DEMOCRACY SIZED FOR CHILDREN (AND ADULTS)

A Progressive Curriculum for Civic Knowledge, Critical Thinking and Democratic Participation

From curiosity to critical thinking. From local participation to global responsibility. Democracy grows at every stage of life.



ADULTHOOD
Lead, deliberate, build together.
(18+)

YOUTH
Question, discuss, shape the future.
(12–18)

PRE-TEEN
Explore, understand, find your voice.
(8–12)

CHILDHOOD
Discover, care, participate.
(4–8)

EARLY YEARS
Notice, imagine, belong.
(0–4)

democraticus.org

BETTER CITIZENS / STRONGER DEMOCRACIES / A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Democracy Sized for Children (and Adults)

Vertical Civic and Democratic Education for Every School Age

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Version 1.0

Suggestions and corrections:

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Editorial Note: Why **This Book Has No ISBN**

This book does not carry an ISBN code. This is not an oversight, nor a lack of means—it is a deliberate choice. Today, the ISBN is not a neutral tool; it is a brand of recognition for the global publishing system, a passport to enter a commercial circuit controlled by a few multinationals and agencies that define what deserves to be seen, sold, or cataloged. If representative democracy is a fiction, why should we ask permission from a bureaucratic apparatus—national or private—to circulate an idea capable of dismantling it?

This book is not merchandise, nor is it an object of cultural consumption. It is a tool for cognitive subversion. Its strength does not lie in its placement on a bookstore shelf, but in its ability to generate assemblies, debates, and constituent movements.

We reject the ISBN not out of isolation, but for liberation:

- Liberation from the logic of "permission" to exist;
- Liberation from the invisible hierarchy that decides what is "legitimate";
- Liberation from the illusion that real change enters through the front door of a system designed specifically to exclude it.

Distribute this text freely. Photocopy it. Translate it. Upload it online. Read it aloud in public squares. (...*or buy it on digital platforms as a donation*.)

A book that serves to build democracy does not need a barcode—it needs hands to hold it, minds to debate it, and bodies to transform it into action.

Democraticus Project Forum Channels:

- IT **Italiano:** demos2kratia-it.freeforums.net
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Preface

This manual was born not from an abstract idea, but from a profound conviction: democracy is not inherited; it is built every day, and the best place to begin is at school—starting from the earliest years of life.

In an era of distrust in institutions, polarization, digital disinformation, and global crises that test our systems, educating for democracy does not merely mean teaching articles of the Constitution or electoral mechanisms. It means cultivating, step by step, those fundamental human capacities without which any rule remains a dead letter: the empathy that makes us listen to others, the responsibility that drives us to care for common goods, the courage to argue with respect, the patience to negotiate, and the determination to defend rights even when they are not our own.

I wrote these pages thinking of the teachers who every day open classrooms as small laboratories of democratic coexistence; of the children who learn to share a crayon even before understanding what a right is; of adolescents who passionately debate issues that truly concern them; of university students who want not only to study democracy, but to change it for the better.

This vertical pathway—from kindergarten to university—is a humble attempt to provide everyone with a coherent, evidence-based, and ready-to-use framework that respects people's actual development and current regulatory guidelines. It is not a "finished" book: it is an open invitation. Test it, adapt it, improve it, share it. Democracy lives when we practice it together.

Special thanks go to all those who, in Italian schools and beyond, choose every day to educate not just on notions, but on conscious, empathetic, and responsible citizens.

To the democracy that grows with our children—and with us adults who still have much to learn.

Demostopheles HIN March 2026

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Introduction

Education for democracy cannot be a sporadic "module" or rote memorization of constitutional articles. It must be a vertical, progressive pathway calibrated to the real development of the person, from early coexistence experiences in kindergarten to the capacity for advocacy and adult deliberation at university.

Democracy is not just a political system: it is a way of being in the world, based on empathy, mutual respect, the ability to listen to others, negotiate conflicts, recognize common interests, and defend universal rights. To build it requires solid foundations from childhood onward, utilizing different languages, activities, and complexities depending on age.

This book is designed to fill a gap: there is (as yet) no operational manual in Italy that translates Law 92/2019 on Civic Education into an evidence-based vertical curriculum aligned with the National Guidelines for the kindergarten and first cycle curriculum (DM 221 of December 9, 2025, Official Gazette January 27, 2026, progressive application starting from 2026/2027) and the Guidelines for Teaching Civic Education (DM 183 of September 7, 2024, in force since 2024/2025), alongside international frameworks (Council of Europe RFCDC, CASEL SEL, DigComp, GreenComp, Agenda 2030).

Key Scientific References

- **Cognitive development (Piaget):** preoperational (ages 2–7), concrete operational (ages 7–11), formal operational (ages 11+).
- **Moral development (Kohlberg + integrations):** preconventional → conventional → postconventional.
- **Socio-emotional competencies (CASEL/SEL):** broken down by age, from basic empathy to global citizenship.

The book is designed to be practical and forkable (CC BY-SA 4.0): each chapter contains clear objectives, ready-to-use activities (with materials,

duration, cross-curricular objectives), evaluation rubrics, and PTOF connections. It can be used by teachers, civic education coordinators, university trainers, and parents. Objective: to train participatory, critical, and responsible citizens, sowing early seeds for civic platforms like Democraticus.

Chapter 1 — Kindergarten (Ages 3–6)

Typical Mental and Affective Development

Ages 3–6: preoperational stage (Piaget) → symbolic, magical, egocentric thinking (difficulty decentering), exploding language, but intuitive rather than logical reasoning. Emotionally: basic recognition of own/others' emotions, strong attachment to peers/adults, initial coexistence rules learned through imitation and routine. Moral development (Kohlberg): preconventional – obedience to avoid punishment or obtain rewards. SEL (CASEL): focus on self-awareness (recognizing emotions), social awareness (basic empathy), relationship skills (sharing, taking turns). We do not speak of "democracy" (an abstract concept), but we build building blocks: common desire > individual desire, shared rules, respect for common goods, mutual listening.

Main Objectives (Aligned with National Guidelines fields of experience + 2024 Kindergarten Civic Education Guidelines)

- Recognize and name one's own and others' emotions (The Self and the Other).
- Understand that desires different from one's own exist and require mediation (The Self and the Other).
- Participate in creating and respecting a few simple coexistence rules (Knowledge of the World).
- Experience taking turns, sharing materials, and mutual help (The Body and Movement, Images Sounds Colors).
- Develop a sense of belonging to the class-group as a "we" (early seeds of common interest).

Practical Activities (All game-based, 10–20 minutes, repeatable)

1. **The Emotion Circle (Daily, 10 min):** Objective: self-awareness + social awareness. Method: seated in a circle. Teacher shows smiley faces (draws or cards) or mimics an emotion; children say "I am happy/sad/angry when...". Then: "How do we help our angry friend?". Materials: printed faces. Variant: "The Emotion Box" – child draws a card and everyone mimics it.
2. **The Common Treasure Box (Weekly, 15 min):** Objective: common interest, shared rules. Method: box with beloved objects (balls, puzzles, plush toys). Group decides 3 rules to use them ("one at a time", "when my turn ends I pass it", "if it breaks we tell someone"). Voting with tokens or raised hands (basic democratic symbol). Final discussion: "What happens if we don't respect the rules?".
3. **Helping the Friend – Role-Playing (Motor activity, 15 min):** Objective: empathy, mutual help. Method: pairs or small groups. One "falls" (pretend), the other helps. Roles rotate. Debriefing: "How did it feel to be helped? How about helping?". Variant: obstacles to overcome together (tunnel course, hoops).
4. **The Class Wish Tree (Monthly, 15 min):** Objective: early collective decisions. Method: cardboard tree. Each child attaches a drawing of what they would like to do (outdoor play, singing, reading a story). Discussion: "Which wishes can we do together?". Voting with stickers or tokens → choose 1–2 priority activities.
5. **Caring for the Nature Corner / School Garden (Ongoing):** Objective: collective responsibility, environmental respect. Method: watering plants, cleaning materials, observing insects. Shared rule: "The plant belongs to everyone, we care for it together".

Assessment

- Systematic observation (grid: "participates in circle?", "respects turns?", "helps spontaneously?").
- Emotional portfolio: drawings + photos + teacher notes ("Today he comforted a crying classmate").

- No grades or judgments: only positive descriptive feedback + encouragement.

Inclusive Adaptations

- For children with emotional/relational difficulties: "gentle observer" role before active participation.
- SEN/SLD (BES/DSA): visual support (pictograms for rules), extended time, individual reinforcement.

(This chapter lays the emotional and relational foundations without which any subsequent discourse on democracy remains empty.)

Chapter 2 — Primary School (Ages 6–11)

Typical Mental and Affective Development

Ages 6–11: concrete operational stage (Piaget) → children can reason logically about concrete objects and events, but still struggle with purely abstract or hypothetical concepts. They begin moving away from egocentrism, better understand others' perspectives, and develop notions of reciprocity and justice. Moral development (Kohlberg): predominantly preconventional (rules to avoid punishment or obtain rewards), with a transition toward conventional (respecting social norms for group approval). SEL (CASEL): strengthening self-management (impulse control, goals), social awareness (empathy, perspective-taking), relationship skills (cooperation, conflict resolution), responsible decision-making (evaluating consequences). At this stage, concrete and lived civic concepts can be introduced: class/school rules as "rules of the big house Italy", tangible rights/duties, early notions of equality and solidarity through direct experiences.

Main Objectives

Aligned with the Guidelines for Teaching Civic Education (DM 183 of September 7, 2024, in force since the 2024/2025 school year) and the National Guidelines for the curriculum of kindergarten and the first education cycle (DM 221 of December 9, 2025, Official Gazette January 27, 2026, progressive application starting from 2026/2027, starting from first grades). The Guidelines define uniform national targets for the first cycle (primary + lower secondary), with emphasis on co-responsibility (all teachers involved), competence-based assessment, and at least 33 annual hours dedicated + daily infusion across subjects. Three central conceptual cores:

1. Constitution
2. Economic development and sustainability (includes Agenda 2030, environmental, financial, and health education)

3. Digital citizenship

Competence Development Targets (First cycle, progressively pursued):

- Develop attitudes based on respect for the person, individual responsibility, legality, awareness of community belonging, participation, and solidarity, supported by knowledge of the Italian Constitution, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Recognize personal and collective rights and duties, exercising them in concrete contexts (class, school, family, territory).
- Understand the importance of environmental and economic sustainability, the value of work, and private initiative for the common good.
- Use digital tools consciously and responsibly, recognizing opportunities and risks.

Specific Learning Objectives for Primary School (Ages 6–11, progressive from 1st to 5th year):

- Know the fundamental principles of the Constitution (e.g., arts. 1–3, 9, 30–34) and identify their implications in daily life (equality, right to study, respect for diversity).
- Recognize basic rights and duties (e.g., right to play, to study, to respect; duty not to damage common goods, respect turns).
- Be aware of belonging to local/national communities (e.g., Municipality as a "big house", public services).
- Adopt sustainable behaviors (waste reduction, recycling, environmental care).
- Use digital devices safely (basic privacy, online respect, recognition of simple fake news).

Practical Activities (Cross-curricular, integrated into subjects, 1–2 dedicated hours/week + daily infusion; cooperative and concrete)

1. **Class Parliament (Weekly, 20–30 min):** Objective: concrete democratic participation, shared rules, voting. Method: election of monthly representatives (with tokens or drawings for younger ones); discussion and voting on proposals (e.g., "Friday game", classroom decorations, material usage rules). Fixed rules: listening in turn, no interruptions, simple majority decides. Debriefing: "What changed thanks to our decision?". Materials: voting urn (decorated box), cards with symbols. Variant for 1st–2nd grade: "idea circle" with drawings; for 4th–5th grade: short written motions. Democraticus link: mini-Civic Assembly; seed for deliberative platform.
2. **Our Retold Constitution (Modular, 4–6 meetings):** Objective: fundamental principles in a narrative/concrete way. Method: simplified reading/comics (e.g., "The Constitution Told to Children" or MIM resources); focus on art. 3 (equality), art. 34 (right to study), art. 9 (promotion of culture). Activity: "Draw your favorite right" → class mural; role-play "If it weren't for...". Materials: illustrated books, animated videos (Rai Ragazzi or MIM), key article posters.
3. **Conflict Tribunal / Class Justice (For problem solving):** Objective: justice, rule compliance, mediation. Method: when a dispute arises, a "tribunal" with roles (neutral judge, parties, friend-lawyers); class rules applied (inspired by Constitution: listening, fairness). Debriefing: "What did we learn about rights/duties?". Variant: cases from vignettes or read stories.
4. **Garden Citizens / Sustainability Project (Ongoing, interdisciplinary):** Objective: sustainability, collective responsibility, simple economics. Method: garden/school care → group decisions on what to plant, watering turns, harvesting and sharing products. Discussion: "Why recycle? How does our waste affect others?". Link Agenda 2030 (SDG 2, 12, 13). Materials: pots, seeds, "green observations" notebook.
5. **Journey into My Municipality (Field trip + research):** Objective: community belonging, public services. Method: visit Town Hall/library/park; mapping services (where does garbage go? Who helps if a doctor is needed?). Then: "My Municipality as a big family" –

drawing/map with roles (Mayor = big mom/dad?). Digital variant: Google Maps + photos.

6. **Basic Digital Citizenship (Integrated computer science/Italian):** Objective: responsible device use (DIGCOMP 2.2 basic). Method: privacy games (do not share first/last name online), recognizing true/false images, "good digital neighbor" rules. Activity: "Class digital pact" – signed by everyone.

Assessment

- Formative and observational: descriptive rubrics (e.g., "Actively participates in group decisions? Respects turns and common materials? Shows empathy in conflicts?").
- Self-assessment: diary "What did I do today for the class/environment?" (drawings + phrases).
- Citizenship portfolio: collection of work (Constitution drawings, garden photos, reflections on resolved conflicts). In line with DM 183/2024 and DM 221/2025: periodic descriptive judgment (no isolated numerical grade), levels (basic/intermediate/advanced).

Inclusive Adaptations

- SEN/SLD (BES/DSA): pictograms for rules, extended time, buddy system, visual/tactile materials.
- Cultural diversity: valuing traditions/festivals of everyone for equality.
- Emotional SEN: "peaceful observer" role before participating in debates. Cross-cutting principle: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), as per 2024 Guidelines.

Chapter 3 — Lower Secondary School (Middle School, Ages 11–14)

Typical Mental and Affective Development

Ages 11–14: transition from concrete operational stage toward formal operational stage (Piaget): the ability to think in abstract, hypothetical, and deductive terms emerges, though not always stably (many remain anchored in concrete thinking up to ages 13–14). Greater decentering from egocentrism, strong peer group influence, search for personal identity, sensitivity to justice and perceived injustices. Moral development (Kohlberg): prevailing conventional level (respecting social norms for group approval, sense of duty toward authority and laws). Beginning of transition toward post-conventional in some cases. SEL (CASEL): consolidation of relationship skills (conflict management, teamwork), responsible decision-making (ethical evaluation of consequences), self-awareness (reflection on personal values). Critical thinking on social issues emerges, but with risks of polarization or conformity. At this stage, moderate abstraction can be introduced: concepts such as legality, human rights, sustainability as collective choices, real democratic participation (not just simulated).

Main Objectives

Aligned with the Guidelines for Teaching Civic Education (DM 183 of September 7, 2024, in force since the 2024/2025 school year) and National Curriculum Guidelines (DM 221 of December 9, 2025, progressive application starting from 2026/2027). The Guidelines define uniform national targets for the first cycle (primary + lower secondary), with co-responsibility (all teachers involved), at least 33 annual dedicated hours + daily infusion. Three central cores:

1. Constitution
2. Economic development and sustainability (Agenda 2030, environmental, financial, health education)

3. Digital citizenship

Competence Development Targets (First cycle, progressively pursued by end of lower secondary):

- Develop attitudes based on respect for the person, individual responsibility, legality, awareness of community belonging, participation, solidarity (supported by knowledge of the Constitution, EU Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).
- Interact correctly with institutions (State, EU, local authorities), exercise active citizenship.
- Respect the rules of democracy, social coexistence, contribute to the common good.
- Know the structure of the Constitution, key articles, implications for daily life and current affairs.
- Be aware of belonging to local/national/European communities; participate in formulating school rules.
- Know the organization of the State, EU, local authorities; functions of the Mayor, Executive Board, public services.
- Adopt sustainable behaviors (relevant Agenda 2030 SDGs: 4 Education, 12 Responsible consumption, 13 Climate, 16 Peace/justice); protect the environment, public goods, cultural heritage.
- Consciously use digital tools (DIGCOMP 2.2 basic-advanced); recognize risks (cyberbullying, fake news, privacy); critically evaluate online information.

Specific Learning Objectives for Lower Secondary School (Progressive breakdown by 1st, 2nd, 3rd year):

- Know the structure of the Constitution (fundamental principles, Parts I and II), articles related to rights/duties, social/economic relations; identify connections with daily life/current events.

- Identify behaviors to protect equality, solidarity, freedom, responsibility; participate in revising class/school rules.
- Know base organs/institutions (Municipality, Province/Region, Parliament, Government, EU); essential functions.
- Understand Agenda 2030 (focus SDGs 4, 13, 16, 12); propose personal/collective sustainable actions.
- Recognize fake news, cyberbullying, online risks; apply rules of ethical digital citizenship.

Practical Activities (Cross-curricular, cooperative, critical thinking; 33+ dedicated annual hours + infusion; 1–3 hours each, modular)

1. **Structured "Pro and Con" Debate (Weekly/monthly, 45–60 min):** Objective: critical thinking, active listening, argumentation. Method: current topics (e.g., "Social media: freedom or danger?", "Mandatory school recycling", "Animals in captivity: yes/no?"). Rules: equal speaking time, listening without interruptions, motivated final vote. Debriefing: "What did I change my mind on? Why?". Materials: pro/con cards, timer. Variant: topics linked to Agenda 2030 or fake news.
2. **Simulated City Council / School Assembly (Quarterly project, 2–4 meetings):** Objective: democratic participation, knowledge of local authorities. Method: roles (Mayor, councilors, aldermen, citizens); motion on a real topic (e.g., "School courtyard redevelopment", "Canteen anti-waste campaign"). Discussion, amendments, vote. Invite real Mayor/police if possible. Democraticus link: seed for Civic Assembly; deliberation on local common good.
3. **Agenda 2030 Project – "Our Sustainable School" (Annual, interdisciplinary):** Objective: sustainability, global citizenship. Method: choice of 2–3 SDGs (e.g., 13 Climate, 12 Consumption); school audit (energy/water waste, plastic); campaign (posters, petition, "Zero Waste Day" event). Reflection: "How do we contribute to the common good?". Materials: posters, short videos, questionnaires.

4. **Simulated Trial "The Rights Tribunal" (2–3 meetings):** Objective: legality, human rights. Method: simplified current affairs cases (e.g., discrimination, bullying, environmental damage); roles (judge, prosecutor, defense lawyers, witnesses). Motivated sentence based on Constitution/rights articles. Link: art. 3 equality, art. 9 culture promotion.
5. **Digital Citizenship – "Fact-checking Challenge" (Monthly, 60 min):** Objective: fighting disinformation, DIGCOMP. Method: analysis of viral/fake news (from reliable vs dubious sites); basic tools (Google reverse image, Italian fact-checkers). Creation of updated "Class digital pact". Discussion of cyberbullying/privacy risks.
6. **Meetings with Witnesses/Institutions (2–4 per year):** Objective: real interaction. Method: Mayor, Postal Police, environmental activist, magistrate (virtual or in-person). Prepared questions, debriefing.

Assessment

- Competence-based (DM 183/2024 Guidelines): analytical rubrics on participation, argumentation, rule compliance, sustainable actions, critical digital use. Self-assessment and peer assessment: reflective journal "What did I learn about democracy today?", group grids. Citizenship portfolio: collection (recorded debates, Agenda 2030 projects, written reflections, event photos). Descriptive judgment: level reached for targets (basic/intermediate/advanced); no isolated numerical grade.

Inclusive Adaptations

- SEN/SLD (BES/DSA): concept maps for debates, audio recordings, heterogeneous groups with differentiated roles. Diversity: multicultural themes (migrant rights, global SDGs). Relational SEN: "neutral moderator" roles for those struggling in groups. Principle: Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Chapter 4 — Upper Secondary School (High School, Ages 14–19)

Typical Mental and Affective Development

Ages 14–19: consolidation of the formal operational stage (Piaget), with full capacity for abstract, hypothetical-deductive, systemic, and critical thinking. Post-formal thinking emerges in many cases: capacity to integrate multiple perspectives, manage ambiguity, reason ethically on complex dilemmas. Moral development (Kohlberg + Gilligan): transition toward post-conventional level (universal principles of justice, human rights, fairness beyond existing rules); greater focus on the ethics of care and relationships. SEL (CASEL): advanced self-awareness (personal values, cognitive biases), long-term ethical responsible decision-making, global social awareness, inclusive empathy. Strong search for autonomy, social/political identity, sensitivity to systemic injustices, media/social influence, and risk of polarization or disengagement. At this stage, abstraction can be fully addressed: democratic theory, separation of powers, universal human rights, deliberative democracy, global challenges (climate, AI, migration), conscious and critical participation.

Main Objectives

Aligned with the Guidelines for Teaching Civic Education (DM 183 of September 7, 2024, in force since the 2024/2025 school year), which define national targets for the second cycle (upper secondary school). Three central conceptual cores (common to all cycles):

1. Constitution
2. Economic development and sustainability (includes Agenda 2030, environmental, financial, health, road safety, and wellness education)
3. Digital citizenship

Competence Development Targets (To be achieved by the end of the second cycle):

- Develop attitudes based on respect for human dignity, individual and collective responsibility, legality, active democratic participation, solidarity, global citizenship.
- Know and critically apply the Italian Constitution, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; understand institutional structures (State, EU, international bodies).
- Critically analyze social, economic, and environmental phenomena; contribute to sustainability (Agenda 2030 key SDGs: 4 Education, 8 Decent work, 10 Reduced inequalities, 13 Climate action, 16 Peace/justice).
- Use digital tools ethically, critically, and responsibly (DIGCOMP 2.2 advanced); recognize disinformation, propaganda, AI/privacy risks; promote constructive online communication.
- Exercise active citizenship: informed participation, advocacy, deliberation, countering discrimination/mafias/hate.

Specific Learning Objectives for Upper Secondary School (Progressive biennial-triennial breakdown):

- Analyze the structure and principles of the Constitution (Parts I and II), separation of powers, form of State, EU relations; connect to current events (reforms, judicial news).
- Understand rights/duties in complex contexts (freedom of expression vs online hate, child labor, migration).
- Know EU/UN institutions; functions of Parliament, Government, President of the Republic; referendum/electoral mechanisms.
- Evaluate sustainability impacts (circular economy, ecological transition, ethical finance); propose personal/collective actions for SDGs.
- Apply critical thinking to media/digital: advanced fact-checking, propaganda analysis, AI ethics, cyber security/privacy by design.

- Develop deliberative skills: argue ethically, negotiate, mediate complex conflicts.

Practical Activities (Cross-curricular, cooperative/project-based, advanced critical thinking; at least 33 annual hours + subject infusion; duration 1–4 hours or multi-month projects)

1. **Simulated Italian Parliament / EU (Annual project, 4–6 meetings + autonomous work):** Objective: representative democracy, separation of powers, legislation. Method: classes divided into "parties" (based on real or fictitious positions); drafting/proposing/amending a bill on a current topic (e.g., "Rules on ethical AI", "National climate reform", "Voting right at 16"). Debate in the chamber, committees, vote. Invite deputies/MEPs (virtual or in-person). Materials: simplified regulatory texts, online deliberative tools (e.g., Loomio or similar). Democraticus link: preparation for Civic Platform; simulation of deliberative assembly.
2. **Advanced Simulated Trial / School Legal Clinic (Quarterly, 3–5 meetings):** Objective: legality, human rights, justice. Method: simplified real cases (e.g., discrimination, corruption, environmental damage, online hate speech); roles (prosecutor, defense, judge, witnesses, jury). Motivated sentence based on Constitution/International Conventions. Ethical debriefing: "Principles vs existing norms?". Variant: collaboration with juvenile courts or lawyers (PCTO projects).
3. **Service-Learning + SDG Advocacy (Annual, interdisciplinary):** Objective: global citizenship, sustainability, real impact. Method: choice of SDG (e.g., 13 Climate, 10 Inequalities); action-research (local analysis + proposal), campaign (Change.org petition, school/community event, advocacy video). Examples: "No plastic at school", "Local air quality monitoring", "Migrant inclusion". Reflection: impact portfolio. Link: Agenda 2030, EU Green Deal.
4. **Critical Media and Disinformation Analysis (Monthly, 60–90 min):** Objective: advanced digital citizenship, countering propaganda. Method: fact-checking viral news (tools: FactCheck.org, Pagella Politica, Open); rhetorical analysis (fallacies, biases, deepfakes);

debate "Freedom of expression vs hate speech regulation". Creation of own content (debunking videos). Variant: monitoring election campaigns or sensitive topics.

5. **Ethical Debate on Contemporary Dilemmas (Weekly, 60 min):** Objective: post-formal critical thinking, democratic ethics. Method: topics like "Legal euthanasia?", "AI and jobs", "Migration: open/closed borders?", "Universal basic income vs traditional welfare". Formal structure (Lincoln-Douglas or British Parliamentary), evaluation of argumentation/ethics.
6. **Meetings with Witnesses / Democratic Leaders (3–5 per year):** Objective: inspiration, real interaction. Method: anti-mafia magistrates, activists (e.g., Fridays for Future, Amnesty), investigative journalists, local/national politicians, ethical AI experts. Prepared Q&A + written reflection.

Assessment

- Competence-based (DM 183/2024 Guidelines): multidimensional rubrics (critical argumentation, deliberative participation, sustainable actions, ethical digital use, ethical reflection). Self-assessment/peer: reflective portfolio "My evolution as an active citizen", group contribution grids. Citizenship portfolio: collection (proposed legislative texts, campaign videos, debate reflections, civic PCTO certifications). Descriptive judgment: levels (basic/intermediate/advanced/exemplary) on targets; integration with PCTO and school-work alternation.

Inclusive Adaptations

- SEN/SLD (BES/DSA): advanced concept maps, debate recordings, flexible roles (researcher/witness instead of speaker). Diversity/multiculturalism: global themes (LGBTIQ+ rights, colonialism, global south SDGs). Emotional/behavioral SEN: individual debriefing spaces, neutral moderation. Principle: Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Chapter 5 — University and Lifelong Learning (Ages 18+)

Typical Mental and Affective Development

Ages 18–25+: consolidated post-formal thinking (integration of multiple perspectives, handling ambiguity, dialectical and systemic reasoning). Advanced abstraction capacity, metacognitive reflection, autonomous ethics, and personal/social responsibility. Moral development: prevailing post-conventional level (universal principles, procedural justice, human rights as ethical imperatives; integration of care-relational and justice ethics). SEL (advanced CASEL): deep self-awareness (biases, personal values), long-term ethical responsible decision-making, global social awareness, inclusive empathy. Transition phase to adulthood: search for meaning, civic/political engagement, confronting global complexity (democratic crisis, disinformation, AI, climate change, polarization). Risk of cynicism or disengagement if not supported by meaningful experiences.

Main Objectives

Unlike previous school cycles, there is no mandatory structured teaching of "Civic Education" at the national level in Italian universities (Law 92/2019 and DM 183/2024 Guidelines apply to the pre-university school system). Universities are called upon to integrate democratic, global, and digital citizenship education in a cross-cutting and lifelong manner, in line with:

- European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (EU Recommendation 2018).
- Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC, Council of Europe 2018, with higher education guides).
- Agenda 2030 (SDG 4.7: education for global citizenship, human rights, sustainability).
- GreenComp (sustainability competences, EU JRC 2022).

- DigComp 2.2/2.3 (advanced digital citizenship, with focus on AI).
- EntreComp (democratic entrepreneurship).
- UNESCO Recommendations on Global Citizenship Education.
- National initiatives: extended PCTOs, civic internships, university projects on legality, sustainability, digital democracy; mandatory/elective modules in degree courses (Political Science, Law, Education, Communication, etc.).

Specific Learning Objectives (Proposed for university vertical curriculum / lifelong learning):

- Understand classical and contemporary democratic theories (Dewey, Habermas, Rawls, deliberative democracy, democratic agonism, digital democracy).
- Critically analyze challenges to democracy (populism, disinformation, trust erosion, AI and surveillance, climate crisis as a democratic test).
- Develop skills in advocacy, democratic leadership, inclusive deliberation, advanced fact-checking, digital ethics.
- Apply constitutional/EU/human rights principles to real cases (migration, precarious labor, ecological transition, gender equality).
- Participate actively: public deliberation, service-learning, institutional monitoring, social impact projects.
- Lifelong learning: education across the lifespan to counter polarization, promote democratic resilience.

Practical Activities (Labs, elective/mandatory courses, interdisciplinary projects, advanced PCTOs; duration 20–100+ hours, often co-designed with external bodies)

1. **Deliberative Democracy Labs / Simulated Mini-Publics (30–50 hour module):** Objective: deliberative practice, active listening, ethical negotiation. Method: simulated citizen assemblies on real topics (e.g., "Local climate policies", "AI regulation in EU", "Electoral

reforms"). Technique: role sortition, evidence-based discussion, facilitation. Output: motivated recommendations + reflection on biases. Variant: collaboration with Municipalities or Regions for real processes (e.g., participatory budgeting citizen panels). Democraticus link: direct practice of Civic Assembly.

2. **Digital Democracy Clinic / Fact-checking & Advocacy Lab (Annual, 40–60 hours):** Objective: combating disinformation, AI ethics, advanced digital citizenship. Method: monitoring election campaigns/social media, using advanced tools (OSINT, AI deepfake detection, Italian/European platform fact-checking). Content creation: reports, debunking videos, petitions. Ethical discussion: "EU AI Act vs freedom of expression". Link: DigComp, EU AI Regulation 2024; seed for Public AI Oversight.
3. **Advanced Service-Learning / Civic Impact Projects (Annual/semestral, 50–150 hours):** Objective: practical application, global citizenship. Method: NGO, institution, social enterprise partnerships. Examples: anti-mafia monitoring (Libera), SDG campaigns (local Fridays for Future), migrant rights advocacy, sustainable urban regeneration projects. Guided reflection: journal + seminar "How does my intervention strengthen democracy?". Certification: academic credits, university PCTO, Europass badge.
4. **Multidisciplinary Seminars on Democratic Dilemmas (20–40 hour modules):** Objective: post-formal critical thinking. Method: guest lectures (magistrates, constitutionalists, activists, ethical AI experts, investigative journalists). Ethical debates: "Democracy vs authoritarian efficiency in climate crisis?", "Universal basic income and solidarity", "Migration and ethical borders". Structure: pro/con + deliberation.
5. **Integrated Theoretical Courses "Theory and Practice of Democracy" (30–60 hours):** Objective: philosophical/political foundations. Method: reading Dewey ("Democracy and Education"), Habermas (public spheres), Rawls (justice), Mouffe (agonism); connecting to current affairs (democratic erosion in Europe, social media role). Project work: democratic reform proposal (e.g., sortition in institutions, e-democracy).

6. **Lifelong Learning / Open MOOCs or Lifelong Learning Courses (Short 10–30 hour modules):** Objective: adult/citizen education. Method: platforms like Unimi, Unibo, Federica, Coursera with Italian focus (e.g., "Digital Democracy", "Sustainability and Participation", "Human Rights in the 21st Century"). Community of practice for alumni.

Assessment

- Competence-based (multidimensional rubrics): ethical argumentation, deliberative participation, project impact, critical reflection, ethical digital use. Democratic citizenship portfolio: collection (advocacy reports, videos, reflections, service-learning certifications). Self-assessment/peer: reflective journal "My contribution to democratic resilience", group feedback. Formative assessment: exemplary/advanced/intermediate levels on targets (aligned with RFCDC, GreenComp, DigComp). Credits: recognition in Europass curriculum vitae, digital badges.

Inclusive Adaptations

- SEN/SLD (BES/DSA): accessible materials, recordings, flexible roles (research instead of public speaking). Diversity: intercultural/global focus (SDGs, minority rights). Working students: hybrid/blended formats, asynchronous modules.

Cross-Sectional Part and MVP Toolkit

A — Assessment Tools for All Ages

Assessment in civic education is formative, descriptive, competence-based, and cross-cutting (not an isolated discipline). Consistent with DM 183/2024:

- Consistency with national targets (12 for first cycle, similar for second).
- Multi-teacher involvement: coordinator gathers evidence from teaching team/class council.
- Shared tools: rubrics, observation grids, portfolios.
- Focus on progression: knowledge → skills → democratic attitudes/behaviors.
- Integration into periodic/final evaluation documents (descriptive judgment).

Cross-Sectional Reference Rubric (Adaptable by age; 4 main dimensions, inspired by 2024 Guidelines and RFCDC)

- **1. Awareness and Knowledge (Constitution, rights, sustainability, digital):** From recognizing basics with help (Basic) to critically analyzing and proposing reforms (Exemplary).
- **2. Participation and Deliberation (Listening, voting, proposing, negotiating):** From passive participation (Basic) to guiding processes and managing ambiguity (Exemplary).
- **3. Democratic Attitudes (Empathy, solidarity, responsibility, legality):** From sporadic respect (Basic) to becoming a role model and calling out injustices (Exemplary).

- **4. Critical and Digital Thinking (Argumentation, fact-checking, ethics):** From guided evaluation (Basic) to producing critical content and effective advocacy (Exemplary).

Age Adaptations:

- Kindergarten (3–6): observation only + yes/partially/no grid (emoji + note).
- Primary: Basic/Intermediate/Advanced levels + portfolio drawings/photos.
- Middle School: levels + brief written self-assessment.
- High School: levels + argumentation rubric (fallacies, sources) + peer review.
- University: Exemplary as standard; portfolio with real impact evidence (reports, petitions).

Quick Observational Grid (Weekly/monthly, filled out by coordinator):

Columns: Date – Activity – Dimension 1/2/3/4 – Observed Evidence – Level – Teacher Signature.

B — Democratic Citizenship Portfolio

A central cumulative tool (maintained across years). Personal, reflective. Minimum contents by age:

- **Kindergarten:** drawings, activity photos (emotion circle, wish tree), teacher notes.
- **Primary:** Constitution drawings, garden photos, short reflections ("What did I do for the class?"), digital pact.
- **Middle School:** debate reports, simulation photos, SDG petitions, diary ("What did I change my mind on?").

- **High School:** proposed legislative texts, debunking videos, service-learning reports, ethical reflections.
- **University:** advocacy reports, publications, PCTO certifications, deliberative journal, impact evidence.

Structure (Digital or paper):

- Personal cover + photo.
- Annual index.
- Sections by core: Constitution – Sustainability – Digital Citizenship.
- Evidence (photos, texts, QR links).
- Periodic reflection: "What did I learn about democracy? How have I changed?". Annual final self-assessment (rubric levels). Use: presentation in school board/guidance/university; Europass badge for cross-curricular credits.

C — Inclusive Adaptations and for SEN/SLD (BES/DSA)

- **Principles:** Universal Design for Learning (UDL) + personalization (National Guidelines DM 221/2025, 2024 Guidelines).
- **SEN/SLD (BES/DSA):** concept maps, audio/video recordings, extended time, buddy system.
- **Emotional/relational difficulties:** alternative roles ("gentle observer", "neutral moderator"); individual debriefing.
- **Cultural/linguistic diversity:** valuing traditions; multilingual materials/pictograms; global themes (migration, global south SDGs).
- **Motor/sensory disabilities:** adapted activities (seated circle, tactile materials, accessible software).
- **University:** personalized plans, accessible materials (alt text, subtitles), hybrid formats for working students.

D — Teacher/University Training and Integration into PTOF / Curricula

- **Initial/Continuing training:** labs on debate facilitation, rubrics, SEL monitoring (empathy, critical thinking).
- **PTOF / Three-Year Plan:** "Vertical Civic Education" section with shared curriculum, cycle coordinator, minimum 33 annual hours (DM 183/2024).
- **University:** integration into study plans (mandatory/elective modules in educational/political courses); credit recognition for service-learning. Resources: MIM webinars, INDIRE, Council of Europe RFCDC, CASEL for SEL.

E — Impact Monitoring and Action-Research

Pre/post annual indicators:

- SEL (empathy, civic self-efficacy) via adapted CASEL questionnaires.
- Critical thinking, perceived participation (external efficacy: "Does my vote/sharing matter?").
- Measurable actions (reduction of school plastic, signed petitions, debate frequency). Tools: validated scales (CASEL SEL Screener, OECD Global Competence, RFCDC descriptors). Action-research: teaching team + university for longitudinal studies. Annual report: "Impact democraticus.org" – progress, critical issues, best practices.

Bibliography and Webography

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- Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) – Council of Europe (2018). Main volume (English, free PDF): RFCDC PDF.
- DigComp 2.2 – The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (EU, Joint Research Centre, 2022). Complete report (PDF): DigComp PDF.
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- UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015, focus on SDG 4.7).

3. Socio-Emotional Competencies (SEL)

- CASEL Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning. Official framework page: CASEL Framework.

4. Developmental Psychology and Scientific Foundations

- Piaget, J. – Stages of cognitive development.
- Kohlberg, L. – Moral development.
- Vygotsky, L. – Zone of proximal development.

5. Practical and Additional Open-Access Resources

- UNESCO – Global Citizenship Education (SDG 4.7 focus).
- OECD – Citizenship Education and Global Competence (PISA 2025 framework).
- CASEL School Guide: CASEL School Guide.

(Final Note: Fork, adapt, test these models – share improvements on democraticus.org or via demostopheles@democraticus.org.)

Appendix — Illustrative Annual Vertical Curricula and Digital Resource QR Codes

This appendix provides annual vertical curriculum models for democratic civic education (aligned with DM 183/2024 Guidelines and DM 221/2025 National Guidelines) ready to be adapted to a school's PTOF or university study plans.

1. Kindergarten (Ages 3–6) – Sensitization to Citizenship

- **Indicative hours:** 60–80 annual hours (integrated into routines). Adapted cores: Empathy and common interest (Constitution base); Shared environment care (sustainability); Simple coexistence rules.
- **Exemplary annual plan (A.S. 2026/27):** September–October (Emotion circle + Common treasure box); November–December (Helping a friend + Material sharing rules); January–February (Class wish tree + Nature corner care); March–April (Turn-taking role play + Respect for common goods); May–June (Reviewing shared rules + "Class We" party).

2. Primary School (Ages 6–11) – First cycle, 33 minimum annual hours

- **I Term (17 hours):** Constitution: Fundamental principles + equality (art. 3) → Class parliament + simplified reading (8 hrs); Sustainability: Environment care + recycling → Garden citizens (6 hrs); Digital: Basic privacy + online respect → Class digital pact (3 hrs).
- **II Term (16 hours):** Constitution: Rights/duties + Conflict tribunal (6 hrs); Sustainability: Basic Agenda 2030 (SDGs 12, 13) → Canteen waste project (5 hrs); Digital: Simple fake news recognition → Journey into the Municipality (5 hrs).

3. Lower Secondary School (Middle School, Ages 11–14) – First cycle, 33 minimum hours

- **I Term (17 hours):** Constitution: Structure + key articles → Pro/con debate + class rules (8 hrs); Sustainability: Agenda 2030 (SDGs 4, 13, 16) → Sustainability school audit (6 hrs); Digital: Cyberbullying + basic fact-checking → Advanced digital pact (3 hrs).
- **II Term (16 hours):** Constitution: Local institutions → Simulated City Council (7 hrs); Sustainability: Collective actions → Zero waste campaign (5 hrs); Digital: Online risks → Postal Police meetings (4 hrs).

4. Upper Secondary School (High School, Ages 14–19) – Second cycle, 33+ annual hours

- **I Semester (18 hours):** Constitution: Separation of powers + human rights → Parliament simulation (8 hrs); Sustainability: Green Deal + SDGs 10, 13 → Local service-learning (6 hrs); Digital: Propaganda + AI ethics → Fact-checking challenge (4 hrs).
- **II Semester (15+ hours):** Constitution: Reforms + referendum → Advanced simulated trial (6 hrs); Sustainability: Ecological transition → SDG advocacy (5 hrs); Digital: Deepfakes + cyber security → AI ethical debate (4 hrs).

5. University and Lifelong Learning (Ages 18+) – Flexible modules (30–100+ hours)

- **First Semester:** Democratic theory + deliberative democracy → Mini-publics lab (20–30 hrs); Contemporary challenges → Digital democracy clinic (20 hrs).
- **Second Semester:** Adult practice → Advanced service-learning + impact projects (30–50 hrs); Ethical dilemmas seminars + impact portfolio (20 hrs).

Publications & Documents Available on www.democraticus.org

The following works, theoretical frameworks, operational manuals, and institutional blueprints are published open-source under Creative Commons licenses and are accessible at **democraticus.org/books**.

Major Treatises & Books

The Metacognitive Species *(165 pages)*

A philosophical and systemic treatise examining the civilizational transition from information pollution and epistemic capture to metacognitive sovereignty. By establishing a rigorous 5-axis diagnostic matrix of social maturity and integrating thermodynamic accounting, distributed sortition, and the jurisprudence of truth, this foundational work provides the ultimate architectural roadmap for a society capable of clearing the Great Filter and sustaining a Kardashev Type I civilization.

Autopsia della democrazia rappresentativa *(584 pages)*

A comprehensive forensic investigation into modern political power that systematically dismantles the myth of representative democracy. By tracing the historical transition from feudal monarchies to elective aristocracies and financial oligarchies, this core treatise exposes how modern electoral systems withhold true citizen sovereignty through systemic double binds. Beyond its critical diagnosis, the work establishes an empirical blueprint for institutional systems engineering, detailing the global transition toward authentic civic power.

The Troy Syndrome *(49 pages)*

A trenchant examination of internal institutional decay and cognitive capture within modern social architectures. This volume analyzes how totalizing systems rarely collapse solely from external force; instead, they are

hollowed out from within through the covert infiltration of bureaucratic networks, manufactured consensus, and Trojan-horse subversion. It provides a cybernetic analysis of how centralized hierarchies paralyze human agency by turning institutional software against its own constituency.

Institutional System Engineering *(257 pages)*

An applied systems-engineering approach to constitutional public law, civic sovereignty, and institutional design. Treating political architecture as a complex information network, this work applies cybernetic feedback loops and stress-testing methodologies to public administration, demonstrating how to engineer anti-fragile public institutions that resist elite capture and administrative corruption.

Architetture della Democrazia (175 pages)

A historical and theoretical volume analyzing institutional models of direct citizen power across human civilization. From the lottocratic assemblies of classical Athens to modern Swiss direct legislation and digital governance, this text evaluates why legacy political systems decay and demonstrates how modern network topologies can institutionalize direct, unmediated citizen oversight.

The Irreducible Minority Hypothesis *(76 pages)*

An evolutionary, cybernetic, and network-theory examination of human conformity, dissent, and social phase transitions. This treatise demonstrates why top-down authoritarian architectures and technocratic control grids are structurally fragile, proving that adaptive human survival depends on a non-power-seeking, unco-optable minority that preserves empirical truth, breaks preference falsification, and anchors decentralization.

Democrazy sized for Children (and adults) *(43 pages)*

An open-source, vertical operational manual for civic and democratic education spanning pre-school through university levels. Designed to cultivate critical thinking, epistemic autonomy, and democratic literacy from an early age, this pedagogical framework provides practical tools to immunize future generations against propaganda, cognitive manipulation, and authoritarian compliance.

Operational Models & Summaries

The Democraticus 2.1 Model *(325 pages)*

A technical presentation of the **Democraticus 2.1** hybrid institutional architecture. This document outlines a dual-layer system that bridges traditional representative delegation with permanent, algorithmically selected (lottocratic) citizen assemblies, creating an enforceable structural mechanism to guarantee continuous public oversight and institutional accountability.

A Modest Proposal to Humanity *(82 pages)*

A concise executive summary and global manifesto designed as a direct entry point into the Democraticus framework. It articulates the fundamental contradictions of modern technocratic governance and delivers an urgent, actionable roadmap for assembling decentralized, citizen-led institutional alternatives worldwide.

The wrong name *(27 pages)*

A sharp, foundational essay in Italian dissecting the linguistic and conceptual fraud of modern governance. By demonstrating why we continue to apply the label "democracy" to systems that lack every structural property of popular power, this work strips away administrative euphemism and restores literal vocabulary to political discourse.

Handbooks, Charters & Guides

Manuale dell'Elettore *(109 pages)*

An essential guide—regularly updated since 2017—analyzing electoral mechanics, voting procedures, and structural obstacles to voter sovereignty. This handbook provides citizens with the critical tools required to evaluate election laws, identify systemic double binds in modern electoral systems, and understand the practical mechanisms of democratic participation versus passive compliance.

Charter of the Rights of Life on Earth *(20 pages)*

A foundational global framework establishing an integrated paradigm for planetary rights, ecological equilibrium, and intergenerational sustainability. It reframes human civic architecture within the broader biophysical boundaries of earth systems engineering.

Implementation manual for the Charter of Rights of Life on Earth

(41 pages)

A step-by-step practical implementation guide for establishing participatory, lottocratic civic assemblies at local, regional, and national levels. It covers jury selection algorithms, assembly facilitation protocols, and legal strategies for embedding citizen decisions into binding public policy.

Abstract Principles for a Fair and Sustainable Society *(30 pages)*

A foundational set of philosophical and ethical principles designed to guide deliberations within citizen assemblies. It serves as an epistemic compass for non-partisan civic bodies evaluating long-term policy, economic equity, and systemic sustainability.

Democracy Sized for Children (and Adults)



A practical handbook for democratic citizenship, from early learning to lifelong participation.

This book presents a progressive, age-appropriate curriculum that helps children, teenagers and adults understand how democracy works — and how they can be part of building a fairer, smarter and more participatory society.

VERTICAL CURRICULUM

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