is a European priority that must be supported by an effective educational strategy both by the EU institutions and national governments.

However, the overall impact of the activities should be the entire society at national and European level. Thus, both television, radio and YouTube channels have significant roles within the implementation of the project. Additionally, the dissemination of the project will be guaranteed by the invitation of educational and local authorities, stakeholders, parents’ associations, press Media, the whole school community, the teaching staff association, education coordinators, and/or the local communities. Teachers4Europe setting an Agora for Democratic Culture project will evolve as a European learning hub that encompasses additional schools, teachers, policy

representatives and community actors committed to working for EU values.

Interactive learning and dissemination activities

Teachers4Europe Agora for Democracy conference in Athens, 2020

T4E Simulation Exercise of the EU institutions and decision-making process with students from the participating countries, Athens 2020

Students’ Rhetoric Symposium “Global Citizen: Supporting Sustainable Cities and Communities” in Elefsina, the European Cultural Capital 2021.

Political Dialogue for Education and Democracy at national level and in Brussels aiming at reforming education systems

Ancient Agora, located in Athens was the political, judicial, economic, cultural, and social Assembly of Polis (City). Consequently, T4E project intends to replicate a “European Agora for Democratic Culture” targeting at policy reforms on curricula of all levels of education; implementing non-formal educational activities such as role models; redesigning initial and in-service-teachers’ training; establishing transnational T4E networks and engaging local governments and communities in raising democratic awareness. Specifically, at the policy level, the countermeasures of the program will be visible to policy makers and those interested at the national level and European level. Their participation would be immediate in order to gain expertise, exchange of good practices and commitment to policy reforms. The ultimate goal of the program is to motivate them to contribute to the "Market for Democratic Culture" that will ultimately lead to a long-term policy reform from the ground up after the end of the project.