



# A Roadmap toward the “Toolkit for Local Learning Ecosystems”



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**Democratic Citizenship Teaching and Learning (DECITEL)**

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# Index

## Table des matières

1. Purpose of this document .....	4
2. Theoretical and Policy Framework .....	5
3. The place and role of Local Learning Ecosystems in DeCiTeL.....	6
4. Structure and Implementation of the DeCiTeL Toolkit .....	7
4.1 Steps facilitating the toolkit development .....	8
4.2 Partners Tasks .....	10
5. Local Learning Ecosystem Description Template .....	11
6. Template .....	13
7. References.....	18

# 1. Purpose of this document

This document outlines a path and sequence of activities for the development of the **“Toolkit for Local Learning Ecosystems”** (WP 5.2). The DeCiTeL Toolkit is co-designed with partners and the local stakeholders in each national context, ensuring that they are actively involved in shaping its content and validating its first version through new initiatives in citizenship education and democratic citizenship. It aims to provide a path for the development and modelling of Local Learning Ecosystems (LLE).

**Local Learning Ecosystems** are networks of interconnected actors and institutions within a given geographic area, encompassing formal education, non-formal and informal learning environments, community organizations, local authorities, and engaged citizens. These actors collaborate to support learning, facilitate knowledge exchange, and test, adapt, and sustain educational innovations.

This roadmap provides reference points (e.g., competence frameworks related to democracy learning, such as the RFCFC) and guiding questions for the development of piloting activities, as the results and insights from these activities will form the material basis for the partners’ contributions to the toolkit.

We suggest with this document a process of concrete steps and reference points to orient the Partners Educational Work in the development and modelling of Local Learning Ecosystems. Based on the partners’ experiences and lessons learned, the concrete toolkit will be developed.

## 2. Theoretical and Policy Framework

**Citizenship education** has traditionally focused on equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to participate responsibly in society, including an understanding of civic institutions, democratic processes, and individual rights and responsibilities. **Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC)** extends this foundation by shifting emphasis from passive awareness to active engagement. It emphasizes participatory engagement in democratic life and prioritizes the development of critical thinking, empathy, collaboration, and respect for diversity. In doing so, EDC positions democracy not merely as a topic to be studied but as a set of practices to be experienced and enacted within educational contexts. This shift is particularly significant in contemporary Europe, where increasing polarization, social fragmentation, and challenges to democratic norms demand more robust forms of civic preparation. Within this perspective, education must move beyond the transmission of factual knowledge to create learner-centred and inclusive environments that model democratic values, encourage dialogue across differences, and empower students to take part in collective decision-making.

Within the **European framework**, EDC is guided by several key instruments (Council of Europe, 2018). **The Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)** defines the values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge required for effective democratic participation. [The European Space for Citizenship Education](#) provides a structured approach to high-quality citizenship education and outlines key principles for its provision (2023). Together, these instruments ensure that democratic principles are not only taught but also practiced within educational environments, highlighting the importance of systemic cooperation, continuous professional development, and reflective practice.

Teachers and educators, both in formal and non-formal education, play a central role in democratic citizenship. They are not simply conveyors of knowledge but architects of democratic learning environments, where dialogue, mutual respect, and shared decision-making are part of everyday life. Beyond teachers and educators, democratic

citizenship education is supported by a wide range of stakeholders, who are or can become part of the **Local Learning Ecosystem**, as outlined in the DeCiTeL Stakeholders Engagement Plan (WP5 D5.1).

In addition, the toolkit aligns with broader European initiatives, including the European Education Area and the European Skills Strategy, whose Action Plan on Basic Skills identifies citizenship as a core competence for lifelong learning. By integrating these frameworks, the **DeCiTeL Toolkit** and its roadmap operate within a coherent European vision, supporting the development of a sustainable democratic culture through quality education for democratic citizenship. Therefore, we suggest aligning the development of Local Learning Ecosystems and the Toolkit with the criteria outlined in these frameworks.

### 3. The place and role of Local Learning Ecosystems in DeCiTeL

The Local Learning Ecosystems developed within WP5 of DeCiTeL extend participation beyond schools by **actively involving** a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, local administrations, higher education institutions, and community groups. These ecosystems are designed not only to support the development of citizenship competences among teachers and students but also **to promote** civic engagement, social responsibility, and democratic participation across the broader community.

By facilitating collaboration among diverse actors, LLEs create a shared space for co-creating learning experiences that address locally relevant challenges and opportunities. **The role of the LLE** within each national and local context is therefore flexible and adaptive, shaped by existing national frameworks, educational structures, cultural practices, and community needs, while consistently aiming to strengthen the connections between formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Over time, these ecosystems are expected to foster sustainable networks, enhance local capacity for democratic education, and serve as a model for embedding citizenship education in everyday social and institutional life.

## 4. Structure and Implementation of the DeCiTeL Toolkit

The DeCiTeL Toolkit is **designed** to strengthen teachers' capacity to implement democratic citizenship education through experiential, participatory, and inclusive pedagogical methods. The development of the toolkit follows a co-design methodology that embodies the democratic principles it seeks to promote. Teachers, researchers, community partners, civil servants, policymakers, and students/pupils collaborate through iterative cycles of design, piloting, reflection, and refinement.

The Toolkit for Democratic Citizenship Teaching and Learning is **structured around three interrelated components** that together provide a comprehensive framework for supporting teachers and institutions in fostering democratic competences.

- a) The first component, **the conceptual and competence framework**, establishes the theoretical foundations of democratic citizenship education and translates the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) into a clear teacher and educator competence model. This framework specifies what teachers should know, understand, and be able to do to cultivate a democratic culture within classrooms and school institutions. It also incorporates a needs-analysis phase to identify specific gaps in teacher knowledge, skills, and institutional readiness, ensuring that the toolkit addresses real educational contexts and priorities.
- b) The second component consists of **the assessment and insights derived from the various implementing activities of the partners**. The practices in the local learning systems cover key themes such as critical media literacy, civic participation, intercultural dialogue, environmental citizenship, and school democracy, providing concrete examples and strategies for classroom implementation. Piloting of these modules within diverse local learning ecosystems allows for iterative refinement based on teacher feedback, classroom observations, and student engagement.
- c) The third component provides **reflective and quality-assurance tools**. Drawing directly from the Council of Europe's Framework of Quality Assurance for Citizenship Education, these tools offer educators frameworks for self-evaluation, peer learning, and participatory quality development. They support teachers and institutions in assessing the inclusivity, participation, and democratic governance of their educational practices, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and reflective practice.

The Toolkit provides an integrated framework that combines 1) conceptual understanding, 2) pedagogical innovation, 3) reflective practice, and 4) systemic support for school governance. It translates the RFCDC competences into concrete teacher-training outcomes, equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to foster democratic classrooms.

It offers adaptable pedagogical modules and learning resources that demonstrate inquiry-based and participatory methods across subjects and age groups, alongside reflective and quality-assurance tools that enable educators to assess both their own practice and the institutional conditions necessary for democratic learning.

An implementation guide supports educators and policymakers in embedding democratic governance into curricula, school culture, and broader educational policies.

## 4.1 Steps facilitating the toolkit development

The development and implementation of the toolkit are closely linked to stakeholder engagement (WP5.1). Each project partner identifies key stakeholders at European, national, regional, and local levels, combining formal education institutions, civil society organizations, local authorities, and community partners. Partners select exemplary practices from their networks to analyse and integrate into the toolkit, identifying common elements that are transferable across countries, educational contexts, and age groups. This process informs the development of Local Learning Ecosystems and ensures that the toolkit responds to diverse educational realities.

**The roadmap for implementation** suggests five interconnected stages. It considers the different levels of access partners have to LLE coaching (some already have close collaborations and do not need to start at the first stage, while others do). Thus, some partners follow the full process, while others may select only specific steps.

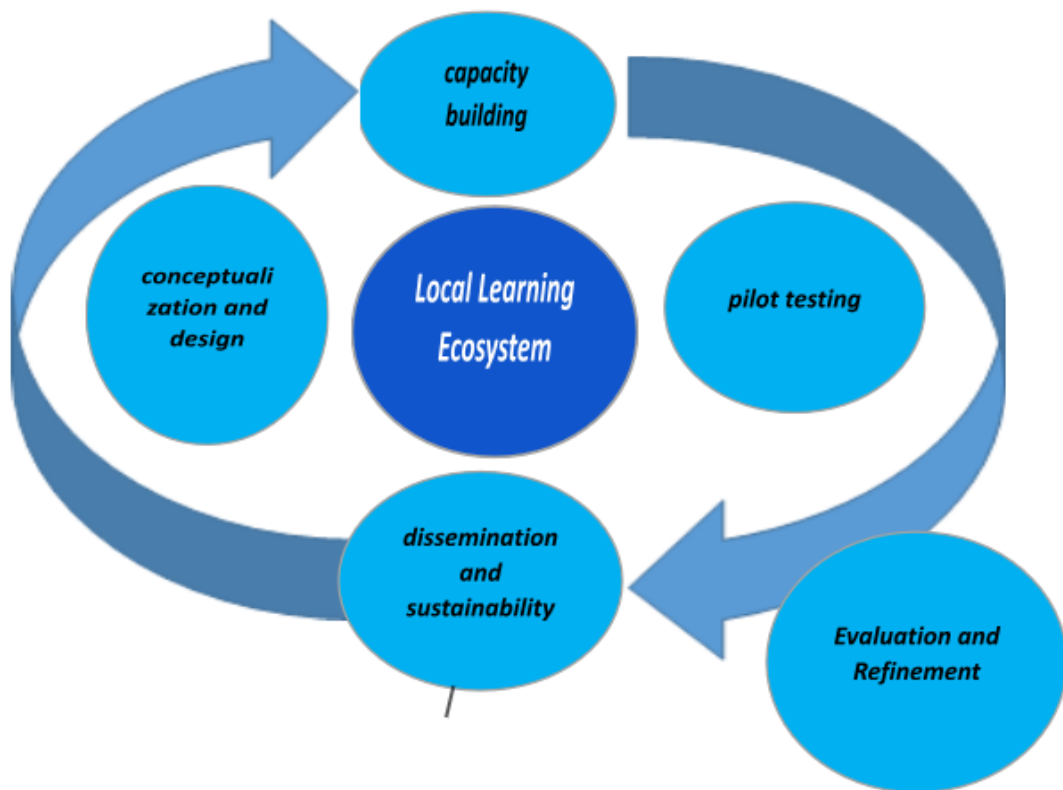
The **first stage**, conceptualization and design, establishes theoretical foundations and defines teacher competences while translating RFCDC standards into practical teacher-training outcomes.

The **second stage**, capacity building, prepares educators and institutions to apply the toolkit through professional development, workshops, and local training initiatives.

In the **third stage**, pilot testing, the toolkit is applied in diverse LLEs across Europe, including urban, rural, and multicultural contexts, to assess its impact on participatory teaching, learner-centred approaches, and democratic governance in schools. Systematic feedback from teachers, students, and institutional leaders informs the evaluation of teacher practices and institutional support for democratic learning.

The **fourth stage**, evaluation and refinement, uses participatory quality-assurance methods to analyse pilot results and incorporate feedback into improvements in content, teaching strategies, and institutional integration. This stage focuses on assessing teachers' ability to create democratic learning environments and to engage students as co-participants in decision-making.

The **fifth stage**, dissemination and sustainability, aims to embed the toolkit within national and European teacher education systems through the Teacher Academy Alliance, sharing lessons learned, supporting inter-institutional collaboration, and promoting long-term adoption of democratic learning practices.



**Figure 1: Toolkit's Methodology**

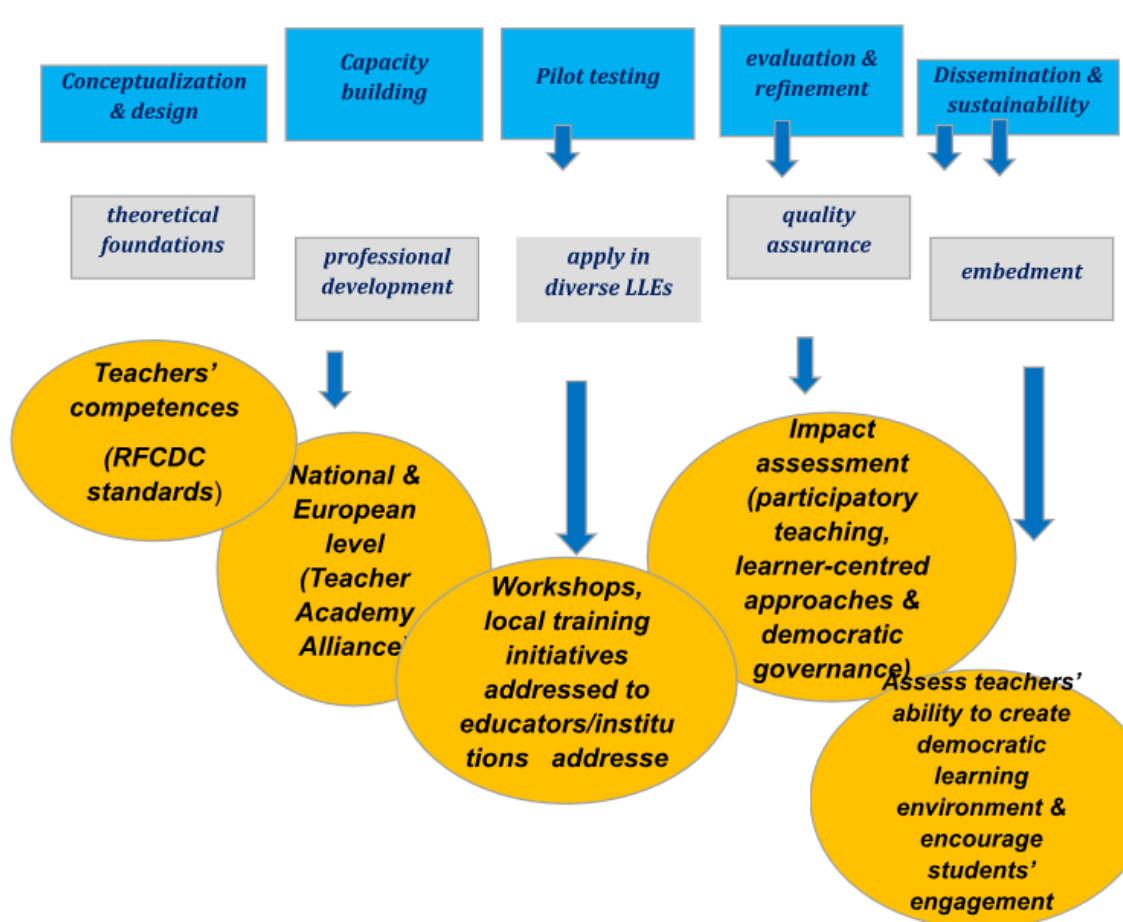


Figure 2: Roadmap Implementation Stages

## 4.2 Partners Tasks

Partners identify and describe LLE activities to be conducted in their respective concrete contexts:

1. Topical description of CE focus
2. Description of LLE stakeholders
3. Description of the educational framework
4. Description of the timeline to conduct the LLE and gain experience, including milestone reflections on practices conducted at the Berlin Partner Meeting (March 2026)
5. Discussion of LLE activities suggested by each partner in PM NICE

As part of this process, partners review and update stakeholder contacts and engagement plans, organize local focus groups to share good practices, and collect expressions of interest regarding collaboration or peer-learning initiatives. Draft plans

for LLEs are shared by the end of November 2025, and local stakeholders are nominated to participate in the International Working Group to coordinate engagement.

**An initial development plan** for each LLE is agreed upon in November 2025 through a planning meeting or a one-day policy lab. LLE formats, experimentation, and activities leading to the toolkit (UCA) are then tested, refined, and embedded in local practices based on pilot feedback, ensuring alignment with both school and community contexts.

**The expected outcomes** of this process include generalizable findings on supportive and hindering elements in Local Learning Ecosystems for Citizenship Education and strengthened coherence between teacher/educator training and democratic citizenship objectives. Teachers and educators will develop a deeper understanding of democratic learning requirements and implement participatory classroom practices. Schools are invited to adopt democratic governance structures and strengthen community partnerships, reinforcing the whole-school, whole-community approach. At the European level, outcomes will contribute to a framework integrating codification of principles, quality assurance, and inter-institutional cooperation. Evidence from pilots and LLEs will inform policy and practice, demonstrating how teacher education can sustain democratic culture through reflective practice, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

## 5. Local Learning Ecosystem Description Template

The template supports partners in documenting their Local Learning Ecosystem in alignment with the Roadmap for the Development of the DeCiTeL Toolkit (deliverable D5.2).

It is both a planning tool and a reporting tool, helping partners:

- translate the roadmap's conceptual and methodological steps into concrete local actions;
- document processes, decisions, and learning during the piloting phase;
- collect structured information that will feed into the final Toolkit developed by UCA;
- capture generalisable insights on democratic citizenship education within Local Learning Ecosystems.

Each section corresponds to a key element of the roadmap, guiding partners through conceptualisation, capacity building, piloting, evaluation, and contribution to the final Toolkit.

Partners are encouraged to fill out the template before, during, and after the piloting activities, updating it as their LLE develops. It will serve as a basis for reflection at milestones such as the Berlin Partner Meeting (March 2026) and for the partners' final contribution to the Toolkit.

**Note:**

The idea is not to answer all the guiding questions in each section. They are meant as inspiration to support you throughout the design, implementation, and reflection phases.

## 6. Template

### Template

#### Partner Information

**Partner Name:** [Insert Name]

**Country/Region/City:** [Insert Location]

**Contact Person:** [Insert Name and Email]

**Period and duration of the pilot:** XX months, from XX to XX

#### 1. Title and Brief Description of the LLE

*Provide a short and clear name for the LLE and a 3–5 sentence summary describing its focus and purpose.*

#### 2. Educational Context and Needs

- *Describe the local context and explain why this LLE is relevant*
- *Identify the needs that the LLE aims to address*

Please specify whether there are already networks or other types of local relationships related to the education context (formal, non-formal, informal), and whether the LLE will be developed on the basis of what is already in place in the context — that is, the “maturity” of the local learning system.

##### **Guiding questions:**

- ✓ What is the educational setting (formal, non-formal, informal)?
  - ✓ How does the activity align with existing curricula, policies, or local priorities?
  - ✓ Identify potential challenges that may hinder the implementation, participation, or impact of the LLE.
- *Describe anticipated barriers*

##### **Guiding questions:**

- ✓ What institutional or organisational barriers might affect the activity (e.g., limited school autonomy, bureaucratic constraints, lack of resources)?
- ✓ What pedagogical challenges may arise (e.g., low teacher confidence in participatory methods, resistance to innovation)?
- ✓ Are there cultural or social factors that may limit engagement (e.g., low trust, polarisation, language barriers)?
- ✓ What logistical challenges are foreseeable (e.g., scheduling conflicts, limited time, lack of space)?
- ✓ Which stakeholders might be difficult to involve or keep engaged? Why?

- Identify the conditions in the local context that can support or facilitate the piloting activity. *Describe enabling conditions*

**Guiding questions:**

- ✓ What institutional support exists (e.g., leadership commitment, existing democratic processes, supportive policies)?
- ✓ Which partnerships, networks, or community actors provide a favorable environment?
- ✓ What strengths do participants bring (e.g., motivation, prior experience, skills)?
- ✓ Are there existing programs, tools, or infrastructures that align with the LLE?
- ✓ What resources are available (e.g., funding, expertise, venues, technology)?

### 3. Expected Outcomes

- *Describe the expected learning outcomes*

**Guiding questions:**

- ✓ What are the intended learning outcomes for participants?
- ✓ How will you assess changes in attitudes, competences, or behaviors?
- ✓ What quantitative/qualitative evidence will be collected?

### 4. Educational Focus / Citizenship Education Topic

- *Describe the CE theme and the specific democratic citizenship focus.*

**Guiding questions:**

- ✓ Which themes will be addressed (participation, media literacy, diversity, environmental citizenship, etc.)?
- ✓ What pedagogical and institutional motivations inform this focus?
- ✓ How are democratic citizenship and participation integrated into the activity design?

### 5. Connection to RFCDC and Other Frameworks

- *Explain how the LLE relates to the RFCDC and/or other frameworks for citizenship education.*
- *Which RFCDC competences does the piloting activity target?*

### 6. Stakeholders Involved

- *List and describe the main stakeholders involved in the LLE.*

**Guiding questions:**

- ✓ Who are the key stakeholders (schools, NGOs, local authorities, youth groups, etc.)?

- ✓ What roles do they play in planning, implementation, and evaluation?
- ✓ What cooperation formats exist or need to be developed?

Stakeholder	Role in the LLE	Type (School, NGO, Municipality, etc.)
Example: Local Secondary School	Hosting and co-designing activities	School
Example: Youth NGO	Facilitating workshops	Civil Society

## 7. Phases and Timeline

- *Outline the planned phases and key milestones.*

### Guiding questions:

- ✓ Which settings will be used (school, community centre, university, online...)?
- ✓ What is the format of the piloting activity (workshop, module, community event...)?
- ✓ How many sessions are planned and on what timeline?
- ✓ How are learners actively involved?
- ✓ What risks or constraints exist, and how will they be mitigated?

*Example:*

Phase	Description	Timeline
Planning (describe the phase and activities)	Stakeholder meetings, needs analysis	Nov–Dec 2025
Implementation (describe the phase and activities)	Workshops with students and teachers	Jan–Feb 2026
Reflection (describe the phase and activities)	Evaluation and documentation	March 2026

## 8. Data Collection and Evaluation Tools

- *Describe the planned methods for evaluation and data collection.*

### Guiding questions:

- ✓ Which tools will be used (surveys, interviews, observation templates, reflective diaries...)?
- ✓ How will self-evaluation and peer feedback be integrated?
- ✓ What reflection moments are planned?
- ✓ How will lessons learned be documented?

## 9. Contributions to the Toolkit

- *Explain what elements of this LLE can be integrated into the DeCiTeL Toolkit.*

### Guiding questions:

- ✓ Which parts of your piloting could be adapted or scaled elsewhere?
- ✓ What tools, methods, or insights could be included?
- ✓ What recommendations would you give to others implementing a similar LLE?
- *Specify the planned contribution format (practice article, module, infographic, etc.).*

## 10. Conditions Affecting the Implementation of the LLE (Enablers, Barriers, Success Factors, and Comparison to Initial Assumptions)

- *Describe here the enabling conditions, barriers, success factors, and comparison with your initial assumption.*

Provide an integrated analysis of all contextual factors that influenced the implementation of the LLE. This should summarise what helped the process, what hindered it, what contributed to success, and how these observations compare with the assumptions you had at the beginning of the pilot.

### Guiding questions:

- ✓ At the start of the process, what assumptions or expectations did you have regarding the implementation (e.g., expected support, predicted challenges, anticipated engagement levels)?
- ✓ To what extent did these initial assumptions prove accurate? What changed along the way?
- ✓ Which institutional or organisational conditions enabled the activity (leadership support, democratic governance, policies, resources)?
- ✓ Which partnerships, networks, or community actors created supportive conditions?
- ✓ What strengths did educators, learners, or other participants bring into the process (competences, motivation, experience)?

- Which barriers emerged (anticipated or unexpected), and how did they affect participation, timing, or the quality of activities?
  - Which mitigation strategies worked? Which did not?
  - Which practices, methods, or contextual conditions proved most successful, and why?
  - What factors contributed significantly to democratic competence development?
- ✓ Which insights appear generalisable, and which seem context-specific?

## 7. References

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