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Methodology for Creating Training Materials



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Quick navigation table: How to use this Methodology

Section	Use for Learning Materials
1.a Principles of Civic Engagement in democratic societies	This section outlines the foundational values of civic education, drawing on established frameworks such as the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, the Together for Dialogue framework, and OECD guidelines. From **general principles as a starting point**, it also provides more concrete **recommendations for the field of youth work**. Partners should use this section to ensure that the civic learning journey they will develop is grounded in rights-based, inclusive, and democratic values.
1.b Principles for SHINE Civic Education Materials	This section translates the general civic engagement principles into concrete design principles tailored to SHINE materials. It acts as a value compass for all WP3 outputs (podcast, toolkit, board game), helping ensure coherence, relevance, and fidelity to the SHINE vision throughout the content development process. Partners should regularly check whether a given activity or resource explicitly supports one or more of these principles.
2: Competence framework for democratic culture	Based on the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and complementary resources like Competendo and the DARE network, this section identifies essential **knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values** that each WP3 product should aim to cultivate. Partners should use this table as a guiding checklist: if an activity/part of the learning material fosters several of the described competences, it should be on the right track.
3: Recommended methodologies	This section introduces a **pool of tested non-formal (civic) education methodologies** mapped to the SHINE learning materials. The list of these methods is meant to serve as an inspiration; it is not mandatory to use all (or any) of these methods; however, it offers a useful set of building blocks for the SHINE learning material developers.
4: Recommendations for designing civic (non-formal) education frameworks	This section is especially valuable for the design of the SHINE Toolkit, as it supports the practical design and facilitation of civic education activities. It provides guidance on a wide range of crucial parameters for effective and value-driven delivery of non-formal, civic education.
Annex: Analysis of recommended methodologies	This annex provides detailed explanations of each recommended method, including *some concrete ideas (in italics) for how to embed them into the podcast, toolkit, or game*. These ideas are meant to serve as **a source of inspiration** and **do not**

	need to be included in the final materials. Partners are encouraged to creatively integrate these methods/ideas wherever they deem appropriate, combining them with their own ideas; adapting them to their own pedagogical vision for the SHINE materials in line with the SHINE principles.
SHINE Methodology Matrix	Provides an at-a-glance overview of how each recommended method connects to SHINE's core educational principles, to support cross-checking that selected activities remain aligned with those principles.

Section 1: Introduction

Basic to fostering civic literacy and democratic culture is an understanding of how democratic systems function and an awareness of how individuals and communities engage with civic life. Youth workers should base their teaching on *foundational principles of civic engagement and civic education* to create a robust framework for understanding societal structures, rights, and responsibilities. This framework should not only support learners in critically examining their roles within democratic systems but also equip them to analyse complex societal issues, collaborate across differences, and address pressing challenges - such as disinformation, Euroscepticism, and social alienation - while empowering them to advocate for the society they yearn for.

Principles of Civic Engagement in democratic societies [7][11] [16][22]

Civic engagement is defined in a general sense as "the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future." [1]

1. **Participation as a right, not a privilege**

Democratic engagement begins with the belief that every young person has the right to be heard, to shape the decisions that affect their lives, and to be part of building their communities and Europe's future. That is, participation must be recognised and upheld as a fundamental democratic right (and as a responsibility at the same time), not treated as a privilege to be earned or selectively granted.

> *Youth work shall provide structured, meaningful opportunities for young people to influence decisions, contribute perspectives, and exercise civic agency to build confidence and the habit of meaningful participation.*

2. **Inclusivity and non-discrimination**

When certain groups are excluded systematically from public discourse and decision-making, the legitimacy, fairness, and representativeness of democratic institutions are undermined. Therefore, for civic engagement to be meaningful and transformative, it must reflect the full diversity of society and thus be accessible to all regardless of any identity marker.

> *Youth work should prioritise active outreach, accessible formats, and the creation of inclusive spaces that encourage participation from those who are often unheard and help them see themselves as a rightful participant in democratic life.*

3. **Commitment to the Common Good**

In an era of increasing polarisation and individualism, commitment to the common good stands as both an anchor and a compass of a democratic society, as per definition, civic engagement isn't about promoting personal or small-group interests, but about working together for the well-being of everyone in the community. This often means finding a balance between different needs, making compromises, and understanding how connected we all are.

Youth work should create learning experiences that make the abstract concept of the common good tangible; and foster a new way of relating to society, where personal fulfilment is intrinsically linked to the well-being of the wider community.

4. **Transparency and access to information**

Transparency and access to accurate, timely, and understandable information are fundamental to democratic engagement. Only when people know how decisions have been made, who holds responsibility, what does not work well and how they can get involved, they can participate actively, meaningfully and competently in public life.

Youth work should demystify civic structures and political processes for young people by providing clear, youth-friendly information about how institutions work, promoting media literacy and critical thinking and modelling transparency within youth organisations.

5. **Dialogue and Deliberation**

Democracy is rooted in pluralism, and where pluralism exists, the emergence of conflict is both natural and inevitable, making dialogue the essential antidote to violence. It is through open, respectful, and evidence-informed deliberation that democratic societies manage conflict, build mutual understanding, and foster social cohesion. Therefore, the strength of a democracy lies not in the absence of disagreements but in the capacity to bridge those constructively across differences through deliberative dialogue.

Youth work must model and encourage constructive disagreement and deliberation across differences.

6. **Mutual accountability**

Accountability is the "glue" that holds democratic systems together, ensuring that promises made are promises kept. Crucially, accountability is not a one-sided exercise of power—it requires both institutions and citizens to uphold their responsibilities to one another, and to the democratic process itself.

Youth work shall foster a culture of shared responsibility by engaging young people in critical reflection, participatory decision-making, and practical simulations of democratic accountability mechanisms.

7. Voluntary and collective action

Democracy in its essence emerges not from obligation but from choice - the voluntary coming together of citizens to contribute to shaping their shared world. This principle honours individual agency and collective power, recognising that lasting change happens when personal conviction is combined with organised action.

Youth work should inspire and support young people to experience the power of collaboration, explore real-life examples of collective action, and take initiative in their communities. Equally important, it should encourage self-reflection on their values, motivations, and roles in society - helping them understand why they choose to engage and what meaningful participation means to them personally.

8. Continuous learning and adaptive practices

Societies constantly evolve, and learning is lifelong, thus civic skills, knowledge, and attitudes need to be continually revisited, refined, and adapted in response to new challenges (e.g., digital advancements and the potential to dis-, mal-, and misinformation, climate crisis, diplomatic relationships, societal issues).

Youth work should embrace a culture of continuous learning by fostering reflection, adaptability, and responsiveness within all civic education activities, including regular feedback mechanisms into the learning process, peer exchange, self-directed learning and engaging with current and pressing issues that shape young people's realities.

Principles for SHINE Civic Education Materials

The SHINE Civic Education Materials are informed by a commitment to democratic learning that is inclusive, reflective, and grounded in real-world practice. They draw on the understanding that civic engagement is not a fixed curriculum but a living process - that benefits from **diverse voices**, **interactive and experiential learning**, **peer exchange**, and **creative forms of participation**.

To guide the development of these materials under Work Package 3, the principles above serve as a shared ethical and pedagogical foundation.

These principles build on the *"Principles of Civic Engagement in Democratic Societies"* and associated *recommendations for Youth Work,* of this Methodological Guide, and are further shaped by established resources such as the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture [4], the Competendo Training Design Guide [5], the Together for Dialogue Civic Competence Framework [21], and the OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes [22]

Principles for SHINE Civic Education Materials

Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency

SHINE materials demystify civic structures and promote transparent learning about institutions, democratic processes, and rights., supporting youth understand how decisions are made, who holds power, and how they can exercise civic agency.



Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy

SHINE materials foster critical thinking and media literacy by empowering young people to question, verify, and interpret information in complex digital spaces. They promote active, responsible civic engagement by building digital competences and resilience against disinformation and encouraging ethical reflection.

Participation as a Learning Practice

In SHINE, participation is embedded not just as a theme but as both a method and a goal. Materials are designed to foster active involvement through co-creation, built-in individual and shared decision-making moments, guided reflection, and shared facilitation roles.



Dialogue & Disagreement as Learning Practices

SHINE nurtures a culture where constructive disagreement is encouraged and diverse perspectives are welcome. It places special emphasis in utilising controversy-based learning, emotional response management-, deliberation- and negotiation- techniques.

Peer Learning & Experience-Based Approaches

Learning happens through doing. SHINE integrates experiential and non-formal education methods, allowing learners to build skills through real-life, participatory, and peer-led experiences, reinforcing civic habits.



Inclusion through Representation & Accessibility

SHINE materials strive to reflect the full diversity of society and meet the needs of diverse learners, using representative examples and accessible language. They offer guidance on how to create environments where every participant sees themselves as a rightful contributor to civic life

Mutual Accountability & Shared Ownership

SHINE promotes civic learning as a shared responsibility, where all participants are both agents and stakeholders in collective outcomes. It fosters democratic trust by simulating real-world accountability and encouraging active, responsible engagement.



Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection

SHINE encourages learners to reflect on their growth, evaluate learning processes, and adapt continuously; become comfortable with uncertainty, multiple perspectives, and evolving truths. It embraces lifelong learning as central to being an engaged citizen in changing contexts.

Values-Based Reflection & Civic Courage

SHINE creates space for exploring personal values, social justice, and ethical dilemmas—it inspires moral reasoning and principled action, cultivates civic courage and the motivation to act in line with one's beliefs and roles



Solidarity & Commitment to the Common Good

SHINE materials call learners to balance different needs and perspectives in order to find shared solutions and emphasise the role of empathy, listening, and compromise in making decisions that benefit the broader community.

Section 2: Competence framework for democratic culture

Civic education is not merely about transmitting knowledge of governance or historical milestones; it is about, parallel to imparting knowledge, cultivating the skills, attitudes, and values necessary for individuals to act as responsible agents of change.

The table below outlines the key areas of knowledge, as well as the essential skills, attitudes, and values that each Training Material developed by the SHINE consortium should address. These competences have been identified based on the objectives described in the project proposal for each of the SHINE Training Materials, as well as insights from the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture [4], the recommendations of member organisations within the Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE) Network, as well as relevant learning material of the Network (Competendo).

WP3 – T3.1 Podcast Series

Knowledge
• Democratic decision-making processes and the roles of individuals, communities, and institutions • EU values and human rights frameworks • Social /cultural diversity & inclusion, pluralism, integration vs. assimilation, minority rights • Digital citizenship and e-participation, including the use of digital platforms to engage in democratic processes • Gender roles, stereotypes, power relations and equality principles • Equality vs. Equity, barriers to participation, intersectionality; inclusion strategies and policies • Ecological citizenship; sustainability; carbon footprint, circular economy, climate justice • Foundations of non-violent resistance; conflict dynamics; peacebuilding mechanisms (mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, restorative justice) • Media's role as the "fourth estate" in democracy; algorithms and news distribution • Data protection and privacy rights, legal frameworks (e.g. GDPR), informed consent, data ownership, and digital footprints; surveillance and digital democracy; ethical digital participation • Disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation; freedom of expression vs. harmful speech; legal and institutional responses; fact-checking and verification tools
Skills
• Critical listening (attentively process spoken content, distinguish fact from opinion, engage thoughtfully with complex topics) • Awareness of media framing and credibility, enhancing the evaluation of how and why information is presented • Analytical thinking and interpretation of narratives

- Recognition of arguments, use of evidence, and rhetorical strategies
- Capacity for reflection and analysis of civic issues, connecting personal experiences to broader social and political contexts
- Awareness of ethical and civic implications of one's online presence

Attitudes

- Curiosity and engagement with public affairs
- Empathy and openness through exposure to diverse voices and ideas
- Support for open discourse while opposing hate and harm
- Environmental consciousness and sensitivity to our impact on the planet
- Responsibility in digital environments
- Readiness to reflect and grow

Values

- Valuing human dignity, freedom and human rights
- Valuing diversity
- Valuing non-discrimination, representation, and equal opportunities
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law
- Valuing community, empathy, and collective support as foundations of democratic life
- Valuing long-term ecological balance and future-focused decision-making
- Valuing dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding as means of change; rejecting violence as such

WP3 – T3.2 Training Toolkit for Youth Workers

Knowledge

Complementing / connected to the knowledge gained through T3.1

- Principles of civic education and non-formal learning
- Theoretical foundations of civic engagement and youth participation
- Media systems and challenges of disinformation
- Institutional structures of the EU and human rights systems
- Facilitation techniques and group dynamics
- Reflective practice and competence-based education

Skills

- Critical thinking and analytical reasoning on civic, social, and media-related issues
- Identifying misinformation and using fact-checking tools
- Communication and argumentation
- Deliberation, perspective -taking and respectful debate: expressing opinions while actively listening to others
- Problem-solving and negotiation in group dynamics
- Sharing leadership, and taking responsibility for group outcomes
- Mobilising peers and taking initiatives

- Project planning and civic action design
- Adaptive learning; adjusting perspectives based on new information or group input

Attitudes

Complementing / connected to the attitudes cultivated through T3.1

- Belief in fair, transparent, and inclusive processes
- Respect for procedural fairness and pluralism in democratic dialogue
- Motivation to act on one's values
- Willingness to engage constructively in group processes and community action
- Confidence in one's ability to influence change at different levels (local, national, EU)
- Openness to learning from failure and feedback

Values

Complementing / connected to the values cultivated through T3.1

- Valuing inclusive collaboration and co-creation as foundations of democratic engagement and community empowerment
- Valuing active citizenship and civic responsibility
- Valuing lifelong learning and adaptability

WP3 – T3.3 Board Game on Democracy

Knowledge

Complementing / connected to the knowledge gained through T3.1 & T3.2

- Forms of government and models of democracy
- European history and milestones in civic development
- Citizen rights and responsibilities
- Civic structures and participation channels (public deliberation, citizen forums, protest rights)
- Democratic institutions and their roles; legislative, executive, and judicial branches
- Political decision-making processes; how policies are proposed, debated, amended, and adopted
- Democratic tools (e.g. petitions, referenda, consultations)
- Political roles and institutions (e.g. parliament, civil society, media, executive) and their interplay/power dynamics
- Media and digital platforms as power brokers
- Democratic resilience and authoritarian threats: how systems can erode or be protected
- Role of public discourse and narrative in shaping political identity, legitimacy, and collective memory (e.g. protests, scandals, populist movements)

Skills

- Rule interpretation and application in a simulated system
- Strategic thinking; weighing options, predicting consequences; making decisions
- Responding to dilemmas; Prioritisation and long-term thinking
- Collaboration across different "roles" & Alliance building in simulated democratic systems
- Teamwork; compromise, negotiation, consensus-building
- Empathy & perspective-taking through stepping into diverse civic roles (voters, media, politicians, activists)
- Conflict resolution and peaceful contestation
- Legal and institutional literacy in a practical context
- Systems thinking: understanding cause-effect chains in political and social systems
- Understanding the balance between individual freedoms and the common good
- Flexibility; learning from success and failure, applying new knowledge to evolving conditions
- Critical self-reflection and moral reasoning (e.g., Was my decision beneficial/fair? What would I change?)

Attitudes

Complementing / connected to the attitudes cultivated through T3.1 & T3.2

- Appreciation for pluralism and procedural fairness
- Respect for different political opinions and roles
- Tolerance of uncertainty & ambiguity – acceptance of complexity, contradiction, and the lack of simple answers in democratic discourse
- Willingness to listen and reconsider positions in light of new information
- Patience and persistence when facing slow and complex democratic processes
- Resilience in the face of setbacks (e.g. failing to pass reforms or facing opposition)

Values

Complementing / connected to the values cultivated through T3.1 & T3.2

- Valuing justice and fairness in rule application and political life
- Value of democracy as a process requiring negotiation and compromise
- Valuing integrity and truthfulness in civic discourse
- Valuing accountability of one's own and others' decisions
- Valuing freedom of speech and responsible use of influence

Section 3: Recommended methodologies

For the detailed description of the recommended methodologies, check the Annex of this Manual

Methodologies targeting knowledge-related objectives	Methodologies targeting skills-related objectives	Methodologies targeting attitudes & values-related objectives
PODCAST SERIES		
Method 1: Listening Circles / Reflective Listening		
Method 2: Storytelling for Civic Engagement Method 12: Case Studies	Method 3: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation Method 8: Photovoice Method	
TRAINING TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH WORKERS		
Method 2: Storytelling for Civic Engagement Method 3: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation Method 4: Envelopes Method Method 5: Simulation Games Method 6: Walking Debate Method 7: Map your neighbourhood Method 8: Photovoice Method Method 9: Project-based learning and culturally relevant pedagogy Method 10: Cooperative Learning Method 12: Case Studies		
Method 11: Mind Mapping / Visualisations Method 12: Case Studies	Method 13: Why + How + What Method 14: Six Thinking Hats Method 15: Learning Zone	
BOARD GAME		
Complementing / connected to the methods used in the Toolkit Method 5: Simulation games Method 10: Cooperative Learning		
Method 11: Mind Mapping / Visualisations Method 12: Case Studies	Method 13: Why + How + What Method 14: Six Thinking Hats	

1. Foster a sense of identity and mutual respect before addressing complex civic issues

Civic education does not begin with politics - it begins with people. Before young people can critically engage with polarising or emotionally charged civic themes, they need to feel safe, respected, and connected - as people and learners. Building trust and mutual respect is especially critical when groups are intercultural or made up of participants with different backgrounds, e.g. different levels of privilege or marginalisation.

This requires more than introductory icebreakers. It demands an intentional **relational approach** to facilitation and a strong focus on group dynamics, trust-building, and identity validation.

A relational approach emphasises human connection as a learning foundation. According to the *Manual for Facilitators in Non-Formal Education* of the Council of Europe [3], facilitators are not merely instructors but are responsible for setting the emotional tone within the learning setting, holding space for difference, fostering empathy, and navigating tensions.

This approach asks facilitators to:

- View each participant as a holder of unique experiences and knowledge
- Cultivate trust through consistency, transparency, and vulnerability
- Design processes that allow for multiple truths and lived realities to co-exist

It means you start not with "What do I want to teach?" but with "*What do these people need from each other to feel seen and safe to open up?*" Only when these relational needs are met, we can expect learners to explore topics like power, injustice, exclusion, or democracy in ways that are constructive rather than performative or defensive.

To put this into practice, facilitators should deliberately create an atmosphere of **psychological safety**, which refers to the shared belief that one can speak up, make mistakes, express differences, or show vulnerability without fear of judgment or reprisal. In SHINE, where learners come from varied cultural, social, or linguistic backgrounds - and where civic themes can easily stir up conflict - building this safety is essential for authentic civic dialogue.

Practices to support a relational approach include:

- ✓ **Slowing down at the beginning of the program** to invest time in building group cohesion before introducing heavy or controversial topics
- ✓ **Establishing shared values and group agreements**, not as imposed rules but as co-constructed norms that reflect the diversity of the group

- ✓ **Modelling active listening, respect for silences, and acknowledgement of emotions** (even discomfort) as a way to show that every contribution has value
- ✓ **Avoiding early polarisation**. Instead of jumping into "debates", facilitators can initiate value-sharing dialogues that invite participants to reflect on why and what they believe
- ✓ **Ensuring that minority voices are protected**, not drowned out by dominant narratives, louder personalities, or majority views. To achieve this, it is important to be attentive to non-verbal cues and emotional signals, especially from quieter or marginalised participants, and check in when needed
- ✓ **Being transparent about your position as a facilitator**—not presenting yourself as a neutral authority but as a committed, reflective co-learner willing to model openness and care
- ✓ **Using inclusive language** and avoiding jargon so that all participants—regardless of education or language level—feel capable of engaging
- ✓ **Inviting feedback regularly**, not just at the end of sessions but throughout the process, so that the group's evolving needs are acknowledged and addressed
- ✓ **Affirming identity in subtle ways** (e.g., pronoun check-ins, celebrating multilingualism, or asking learners to describe what "respect" means to them personally)

2. Assess learners' needs and adapt to their contexts

Non-formal education allows for **responsive pedagogy**; unlike fixed curricula, it evolves with the learners. The CDC Framework [4] emphasises this, noting that "competences cannot be taught in isolation from the learners' contexts, experiences and identities". Therefore, effective civic education requires youth workers to listen before they teach.

This begins with a **needs assessment**: *What do participants already know? What civic issues affect them most? What are their learning preferences and barriers to participation?*

Examples of assessment tools may include:

- **Visual mapping**: Learners visually map out their ideas, opinions, identities, or social connections using drawings, charts, or diagrams – The method helps assess prior knowledge, personal values, or perceptions of civic issues
- **Youth journaling**: Individual written reflections used throughout a learning process can be used to track personal growth, emotional responses, and understanding of democratic values

- **Sociograms**: A visual representation of social relationships within a group (who collaborates with whom, who feels connected/disconnected) – sociograms assist facilitators in monitoring team dynamics, spotting power imbalances, social isolation or evolving trust in the group

- **Storytelling circles**: Structured discussions in smaller groups or plenary, where participants share personal stories linked to civic themes (e.g. fairness, inequality, discrimination, participation, etc.) – fosters empathy among the group and for the group by the facilitator, while it helps bring learners' life experiences on the surface, as "data" for the needs assessment

- **Questionnaires**: Written or digital sets of tailored questions (open or closed) to the particular purpose of the assessment - easy to administer, compare, and analyse

Contextual adaptation is equally essential. Youth in a rural town may need examples drawn from land use conflicts or barriers to opportunities, while urban youth may resonate more with topics like policing or digital rights. Migrants or newly arrived learners may require adaptation to simple language, while neurodiverse learners may benefit from visual support or task simplification.

For SHINE, adaptation means more than "tweaking" - it means co-creating learning journeys that reflect the lived realities of the young people involved, making democratic culture **v**isible and actionable in their everyday lives.

3. Anchor every learning experience in a clear social or civic purpose

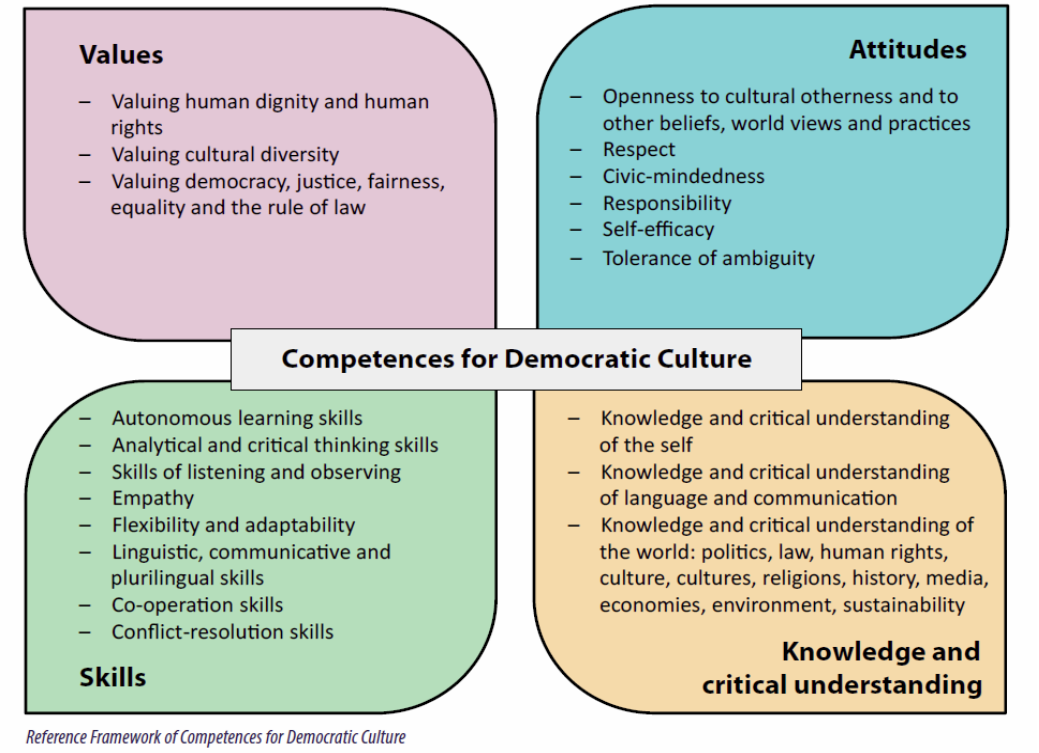
Civic education must be relevant. According to the *Training Design Step-by-Step* guide [5], every learning experience should "start from a clear understanding of the learners' needs and the social purpose of the training". This means youth workers must articulate not just what is being taught, but **why it matters** in society and the lives of the participants.

Purpose-driven education recognises learners as agents of change. In this context, instead of abstract knowledge, youth should engage with real civic issues: climate justice, discrimination, media biases in political campaigning, youth representation in decision-making, corruption etc. Connecting learning to social purpose is a powerful approach to boost motivation for engagement, as well as to frame democracy as a **lived and collective responsibility** and not a distant political idea.

In SHINE, this involves co-identifying social challenges with participants and then outlining the training path together as a response. For example, a session on critical thinking might begin with a case study of viral misinformation in their country or community. A participation session might lead to drafting a letter to local officials. A well-cultivated sense of purpose will transform civic education into **civic engagement** and, eventually, make learning personally and socially transformative.

4. Integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (and choose methods that model democratic learning)

At the heart of the Council of Europe's *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (CDC) [4] lies a simple but profound insight: democratic competence is not a single ability but a complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions. These are grouped into four interdependent categories: **values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge/critical understanding** - each essential for navigating and contributing to democratic life.



The model of Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC): Presents the competences that individuals require to act as competent democratic citizens. *Source: Council of Europe (2018). Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture - Volume 1: Context, Concepts and Model. Council of Europe Publishing.*

This approach challenges traditional notions of civic education, which have often focused narrowly on knowledge of institutions or legal rights. As the CDC Framework makes clear, without shared democratic values or interpersonal skills like empathy, even the best-informed citizens may fail to contribute meaningfully or ethically to a democratic society. That's why in the context of SHINE we ought to care not only *what* we teach, but *how* we teach it.

This requires youth workers to act intentionally in both curriculum design and facilitation. Each activity must be chosen not only for its content relevance but also for the competences it develops. For example, a task on analysing political memes might target critical thinking and media literacy (skills) while also surfacing tolerance of ambiguity and openness to other perspectives (attitudes). Likewise, a group decision-making exercise

can teach knowledge about democratic procedures while strengthening cooperation skills and valuing equality.

This integrative approach also reflects a deeper pedagogical principle long emphasised in education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and human rights education (HRE): ***the method carries the message***. This phrase highlights the crucial idea that how we teach democratic content must itself be democratic. A lecture on equality delivered unilaterally, without discussion or space for disagreement, contradicts its own content. Similarly, a workshop on participation that does not invite youth input is pedagogically and ethically misaligned.

In the context of SHINE, this principle requires youth workers to scrutinise their own facilitation choices:

- Are learners invited to help shape the structure of the session?
- Are there opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and co-facilitation?
- Are mistakes and disagreements treated as learning moments, rather than disruptions?
- Are "quieter" or marginalised voices given space to be heard?

Furthermore, by integrating multiple dimensions of learning, SHINE should help prevent the fragmentation often seen in traditional civic education approaches. Rather than treating knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes as separate elements, we should invite learners to make meaning across domains and connect what they know with what they feel and do.

This also allows for differentiation and inclusion. For example, participants who may struggle with abstract theoretical content could still demonstrate democratic competences through collaboration, reflection, and action. The holistic model recognises that young people express civic agency in diverse ways (intellectually, emotionally, socially and behaviourally), and all of these modes are valid.

Finally, the CDC framework encourages facilitators to link competences with real-life civic scenarios, such as encountering hate speech, navigating disagreement in a youth council, or participating in a community dialogue. These scenarios require a blend of competences, and SHINE's methodology should reflect that complexity in its structure and learning materials.

5. Co-design with learners and set competence-based outcomes

Education for democratic culture shall mirror its content in its process. If democracy is about shared decision-making, civic learning should be, too. Therefore, the learning space where democratic culture is being taught should, in essence, represent a microcosm of democratic society (a **"micro-society")** where young people experience, practice, and reflect on the values and behaviours that underpin democratic life [9].

This concept implies that the learning room is not merely a neutral space for information transfer but a living civic environment where participants co-create norms, negotiate differences and take shared responsibility for the group's well-being. Facilitating this micro-society requires **intentional design**: clear group agreements of common rules of conduct, space for disagreement without losing emotional control or respect, and mechanisms for collective problem-solving. A fundamental aspect of this process is also the **co-designing of learning goals** together with the participants to empower them to take ownership in their learning journey.

This approach aligns closely with the relational and democratic pedagogies that should underpin the SHINE methodology, emphasising that young people should not only learn *about* participation and shared responsibility but be actively engaged *in* those practices throughout the learning experience. When participants co-design the direction of their learning, they begin to embody the democratic culture being taught. This process builds civic competences such as initiative, collaboration, negotiation, and respect for diversity—not just as outcomes but through lived experience.

In practice, rather than predefining abstract topics, facilitators support participants in shaping concrete and personally meaningful goals, using tools such as:

- **Learning contracts:**
  Agreements co-written by learners and facilitators that define individual or group learning goals, expectations, and responsibilities. Such contracts help build ownership and create a shared accountability framework that mirrors civic negotiation processes.

- **Goal trees:**
  Visual tools that help learners break down a broad learning aim into manageable sub-goals ("branches"), fostering clarity and progression. They allow participants to link personal aspirations with civic competences and identify what support they need to grow.

- **Competence cards** [14]**:**
  Cards describing the 20 CDC competences, used as reflection and planning tools. With the help of these cards, participants can select and prioritise the competences most relevant to their personal development or to the civic project at hand, introducing a shared vocabulary and deepening metacognitive awareness.

This co-design process also allows youth to define what **success** looks like. Do they want to create a podcast about civic issues? Mediate a group conflict? Participate in a local youth council?

Whatever form it takes, co-design transforms the learning space into a participatory civic experience, empowering young people not only to understand democratic culture but to **inhabit it** - in the room, in their communities, and beyond.

6. **Embed democratic values and ethical reflection into both what you teach and how you teach it**

Young people today are confronted with an increasingly complex social reality marked by ethical dilemmas, value conflicts and competing truths, online and offline. Civic education becomes, thus, an essential space not just to discuss issues but to learn how to think ethically, critically, and relationally. This includes developing the ability to examine one's own assumptions, consider diverse perspectives, and deliberate about difficult questions without falling into moral relativism or rigid dogma. In this context, the integration of fundamental democratic values and ethical reflection should, therefore, be intentional, visible, and continuous throughout the learning journey.

The CDC Framework outlines three central sets of democratic values that form the foundation for democratic competence:

1. Valuing human dignity and human rights
2. Valuing cultural diversity
3. Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law

These values guide how individuals relate to others, engage in civic life, and make ethical decisions in democratic societies.

Importantly, **values education cannot be limited to content**. It must also be deeply **embedded in the learning process itself**. The way youth workers relate to participants (how they manage leadership roles/power, distribute voice, handle disagreement, and ensure fairness) communicates values just as strongly as any curriculum. If facilitators teach about inclusion but allow dominant voices to monopolise the discussion, the method undermines the message. If discussions on justice are conducted without listening or empathy, learners may absorb the lesson that "justice" is about being right, not about being accountable to others.

Within SHINE, youth workers are encouraged to make their values explicit, not to indoctrinate, but to model reflective civic engagement. This includes being honest about their own learning, transparent about decision-making processes, and receptive to critique. Ethical reflection should also be participatory; something learners are invited into, rather than subjected to.

More concretely, to effectively encourage value-based ethical inquiry within the learning process, facilitators in SHINE are invited to:

- ✓ **Encourage learners to recognise and examine their own values and biases** and to consider how they influence their civic decisions and interactions *(Valuing cultural diversity; Valuing human dignity and human rights)*

- ✓ **Foster a culture of open and respectful dialogue** where learners are encouraged to explore value-laden questions without fear of judgment *(Valuing cultural diversity; Valuing human dignity and human rights)*

- ✓ **Create space for ethical dilemmas and disagreement**, framed as opportunities for reflection rather than conflict *(Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law; Valuing cultural diversity)*

- ✓ **Model transparency and consistency in decision-making processes** so that fairness and integrity are not only taught but experienced *(Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law)*

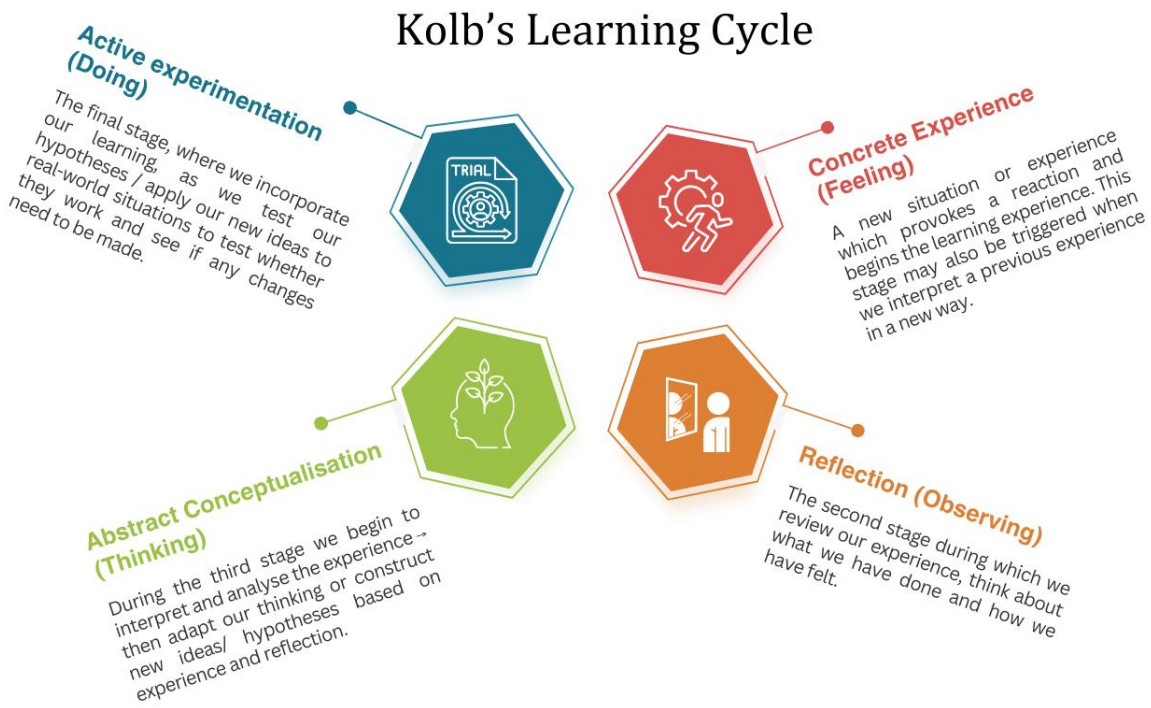
- ✓ **Guide learners to reflect** on how individual actions relate to broader societal outcomes *(Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law)*

- ✓ **Promoting civic courage** (the willingness to speak up against injustice or exclusion, even when it is uncomfortable or unpopular) *(Valuing human dignity and human rights; Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law)*

7. Keep it participatory and experiential

The development of democratic competences cannot be achieved through passive, lecture-based instruction alone but through *learner-centred, participatory and experience-based approaches*. Participation lies at the core of democratic life, therefore, it must also lie at the heart of civic education.

At its core, experiential learning means that young people engage not only with the content of democratic life but with its practices. This mirrors Kolb's experiential learning cycle [13]: **action (concrete experience) → reflection → abstract conceptualisation → application (active experimentation) → action → ...**, which allows participants to move from lived experiences to analytical insights and back into real-world practice. It also means that participants' contributions should be designed to extend far beyond verbal comments in a discussion.



Kolb's Learning Cycle. *Adapted from Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984).*

Within the SHINE context, this can mean:

- ✓ planning activities
- ✓ defining group rules
- ✓ taking responsibility for documenting sessions
- ✓ initiating peer learning moments
- ✓ simulating democratic processes
- ✓ engaging in civic mapping or media/awareness-campaigns production
- ✓ taking on facilitation/leadership roles within the group, etc.

What matters most is that learners **are active contributors of knowledge, not passive recipients.**

Such active involvement not only reinforces the content but also enables the development of **transversal competences** essential to democratic life, including empathy, cooperation, a sense of ownership and responsibility, perspective-taking, and critical thinking. Furthermore, experiential learning fosters **emotional engagement**, which increases motivation, deepens retention, and enhances the personal relevance of civic education. When learners feel emotionally connected to an issue or empowered through action, they are more likely to internalise democratic values and carry those lessons into their communities.

All in all, within SHINE, we should conceptualise our participatory learning methods not just as a beneficial non-formal education tool but as an indispensable one; one that allows us to provide a lived rehearsal of democratic culture.

8. Embed a combination of reflection methods to deepen learning and measure impact

Assessment in SHINE should not be about "measuring up" but "making visible" the learning that has occurred; a practice of looking inward and outward, individually and collectively, to understand how thinking, behaviour, and awareness have evolved. As *Training Design Step-by-Step* [5] and the CDC Framework [4] highlight, **reflection is critical for turning experience into competence** while it also teaches learners how to own their development - a core component of lifelong learning and democratic participation.

To enhance the efficiency and inclusiveness of the reflection process, it is recommended to combine assessment tools across **group and individual** formats, and **oral, written, and digital** modes:

- **Individual vs. Group**

Individual reflections allow learners to process personal insights privately and at their own pace. Group-based tools (e.g. peer feedback circles or shared goal reviews) promote accountability, empathy, and perspective-sharing. A blended approach facilitates different communication styles, respects different personalities and builds both autonomy and solidarity

- **Oral vs. Written vs. Online**

Oral debriefs are **dynamic, immediate and relational** and allow for more information to be shared (in that orally describing a learning experience in detail takes generally less time than writing it) - ideal for emotion-laden experiences or diverse language levels. Written tools (feedback forms, "reflection walls", journals) encourage **deeper, more sustained** reflection. Online versions of written tools, particularly questionnaires with close-ended questions, offer important advantages in **quantifying and processing learning outcomes**. While they may not capture the full depth of reflection at the level of the individual, they can efficiently measure shifts in knowledge, attitudes, or self-perceived competences across larger groups.

Some tools we could use in SHINE include:

- **Learning journals or "reflection spirals"**
  (Individual – Written)

  Learners record their thoughts, key moments, emotions, and learning / thought development in "real-time", so frequently and in chronological order. Spiral formats allow them to revisit earlier entries and track progress over time

  The method promotes self-awareness, long-term engagement and personalised meaning-making.

- **Civic competence self-checklists**
  (Individual – Written or Online)

  Learners reflect on their own behaviours, attitudes, or choices using CDC-based descriptors (e.g. "I expressed disagreement respectfully")

  Such lists foster metacognition, connect learning to concrete competences, while providing a baseline for growth.

- **Peer feedback circles / Reflection Groups**
  (Group – Oral or Written)

  In structured group settings, learners reflect on each other's contributions and behaviours. Encourages respectful critique, empathy, and collective learning, while also strengthening the feeling of belonging in the group.

- **"What? So what? Now what?" debriefs**
  (Group, after individual reflection – Oral)

  This structured reflection helps learners unpack an experience: what happened, why it mattered, and how they will act on it.

  Highly adaptable for small-group or plenary reflections and supports experiential learning cycles.

- **Shared digital reflection boards (e.g. Padlet, Jamboard)**
  (Group – Online/Written)

  Participants post quick reflections, images, quotes, or emojis on a shared digital board in response to questions, such as "What was the most meaningful moment for you today?"; "What values were at play in today's discussion?"; "Something I learned about myself today", etc. Works well for asynchronous feedback, visual learners, or anonymous contributions, increasing accessibility and inclusiveness.

- **Instant polling or scaled response tools (e.g. Mentimeter, Kahoot, Google Forms questionnaires)**
  (Individual – Online)

  These tools allow facilitators to quickly gather responses to closed-ended questions (such as multiple choice, Likert-scale, or ranking questions) on knowledge, attitudes, or self-perceived competences.

  Helps with quick check-ins on baseline understanding of key concepts, visualising group progress and quantifying learning shifts, making it especially useful for project reporting and evaluation.

  Tools like that can be mixed and matched depending on learning objectives, group dynamics, and available resources. For example, a workshop might close with a **verbal group debrief**, followed by **individual reflection journals** and an **online self-checklist** submitted later.

Annex: Analysis of recommended methodologies

Method 1: Listening Circles / Reflective Listening

Description

Listening Circles are structured group sessions where participants take turns sharing thoughts or reflections while others practice active listening without interruption. The method is often supported by a talking piece or circle protocol and includes moments of silence or paraphrasing. It can also incorporate reflective prompts or civic-themed audio content.

How the method can be used in SHINE

In civic education, Listening Circles promote respectful dialogue, empathy, and a deeper understanding of others' perspectives by training active listening.

Listening Circles have also been widely used in youth dialogue, conflict transformation, and intergroup reconciliation (restorative circles) – particularly in post-conflict and intercultural contexts. Their non-hierarchical structure empowers all voices, making them ideal for SHINE's goal of inclusion and pluralism.

In the SHINE Podcast Series, this method can be integrated directly into learning sessions: groups begin by listening to a selected podcast episode (e.g., on gender equality, digital disinformation, or climate responsibility), followed by a facilitated Listening Circle where participants share personal reactions, connect ideas to their own realities, and respectfully engage with others' interpretations. This transforms passive listening into reflective civic learning.

When integrated into podcast-based sessions, the method can effectively strengthen the internalisation of civic knowledge – moving beyond passive listening to active interpretation. *For example, after listening to an episode about gender equality or digital disinformation, participants could reflect on their own experiences, question assumptions, and explore how these issues affect different groups in their community. This process transforms information into insight and insights into a deeper civic awareness.*

Implementation outcomes

This method emphasises *active listening* as a foundational democratic skill. By creating structured, non-judgmental spaces for dialogue, participants learn to prioritise understanding over persuasion.

Practising self-expression in a safe and supportive setting also helps participants build confidence in sharing personal insights and responding constructively to others' experiences. This mutual exchange enhances empathy, tolerance, and ethical reflection,

particularly when discussing sensitive civic topics like discrimination, human rights, or political polarisation.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Dialogue & Disagreement as learning practices

Listening Circles as a method, provides a respectful and reflective structure for encountering different perspectives, modelling the idea that disagreement can be constructive when grounded in empathy and mutual understanding.

✓ Values-based reflection & civic courage

The method creates space for young people to examine their beliefs, confront challenging topics, and speak from personal experience, fostering the development of civic courage – daring to care, question, and engage!

✓ Inclusion through representation & accessibility

The circle format treats all voices as equal, helping participants who are often marginalised to feel seen and heard.

Method 2: Storytelling for Civic Engagement

Description

Storytelling is an educational method that uses personal, fictional, or collective narratives to convey ideas, foster reflection, and build connections between learners and civic or social concepts. As a pedagogical tool, it transforms abstract principles into relatable experiences, making learning more engaging, memorable, and emotionally resonant.

The use of storytelling as a pedagogical method is not new. Long before schools and classrooms existed, people sat around fires and passed down knowledge through myths, legends, and real-life tales. These stories did not just entertain; they taught vital lessons, shared values, and helped communities remember who they were.

Today, this ancient need remains etched into our neural wiring. Cognitive science reveals that stories activate not just the language centres of the brain but also the sensory, emotional and motor regions, which is why stories feel so real – when we hear about someone showing courage, we can feel it [20] [24]. That is why stories about fairness stick with us more than textbook definitions of "equity", and why hearing a refugee's personal story can inspire action more than reading a list of facts.

Because of their versatility, storytelling methods can be adapted in many ways. Storytelling can take many forms, including oral storytelling, written narratives, digital storytelling (video/audio), visual stories (comics, photo essays), autobiographical writing, and interactive formats such as role play or forum theatre. Each format can be adapted to fit learners' needs, cultural contexts, and the objectives of civic education.

How the method can be used in SHINE

Storytelling has long been recognised as a powerful civic education strategy to promote democratic engagement, self-expression, and connection to the community. Initiatives like the **YouthBank Model** demonstrate how young people use storytelling to articulate personal experiences tied to local change more effectively [15]. YouthBanks are funds run by young people to support youth-led projects that address issues important to young people to improve their communities. In the YouthBank model, youth construct stories using narrative elements (such as challenge, choice, and resolution) to advocate for community projects, fundraise, and engage peers. These stories become more than anecdotes; they serve as catalysts for civic action.

Similarly, in the **Storypath approach** (a storytelling framework consisting of 5 components, namely *setting, characters, context, critical incidents,* and *concluding event*) used in elementary schools, students create characters and simulate civic scenarios, such as sitting on city councils or engaging with residents to solve policy issues [10]. One example, in Seattle, involved fourth-grade students navigating the complexities of affordable housing. The storytelling framework stimulated critical thinking and emotional engagement while making civic structures more relatable and accessible.

Storytelling in SHINE will most prominently be applied through the **Podcast Series**, where partners script and narrate thematic episodes in the form of dialogues rooted in real or plausible civic experiences. Each podcast episode can function as a civic narrative, drawing listeners into the lived realities of young people navigating democratic life, stakeholders participating in democratic processes or crafted purposeful stories that blend emotional resonance, factual framing, and civic dilemmas.

*Just as examples, a dialogue between two friends, one eco-conscious, the other sceptical, could frame a deeper discussion on intergenerational justice, environmental policy, and behavioural change in the "**Sustainable lifestyles**" theme or a case of social media misuse (such as posting photos without consent) could be the centre of the "**Respect the privacy of others"** episode, raising important questions about digital ethics and civic responsibility in online spaces.*

*In the **SHINE training context**, we could use storytelling as a warm-up to an activity concerning virtually all SHINE topics. Youth workers can ask participants to share short stories based on instructions such as: "A time I felt excluded (or included) in my community"; "A change I witnessed because someone took civic action"; "A tradition or cultural value that shaped how I view fairness".*

Another idea could be to invite participants to engage in autobiographical storytelling after listening to a particular SHINE podcast episode, reflecting on the civic theme through their own lived experiences. This way, we could support building a deeper personal connection of

the participants to democratic values parallel to fostering empathy, proactivity, and civic identity.

Implementation Outcomes

Storytelling is a highly effective method for enhancing civic education by engaging learners emotionally, fostering critical thinking, and encouraging active participation. It connects learners to civic concepts through relatable narratives, making abstract ideas more tangible and emotionally impactful. Storytelling encourages them to analyse societal issues, consider diverse perspectives, and reflect on their roles as citizens.

A strategic use of storytelling in the SHINE themes is set to strengthen the civic learning arc by connecting personal or plausible civic narratives to broader democratic principles – all while supporting the project's key pedagogical goals: empowerment, inclusion, and key democratic competences, such as active listening and empathetic communication, critical thinking, capacity for ethical judgment and civic responsibility, and ability to imagine alternatives and envision change.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Peer Learning & Experience-Based Approaches
Storytelling supports horizontal learning, where knowledge is co-created through stories rather than top-down instruction, letting participants become teachers of one another's civic realities.

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency
Storytelling offers an engaging entry point into complex civic and democratic concepts that links abstract ideas (such as rights, institutions, responsibilities, or participation) to narratives one can easily identify with. Thus, learners develop a more nuanced and relatable understanding of how democracy functions in real life.

✓ Solidarity & Commitment to the Common Good
By connecting individual narratives to broader civic themes, participants begin to see how personal challenges and hopes are part of a shared societal fabric, building a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for shaping inclusive futures.

✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection
Storytelling (especially autobiographical or reflective storytelling) encourages young people to look inward, revisit personal experiences, and examine how those have shaped their understanding of fairness, participation, inclusion and other civic topics.

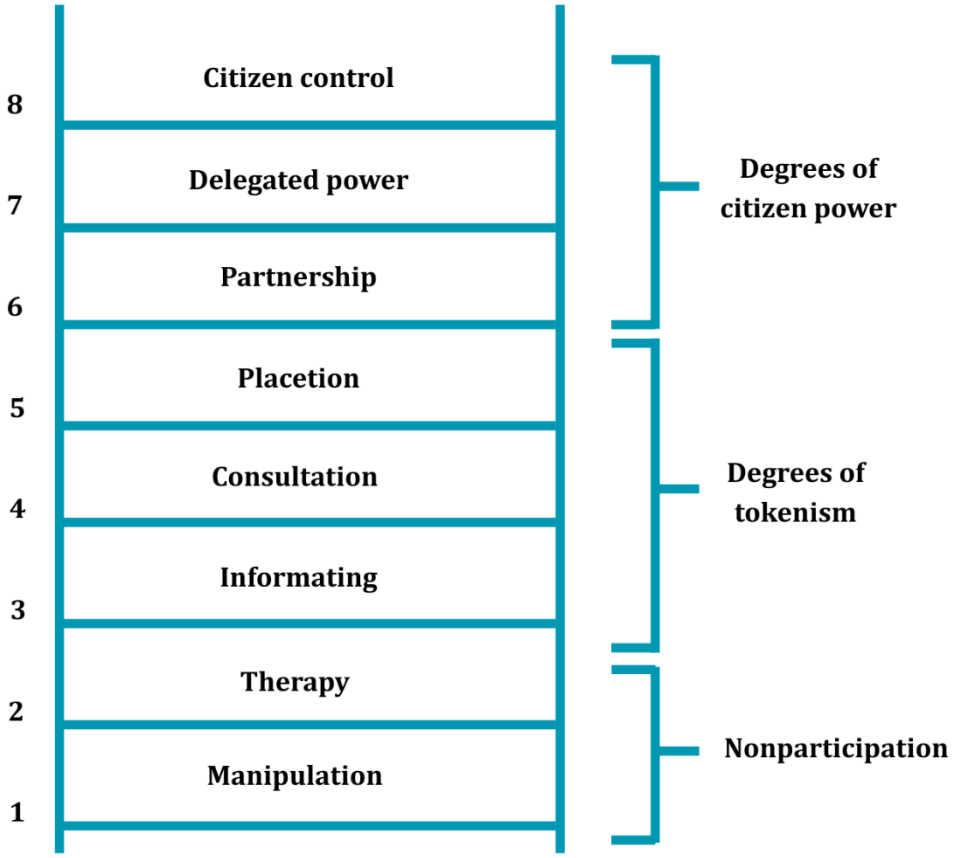
✓ Values-Based Reflection & Civic Courage
Giving voice to personal stories or lived experiences of one's own or others' (especially those involving moral dilemmas, acts of courage, or exclusion) helps youth reflect on their

own beliefs and recognise the values that guide their civic identity. Sharing such stories in a group fosters vulnerability and empathy, while also promoting civic courage: the willingness to speak up, confront injustice, and act in line with one's principles.

Method 3: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

Description

Proposed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, the Ladder of Citizen Participation is one of the most widely referenced and influential models in the field of democratic public participation. The metaphorical ladder identifies eight levels of citizen participation representing increasing citizen agency, control, and power; starting from *non-participation* (no power) to *degrees of tokenism* (counterfeit power) to *degrees of citizen participation* (actual power).



Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. *The original 1969 depiction of Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, published in the Journal of the American Planning Association, presents eight distinct "rungs" representing varying levels of public influence in democratic decision-making. These rungs are grouped into three broad categories:* ***Nonparticipation****, where citizens hold no real influence;* ***Degrees of Tokenism****, where involvement is largely symbolic; and* ***Degrees of Citizen Power****, where meaningful influence and control are granted.*

How the method can be used in SHINE

Arnstein's Ladder provides a conceptual framework for evaluating how much influence citizens (or youth) truly have in shaping decisions that affect them. In civic education, the ladder is widely used as an analytical tool to foster youth awareness of power dynamics in participatory processes - be it in school governance, youth councils, local politics, or digital activism.

Programs such as youth policy co-creation, participatory budgeting simulations, or school democracy audits often rely on this model to help learners distinguish between symbolic involvement and real influence.

In the SHINE project, this method is well-suited to training youth workers and young people to **critically assess the quality of participation mechanisms** in their community, identify gaps, and advocate for more inclusive, accountable democratic processes. Using the ladder, they can identify whether these mechanisms offer real influence or only symbolic engagement and then design strategies - like awareness campaigns, feedback sessions, or policy proposals - to push toward more inclusive and accountable forms of youth participation.

For instance, the Ladder of Participation could be used as a visual and conceptual anchor for the podcast episode "Constructive Participation in Decision-Making", helping listeners reflect on how meaningful their participation really is and what steps can be taken to elevate their influence.

Implementation Outcomes

Through the use of Arnstein's Ladder, young people learn to critically recognise the difference between tokenistic involvement and meaningful civic influence. By mapping real-life examples - from student councils to local consultations - onto the ladder, they actively engage with the idea of participation as a learning process. The method fosters transparency by demystifying how decisions are made and who holds power, and it strengthens a culture of mutual accountability by encouraging both institutions and youth to reflect on their roles in creating more equitable, inclusive, and effective democratic spaces.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Participation as a Learning Practice

The ladder serves as a practical tool for youth to explore the depth and quality of their participation experiences. Rather than accepting all involvement as equal, learners develop the ability to critically evaluate where genuine decision-making power exists.

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency

By examining the structures behind civic engagement opportunities, the method reveals where power lies, how processes work, and why certain participation spaces may be limited or symbolic. This promotes informed civic engagement rooted in clarity and democratic literacy.

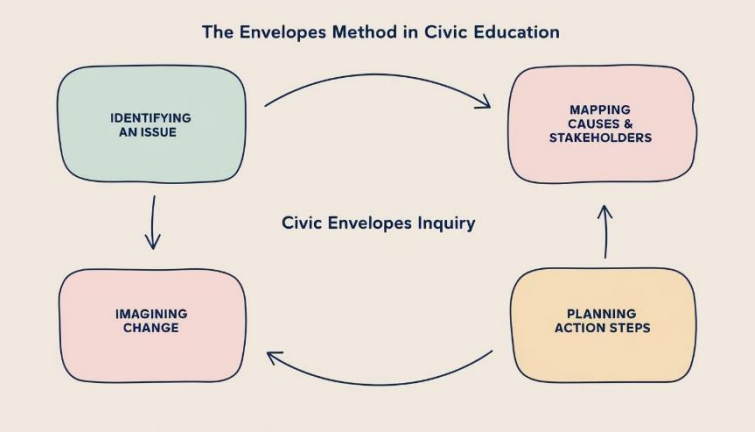
✓ Mutual Accountability & Shared Ownership

The ladder prompts institutions to be more responsive while empowering young people to hold both themselves and their communities accountable for inclusive, authentic participation.

Method 4: Envelopes Method

Description

The Envelopes Method is a scaffolded ideation activity that guides learners through a structured, group-based exploration of a civic issue. Participants are divided into small groups, and each group begins with an envelope containing prompts related to the first step of a civic inquiry process (e.g. identifying a social issue relevant to their context). Each participant notes down their thoughts, working individually and in silence.



After a set amount of time, the groups pass their envelope to the next group and receive a new prompt envelope in return. Each new envelope builds on the previous group's contributions, inviting participants to deepen the inquiry and move the process forward.

The full sequence typically follows four envelopes or stations:

1. Identifying a civic issue
2. Mapping underlying causes and key stakeholders
3. Imagining a vision of positive change
4. Defining realistic next steps for civic action

As groups rotate through the envelopes, they reflect, discuss, and document their insights using guiding questions or creative tools (e.g. post-its, diagrams, sketches). By the end of the cycle, each envelope contains a complete, collaboratively developed action plan that can inform youth-led campaigns, workshops, or podcast themes within the SHINE project.

How the method can be used in SHINE

In SHINE, the Envelopes Method is ideal for non-formal educational settings aimed at helping youth move from abstract concerns (e.g. "youth underrepresentation", "democratic resilience", "populism", "civic space") to tangible action. Youth workers can use it to guide learners through civic exploration while fostering collective problem-solving and systemic thinking.

For example, following an NFE workshop on youth participation, disinformation & the role of media, equality & equity, ecological citizenship or any other project topic, groups could use the Envelopes Method to design a local awareness campaign or a participatory media initiative. The envelopes could help scaffold their thinking from personal concern to public initiative - turning knowledge into practice.

This method is also highly inclusive and flexible. It can be adapted to different levels of literacy or experience and allows for diverse formats (drawings, post-its, photos, etc.). It naturally promotes equal participation, rotating roles, and shared ownership of the outcome.

Implementation Outcomes

The Envelopes Method serves as a dynamic tool to cultivate essential democratic and civic competencies – primarily, helping participants explore the roots and ripple effects of social issues, i.e. practice systems thinking, strengthening strategic planning abilities, and fostering a sense of civic agency: as young people visualise how their ideas drive change, they grow more confident in shaping democratic life.

The method also embeds participatory engagement in the learning process in a sequentially structured and inclusive way. Its step-by-step format invites all participants to contribute at each stage, ensuring that ideas are built collaboratively rather than dominated by a few voices. The physical passing of envelopes between groups symbolises a democratic exchange of ideas, where no single individual owns the outcome, and every contribution shapes the final result. This not only makes participation feel more accessible and equitable but also reinforces the collective nature of civic action - turning engagement into a shared experience of meaning-making and responsibility.

In addition, depending on the focus of the session, the method can deepen understanding of a wide variety of civic topics like social justice, community dynamics, or policy impacts, as well as reinforce skills in critical analysis and creative problem-solving.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓Mutual Accountability & Shared Ownership

As each group builds on the work of the previous one, the method distributes responsibility across participants and highlights the importance of respecting and valuing

others' contributions. This collective authorship fosters a strong sense of shared ownership over the final outcomes and provides participants with an experiential understanding that effective civic action is a collective effort of co-creation.

✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection

The method encourages structured introspection and awareness of how ideas evolve through group work and multiple stages of inquiry.

✓ Participation as a Learning Practice

Every participant contributes at each stage of the planning process, fostering active involvement and horizontal dialogue.

Method 5: Simulation Games

Description

Simulation games are pedagogical tools that replicate real or hypothetical situations, allowing learners to actively practice decision-making and problem-solving. They align with **constructivist learning principles** (which posit that knowledge is constructed through experience and reflection), as participants step into roles, confront challenges, navigate dilemmas and consequences and generally build knowledge through experience and interaction. Thus, simulation games offer the environment and process needed so abstract concepts like democracy, power, or ethics are felt, debated, and internalised rather than merely described, presented or lectured.

How the method can be used in SHINE

Simulation games have been widely used in civic education by simulating political decision-making processes and fostering democratic awareness, utilising fictional or real-world civic scenarios. These scenarios range from **parliamentary debates, local council negotiations, environmental hearings, youth assemblies, or Model UN-style simulations**. Each participant represents a perspective or institution and must engage in problem-solving, negotiation, or deliberation based on that role's interest, values, and constraints.

In the SHINE project, simulation games are a great method to be applied in both the **Board Game** and the **Training Toolkit for Youth Workers**, especially for exploring power dynamics, public deliberation, and the interaction between citizens, civil society, and institutions.

Youth workers can use simulation games to let participants **"step into the shoes" of different democratic actors** - such as policymakers, activists, journalists, or citizens - around themes central to SHINE, including constructive participation, media and disinformation, or policy dilemmas. *For instance, in a simulation on environmental decision-making, players might represent industry leaders, environmental NGOs, youth*

climate advocates, or government agencies negotiating land use. This allows participants to understand not only their own civic stance but also the reasoning behind opposing perspectives.

Facilitators may adapt existing formats like Model UN, mock parliaments, or structured dialogue circles, ensuring accessibility and inclusion by varying roles in complexity and scope. Scenarios can be fictional or directly inspired by local or EU-level policies and challenges.

Implementation Outcomes

Simulation games allow learners to step into the shoes of civic actors - be they elected officials, journalists, activists, or citizens - providing them with a concrete, embodied understanding of how democratic institutions work. Through role-playing real or fictional public processes (e.g., town hall meetings, legislative debates, budget negotiations), young people not only learn about democratic structures in theory but experience them in action. They gain insights into procedural fairness, power dynamics, rule-making, and the negotiation of competing interests. This fosters **institutional literacy** (how systems work) and **civic fluency** (how to effectively participate within them).

Moreover, simulations are inherently dialogic: participants must express viewpoints, listen actively, engage opposing perspectives, and work through disagreement to reach collective decisions. This trains not only communication skills, but also the key democratic habits of **tolerance and respect towards diversity of opinion,** and, by extension, **constructive debate.**

Lastly, during gameplay, learners often encounter partial information, competing narratives, or persuasive arguments that test their judgment, mimicking the media and political environments they face in real life. This makes the method particularly effective in cultivating information discernment, argumentation, and bias awareness; all core components of media literacy.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency
Simulations provide hands-on experience with how democratic institutions function, how civic actors influence policy, and how participation plays out in complex systems.

✓ Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy
Simulation games foster critical thinking by immersing learners in realistic civic dilemmas that require evaluating information, weighing perspectives, and projecting possible outcomes. When simulations involve media roles (e.g. journalists, social media influencers, press secretaries), learners also explore how messages are framed and

disseminated, further reinforcing their capacity to question sources, detect misinformation, and understand how media shapes public discourse.

✓ Dialogue & Disagreement as Learning Practices

Simulations model constructive disagreement, wherein participants must communicate, debate, and negotiate across differences while upholding shared civic processes.

✓ Peer Learning & Experience-Based Approaches

The method fosters horizontal knowledge transfer through role-play, dialogue, and group problem-solving, where learning happens not only through the information content but also through each other's reactions, strategies, and arguments.

✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection

Post-simulation debriefings allow learners to reflect on what challenges they faced, how democratic practices could improve and, in general, how their thinking evolved thanks to the transformative potential of experiential learning. Through this process, simulation games reinforce metacognition and emotional regulation - key to lifelong civic engagement.

Method 6: Walking Debate

Description

Walking or moving debate methodology engages learners verbally and physically, allowing them to take a visible stance on a chosen topic. The main idea is that participants have to show their level of agreement with specific statements by moving to different positions in the room. The room can be separated into two parts ("Agree" and "Disagree") or in more lines corresponding to the degree of agreement (e.g. "Totally disagree", "Somewhat disagree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "Somewhat agree", "Totally agree"). Other variations exist too, such as the Middle Ground debate method, in which participants are divided according to an "ideological label" (e.g. religious vs. secular, feminist vs. non-feminist, pro-life vs. pro-choice) and move to a circle in the centre whenever they agree with a particular statement.

Example of a Middle Ground Debate

How the method can be used in SHINE

The walking debate method is a classic tool used for the enhancement of critical thinking and discourse skills (reflecting and expressing one's views, open-minded listening to the views of others), as well as for increasing awareness about the experiences of others and the social realities reflected in those diverse experiences.

This makes it a powerful tool for exploring controversial or value-laden civic topics, such as:

"The voting age should be lowered to 16."
"People who don't vote have no right to complain about politics."
"Protests that disrupt public life should be banned."
"Governments should monitor social media to prevent misinformation."
"Cultural traditions should never be criticized, even if they seem discriminatory."
"Hate speech laws restrict honest conversation."
"Democracy is not the best system for every country."

Implementation outcomes

The various formats of the walking debate method are an excellent way to stimulate discussion, encourage participants to reflect on the statements, share their views with others, and develop a deeper understanding of an issue and better corroborate their arguments. This makes it a great tool to enhance communication/public speaking skills, deliberation & critical thinking, active participation stance, respect for diversity of opinion and constructive disagreement.

In addition, depending on the topic around which the statements revolve, this method can increase the knowledge of the participants on any chosen subject, including civic and democratic issues central to the SHINE project, such as civic rights and responsibilities, power relations, media influence, youth voice, (environmental) justice, discrimination, inclusion and so on. A good debate can also serve as a springboard for reinforcing methods/workshops (e.g. role plays or project-based activities) and, of course, further inquiry.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Dialogue & Disagreement as Learning Practices
The method encourages participants to openly express differing views and engage in respectful, evidence-informed dialogue - helping them practice constructive disagreement in a democratic context.

✓ Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy
This method invites participants to engage critically with civic statements - examining assumptions, questioning generalisations, and considering implications, supporting critical reflection and reasoned judgment in civic life.

✓ Peer-Learning & Experience-Based Approaches
Rather than absorbing information from a single source, participants learn from one another's reasoning, life experiences, and values - building knowledge through discussion and interaction. This peer-based dynamic reinforces learning as a social and civic process, where differing standpoints serve as resources rather than obstacles.

✓ Inclusion through Representation & Accessibility

By creating a space where all voices are visible and equally respected, regardless of the position taken, the method ensures inclusive participation and lowers barriers to civic discourse, especially for quieter or less experienced participants.

✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection

This method requires participants to confront their assumptions, question their initial positions, and potentially revise their thinking based on peer perspectives. The shift from "speaking your mind" to "rethinking your stance" builds self-awareness and meta-cognitive skills, central to lifelong learning and democratic citizenship.

✓ Values-Based Reflection & Civic Courage

Learners are prompted to articulate personal values and take a visible stand on complex issues, fostering ethical reflection and the confidence to express their beliefs—even when they diverge from the group.

Method 7: Map your neighbourhood

Description

"Map Your Neighbourhood" [8] is a participatory and place-based method that invites learners to explore visually their local civic environment. Participants create maps of their neighbourhood or town highlighting spaces and actors connected to democratic life—such as youth centres, schools, religious institutions, community halls, local council offices, libraries, protest sites, NGOs, or public forums. The map reflects both physical and social features, with a focus on identifying where decisions are made, who holds influence, and where young people can engage.

How the method can be used in SHINE

In SHINE, this method could help young people ground civic education in their own realities by recognising where democratic participation happens (or fails to happen) in their immediate surroundings. It can be used at the start of training to activate prior knowledge before connecting those realities to broader democratic structures (e.g. regional or EU-level institutions) or as part of an action-planning process to locate spaces for change.

For example, in a workshop on constructive participation in decision-making, youth might map out which youth councils or school boards exist, which NGOs advocate for their interests, and where decisions impacting their daily life are being made. In a session on e-participation, participants could explore which digital platforms are used for civic mobilisation in their town or region.

The activity can also be **flexibly combined with other methods**, such as *storytelling (learners attach personal stories to specific locations - "This is where we held our first protest"), case studies (analysis of real civic initiatives that took place in their neighbourhood), or the photovoice method (use photographs they've taken to document visually places of exclusion, empowerment, or transformation).*

Implementation Outcomes

With the help of this method, participants will begin to see their neighbourhoods not just as places they live but as civic ecosystems where power, participation, and rights play out.

The method will also help them identify barriers and opportunities for engagement, understand the structures that shape their everyday lives, and propose ideas for improvement. Thanks to its visual nature and the fact that it is grounded in personal experience, this method is well set to support the "cartographers" emotional connection to civic learning and to reinforce their sense of belonging and agency in their community.

The *Map Your Neighbourhood* method also has a "journalistic vein"; it calls participants to investigate local dynamics, collect information (e.g. which actors or institutions hold influence), and document their findings through narrative, visual, or digital tools. This way, the method can be used to cultivate young people's role as local civic observers and community narrators, paving the way for a more dynamic participation in the public discourse.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency
Participants become adept at identifying local civic actors and systems, which enhances their readiness to engage in democratic processes at the community level and beyond.

✓ Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy
As participants gather and visualize data about civic spaces and actors, engaging in questioning existing and generating alternative narratives about their communities. Especially when combined with storytelling, photovoice, or citizen reporting, this method is an ideal springboard to produce and analyse media with civic relevance.

✓ Solidarity & Commitment to the Common Good
When young people work together to identify and map shared civic spaces, from libraries and playgrounds to youth centres and voting stations, they naturally begin to develop a sense of *collective stewardship*. These aren't just places on a map; they are shared democratic resources which are to be protected and improved not just for oneself but for everyone.

✓ Participation as a Learning Practice

This method transforms young people from passive observers into active civic investigators. As they explore where decisions are made in their community, they begin to see participation not as a theoretical concept but as something embedded in the physical and social fabric around them.

✓ Mutual Accountability & Shared Ownership

The method turns civic learning into a shared act of discovery. By mapping local power structures and participation gaps together, youth build mutual accountability and shared ownership, not only of the map but of their role in shaping democratic life.

Method 8: Photovoice Method

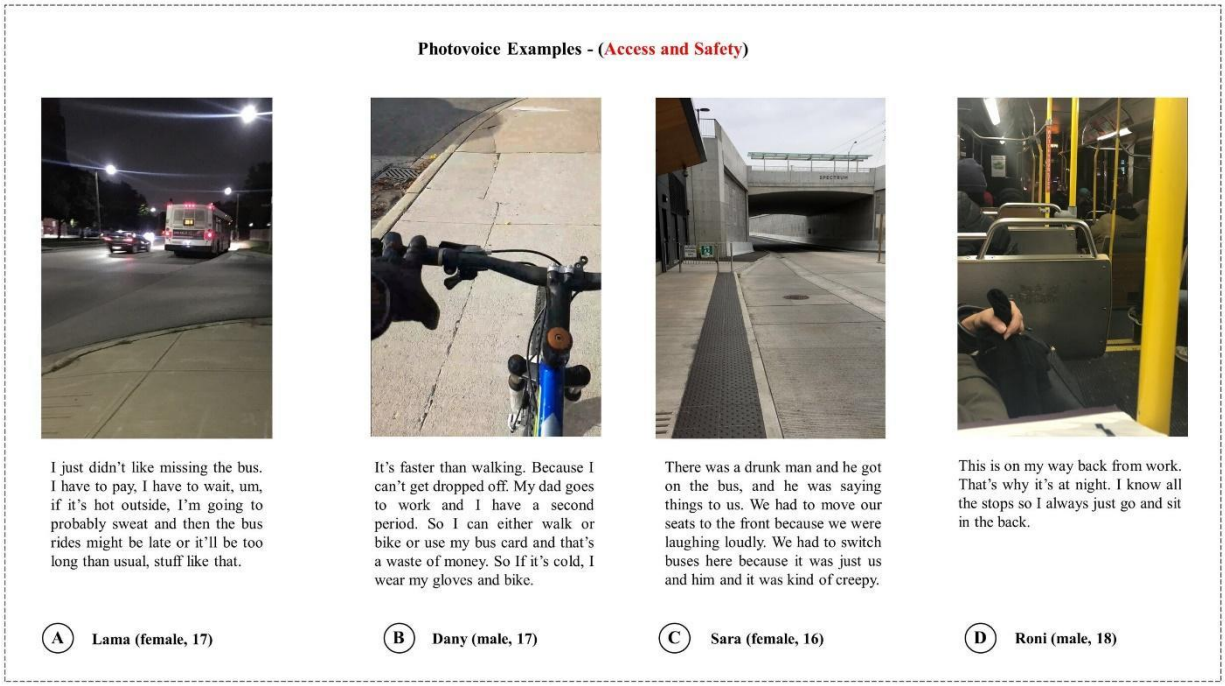
Description

Photovoice is a process in which people - usually those with limited power due to language, gender, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, disability, or other circumstances - use video and/or photo images to capture aspects of their experiences and environment and share them with others. Participants are asked to express their points of view or represent their communities by photographing scenes highlighting research themes. The pictures can then be used, usually with captions composed by the photographers, to bring the realities of the photographers' lives home to the public and policymakers, raise awareness of hidden or overlooked issues and aspects of the community and spur change.

How the method can be used in SHINE

Photovoice is particularly effective in contexts where traditional discussion-based or text-heavy methods may be limiting - especially for young people with fewer opportunities, lower literacy levels, or language barriers. By engaging visual, emotional, and social intelligence, this method opens up new channels for self-expression, critical reflection, and civic imagination.

An illustrative example of Photovoice in action comes from Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, where 28 newly arrived immigrant teenagers participated in a project exploring their daily experiences using public transit. Armed with smartphones, they documented what they liked and disliked - from unsafe walking paths and high fare prices to the comfort of buses and how they multitasked during rides. In follow-up interviews, the photos served as triggers for reflection and dialogue around key civic themes: accessibility, safety, inclusion, and public infrastructure. The project didn't just produce personal insights but also informed concrete policy recommendations, such as reduced youth fares, improved shelters at bus stops, and Wi-Fi on transit. This example underscores how Photovoice empowers young people not only to reflect but to engage with institutions as civic actors [2]



Photovoice Examples (Access and Safety). *Source: Alarasi, Haifa, and Ron Buliung. 2021. "Using Photovoice to Explore Teenagers' Public Transit Experiences in a Suburban City." Findings, September. https://doi.org/10.32866/001c.28117 This figure is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). The full license details can be found at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/*

Within the SHINE project, Photovoice could be used as a tool to initiate youth-led inquiry and storytelling on democratic themes.

For example, in the local youth training sessions, facilitators can invite participants to document aspects of civic life in their communities: moments of solidarity, spaces where decision-making happens (or doesn't), symbols of injustice, or personal stories of participation. The resulting photographs could then serve as prompts for small group discussions, critical reflection exercises, and structured dialogues around democratic values, rights, and responsibilities.

Another idea would be to incorporate the images and accompanying narratives created by the participants into SHINE podcast episodes as accompanying visuals, giving local youth a strong sense of ownership and agency.

Implementation Outcomes

The photovoice method is an excellent tool to empower young people and, especially, those with fewer opportunities, by strengthening their confidence in themselves - as they have to be the protagonists of their advocacy work-, as well as by enhancing their feeling of social responsibility to be involved in the public discourse. Through this method, participants enhance their skills in photography techniques, use of digital tools, and narratives or news compilation, while increasing their awareness about overlooked

issues and aspects of the community and enhancing their motivation and commitment to community participation.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy

Central to the method is the intentional use of visual media as a tool for civic expression. Participants learn to create meaningful content, understand visual narratives, and apply ethical standards when representing others and their communities.

✓ Inclusion through Representation & Accessibility

The method uses photography to offer accessible, non-verbal entry points into civic education - particularly valuable for young people with lower literacy levels or language barriers. It encourages the representation of diverse voices and lived experiences, reinforcing the idea that every learner can contribute meaningfully to democratic life.

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency

Photovoice helps young people make sense of democratic structures and civic life by inviting them to visually examine their surroundings and identify where power, exclusion, participation, or solidarity are visible - or absent. In other words, the method connects abstract civic concepts with concrete lived experiences, young people can easily identify with.

Method 9: Project-based learning and culturally relevant pedagogy

Description

Project-based learning is an instructional approach designed to allow people to develop knowledge and skills through engaging projects around challenges and problems they may face in the real world.

This method should be integrated with the culturally Relevant Pedagogy, a theory that recognises the importance of including learners' cultural references in all aspects of learning. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy also affirms the identities of marginalised learners and calls them to develop critical perspectives that challenge societal inequalities [17].

This integration is crucial in **civic education**, as communities and democratic systems are grounded in broader (cultural) contexts. When young people work on issues that affect their own communities, their learning becomes more authentic and more impactful. In parallel, CRP is especially relevant in **a transnational project like SHINE**, which brings together youth from diverse sociopolitical, linguistic, and cultural contexts.

How the method can be used in SHINE

In the SHINE context, PBL could form the basis of **"action-oriented" activities**, where youth are called to identify issues relevant to their personal or local context and work collaboratively to research, plan, and propose solutions or awareness actions. The target outcome(s) could take different formats, such as **youth-led civic action projects, campaign prototypes, democratic simulations, or community-based investigations**.

For example, young participants might develop a voter education toolkit for first-time voters, organise a social media campaign on combating hate speech, map accessibility issues in local public spaces, or co-create an exhibition showcasing stories of cultural diversity in their town.

Through these projects, youth are encouraged to identify real-world civic challenges and collaboratively develop meaningful, creative responses grounded in democratic values. Abiding by the principles of CRP should also ensure that these projects don't exist in a vacuum, but are rooted in the participants' cultural realities, using local knowledge, traditions, and storytelling to shape the learning process around those who engage in it.

Implementation Outcomes

PBL combined with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) is set to foster a broad spectrum of democratic and civic competences in participants. As learners take on real-world challenges through collaborative projects, they naturally acquire essential project management skills, such as planning, organisation, research, resource constraints consideration, etc., by doing rather than only observing. Thereby, civic issues become more tangible and personal when explored through hands-on experience, allowing participants to deepen their understanding beyond theory alone.

The group-based nature of PBL also allows learners to practice democratic principles like deliberation, consultation, and shared leadership in action, rather than just abstract ideas.

At the same time, CRP ensures that learners see their cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and community realities reflected in the learning process.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Mutual Accountability & Shared Ownership

Group-based projects require coordination, role-sharing, and consensus-building, representing, in essence, the hands-on practice of democratic accountability in real-time. Each person's contribution affects the group's progress, reflecting how citizenship functions in society. CRP adds a layer of relational accountability, encouraging participants to honour each other's life experiences, responsibilities, and commitments.

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency

Perhaps one of the strongest links, PBL activities give learners hands-on experiences with democratic processes. Whether it is consulting with stakeholders, writing policy proposals, or hosting a dialogue, learners become fluent in using democratic tools and exercising active citizenship.

✓ Participation as a Learning Practice

PBL empowers learners to take an active role in their civic education, not just as recipients of knowledge but as co-authors of (desired & planned) change. Gradually, as a project unfolds, personal investment in it deepens and the sense of ownership strengthens; participation evolves from a learning activity into a habit of mind - something learners carry with them beyond any workshop or classroom.

✓ Solidarity & Commitment to the Common Good

Learners work on shared challenges affecting their communities, developing a sense of collective responsibility and public purpose.

✓ Inclusion through Representation & Accessibility

CRP ensures that learning is not "one-size-fits-all". Instead, it recognises cultural identity as an asset and starting point for engagement and creates spaces where everyone can contribute meaningfully.

Method 10: Cooperative Learning

Description

Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that enables small groups of learners to work together on a common assignment or towards shared goals. It arranges and mixes students of different levels of ability and learning into groups and can take various forms, such as simple **paired work** or more complex modes like **group projects, jigsaw learning** (where each member becomes an "expert" on one part of the topic)**, guided peer-questioning or rotating station work.** All variations of these methods encourage students to engage actively with democratic values by working in small, diverse groups where each member contributes to mutual understanding.

How the method can be used in SHINE

Cooperative learning offers a powerful approach to civic education by placing collaboration, communication, and shared responsibility at the heart of the learning experience. As highlighted in the literature review by Wisista et al. [23], cooperative learning models such as *Team Games Tournament* (TGT) and *Student Teams Achievement Division* (STAD) have significantly increased student activeness in Civics classes, encouraging learners to not only participate but to take ownership of their learning. For instance, in a study involving second-grade students learning about Pancasila

(Indonesia's foundational civic values), students showed marked improvement in attentiveness, confidence, and group task completion when a *cooperative model* was introduced.

Similarly, the *Jigsaw* method, which involves assigning each student a specific sub-topic to master individually before returning to their group to teach it to their peers, effectively fosters student interdependence and deeper engagement in Civics learning. Teachers observed that students became more motivated and confident, and classroom dynamics shifted from passive reception to active collaboration.

Within SHINE, the Jigsaw method could be effectively integrated into non-formal education sessions to deepen understanding of complex civic topics through peer-led learning.

For instance, in a session on ***democratic institutions*** *and their roles, participants could be divided into "expert" groups to study one institution (e.g., legislative, executive, judicial, civil society, media).*

For themes such as ***data protection and privacy rights****, "expert" groups may explore different aspects - GDPR principles, informed consent, surveillance practices, or ethical digital behaviour -and then share insights in mixed groups.*

The Jigsaw structure is also particularly suitable for ***topics like social/cultural diversity****, where participants can explore sub-themes such as minority rights, integration vs. assimilation, or intersectionality, before rejoining mixed groups to create a shared map or project plan of inclusive civic participation.*

Of course, a wide variety of other collaborative learning methods are equally well-suited to SHINE's non-formal educational context.

For example, we could implement a ***Group Investigation****, inviting small teams to explore different angles of a theme - such as ecological citizenship or disinformation - through mini-research projects, case studies, or even mapping exercises like "Map Your Neighbourhood" to identify local civic structures, access to resources, or sustainability gaps.*

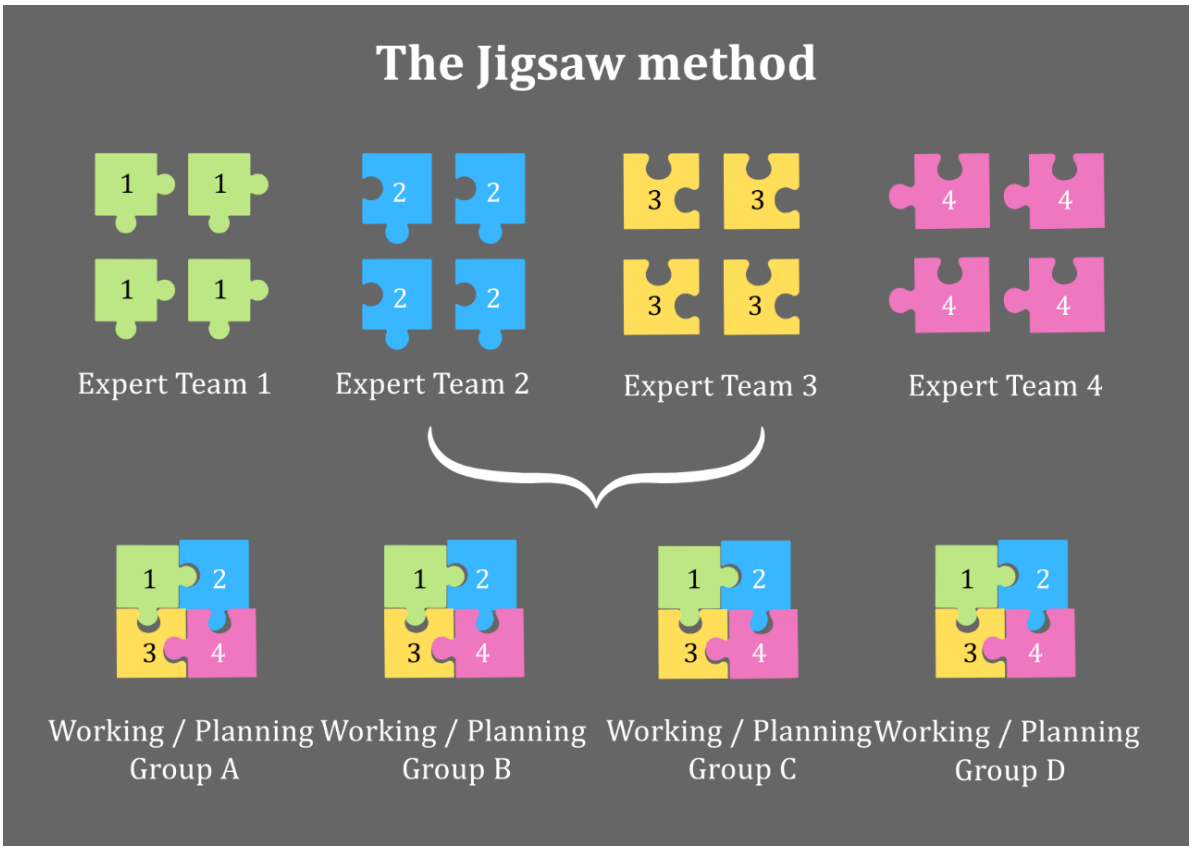
Collaborative Concept Mapping *can support groups in visually connecting ideas - such as linking digital citizenship to rights, responsibilities, risks, and platforms - and grasp complexity through co-created visuals.*

Lastly, ***Peer Teaching*** *and* ***Youth-led Micro-sessions*** *could give space to participants to design and facilitate short sessions or activities for their peers, reinforcing both civic knowledge and youth leadership.*

Implementation Outcomes

Cooperative learning is rated by William Joyce [12] as the number-one strategy to increase student achievement and enhance self-esteem. As learners express their thoughts to their team partners, the thinking becomes visible to their peers and themselves. By putting thoughts from their reading into their own words and sharing them, learners clarify and crystallise their thinking. Exposing one's thinking to others is also a great way to enhance learners' resilience against the echo chambering phenomenon, in which people are trapped in ideological bubbles, because of the way search engines- and social media- algorithms provide recommendations to one's feed. Also, establishing different roles and allocating specific responsibilities to each group member encourages all learners to participate actively.

Cooperative learning taps into many different skills that are vital for civic literacy but also "must-haves" for citizens of the 21st century, generally speaking, such as improved communication skills (both verbal and non-verbal, learning how to work in groups and how to manage best the team dynamics, learning how to express feelings, increasing proactive and prosocial attitudes, enhancing perspective taking and respect to diversity of opinion, etc.



The Jigsaw Method. *Each team (Team 1 to Team 4) is formed based on a specific topic or sub-topic. All members in a team study and master the same material. Each puzzle piece represents a participant with shared expertise (e.g., all "1"s study or reflect on the same content).*

Mixed Groups (Group A to D) are reassembled to include one member from each expert team. Each participant teaches their area of expertise to the group, allowing for collaborative learning. The varied puzzle pieces and colors highlight the integration of diverse knowledge to complete the full picture.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Mutual Accountability & Shared Ownership

At the heart of cooperative learning lies the distribution of responsibility across all participants. Each learner contributes actively to group tasks and shares accountability for outcomes, which mirrors the democratic principle of collective responsibility. Whether through rotating roles, peer feedback, or group goal setting, participants learn to negotiate roles, depend on one another, and recognise their impact within a group - fostering a sense of shared ownership central to civic life.

✓ Peer Learning & Experience-Based Approaches

Cooperative learning utilises peer teaching as a core mechanism, reinforcing learning through dialogue, negotiation, and mutual support. As participants collaborate, they draw on their life experiences, personal knowledge, and diverse viewpoints to co-construct an understanding of civic concepts and translate it into meaningful co-action.

✓ Participation as a Learning Practice

Cooperative learning trains young people in the skills and attitudes needed for active citizenship - listening, deliberating, compromising, and asserting ideas respectfully, providing a practice ground for real democratic engagement.

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency

Working in small, diverse teams fosters understanding of how pluralism and collaboration function in democratic settings, helping learners internalise democratic values through interaction and experience rather than lecture.

Method 11: Mind Mapping / Visualisations

Description

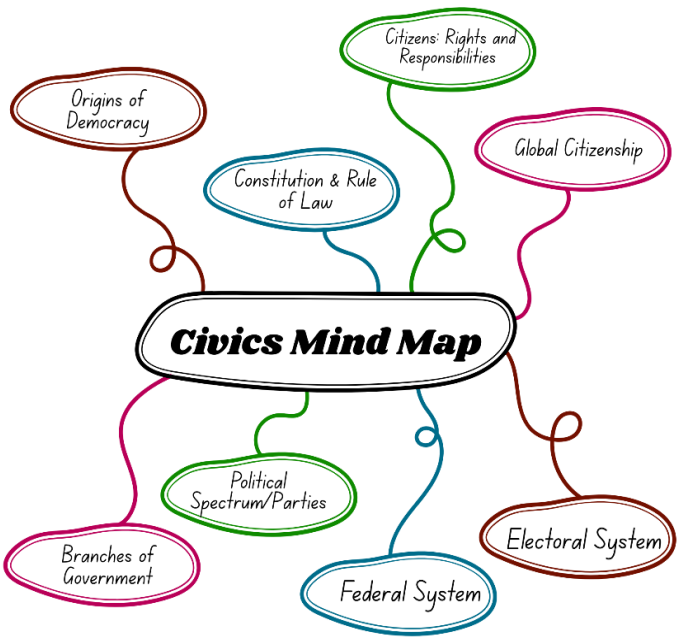
Mind mapping is a learning model that uses concept maps to record learning material in diagrams with interconnected symbols, codes, images, and colours. Using keywords and images that 'snap on' particular memories and inspire fresh ideas, maps (usually developed on paper) are a visual, networked way to store, arrange, and prioritise information [18].

The method taps into both the analytical and creative functions of the brain, making it ideal for generating, structuring, and communicating complex ideas.

How the method can be used in SHINE

Mind Mapping is useful particularly for deconstructing and exploring multifaceted civic issues, starting with the core concept(s) and then branching out into categories/subtopics like platforms, actors, effects on society, fact-checking methods, emotional triggers, policy responses, etc. The holistic view the resulting visual map provides helps learners grasp the core idea itself and how it connects to broader societal dynamics, processes, and actors—deepening their understanding of the issue and its democratic context.

In SHINE workshops, mind mapping could very well be used in ***pre-learning phases*** *(e.g. to assess prior knowledge and assumptions), during* ***interactive brainstorming*** *(to develop civic campaigns or podcast topics), or as a* ***reflective tool*** *(to visualise what was learned and how concepts are interrelated).*



A visualisation could also be combined with other methods, like "Mapping Democratic Ecosystems", where youth could chart the relationships among democratic institutions, civil society, and the media, helping to demystify who does what in a democracy.

In the ***board game*** *development process, mind maps could be used to co-create content by visualising the key themes or mechanics.*

Because mind maps do not require high literacy levels and are easily adapted through visuals, icons, and colour coding, they are accessible to diverse learners and particularly suited to intercultural and inclusive group settings.

Implementation Outcomes

Mind-mapping and visualisation methods make ideas that might otherwise seem distant or difficult to grasp become visible, accessible, and logically connected with a constellation of relevant concepts, as visual, non-linear formats enable more effective 'cognitive organisation' and retention of information.

When used in groups, mind mapping also naturally promotes collaborative thinking, given that learners are called to decide together how to categorise information, which elements to prioritise, and how different concepts relate to one another. At the same time, as participants visually track the growth of their own maps and thinking over time, they

develop metacognitive awareness, i.e. witnessing the evolution of their own knowledge, perceptions and perspectives.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency

Mind mapping makes complex systems visible and understandable and shows how institutions, rights, and responsibilities interconnect. It can, thus, help demystify civic structures and foster an integrated understanding of democratic systems and processes.

✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection

Mind maps help young people visualise their thought processes, see gaps in their understanding, and track their learning journey over time.

✓ Inclusion through Representation & Accessibility

Visual formats reduce language barriers, support diverse learning needs and make it easier for all participants to contribute contributions, regardless of educational background, language or content proficiency. That is, the mind mapping method can be used as a gateway to inclusive participation, enabling diverse learners to access, process, and shape civic knowledge in ways that feel both meaningful and manageable to them.

Method 12: Case Studies

Description

Case studies involve an in-depth examination of a single instance or event, in which learners make use of real-life incidents to see how theoretical knowledge of various concepts might be applied to real-case scenarios. Rather than dealing with abstract concepts alone, this method engages participants with tangible, contextualised situations, inviting them to interpret, analyse, and propose solutions or actions based on careful examination. Case studies can be drawn from historical events, contemporary situations, or hypothetical scenarios resembling closely realistic civic dilemmas.

How the method can be used in SHINE

Case studies are widely used across disciplines, in both formal- and non-formal application settings, to bridge theory with practical application and are particularly suited for testing ideas, exploring ethical dimensions, and generating deeper insights through critical discussion.

In the SHINE project, case studies can be used across the project's training materials:

- In podcasts, real-life or historical case studies *(e.g. youth-led environmental campaigns, media's role in political uprisings, landmark human rights rulings)* can

be woven into scripted segments of the dialogues to illustrate how democratic engagement plays out in practice. These cases can then serve as narrative anchors, sparking discussion in follow-up workshops.

- In the **Training Toolkit**, youth workers can embed case studies in selected workshops to facilitate group analysis of current events or past decisions *(e.g., banning social media in a country, a local (or global) protest movement, a school implementing participatory budgeting, etc.)*. Participants could work in groups to interpret facts, evaluate decisions, and consider implications for the affected community or, more generally, for civic values like inclusion, justice, and participation.

- In the **Board Game**, case studies could be used as scenario or challenge cards upon which players must deliberate and make collective decisions based on fictionalised versions of real civic dilemmas *(e.g. handling a public health crisis, responding to disinformation, debating a policy, etc.).*

Implementation Outcomes

Case studies cultivate a range of civic and transversal competences: they enhance analytical thinking by having participants evaluate evidence, recognise patterns, and witness how theory applies practically. They improve decision-making skills by providing opportunities to explore realistic trade-offs, consequences, and ethical considerations inherent in complex civic situations. Participants also become adept at articulating and justifying their viewpoints, as case study discussions inherently involve debate and evidence-based argumentation.

Importantly, case studies are powerful tools for nurturing empathy and perspective-taking, as they frequently involve multiple stakeholders with competing interests or needs and give insights into their diverse -sometimes opposing- perspectives. This, in turn, leads to an increased ability to navigate conflict constructively, collaborate effectively, and find consensus-driven solutions.

Case studies thus not only deepen and consolidate theoretical understanding but also equip participants with the practical reasoning and interpersonal skills essential for effective civic participation.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency

Through engaging with authentic civic dilemmas and illustrative examples of real-life events, participants gain practical insights into how democratic processes, institutions, and actors operate. They become fluent in civic language and comfortable navigating real-world democratic scenarios.

✓ Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy

Case studies push participants beyond surface-level information consumption, encouraging them to assess evidence critically, discern biases, question sources, and develop their analytical capacities and critical reflection abilities.

✓ Solidarity & Commitment to the Common Good

The exploration of cases involving diverse groups and communities supports participants to develop a deeper awareness of collective interests and the importance of solidarity. They learn how individual actions contribute to shared societal outcomes, reinforcing a commitment to working collaboratively for broader communal benefits.

Method 13: Why + How + What

Description

The Golden Circle is a strategic reflection model popularised by Simon Sinek [19]. It guides participants through three concentric questions:

- Why - What is your core motivation or belief?
- How - What principles or approaches guide your actions?
- What - What concrete actions are you taking or planning?

Unlike most models that begin with external outcomes, the Golden Circle reverses the logic - starting with intrinsic motivation (why) and then moving outward to strategy (how) and execution (what). The framework is widely used in leadership, personal development, and social impact planning and has been adapted in civic education to deepen value-based engagement.

How the method can be used in SHINE

The Golden Circle is especially useful in helping young people understand the motivational and ethical dimensions of civic participation. Rather than acting reactively or imitating others, learners are prompted to anchor their civic actions in personal beliefs and community relevance.

*In the SHINE **Toolkit for Youth Workers**, this method could be used:*

- *As a **preparation tool** before launching civic initiatives or campaigns (e.g. "Why do we care about local climate action?", "How do we want to engage others?", "What will our campaign look like?").*
- *As a **reflection exercise** after simulations or storytelling activities, helping participants revisit their values and civic goals.*
- *In **mentoring or group coaching settings**, where youth need support in articulating their civic identity or planning their path of participation.*

*In the **Board Game**, the model could be introduced as a **reflection prompt** after a key decision or scenario. Players might be asked: "Why did you vote for this outcome?", "How did your group negotiate that decision?", "What impact did your choice have on others?"*

This way, players would be invited to pause and explore the underlying values and reasoning behind their gameplay - transforming it into a civic learning experience.

Implementation Outcomes

The Why + How + What (Golden Circle) method deepens civic engagement by grounding actions in personal values. By starting with "why" - core motivations like justice or equity- young people move beyond superficial or reactive actions and develop a deep sense of purpose. Defining "how" - strategies aligned with their why - teaches ethical navigation, such as prioritizing community partnerships over visibility campaigns. Finally, "what" translates values into action, like organising workshops or campaigns. Moreover, pausing to reflect on decisions (e.g. "Why vote this way?") is a way to mirror democratic reasoning, emphasising values over outcomes. All in all, the method fosters civic ownership, empowering youth to act as changemakers capable of sustaining engagement through challenges and aligning their actions with personal and collective principles.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Values-Based Reflection & Civic Courage
The model centres around personal meaning and ethical motivation, giving young people the courage to act in alignment with their principles even when facing resistance.

✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection
It fosters metacognition by encouraging learners to examine not just what they do but why they care and how they want to act. Thus, the method helps participants in grounding their learning in personal relevance and growing more adaptive in how they process new civic experiences.

✓ Participation as a Learning Practice
By prompting deliberate action rather than passive involvement, the method reinforces participation as an intentional and empowered choice.

Method 14: Six Thinking Hats

Description

A classic tool to cultivate critical thinking, Six Thinking Hats was introduced by the psychologist and author Edward de Bono in 1985 [6]. The method involves breaking down ideas into six areas of thought: logic, optimism, the devil's advocate, emotion, creativity, and management. When approaching a new problem or project, each "hat"

represents a unique set of priorities and perspectives that will help focus the discussion and consider the project from a wide variety of angles. There are two main objectives of the Six Thinking Hats concept. The first is to simplify thinking by allowing a thinker to deal with one aspect at a time, and the second purpose is to allow a switch in thinking modes.

How the method can be used in SHINE

As is the case with other Methods of this Manual, like the "Walking Debate" or the "Mind Mapping" among others, the structure of the Six-thinking-hats can be used as a highly adaptable tool to the purposes of a Trainer and address virtually any civic education concept. Its strength lies in offering a structured, non-confrontational way to explore complexity - essential in civic learning environments where multiple truths, tensions, and value conflicts coexist.

Basically, with this method, every socially discussed topic can be discussed from several perspectives. Especially in intercultural or diverse group settings, the hats offer a safe structure for discussing sensitive issues related to identity and inclusion, such as ethnicity, language rights, gender equality, health status/disability, and sexual orientation or any other group identifiers.

By encouraging participants to adopt multiple cognitive and emotional perspectives, it reduces the personal pressure often associated with difficult conversations and fosters mutual understanding and respectful dialogue.

Coloured hat	*Think of*	*Detailed description*
	White paper	*The white hat is about data and information. It is used to record information that is currently available and to identify further information that may be needed.*
	Fire and warmth	*The red hat is associated with feelings, intuition, and emotion. The red hat allows people to put forward feelings without justification or prejudice.*
	Sunshine	*The yellow hat is for positive view on things. It looks for benefits in a situation. This hat encourages a positive view even in people who are always critical.*

	A stern judge	*The black hat related to caution. It is used for critical judgment. Sometimes it is easy to overuse the black hat.*
	Vegetation and rich growth	*The green hat is for creative thinking and generating new ideas. This is your creative thinking cap.*
	The sky and overview	*The blue hat is about process control. It is used for thinking about thinking. The blue hat asks for summaries, conclusions and decisions.*

The Six Thinking Hats *based on Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats method (1985).*

This makes the method particularly valuable in exploring ***SHINE themes*** *such as:*

- *Embracing social and cultural diversity, which often requires shifting from abstract support of diversity to concrete understanding of what inclusion looks like in practice—an ideal fit for the creative and visionary lenses of the Green and Yellow hats.*

- *Gender equality and social cohesion, where varied beliefs, values, and lived experiences can be respectfully unpacked using the emotional (Red), factual (White), and ethical (Yellow/Black) hats*

- *Combating hate speech and discrimination, where participants must navigate the fine balance between freedom of expression and protection from harm - an ideal setting for emotional (Red), legal and factual (White), cautionary (Black), and constructive (Yellow/Green) thinking to unfold in a balanced*

In addition, the method excels in supporting themes fundamentally rooted in critical thinking and civic judgment, such as Combating fake news and disinformation. Here, learners can apply the Hats to examine how narratives are constructed, how emotions are manipulated, and how alternative framings or solutions might strengthen democratic resilience.
Also, in all themes, the Six Thinking Hats can use inspiration and themes from books, films, articles and current social issues as the topic of heterogeneity.

In the Board Game*, the Six Hats could be adapted as "perspective cards" that players draw during moments of conflict, negotiations or ethical decision-making. For instance, after proposing a law on minority language use, players might be asked to consider it from the*

Yellow Hat (optimistic benefits for inclusion), Black Hat (potential logistical or political backlash), or Red Hat (how affected groups might feel). This could be a mechanism to reinforce the game's civic learning goals while deepening awareness of diversity and democratic decision-making.

Implementation Outcomes

The Six Thinking Hats method is used to encourage different perspectives or ways of thinking based on the participants' preconceptions. The advantage of Six Thinking Hats is that it encourages participants to take different roles, "put on different hats" and go outside their comfort zones. This way it is a great method to enhance critical thinking and perspective-taking, as well as a quest for objectivity. Another benefit is that it can ease the structure in a discussion and reduce the tension often linked with difficult conversations, fostering participants' ability to engage in constructive dialogue.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy

Learners develop higher-order thinking by toggling between logic, emotion, creativity, and scepticism. This is especially useful when evaluating the wide range of perspectives existing in a pluralistic society, civic messages, political rhetoric, or media narratives.

✓ Dialogue & Disagreement as Learning Practices

The method fosters respectful disagreement by requiring participants to engage from all angles even those they wouldn't naturally adopt. This enables dialogue over debate and model pluralistic discourse.

✓ Values-Based Reflection & Civic Courage

By engaging with emotional and ethical aspects (Red and Yellow Hats), the method helps learners articulate and act on their values. It cultivates courage by making moral reflection an explicit part of civic learning.

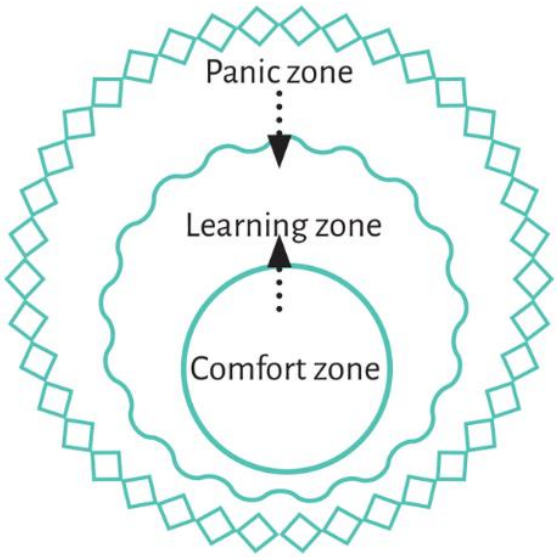
✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection

Learners grow aware of their thinking habits, biases, strengths & weaknesses, gaining tools to broaden their analytical approach. The Blue Hat, in particular, trains self-regulation and reflective facilitation.

Method 15: Learning Zone

Description

The Learning Zone model frames the learning process as a journey through three zones: the Comfort Zone (where individuals feel safe but unstimulated), the Learning Zone (where growth occurs through manageable challenges), and the Panic Zone (where anxiety overwhelms and inhibits learning). This model is a metacognitive tool that helps participants reflect on how they respond to discomfort and challenges in educational and civic settings. By understanding and naming these zones, learners become more aware of their emotions, thoughts, and reactions during complex activities or discussions.



Learning Zone Diagram. *Popularised in experiential education, based on the Yerkes-Dodson Law (1908) and adapted by practitioners across non-formal learning and coaching fields. Source: Graphic representation of the Learning Zone Model in MitOst e.V. and the Competendo editorial team.*

How the method can be used in SHINE

The Learning Zone Model demonstrates how, in order to learn successfully, we must be challenged to push beyond our comfort zone.

In civic education, where participants tackle sensitive topics like discrimination, hate speech, or political polarisation, this model helps balance challenge and support to build **emotional resilience** (managing discomfort) and **cognitive resilience** (critical thinking amid complexity).

In the SHINE context, youth workers may use the option of introducing the Learning Zone model before engaging in challenging activities/sessions of the toolkit (e.g. walking debates, deliberative simulations, or group critiques) or dealing with sensitive/controversial topics. This gives learners a framework to express when they feel overstimulated or disengaged and helps trainers calibrate the challenge level appropriately.

Implementation Outcomes

By identifying their own Learning Zone, participants become more capable of self-regulation and reflection, crucial skills for navigating civic spaces that are often contentious or fast-evolving.

Also, by normalising discomfort as part of growth, young people learn to navigate civic tensions constructively. For example, preparing youth-led policy recommendations on media literacy might push participants to confront misinformation tactics (learning zone), but iterative teamwork and mentor support ensure they stay engaged rather than retreating. Over time, this cultivates civic courage—the ability to act despite uncertainty—and embeds habits like active listening, ethical advocacy, and collaborative problem-solving.

Connection with SHINE principles

✓ Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection

The method strengthens meta-cognitive abilities, inviting learners to evaluate not only what and how they learn but also how they engage with discomfort, complexity, and change.

✓ Values-Based Reflection & Civic Courage

By acknowledging that democratic engagement requires vulnerability, courage, and persistence, the Learning Zone model fosters an ethic of responsibility and emotional resilience.

✓ Inclusion through Representation & Accessibility

This method welcomes and gives voice to a wide range of emotional reactions and learning needs, validating diverse learner experiences. This way it allows facilitators to respond to different needs and create a supportive, adaptive learning environment, which is especially valuable for mixed-ability groups or young people with fewer opportunities.

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SHINE Methodology Matrix: Mapping proposed Methods to SHINE Principles

SHINE Principle/Method	M1 Listening Circles	M2 Storytelling	M3 Arnstein's Ladder	M4 Envelopes	M5 Simulation Games	M6 Walking Debate	M7 Map your Neighbourhood	M8 Photovoice	M9 PBL + CRP	M10 Cooperative Learning	M11 Mind Mapping	M12 Case Studies	M13 Why-How-What	M14 Six Thinking Hats	M15 Learning Zone
Building Democratic Literacy & Civic Fluency		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Developing Critical Thinking & Media Literacy					✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	
Participation as a Learning Practice			✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓		
Dialogue & Disagreement as Learning Practices	✓				✓	✓								✓	
Peer Learning & Experience-Based Approaches		✓			✓	✓				✓					
Inclusion through Representation & Accessibility	✓					✓		✓	✓		✓				✓
Mutual Accountability & Shared Ownership			✓	✓			✓		✓	✓					
Learning to Learn and Self-Reflection		✓		✓	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓
Values-Based Reflection & Civic Courage	✓	✓				✓							✓		✓
Solidarity & Commitment to the Common Good		✓					✓		✓			✓		✓	