



User driven Social Innovation and Living Labs

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DEMOCRAT

Education for Democracy



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Abstract

The DEMOCRAT Project is conceived as an open social innovation process in the field of Education for Democracy (EfD) and related fields. The project aims to develop a Competences Framework for Responsible Democratic Citizenship (RCD), a European Curriculum for EfD prototype, and tools to assess RCD competences. This will be tested in real-world settings through local projects. As innovation, particularly social innovations, can be conceived of as an open-ended process of problem-solving, it is imperative to involve those affected by the social problems. For this reason, DEMOCRAT has opted for a strategy of continuous collaboration with the educational community through the establishment of Living Labs. DEMOCRAT conceives Living Labs as an iterative mutual learning process among different stakeholders in three dimensions:

- i) Learning with practitioners and other stakeholders to resolve the problem of effective education for democracy and to enhance democratic commitment in the EU countries.
- ii) Learning from one's own experience with novel approaches to education for democracy in education practice.
- iii) Learning from others' experience with novel approaches of education for democracy in education practice. T

This comprehensive Living Lab strategy based on a combination of social science research methods enables the integration of social science research with practical experience in the field, thereby facilitating the development of novel tools or methods for EfD with the active participation of the community of education, putting the ground so that the proposed social invention can become social innovation

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1. Social innovation as user innovation process

The DEMOCRAT project is conceived as an open social innovation process in the field of Education for Democracy (EfD) and related fields. The aim of the project is to develop a Competences Framework for Responsible Democratic Citizenship (RCD), a prototype of a European Curriculum for EfD and tools to assess RCD competences. This will be tested in real-world settings through local projects. The test results will allow to refine the prototypes into final versions that can be used and implemented by the education community in Europe.

The term ‘social innovation’ has gained widespread usage in conjunction with the political strategy of the European Union (Benneworth *et al.* 2014), particularly during the Barroso Presidency of European Commission (2004 – 2014). It was employed as a key concept to address the non-economic aspects of designing and implementing effective and socially acceptable solutions to the major challenges of 21st-century society.

The scientific and practical activities in the fields of employment, R&D&I, climate change, education and social inclusion would not be possible without changes of social practices in business, civil society and the state, which requires a paradigmatic change in innovation systems through the inclusion of social innovation. Although the concept of social innovation has been more closely associated with technological and economic innovation and sustainability, it has also found application in areas such as social and educational policies and practices.

It is important to note that in the early days of the studies on innovation, the focus was not exclusively on technological innovation, but also on social innovation (see Ogburn & Nimkoff, 1947; Schumpeter, 1923; 1947 and 1949; and Tarde, 1903). Ogburn (1933) set out a clear distinction between an invention becoming an innovation and then innovation that produces social changes.

The term ‘social innovation’ needs to be defined precisely by introducing the distinction between invention and innovation. A social invention can be defined as a new pattern of behaviour that has been intentionally adapted and implemented by a group of people within a limited social environment or niche. An example is the application of a novel pedagogical approach in an educational institution. Social inventions become a social innovation when it meets the following criteria:

- The proposed invention is adopted by an increasing number of actors and social groups and accepted by society as a new pattern of behaviour despite the possible continued rejection by other actors and social groups.
- The proposed social invention demonstrates stability over time.

In the field of technological, natural science and health science research, the EU has identified a discrepancy between the funding of innovation projects and the generation of feasible innovations or broadly applied innovations based on the funded research. To enhance the likelihood that research outcomes become applied innovations, the EU has developed the concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) (see Schomberg, 2013). This has been a significant funding area within the Horizon 2020 research programme. A notable shortcoming of research projects is the lack of connection to

society and its real needs.¹ Accordingly, the concept of RRI proposes to achieve a higher degree of private and civic participation in European funded projects. This encompasses not only enterprises but especially the general public.

This is consistent with the trend among business enterprises to leverage user innovation² (see Hippel, 2005) or open innovation (see Chesbrough, 2006)³ to develop new products and services. Both concepts highlight the pivotal role of the end-users in the process of developing new products and services. It is evident that the extent of end-users' involvement is contingent upon the strategy adopted by the enterprises in question.

The DEMOCRAT project purports to create social inventions through the development of an RDC competence framework, an outline of an EU-curriculum (in the form of suggestions for pedagogical approaches and methods) and assessment tools, which will result in novel forms of teaching and learning in schools or other educational contexts.⁴ In national and local settings (see next chapter for Living Labs) various educational methods and approaches will be tested in cooperation with schools or other educational actors, creating an environment conducive to social invention and innovation within real educational settings. Should these (local) social inventions prove successful in the cooperating educational settings, there is a chance, contingent on the implementation of an effective scaling-up strategy, that they will expand beyond these social niches and will become a social innovation in the regional and national education systems.

In order to facilitate the development of social innovation in the field of Education for Democracy, DEMOCRAT considers essential to involve the education community from the outset of the projects. This entails identifying the social problem that requires solution and collaboratively coming up solutions. Consequently, DEMOCRAT initiated contacts with education stakeholders at the earliest possible stage, namely at the proposal preparation stage.

2. Social user innovation through *Living Labs*

As innovation and particularly social innovations, can be conceived of as an open-ended process of problem solving, it is imperative that those affected by the social problems be involved from the outset

¹ In the "Green Paper on Innovation" of the European Commission was coined the term "European Paradox" referring to the fact that the scientific performance of the EU excellent, *"but over the last fifteen years its technological and commercial performance in high-technology sectors such as electronics and information technologies has deteriorated"*, (EC 1995: 5).

² "User innovations" are open processes in which the producer of the good or service is cooperating with the user to create an invention. Users could be individuals, companies or organisations that expect to achieve benefits by using the new product or service. The producers in turn expect to make profit through the sale of the product or service.

³ "Open innovation" refers to processes to create new products or services, in which new ideas are not generated exclusively within firms, but through more open processes, to capture new ideas that have been generated in their environment.

⁴ Novelty refers here to new approaches in specific education environments such as schools or NGOs working in the field of education. DEMOCRAT does not pretend to develop new teaching and learning methods by itself but to build on pedagogical and didactical inventions or innovations existing in the field.

(see Dutilleul *et al.*, 2010, p. 61). For this reason, DEMOCRAT opts for a strategy of continuous collaboration with the education community through the establishment of Living Labs.

2.1. Living lab methodology

The Living lab methodology originates in projects of technological innovation. Since the 1990ies it has been applied to a broader range of projects, particularly those related to social innovation, especially to the application of digital technologies, in various societal domains. The concept has been defined as *“a user-driven open innovation ecosystem based on a business – citizens – government partnership which enables users to take an active part in the research, development and innovation process”* (EC 2009: 7). The concept has gained the support of the European Commission and its increasing relevance has led the creation of the European Network of Living labs (ENoLL). ENoLL defines Living Labs (LLs) as *“open innovation ecosystems in real-life environments using iterative feedback processes throughout a lifecycle approach of an innovation to create sustainable impact. They focus on co-creation, rapid prototyping & testing and scaling-up innovations & businesses, providing (different types of) joint-value to the involved stakeholders”* (see <https://enoll.org/about-us/what-are-living-labs>).

There has been a paucity of academic interest in Living Labs as social science methodology. Dekker *et al.* (2020) conducted a search for relevant articles on Living Labs from 2000 to 2017 in Scopus and Web of Knowledge – Social Science Citation Index.⁵ They identified 88 articles of which they selected 84 for an analysis of the Living Lab Methodology. They identified four core elements of Living labs:

- It is an iterative process for developing innovations including stages of research and design.
- It is based on cooperation with multiple stakeholders.
- It is centered on the research and design process.
- Users are involved as co-creators.

It is an iterative method employed to obtain data and information from the stakeholders and the users in order to develop and implement technological or social innovation. Such data may be either quantitative or qualitative in nature. Quantitative data can be obtained by technological means, particularly in technological projects, or by standardised questionnaires. To obtain qualitative data usual social science methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations or user panels are used. Dekker *et al.* (2020: 1213) call the attention that *“scarce efforts to conduct empirical assessments of the merits of the living lab approach, either in comparison with other methodologies, or to understand the long-term impacts of living labs”* has been made until now (see also Voytenko *et al.*, 2016).

Particularly for social innovation processes, it is of paramount importance to have, at the beginning of the Living lab process, a clear definition of the social problem to be resolved. This should be conducted with the stakeholders and potential users. However, this implies that one has to have a clear understanding who are the stakeholders and the potential users are and what are their interests. As

⁵ In an article of 2021, Schuurman & Leminen (2021) mentioned that more than 20.000 articles were written since 2015 in turn around the term Living Lab referring to Internet search, but this does not refer social science reflection on the methodology. However, Greve *et al.* (2021: 2) confirms the analysis of Dekker *et al.* (2022) that the academic has paid few attentions to the living lab methodology: *“the scholarly debate on the topic is dominated by a small number of researchers who actively contribute to the field “*.

evidenced by studies in the field of technology, diverse actors with often conflicting interests intervene in the different stages of the innovation process. For instance, in the development of tools for the education for democracy, there are a wide range of stakeholders such as teachers, head of schools, parents and their associations, public bodies competent in education, political parties to providers of didactical tools. Each of them possesses a distinct set of interests and understandings of what education for democracy means. Additionally, the stakeholders dispose of different power resources to influence the innovation process. This must be considered when establishing the Living Labs and the activities associated with each stage of the innovation process.

In an ideal scenario, the organisers of the living labs should carefully select the participating stakeholders. However, in practice, there are often limitations to cooperation e.g. to dispose of limited time or other resources which condition the willingness of the stakeholder to participate voluntarily in activities with an open end. This, in turn, limits the ability of the Living Labs to select the participants. This gap can be addressed by other research methods, particularly desk research, expert interviews, or surveys, which requires social science know-how. In so far, the Living Labs are guided by the organisers and discussions are informed by scientific inputs and by the results of the previous steps.

2.2. Living labs in the DEMOCRAT Project

2.2.1. Collaborative Problem solving in a Learning Community

DEMOCRAT project understands Living Labs as structured platforms for the identification of social problems and the formulation of solutions. Subsequently, these solutions are tested in real contexts, with the aim of refining them based on the testing experience. In order to facilitate the conversion of the social invention into a social innovation, DEMOCRAT employs a scaling-up strategy development. The scaling-up strategy has two elements: a) the open innovation process to achieve a novel and practicable solution for effective education for democracy with the potential to transcend the social niche, where they were created; b) extending the activities of the Living Labs to a critical mass so that the social inventions could become social innovations.

This requires the creation and expansion of a community interested in participating in the development of envisaged solutions. The overarching goal is to improve the education for democracy as a pivotal means to reinforcing European Democracy, which is one major social problem of the EU.

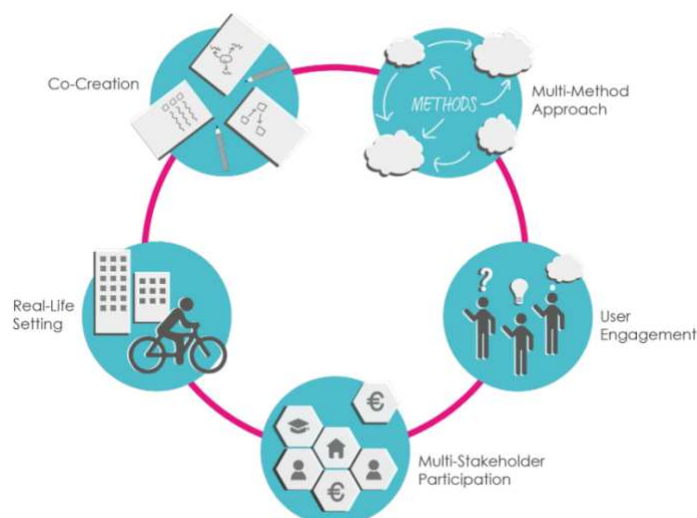


Figure 1: Common Elements of Living Labs

Source: U4LoT (2015: 11) Living Lab Methodology Handbook. zenodo.org/records/1146321

The Living Labs are environments of mutual or collaborative learning between academics and practitioners, as well as among practitioners themselves. Collaborative learning is regarded as an essential element of policy development based on public participation (see Daniels & Walker, 1996). Referring to complex public policy situations, which appear intractable, Daniels & Walker (1996) consider that *“the process of defining a problem and generating alternatives makes for meaningful social learning as constituencies sort out their wone and other’s values, orientation and priorities”*.

According to Simonsen & Robertson (2013) mutual learning is the fundament of participatory approaches as the DEMOCRAT project proposed with its Living Labs. It is *“a process of investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective ‘reflection-in-action’.”*

We use the term mutual learning in reference to the open method coordination of the European Union.⁶ In this setting Hartlapp (2009) distinguished three learning dimensions: 1) learning from one’s experience, 2) learning from the experience of others, and 3) learning with others in a problem-solving setting. This is exactly what DEMOCRAT endeavours with the Living lab methodology, but in another order:

- a) learning with practitioners and other stakeholders to resolve the problem of effective education for democracy to enhance democratic commitment in the EU-countries;

⁶ The “Open Method of Coordination” (OMC) was introduced by the European Council of Lisbon in March 2000. It was a method designed to help Member States progress jointly in the reforms they needed to undertake in order to reach the Lisbon goals” (https://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/coordination/coordination01_en.htm) According to the Art. 149 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - TFEU) Mutual Learning programme is an important tool for the open method of coordination in the field of EU employment policy.

- b) learning from one's own experience with novel approaches of education for democracy in education practice;
- c) learning from others' experience with novel approaches of education for democracy in education practice.

From the innovation perspective, mutual learning for both designers and users can enable participants to envisage solution for technological or social problems, which they can use in practice. It also enables those, who do not have the power resources to participate effectively in innovation processes to participate having voice in the process. From the pragmatic perspective, the mutual learning processes is expected to make novel solutions easier to adapt in practice (see Robertson 2014: 25).

DEMOCRAT project embraced this participatory approach creating a forum not only for the presentation of research results and their discussion with practitioners, but providing a common space for reflection, sharing, consolidation and transfer of experiences on education for democracy. It is expected that this participatory approach will influence the practice of teachers and educators, as well as other stakeholders with view to improve the quality of EfD. Mutual learning is also a dialogue between researcher, teachers, educators, parents, pupils, public authorities, policy makers and experts. The mutual learning workshops sought to combine social scientific conceptualisation, scientific observations, practical experience, and reflexive discussions about Education for Democracy and concrete solution to improve it.

2.2.2. Stakeholder Engagement

DEMOCRAT project facilitates the interaction of a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in Education for Democracy, who would otherwise have limited opportunities to engage with one another. They are voluntarily engaged to the development of the tools, to share knowledge and experience, and to learn from each other throughout the three-year project and hopefully beyond (see Figure 1). In order to achieve this objective, the Living Labs organise onsite or online workshops or similar activities. Transnational and national social platforms (<https://agora.democrat-horizon.eu/>) will ensure continuity to the various Living Labs between these events.

One functional goal of DEMOCRAT's Living Labs is to achieve a high degree of stakeholders' engagement in the open social innovation process from the formulation of the problem to the elaboration of the toolbox, including the testing of the prototype in Local Pilot projects. In a certain manner, this corresponds to Societal Readiness Level model.

The first stage of the model (1-3) deals with the steps from the identification of a social problem (1. threat to democracy) to the formulation of a problem and possible solution (2. elaboration of a proposal and the involvement of the stakeholders through the creation of living labs) and to the more concrete proposal of a solution (3. Competences Framework and European Curriculum). DEMOCRAT fulfilled the first stage as it was previewed in the 1st project period (see Table 1).

Social readiness level of Education for Democracy. 1 st Project Period		
Identification of the social problem and formulation of solution (Month 1 – 14)		
Level	Description	Steps done to impact
1	Identifying problem and identifying societal readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying the problem of risk for liberal democracy. - Reflection on the societal readiness to promote education for democracy as a possible mean to reduce the risk of liberal democracy.
2	Formulation of problem, proposed solution(s) and potential impact, expected societal readiness, identifying relevant stakeholders for the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulation of the problem: Liberal democracy is under threat from a growing number of people who are critical with democratic principle. - Proposed solution: Strengthening education for democracy in schools through educational projects with local relevance. - Expected societal readiness: Awareness of the threat to democracy by all stakeholders. <p><u>Obstacles:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low priority of education on the political agenda in some countries - Low priority for measures to enhance democratic citizenship education in some countries. - High systemic stress of the education system in some countries which reduces the willingness of practitioners and schools to cooperate with DEMOCRAT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying stakeholders: teachers, educators, politicians. - Methodology Creating Living Labs to initiate a process of open social innovation applying principles of Responsible Research and Innovation: Creating national networks of interested practitioners and stakeholders, organising forums to debate the problem and possible solutions, increasing so the readiness for the proposed solutions
3	Initial testing of proposed solution(s) together with relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed solution: Strengthening Education for Democracy by the developing a Competence Framework and a European Curriculum as guide for EFD in practice and testing them in local projects in 6 EU-member countries based on innovative cooperation between schools and other actors. - Methodology: Desk research on current trends in civic education in the LL countries and discussion of the results with the education community in workshops, meetings, focus groups and interviews. Search for cooperation for with schools to find or create local projects to test the European Curriculum and the Competence Framework.

Table 1: Social readiness level of Education for Democracy. 1st Project Period
 Identification of the social problem and formulation of solution (Month 1 – 14)

The second stage (4-6, see Table 2) includes the testing of the proposed solutions in real contexts (4. Local Pilot Projects), the validation of the proposed solution (5. evaluation of the Local pilots and competences within the Living Labs); the adaptation of the proposed solution and its dissemination (6. adaptation of the European Curriculum depending on the results of the pilots and the recommendations of the practitioners and other stakeholders). The second stage will be carried out in the 2nd project period although the step 4 has already been prepared in the 1st period contacting education centre for participation in the Local Pilot Projects.

Social readiness level of Education for Democracy. 2 nd Project Period Testing of the proposed solutions in real contexts (Month 14- 26)		
Level	Description	Steps done to impact
4	problem validated through pilot testing in relevant environment to substantiate proposed impact and societal readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing the European Curriculum: Selection of LPPs based on agreed guidelines. - Project monitoring and assessment: Based on a common, but flexible methodology the selected projects will be monitored by the national project team and the teams of the other local pilots (national workshops). It also includes a transnational workshop to share and compare the different national experiences. - Competence assessment: The LPPs guideline includes several types of competence analysis: Pre- and post-evaluation of student's RDC competences.
5	proposed solution(s) validated, now by relevant stakeholders in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation by the project team based on common guidelines. - Reflection on the pilot results: Presentation of the LPPs results and discussion at national and transnational workshops. - Development of pedagogical material: In close cooperation with teachers, pedagogical material in the field of human geography will be developed to complement the pilots.
6	solution(s) demonstrated in relevant environment and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders to gain initial feedback on potential impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refinement of the RDC Competence Framework and the European Curriculum: The reflection on the pilot projects will allow to refine the both the Competence Framework and the Curriculum in close cooperation with the community of education. - Elaboration of the toolbox: selection of good practices in the pilot projects and other pedagogical projects on democracy; finalisation of the pedagogical material on human geography. - Presentation of the project and its toolbox to the European and global community of education

Table 2: Social readiness level of Education for Democracy. 2nd Project Period
Testing of the proposed solutions in real contexts (Month 14- 26)

The third stage of the model (7-9) implies the refinement of the proposed solution (7: refinement of the European Curriculum according to the results of the workshops and other possible events of the Living Labs, elaboration of the toolbox including e.g. examples of good practice, didactic material on education for democracy in the area of human geography), plan of societal implementation (8: elaboration of a strategic plan to disseminate the project results within the European and global educational community) and the presentation of the final product proved in real environments (9: organising the 2nd project conference, online dissemination and national events). The third stage is the subject of the 2nd project period although the first dissemination and exploitation plan was already defined in the first six project months (see Table 3).

Social readiness level of Education for Democracy. 3 rd Stage: Refinement of the proposed solutions and strategy development (Month 27-36)		
Level	Description	Steps done to impact
7	refinement of project and/or solution and, if needed, retesting in relevant environment with relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refinement of the RDC Competence Framework and the European Curriculum: according to the feedback to the first presentation within the national Living Labs. - Elaboration of the toolbox: Compilation of good practices from the LPPs and other educational projects on democracy; refinement of the didactic material on Human Geography. - Preparation of the presentation of the final product: Once the toolbox is finalised, its presentation online and at on-site events will be prepared.
8	proposed solution(s) as well as a plan for societal adaptation complete and qualified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of the political context to implement DEMOCRAT in order to prepare the strategic plan, a detailed analysis based on advocacy principles should be realised to identify the strategic points for the implementation strategy. - Design of a strategic plan to implement the product in school practice, but also put the issue of education for democracy at the national and European political agenda. Will start still in the phase from month 15-to 26 but will be fully developed from month 27 – 36.
9	actual project solution(s) proven in relevant environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Execution of the strategic plan to implement the product in school practice, but also to put the issue of education for democracy high at the national and European political agenda. Will start still in the phase from month 15-to 26 but fully developed from month 27 – 36 - Organisation of the 2nd Project Conference to which national, European and Global stakeholders will be invited.

Table 3: Social readiness level of Education for Democracy. 3rd Stage
Refinement of the proposed solutions and strategy development (Month 27-36)

However, the functionality is not the sole goal as there is another key objective that extends beyond this functional objective. The goal is to establish a grassroots initiative to reinforce education for democracy in the Living Lab countries and beyond. It is expected that this initiative will achieve a critical mass in medium and long term, so that the novel solutions created in the Living labs will transcend their social niche becoming social innovations.

It is anticipated that educators, parents, students, people from the public administration and other stakeholders with an interest in the subject of education for democracy will take part in the Living Lab activities. As participation is on voluntary base, the number of participants is contingent upon the willingness of the stakeholder to engage, and their availability. Both – willingness and availability – is contingent upon the intrinsic stress of the education system and the extent to which the system is receptive to grassroots initiatives that aim to introduce novel solutions within the education system.

Given that civic education is traditionally situated within the social sciences or humanities, it is anticipated that teachers and educators from these subject areas will demonstrate keen interest to participating in the inaugural living labs. For the success of the project DEMOCRAT, it is crucial to engage also head of school in the Living Lab activities and to engage, especially in the Agora activity,

other stakeholders particularly those from the public administration and political decision-making sector.

3. Living Labs in Practice

DEMOCRAT project has established six national Living Labs in the six participant countries (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Poland, and Spain), where the prototypes will be designed and tested. This is accompanied by a Transnational Living Lab, first, which has two primary objectives: firstly, to facilitate cooperation between the national Living Labs, and, secondly, to enable collaboration with entities from other EU-countries and beyond. The Living Labs combine onsite and online activities in form of national and transnational workshops with online activities on the DEMOCRAT Agora platform,⁷ aimed to ensure continuity to the process.

The decision to create national language Agoras was taken because the education systems are national and/or regionally anchored and operate naturally in their national languages. To create a robust link to the national/regional education communities, the utilisation of national/regional languages is, therefore, an absolute necessity.

From the identification of social problems and the formulation of solutions to the design of the final inventions and development of a strategy to convert the inventions into social innovations, the entire Living Lab process must be conceived as an iterative mutual learning process through which the participating community will increase. For this reason, DEMOCRAT project has devised at least five thematical national and transnational workshops:

1. Brainstorming workshop to generate ideas and foster consensus around the basic vision of the project (responsible democratic citizenship, competences, EfD and learning approaches) and to develop a competence framework for Responsible Democratic Citizenship.
2. Validation of the competence framework, the initial outline of the EfD curriculum and education approaches. It also includes a presentation of the results of the revision of educational praxis and material in the field and how they informed the public debate.
3. Design of local educational projects to test the Competence Framework, the outline of the European Curriculum and the proposed competence assessment tools in real world contexts.
4. Monitoring and self-assessment of the local projects and first reflections on the suitability of the Competences Framework, the European Curriculum, the assessment tools and innovative pedagogical approaches, and debating the outline of pedagogical material in the area of Human Geography.
5. Refinement of the developed tools, debating the impact of local educational projects based on competence assessment and evaluation; validating education material; debating toolbox for practitioners and scaling up prospects and designing sustainable scaling up strategies.

⁷ The Agora is an interactive tool to channel debate, support exchange of information and experiences, fostering project visibility and wider engagement in the field of Education for Democracy. <https://agora.democrat-horizon.eu/>

The national workshops are designed to connect the DEMOCRAT project to the national and regional education communities and to engage them with the testing of methods and final toolbox development. After each series of national workshops, a transnational workshop is organised to enhance the European dimension of the mutual learning. These five themes are thought to be the minimum common Living Lab structure in each country. In accordance with the needs of each national Living Lab, additional onsite or online events and activities are organised as well as additional transnational online events are possible.

Each series of national workshops follow a shared guide and address certain issues so that a smart knowledge transfer between Living Labs' partners is assured. The attendees are informed about the previous results of the co-creation process for the debate of the next steps. The concrete methodology of the workshops is decided by the Living Lab partners due to the particularities of each meeting. This means, for instance, whether the event will be organised as an onsite meeting or an online meeting; or which concrete methodology will be applied to gather information, such as art of hosting, fishbowl, role play, spaghetti challenge, land mines, lost family heirloom or townhall meeting. The partners can use a variety of online and in-person approaches to conduct their national Living Lab meetings and mutual learning activities.

These fundamental co-creating activities are complemented by other social science techniques such as desk research, expert interviews, interviews with representatives of parents and pupils, interviews with practitioners in the field of civic education, and focus groups to reduce the risks to obtain biased information from the voluntary participants.

The national Agoras are designed to facilitate the ongoing co-creation process lively between the different workshops and events. Each Agora include a document repository, presenting not only the project documents but also project external documents deemed pertinent to the co-creation process by the administrators of the Agora. It includes a section of videos, where video interviews with experts and practitioners are uploaded. Another section are blogs, where project members, but also project external persons exposed their opinion about issues related to education for democracy. It is also anticipated that the Agoras will become a space for the interchange of opinions and discussion among interested people with the aim to consolidate the online community for education for democracy.

The transnational Agora also presents the section entitled Democracy Talks, which comprises a series of livestreaming discussions held each second Wednesday. These discussions address themes that are crucial to democracy including: Education for Democracy, civil liberties, voting rights, democratic governance, and citizen engagement. The recorded and edited version can be accessed at a later date at YouTube [<https://www.youtube.com/@DemocratHorizon>].

4. Concluding Remarks

This comprehensive Living Lab strategy based on a combination of social science research methods enables the integration of social science research with practical experience in the field, thereby facilitating the development of novel tools or methods for EfD with the active participation of the community of education. This approach allows for the current development and testing of prototypes in parallel with the implementation of integrated bottom-up and top-down scaling-up approaches. It further facilitates the adaptation of the strategy to the specific needs of each national/regional

educational community. It brings together theoretical reflection with practical experience and promotes mutual learning between academia and education community in the field of education for democracy.

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