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8 CHAPTER

CITIZENSHIP COMPETENCE



Citizenship Competence

Citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.

Knowledge

Citizenship competence is based on knowledge of basic concepts and phenomena relating to individuals, groups, work organisations, society, economy and culture. This involves an understanding of the European common values, as expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It includes knowledge of contemporary events, as well as a critical understanding of the main developments in national, European and world history. In addition, it includes an awareness of the aims, values and policies of social and political movements, as well as of sustainable systems, in particular climate and demographic change at the global level and their underlying causes. Knowledge of European integration as well as an awareness of diversity and cultural identities in Europe and the world is essential. This includes an understanding of the multi-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of European societies, and how national cultural identity contributes to the European identity.

Skills

Skills for citizenship competence relate to the ability to engage effectively with others in common or public interest, including the sustainable development of society. This involves critical thinking and integrated problem solving skills, as well as skills to develop arguments and constructive participation in community activities, as well as in decision-making at all levels, from local and national to the European and international level. This also involves the ability to access, have a critical understanding of, and interact with both traditional and new forms of media and understand the role and functions of media in democratic societies.

Attitudes

Skills for citizenship competence relate to the ability to engage effectively with others in common or public interest, including the sustainable development of society. This involves critical thinking and integrated problem solving skills, as well as skills to develop arguments and constructive participation in community activities, as well as in decision-making at all levels, from local and national to the European and international level. This also involves the ability to access, have a critical understanding of, and interact with both traditional and new forms of media and understand the role and functions of media in democratic societies.



Strengthening the Role of Active Citizenship in Montessori Elementary Schools

In the 21st century, education is not solely about the transmission of knowledge but about empowering learners to become thoughtful, engaged, and responsible citizens of the world. Active citizenship—understood as the ability and willingness to participate in civic and community life based on democratic values, critical thinking, and global awareness—is a key competence for the future. As Maria Montessori profoundly stated: *“We must revise our concepts, our attitudes, our educational systems if we wish to help man to become more cultured, more disciplined, more open to abstract ideas; if our aim is indeed to help him grow to become a citizen of the world.”* (Citizen of the World, p. 79)

This chapter explores how the Montessori elementary environment—characterized by its emphasis on autonomy, responsibility, and social cohesion—can play a pivotal role in fostering the European key competence of Citizenship. Anchored in the EU framework for lifelong learning, Citizenship competence is defined through three interrelated components: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes. These three pillars form the foundation for the development of democratic principles, ethical judgment, and civic engagement in young learners.

Montessori education offers a unique approach to embedding these pillars deeply and naturally into the child's educational journey. Children in Montessori classrooms experience democracy not as an abstract concept but as a lived reality. From collaborative decision-making and respectful dialogue to active involvement in community life, children are equipped with tools for real participation and are invited to co-create the culture of their classroom and school.

This chapter is divided into four main parts:

- principles of democracy and active citizenship embedded in Montessori education

- a conceptual definition of Citizenship competence through Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes, enriched with real-life examples from Montessori School Andílek
- a practical view of how each of these dimensions is developed in Montessori elementary classrooms also with real-life examples from Montessori School Andílek
- a concluding section with recommendations for educators and school leaders seeking to further strengthen active citizenship in their educational settings

The Montessori pedagogy, with its global and humanistic vision, aligns powerfully with the goals of democratic education. In a world facing ecological, social, and political challenges, fostering a generation of young people who not only understand their rights and responsibilities but are also willing and able to act upon them is not just a pedagogical aim—it is a societal imperative.



Principles of Democracy and Active Citizenship Embedded in Montessori Education

“How can we speak of Democracy or Freedom when from the very beginning of life we mould the child to undergo tyranny, to obey a dictator? How can we expect democracy when we have reared slaves? Real freedom begins at the beginning of life, not at the adult stage. ... how can we expect them, when school-life is finished, to accept and use the rights of freedom?”

Maria Montessori - Education for a New World p.72

Education can be a method of overcoming obstacles to democracy by working directly with children, parents and the wider community to foster the values of democracy in everyday life as well as through the curriculum. In particular, the philosophy of Montessori education is rooted in the idea that the child is a citizen, whose contribution is widely undervalued and misunderstood. It is the child that becomes the adult that influences and is influenced by society. The foundation that we lay early in life and then build upon to cultivate characteristics that support democratic culture, institutions and society is an important facet of Montessori education and philosophy.

Montessori believed that education encompassed the development of the self as well as an understanding of the self in a collective. In each stage of development the child is an independent agent of their learning and development while simultaneously an active, essential member of a collective of individuals. The concept of social cohesion is foundational to the effective implementation of Montessori pedagogy and must be established in order for children to thrive in a Montessori environment. It can be interpreted as a social contract, an understanding of “how we are together” that relies on the functional independence of each individual. Montessori understood that by trusting in and enriching the child’s intellect, character and by believing in their potential we could create a new society. A democratic approach is embedded in this philosophy and vital to its authentic implementation.

The European Union definition of democracy refers to three key concepts. Maria Montessori's writings clearly support democratic principles not only in theory but through the actions of the teachers and children.

Equality

"The mind of the child takes elements from the environment and incarnates them into his being. This does not happen through heredity, but is the consequence of a creative potential within the child...The creative potential of the child is not the prerogative of one race or another; it is inherent in the nature of the child. " Maria Montessori - *The San Remo Lectures*, p. 28

Representation

"It is he who forges the normality of intelligence; from him depend strength of character, physical health, bodily beauty, and the unity of the personality that are to be found, or not to be found, in the adult. Is he then not to be considered as a citizen, as a contributor to universal welfare?" Maria Montessori - *Citizen of the World*, p. 66

Montessori advocated for an international political party for the child whom she saw as a citizen worthy of rights and capable of contribution.

Participation

"The child who has never learned to act alone, to direct his own actions, to govern his own will, grows into an adult who is easily led and must always lean upon others. "

Maria Montessori - Citizen of the World, p. 118

In practice, participation is manifested through the development of independent thought and action. Independence is the achievement and agency is one of the tools that facilitates its development. The Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication defines the sociological use of agency as, "A central thematic opposition with structure representing the scope for human freedom of action—versus the ways in which actions may be determined by social structures."

Montessori education fosters positive developmental outcomes by leveraging an in-depth understanding of child development, its unique stages and characteristics. Maria Montessori did not develop presentations or materials that directly mention or focus on active citizenship. But democratic values are woven through the way that teachers in training learn to work with children. The nature of the relationships developed in

Montessori environments and classrooms reflect a predisposition to democratic attitudes held by teachers and internalised by children. Through their activity and interaction in intentionally challenging and stimulating environments children build what Montessori referred to as a society by cohesion. This provides the child with real experiences that develop their character, values and understanding of their role in the community. As the child grows the creation and use of the social contract that supports the proper functioning of their collective becomes the responsibility of the individual and the group. The influence of the adult evolves with each successive plane of development although they remain role models and guides as the child develops an understanding of their role in maintaining a well-functioning community.

It can be said that in an authentic, fully implemented Montessori environment democratic culture thrives naturally because of the way children interact with the learning environment, their teachers, peers and in the way they conduct themselves. The teacher believes children possess certain rights and are deserving of respect. The teacher's training is explicit in stating the child has the freedom of choice, of movement, of thought and expression. The adult prepares an environment where children are active citizens in a micro-society where freedoms and their respective limitations are the responsibility of everyone. This begins from the earliest stages of the child experience in a Montessori setting, the infant community. A combination of understanding what is developmentally appropriate and possible for a child while considering how to support their journey in becoming a responsible, engaged and thoughtful adult citizen is a thread that runs through the Montessori approach. At each developmental stage the child is able to act on the materials and classroom and to benefit and grow from their own actions and experiences. They also interact with other children and adults to gain experience in making choices that benefit themselves, the collective and the environment itself. The adult is there as a positive role model, a guide to the environment and support to the child as an individual and to the group as a community. To achieve this, Montessori teachers use a number of techniques, strategies and methods that allow the foundation for democratic culture to be built naturally. This unfolding relies on the special and reciprocal relationship between the trained teacher, the prepared environment and the child.

Building the Foundations of Citizenship

Citizenship is not a skill one simply acquires overnight—it is rooted in deep and nuanced knowledge about society, history, and the individual’s place within both. In the context of Montessori elementary education, the acquisition of such knowledge is not merely academic; it is experiential, integrated, and personally meaningful. Children are encouraged to explore the interconnectedness of the world around them, building an understanding that citizenship is both a right and a responsibility.



Understanding Society and Human Culture

In Montessori classrooms, children are introduced to the concepts of community, cooperation, and the roles individuals play in the broader social fabric. Through stories, discussions, and interdisciplinary lessons, students learn how societies are formed, how they function, and what values and systems support their cohesion.

Children study different cultures, customs, belief systems, and historical periods—especially those relating to human innovation, cooperation, and conflict. This comparative and non-judgmental lens helps them appreciate both diversity and commonality, fostering an identity as European citizens with a global outlook.

Key Learning Goals:

- Understanding of political, social, and economic structures.
- Familiarity with national and international institutions, including the EU and the UN.
- Awareness of civic rights and responsibilities.
- Exposure to the concept of human solidarity and interdependence across time.

Historical Context and European Values

The Montessori “Great Lessons” provide the historical and philosophical scaffolding for civic understanding. These stories introduce children to the origins of the universe, life on Earth, human beings, language, and mathematics. They provide not only scientific and cultural knowledge but also an ethical context for exploring cooperation, innovation, and justice.

In line with EU guidance, children are introduced to:

- European values as outlined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- Milestones in national and European history.
- The impact of colonisation, war, migration, and globalization.
- The development of democracy and civil society.

Global Awareness and Sustainability

Through thematic work, children explore the global impact of human actions. They learn about climate change, economic inequalities, population dynamics, and sustainability. Geography, biology, and environmental studies are connected to discussions on human responsibility and the shared challenges of our planet.

Activities Supporting Global Awareness:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals projects.
- Cultural festivals and international celebrations.
- Research-based presentations on global challenges.
- Cooperation with Amnesty International or similar NGOs.

I Share with You a Story: How Our Classroom Studies World Conflicts

In one project, upper elementary students studied the war in Ukraine. They looked not only at the conflict itself but also its historical and geopolitical context. They interviewed community members, including Ukrainian peers and their families, created maps, read news in multiple languages, and wrote reports reflecting on justice, freedom, and displacement. The result? A deep, personal understanding of the costs of war, the importance of democracy, and empathy for others—rooted not in fear but in curiosity and knowledge.

Practicing Active Citizenship through Experience

While knowledge lays the intellectual foundation of citizenship, it is through skills that children begin to enact their role in society. In Montessori education, skills are not taught in isolation. They emerge organically through meaningful experiences, self-directed learning, and social collaboration. The elementary years are especially rich in opportunities to develop the tools needed for real-world participation, from communication and cooperation to critical thinking and civic engagement.

Communication and Dialogue

One of the central skills of an active citizen is the ability to express oneself clearly and listen to others with respect. In the Montessori elementary classroom, these skills are cultivated daily through structured and unstructured dialogue. Children are encouraged to share their thoughts, lead discussions, and resolve disagreements with empathy and logic.

Practices That Build Communication Skills:

- Daily group meetings and “community circles.”
- Moderated discussions on ethical or social topics.
- Training in nonviolent communication and active listening.
- Writing reflections, letters, and persuasive texts (e.g. letters to local leaders, peers, or fictional characters).

Critical Thinking and Media Literacy

In an age of information overload, distinguishing fact from opinion is a core democratic skill. Montessori guides encourage students to question, research, and evaluate sources. Children are taught how to verify information, recognize bias, and form well-reasoned arguments.

This is achieved through:

- Project-based learning and independent research.
- Guided debates and fair discussion protocols.
- Media workshops led by journalists and educators.
- Mock trials, ethical dilemmas, and decision-making games.

I Share with You a Story: Detecting Fake News

As part of a media literacy workshop, our students explored how social media spreads false information. With the support of a parent who is a professional journalist, they analyzed headlines, fact-checked articles, and discussed why critical thinking is essential in a democratic society. The session sparked a spontaneous project: students created a classroom newsletter with editorial standards and peer-review practices.

Collaboration and Participation

The ability to collaborate for the common good is central to citizenship. In Montessori elementary environments, mixed-age classrooms foster cooperation across developmental stages. Children plan projects together, manage class resources, and make decisions collectively. Through these practices, they gain real experience in negotiation, compromise, and leadership.

Examples from the practice:

- Students plan excursions, create a budget, and coordinate logistics.
- Elementary parliament enables children to propose changes to classroom life.
- Responsibility rotations (e.g., librarian, gardener, conflict resolver).
- Cooperative storytelling, research projects, and science experiments.

Problem Solving and Civic Action

Montessori children are active problem solvers, not passive recipients of knowledge. Whether addressing a broken material or a community disagreement, they are invited to assess the situation, propose solutions, and implement them. These early exercises mirror the problem-solving involved in civic life.

Civic Action Projects:

- Organizing environmental clean-ups or recycling systems.
- Running charity drives for local causes or disaster relief.
- Participating in democratic simulations like elections or referenda.
- Writing petitions or organizing school-wide votes on relevant issues.

Digital and Global Engagement

In line with the EU's Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, Montessori students are also guided to engage constructively in digital and international contexts. In upper elementary, children begin using digital tools for research, communication, and presentations, always under the guidance of ethical and respectful behavior.

Digital Citizenship Practices:

- Online collaboration on shared documents or presentations.
- Lessons on data protection, consent, and respectful online communication.
- Virtual exchanges with Montessori schools abroad.
- Use of digital maps, videos, and simulations to understand global systems.



Cultivating Democratic Dispositions and Values

While knowledge provides the content and skills offer the means, it is attitude that shapes how a citizen shows up in the world. In Montessori elementary education, attitudes are not taught didactically. Instead, they emerge from lived experience, community practice, and role modeling. Respect, empathy, responsibility, curiosity, and integrity form the fabric of everyday interactions in the classroom and beyond.

These attitudes are not only nurtured through direct experiences but are embedded in the structure of the Montessori environment, the role of the adult, and the children's continuous interaction with the prepared space and their peers.

Respect for Self, Others and the Environment

Respect is foundational to all other attitudes. In Montessori, it is practiced through grace and courtesy lessons, conflict resolution techniques, and shared responsibilities. Respect is both expected and demonstrated — by children, guides, assistants, and parents alike.

Practices That Support Respect:

- Class agreements co-created and upheld by children.
- Peace areas for calming down or resolving disagreements.
- Observing turn-taking, voice levels, and respectful feedback.
- Stewardship of the classroom and school grounds.

I Share with You a Story: The Broken Vase

One morning, a glass vase with flowers was found broken on the shelf. Instead of seeking punishment, the children gathered to calmly discuss what happened. A younger student admitted they accidentally knocked it over and didn't know what to do. The class

collectively reflected on how to prevent similar incidents. They proposed a new “flower helper” role to check for water spills and reviewed how to safely carry glass. The child who broke the vase offered to bring a new one from home. Accountability was matched with empathy.

Curiosity and Wonder

Citizenship begins with asking questions — about the world, society, and one’s place in it. The Montessori elementary child, with their developing reasoning mind, is hungry to understand the “why” behind everything. Guides nurture this attitude not by giving answers, but by encouraging exploration, hypothesis, and experimentation.

Ways Curiosity Is Nurtured:

- Great Lessons (e.g. the story of the universe) ignite awe and inquiry.
- Encouragement to “go out” and research real-world phenomena.
- Access to rich materials, books, maps, and charts to support discovery.
- Time and freedom to pursue personal interests deeply and meaningfully.

Responsibility and Agency

Being a citizen means understanding that your actions affect others and that you have a role in shaping the community. From managing daily classroom jobs to proposing improvements to the class routine, Montessori students internalize a deep sense of agency and accountability.

Concrete Examples of Responsibility in Practice:

- Managing the class budget and expenses.
- Organizing cultural events or school-wide initiatives.
- Preparing for trips, writing permission slips, and leading debriefs.
- Weekly community meetings to discuss what went well and what could improve.

I Share with You a Story: Student-Led Sustainability

After a discussion on climate change, several students proposed a composting system for the classroom's food scraps. They researched what materials could be composted, how to build a compost bin, and how to rotate it. They presented their plan to the guide, wrote to the school director for permission, and involved parents to gather materials. The initiative became a long-term project managed entirely by students — demonstrating initiative, responsibility, and follow-through.

Empathy and Solidarity

Democratic societies thrive when individuals can see the world through the eyes of others. In a mixed-age Montessori classroom, empathy is built naturally: older children assist younger peers, newcomers are welcomed, and social dynamics are openly discussed.

Montessori guides create space for:

- Sharing personal stories and listening without judgment.
- Visiting elderly neighbors or helping with community needs.
- Reflecting on conflicts with empathy for each person's point of view.
- Literature and storytelling that highlights multiple perspectives and cultures.

I Share with you Story: Visiting the Senior House

A group of children prepared poems and handmade gifts before visiting a nearby senior residence. During their visit, they read aloud, listened to stories, and even helped serve tea. One child reflected afterward, "I thought they might be sad or quiet, but they were full of life and had so many things to share. It made me think how every person has a story."



Integrity and Moral Development

In the second plane of development (ages 6–12), children become particularly attuned to fairness, justice, and consistency. They want to know: “What is right?” and “Why?” Montessori elementary guides seize this moment by presenting ethical dilemmas, engaging in historical discussion, and creating space for real-life application of values.

Moral Exploration Happens Through:

- Group discussions on ethical questions (e.g., fairness, rights, harm).
- Role plays, debates, and community decisions.
- Reading biographies of changemakers, activists, and innovators.
- School parliament simulations and real elections.

I Share with You a Story: The Fair Discussion Rules

During a unit on ethics, students co-created the rules of “fair discussion.” These included listening without interrupting, speaking about ideas — not people — and rotating the role of moderator. Later, when debating whether animals should be used in circuses, even the quietest students felt safe to voice their views. The culture of listening and respecting disagreement proved powerful in building democratic habits of heart.

How Citizenship Competence Manifests in the Elementary Classroom – An Integrated View

Citizenship competence in a Montessori elementary environment is not taught in isolation. Instead, it is woven into the daily life of the classroom — through curriculum, materials, relationships, routines, and real-life experiences. This section explores how the triad of **Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes** functions synergistically in the elementary classroom, offering children real agency and engagement with democratic life.

The Montessori Elementary Environment as a Micro-Society

Maria Montessori often spoke of the classroom as a “society by cohesion,” where the child learns how to be both independent and interdependent. The elementary environment is prepared to mirror the structure of a community — with shared responsibilities, mutual agreements, conflict resolution strategies, and freedom within limits.

Key Features That Make the Classroom a Democratic Community:

- **Mixed-age grouping (6–9, 9–12)** that allows peer teaching, leadership rotation, and natural modeling.
- **Freedom of movement and choice**, teaching personal responsibility and time management.
- **Community meetings** to voice concerns, celebrate successes, and reflect.
- **Responsibility for environment**, including cleaning, organizing, and maintaining shared spaces.

“The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences.”

Maria Montessori “Absorbent Mind”

Integrating Knowledge: Democratic Themes in the Curriculum

The Montessori curriculum presents children with **cosmic education** — a big picture of how humans, nature, and the universe are interconnected. This holistic framework includes history, geography, biology, mathematics, and language, all converging to form a deep sense of belonging and responsibility in the world.

Examples:

- **The Great Lessons** introduce the story of the universe, life, humans, and civilization — sparking inquiry about cooperation, innovation, and justice.
- **History and civics** explore systems of government, rights and responsibilities, revolutions, and social movements.
- **Geography and ecology** reveal global interdependence and the importance of sustainability.

Children learn:

- Why elections exist.
- How different societies structure power.
- How conflict and peace shape history.
- What climate change means for the planet and their role in responding.

Practicing Skills: Leadership, Dialogue and Action

Children are not merely passive recipients of civic knowledge. They engage in real-world decision-making and practice democratic skills daily:

- **Voting on class matters** and selecting representatives for student parliament.
- **Leading class meetings** and moderating debates.
- **Creating and enforcing community agreements.**
- **Organizing events, trips, and projects** (e.g. composting initiative, art exhibition on climate justice).

- **Critical media literacy activities** (e.g. analyzing sources, identifying disinformation).

These experiences nurture:

- Self-confidence in public speaking.
- Negotiation and collaboration skills.
- Reflective thinking and empathy.
- The habit of engaging in civil discourse — even around disagreement.

“We must concern ourselves with the study of man not only as an individual, but also as a member of the community within the context of his relationships and his social function. ”

Maria Montessori - The San Remo Lectures, p. 12

Living the Attitudes: Everyday Citizenship

Everyday interactions — choosing a respectful tone, waiting a turn, resolving conflict peacefully — are where attitudes of citizenship are cultivated.

In addition:

- Children serve as **ambassadors** during school visits.
- They **welcome new students** and introduce routines and materials.
- **Service learning** (e.g. writing to Amnesty International, planting trees) builds habits of contribution.
- **Reflections** and **journaling** support inner development and ethical reasoning.

I Share with You a Story: Parliament in Practice

After a semester of preparing campaign platforms, holding speeches, and managing a fair election, the student parliament was formed. It became an active body with weekly meetings and responsibilities such as budget discussions, proposal approvals for new projects, and peer mediation of disputes. What was initially a simulation became a real experience of democratic function — owned and shaped by the children themselves.

Recommendations for Implementation and Growth

While the Montessori method inherently supports the development of democratic culture, implementing citizenship competence intentionally and consistently requires conscious effort, strategic planning, and professional reflection. This part offers concrete recommendations, tools, and sources of inspiration for strengthening citizenship education in elementary environments.

From Philosophy to Practice: Key Implementation Strategies

To bring citizenship competence from philosophical intention into daily school life, we recommend:

1.1. Clarify Vision and Language

- Develop a **shared vocabulary** across the school community to describe and discuss active citizenship.
- Define what *citizenship* looks like at each developmental stage — from Children's House to Adolescent Program.
- Communicate this vision to **parents**, staff, and children consistently.

1.2. Embed Citizenship in the Environment

- Make **student work visible** in classrooms and hallways (e.g. projects on SDGs, class agreements, debate rules).
- Include **reflection areas** for individual and group contemplation.
- Display **symbols of justice, peace, and diversity** that invite conversation.

1.3. Align Curriculum With Civic Intent

- Use the **Great Lessons** as anchors for discussions about cooperation, responsibility, human progress.
- Create **project-based learning units** that explore real-world civic topics.

- Connect **mathematics, science, and language** learning to issues of community, justice, and the environment.

1.4. Foster Authentic Student Leadership

- Establish **student parliaments, project teams, and committees**.
- Involve students in real **decision-making** (budget, schedules, agreements).
- Support **peer mediation** and conflict resolution initiatives.

1.5. Include Parents and the Wider Community

- Offer **parent workshops** on democracy, communication, and responsibility.
- Use **open classroom hours** and **community service events** to model participation.
- Engage local leaders, activists, and experts in **student-led interviews and panels**.

Professional Development for Educators

Developing citizenship competence in students requires adults who themselves think and act democratically. Schools must support staff in deepening their civic engagement, reflection, and facilitation skills.

The teachers can focus on the following areas

Area	Topics & Resources
Democratic Facilitation	Constructive dialogue, community circles, consensus building
Civic Education Foundations	EU values, human rights, environmental literacy
Media Literacy	Understanding misinformation, teaching source evaluation
Emotional Intelligence	RULER method , non-violent communication, self-regulation

Inspirational Programs:

- [Educateurs sans Frontières](#) (AMI)
- [Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking](#) (University of Manchester)
- [Forum for Experiential Education](#) or in Czech [Fórum pro prožitkové vzdělávání](#)
- National democratic education networks (e.g. [Czech NPI civic education workshops](#))
- [Referring to EU materials directly](#)
- [Courses for teachers \(example from University of Manchester - online\)](#)

Assessment and Reflection Tools

To support continuous growth and alignment with the values of citizenship competence, we recommend:

For Teachers:

- **Reflection forms** after key lessons: What civic values were supported? What skills were practiced?
- **Team discussions** on examples of civic growth and challenges in student behavior.
- **Rubrics** for assessing student collaboration, ethical thinking, and communication.

For Students:

- **Self-assessment journals** with prompts such as:
 - What choices did I make today that helped my community?
 - How did I express my opinion respectfully?
 - When did I solve a problem peacefully?
- **Portfolios** that include work related to justice, responsibility, and cooperation.

Case Study: Citizenship Development Through School Projects - in Montessori Schools Andilek

Project	Competence Focus	Description
Mock Presidential Elections	Skills & Attitudes	Students created campaigns, held debates, voted, and reflected on fairness and integrity.
Letters to Amnesty International	Knowledge & Attitudes	Children researched human rights cases and wrote persuasive letters as active citizens.
School Parliament	All Dimensions	Real democratic structure with elected representatives making decisions and proposals.
Trip to Vienna	Skills	Students planned, budgeted, coordinated logistics, represented the school — gaining responsibility, confidence, and intercultural awareness.

Long-term Development Goals for the School

To cultivate citizenship competence as a lasting part of the school culture, we recommend:

- **Annual Citizenship Theme** across classrooms (e.g. Freedom & Responsibility, Justice, Community).
- **Democracy Week** – cross-classroom projects, visitors, exhibitions, discussions.
- **Expanded mentorship model** – older students guide younger in modeling democratic practices.
- **Documentation and Storytelling** – collect stories of democratic growth to share with wider community.

Inspiration from the Montessori community

What and how do other schools and organizations think about democratic culture? Depending on the culture and society the inspiration is from we might find some ideas might be uncomfortable or incompatible, but more than likely we can adapt or take inspiration from these ideas.

International inspiration about democracy culture in education

- [A Montessori Education for Active Citizenship](#)
- [Digital citizenship](#)

Leadership & Parent Participation

[The Montessori School of Tokyo](#) - creating a school community, working with parents

[The Montessori Institute of San Diego](#) - course on inclusive Montessori education

[Socioeconomicpolitics](#) - research article on Montessori education and civic education

[Educateurs Sans Frontières](#) - Montessori and Human Rights

[Norwegian Montessori Society](#) - Implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Montessori Settings - Montessori 2030

[Global Schools Programme](#) - Debate on SDGs with students from a Montessori organisation in Manila

Conferences and or events with students participation and teacher chaperones

- [Conference Montessori model OSN](#)
- [Montessori Europe Adolescent Forum](#)

Reflection: Montessori Education as a Seedbed for Democracy

The strength of Montessori education lies in its trust in the child as capable, intelligent, and moral. By embedding civic education in the life of the classroom — not as a separate subject but as a lived experience — we prepare children not only to *understand* democracy, but to *practice* it.

“We must see the individual in his place in society because no individual can develop without the influence of society.”

Maria Montessori - The Child, Society and the World p. 77

In Montessori elementary schools, education for active citizenship is not an afterthought. It is the *foundation* upon which knowledge, agency, and ethics are built — preparing children not only for their future roles in society, but for their active, meaningful participation in the world *right now*.

Recommended Montessori texts for citizenship and democracy education

[Citizen of the World](#)

[Education for a new World](#)

[Education and Peace](#)

[The 1946 London Lectures](#)

[The Child, Society and the World](#)

How citizenship is visible in Montessori Elementary classroom?

Essential knowledge	
The concepts of democracy, justice and equality	Children co-create class agreements, engage in community circles, discuss fairness during ethical debates, and practice democratic processes such as classroom voting and student parliament.
Citizenship and civil rights, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and international declarations	Through cosmic education, children study human rights, explore real stories, collaborate with organizations such as Amnesty International, and reflect on civic rights and responsibilities.
Contemporary events	Students work with current events through research projects (e.g., the war in Ukraine), analyze news, compare sources, and create their own classroom newspaper.
The main events and trends in national, European and world history	The Great Lessons and follow-up work introduce children to major historical developments, such as civilizations, migration, democracy, revolutions, and global change.
Aims, values and policies of social and political movements	Children study ecological, peace-oriented, and civic movements, explore stories of activists, and create their own campaigns or awareness projects.
European integration	Work with maps, timelines, and European institutions helps students understand the history and purpose of the EU, as well as the meaning of shared European values.
Climate and demographic change at global level and their underlying causes	Projects on sustainability, composting, recycling, ecosystems, and population dynamics, including links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
Diversity and cultural identities in Europe, and the world	Cultural celebrations, family presentations, literature from diverse cultures, and international collaborations help students appreciate both diversity and common humanity.
The European common values (Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union)	Values such as dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, and justice are practiced daily through respectful communication, conflict resolution, and community collaboration.
Multi-cultural and sociology-economic dimensions of European societies, and how	Activities exploring migration, “global village” simulations, comparisons of lifestyles, and real stories from families with varied backgrounds.

national cultural identity contribute to the European identity	
Core skills	
Engage effectively with others in the public domain	Community meetings, student parliament, moderated discussions, public presentations, and peer mediation.
Display solidarity and show interest in solving problems affecting the local and wider community	Classroom responsibilities, environmental clean-ups, charity projects, supporting younger peers, and human-rights letters.
Reflect critically and creatively on community activities	Reflection journals, class debriefs, self-assessment after projects, and group discussions about impact.
Participate constructively in community activities	Organizing trips, leading projects, coordinating cultural events, and creating systems that support the classroom community.
Participate in decision-making at local, national and European levels, in particular through voting	Classroom voting, student parliament elections, simulations of elections or referenda, and debates.
Access, have a critical understanding of, and interact with both traditional and new forms of media	Media literacy workshops, fake-news analysis, creating a classroom newsletter, and evaluating multiple sources.
Attitudes (students value)	
Human rights and equality	Daily practice of respect, fair conflict resolution, children's rights discussions, and inclusive interactions.
Being responsible and constructive	Classroom roles, stewardship of materials, self-directed project management, and contributing to group work.
Belonging to one's own locality, country, the EU and Europe and the world	Cultural projects, map work, international exchanges, and discussions about global citizenship.
Democratic principles	Fair-discussion rules, voting processes, group agreements, and valuing every voice in the community.
Participating in democratic decision-making	Regular voting, student parliament meetings, proposing changes, and co-creating community guidelines.
Social and cultural diversity	Mixed-age work, cultural celebrations, heterogeneous group work, and storytelling from different traditions.
Gender equality and social cohesion	Addressing stereotypes, equal opportunities for all roles, and collaborative problem-solving.

Sustainable development	Composting, gardening, recycling, climate-focused projects, and environmental responsibility.
The values and privacy of others	Respectful communication, protecting personal space and belongings, and learning about boundaries.
Intercultural communication	Family stories, cultural presentations, multilingual interactions, and global projects.
Being responsible for the environment	Daily care for indoor and outdoor spaces, eco-projects, nature work, and sustainability initiatives.

(This text was written by Zuzana Kašparová and Hana Chramostová, with the use of the text “Strengthening Democratic Culture at Andílek Montessori School” written by Kavita Doodnauth for the project “Development of Democratic Culture in Andílek Montessori Schools”)