



Policy Recommendations for Adopting Democratic Education in European Public Schools

DESC Project





This document presents a series of recommendations concerning education systems, school organization, curriculum design, and the roles of teachers and pupils within European public schools. These recommendations are the result of contributions from schools participating in the [DESC project](#) and the University of La Laguna.

1. Education Systems

- o Foster understanding of the significance of democratic values within education systems by embedding them into local and regional policies.
- o Strengthen the connections between schools and their communities.
- o Use democratic principles as the foundation for both theoretical and practical approaches in education.
- o Encourage pedagogical methods that are situational, consent-based, and responsive to spontaneous learning opportunities.
- o Host events, meetings, and open discussions to emphasize the importance of democratic education among teachers, students, and parents.
- o Allocate resources for research and development in democratic education models and practices.
- o Promote the establishment of democratic schools and build partnerships with public schools to create a shared framework.
- o Increase public awareness of diverse educational approaches.
- o Encourage the formation of children's councils within schools to foster early civic engagement.

2. School Organization

- o Develop structures that enable active participation of all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and parents, in decision-making processes.
- o Include students as members of school councils and strengthen collaborative governance.
- o Establish channels for continuous feedback from all members of the school community to enable regular adjustments and improvements.
- o Maintain active connections with the natural, socio-cultural, and socio-economic contexts surrounding the school.
- o Cultivate trust within teaching teams and with local stakeholders, such as policymakers, NGOs, and civil society organizations.





- o Encourage diverse groupings, including mixed-age cohorts, to support empathetic and social learning.
- o Provide training on democratic education practices to ensure alignment with these principles.

3. Students

- o Empower students to engage in autonomous learning and make choices in line with Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child¹ (UNICEF, 1989)².
- o Introduce tutoring systems to support each student's development.
- o Allow students to demonstrate progress and competencies through diverse evaluation methods.
- o Make self-directed learning a cornerstone of student development and educational outcomes.
- o Acknowledge free play as a fundamental need for students' holistic development.
- o Increase opportunities for students to think critically and engage in dynamic learning environments.
- o Prioritize student participation in education as a political and civic imperative, with child protection and safeguarding as key components.

4. Teachers

- o Invest in robust training programs for teachers, emphasizing practical skills in democratic education, self-directed learning, and active citizenship.
- o Facilitate teacher self-training and professional development to enhance their role as agents of change.
- o Provide workshops and systematic training on children's rights and democratic education.
- o Enable teachers to engage in self-assessment as a tool for professional growth and alignment with democratic principles.
- o Equip teachers with the skills and autonomy needed to drive innovation and transformation in schools.

¹ Cf., *Art. 14. §1.*: "States that parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."; and *Art. 14. §2.*: "States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to guide the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child."

² UNICEF. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child.
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/crc.pdf>





5. Curriculum

- o Integrate principles of democracy and student participation into curricular content.
- o Ensure civic education is a central component of the learning experience.

