

Toolbox of Methods for Best Practices to Strengthen Democracy in Civil Society at Local, National, and International Levels

Objective of the Toolbox:

To provide a basis for:

- information and exchange of good practices and methods to promote democratic thinking and action, European awareness and the development of European identity,
- inspiration and animation to initiate similar practices,
- initiating encounters and new partnerships between individuals, groups and organisations,
- networking groups and educational organisations.

As part of this networking project, local partners and interested civil society groups and organizations will have an opportunity to share their own best practices with others, as well as to receive feedbacks and suggestions for improving them.

Key question:

What conditions and methods can contribute to promoting democratic and European awareness and the European identity of citizens, as well as to collaboration, networking, exchange, and encounters between European partner groups? For example, through creatively organized festivals for Europe, meetings, online collaboration, etc.

Themes:

Education, culture, social issues, environment, sports, economy, socio-political issues, and others.

Key cross-sectional questions for Objective and Activating Methods:

1. Social participation and equality and equal rights for all citizens as a prerequisite for a stable, democratic, and peaceful Europe.
2. Intergenerational learning across generations as the basis for a solidarity-based Europe.
3. The use of new media and strengthening media literacy as part of an open, discourse-oriented Europe.

Approach:

ILEU collects best practices through a digital survey (online questionnaire, possibly followed up with interviews) that have taken place or are taking place in municipalities, educational and cultural institutions, social organizations, environmental groups, or other locations. Particular attention is paid to the conditions for implementing these practices. The collected results are analysed according to established criteria — target group(s), occasions, participatory methods, finances, social and European added value. Special emphasis will be placed on activating methods for target groups that, due to their life circumstances (elderly people, people with limited education, people in difficult social situations), have shown little interest in strengthening democracy and a united Europe.

Societal issues in different countries will also be taken into account, and solutions for strengthening cooperation will be sought.

Analysis and Reflection of Applied Methods and Project Experiences in Light of the Above

Priorities:

- Which target groups?
- With what goal?
- Using which methods: formal/non-formal, participatory/outreach, low-threshold/scientifically-based/creative, etc.
- Locations/Timeframes: Partnerships/Events
- Financial Effort
- Application Examples

Results:

The results of the analysis, along with the applied methods, will be documented in an **Online Method Toolbox** and made freely available in digital form to local authorities, civil society groups, and individuals.

Using examples of tested activities, projects, and methods, the toolbox will demonstrate how good practices can strengthen citizens' awareness of democracy and European identity across all age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and life situations, while also helping to reduce prejudice.

The **Toolbox of Methods** will also include a collection of existing materials to inspire interested users. It will indicate which materials (e.g., booths, informational posters, national flags) can potentially be borrowed, and under what conditions.

The **Online Toolbox** will be promoted through flyers, municipal and civil society networks, social media, and press releases.

Summary: The Online Method Toolbox, developed by ILEU within the framework of the "Fit4Democracy" project, is designed to encourage the implementation of activities and projects in the field of general, civic-oriented, non-partisan adult education. It includes both low-threshold and more complex participatory methods and projects across a range of topics, all aiming to strengthen democratic engagement and European awareness among participants through their content and methodology.

The content and categorization of methods/projects were gathered through an online questionnaire. Each contributor is responsible for their submitted content, and users are encouraged to adapt the methods to their own contexts. ILEU does not guarantee the accuracy of the provided information.

This Toolbox contributes to promoting social, civil, and intercultural competencies and combating discrimination, exclusion, and racism. It aims to support educators and demonstrate that they are not alone in their efforts, as people of various ages, ethnicities, and nationalities are actively and creatively working in many places and countries to strengthen democracy and a solidarity-based Europe. May this toolbox also serve as a platform for discovering new partners and fostering connections.

Ulm, 26.04.2025, Signed, Carmen Stadelhofer