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Policy Brief

Scaling up Transformative Education for Democracy (EfD)

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List of Abbreviations

CoE	Council of Europe
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (Ireland)
EC	European Commission
EDC	Education for Democratic Citizenship
EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
EfD	Education for Democracy
ESS	European Social Survey
EU	European Union
GEAP	Gender Equality Action Plan
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship Education Study
LL	Living Labs
LLLPs	Living Lab Local Pilot Projects
LOMLOE	Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la LOE (Spain)
LPPs	Local Pilot Projects
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (Ireland)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDC	Professional Development Communities
RDC	Responsible Democratic Competence
RFCDL	Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WP	Work Package

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Executive Summary

Across Europe, democratic institutions face sustained pressure arising from declining civic participation, the spread of mis- and disinformation, increasing political polarisation, and persistent inequalities in participation. In this context, education systems play a critical role in supporting learners to develop democratic competences, critical judgement, and the capacity for meaningful and inclusive participation. Education for Democracy (EfD) has therefore moved to the foreground of European and international policy debates, including those linked to the Council of Europe, the OECD, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Horizon Europe project DEMOCRAT (2023–2026) contributes to this agenda through four interconnected elements: a European Curriculum for Education for Democracy, a Responsible Democratic Competence (RDC) framework, participatory Living Lab methodologies, and a practical EfD Toolbox. Across six EU Member States, 42 Local Pilot Projects implemented in primary, post-primary, higher education, teacher education, and community-linked settings demonstrate that EfD is most effective when it is experiential, dialogic, inclusive, and embedded within everyday educational practice rather than delivered as a stand-alone subject.

This policy brief understands scaling as a systemic and long-term process rather than a question of numerical expansion alone. Drawing on the OECD Implementation Framework for Effective Change in Schools and the ScaleDem Analytical Framework for scaling democratic innovations (Camatarri et al., 2025), it highlights the importance of sustained pedagogical change, institutional embedding, professional learning, and supportive policy conditions in enabling EfD to endure and expand.

Evidence from the DEMOCRAT Local Pilot Projects identifies key enabling factors, including teacher co-design and professional judgement, flexible and accessible assessment approaches, participatory pedagogies, and collaboration with community and civil society actors. At the same time, the findings reveal persistent constraints such as time pressures, curriculum overload, fragmented partnerships, and short-term funding, underlining the need for greater policy coherence and long-term support.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Education for Democracy achieves greatest impact and sustainability when approached as a system-level process rather than as a series of isolated initiatives. The policy implications of this evidence, set out in the final section of the brief, highlight how balanced attention to institutional embedding, cultural and pedagogical change, internal learning, and expansion across contexts can support the sustainable scaling of EfD within and across education systems.

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1. Introduction

Across Europe and beyond, democratic institutions are under growing pressure. Declining civic participation, rising mis- and disinformation, political polarisation, and deepening social inequities all present significant challenges. According to the European Union Youth Survey 2024 (European Commission, 2024a), only 39% of young Europeans (aged 16–30) say they have ever voted in a local, national, or European election, while 15% report no civic engagement of any kind. Among those who abstained from the 2024 European-Parliament vote, the most cited reasons were “not enough information to make a choice” and “no party represented my views” (both 16%). Beyond voting, the same survey shows that young people engage in other forms of civic action: signing petitions (26%), volunteering for a cause (20%), posting political or social views online (19%) and ethical consumerism (19 %). These activities, however, unfold in an information ecosystem dominated by social media. Instagram (47%) and TikTok (39%) have overtaken Facebook as primary news sources for young people (European Commission, 2024a). At the same time, monitoring data indicate a three-fold increase in EU-related false or misleading content circulating on major social media platforms in early 2024 (European Digital Media Observatory, 2024). While 73% of young people say they are at least “somewhat confident” in spotting disinformation, 44% report encountering it frequently. Additionally, a Eurobarometer survey in 2024 found that 71% of Europeans often come across disinformation, and 86% agree that its rapid spread poses a major threat to democracy (European Commission, 2024).

In this context, education has a pivotal role to play in counteracting these issues. Education for Democracy (EfD) has therefore moved to the foreground of policy, most clearly in SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.7, which call on education systems to promote human-rights values, sustainable development, global citizenship and inclusive decision-making. The Horizon-Europe project DEMOCRAT, launched in March 2023, responds to this agenda. Working with schools, universities, youth organisations and local authorities in six EU member states, the consortium has:

- developed a Responsible Democratic Competence (RDC) framework that identifies the knowledge, skills and dispositions associated with effective, ethically grounded participation in democratic life;
- co-designed and trialled a series of local “Living Lab” learning projects where teachers, learners, parents and community actors test new pedagogies and materials;
- assembled a toolbox that supports educators to consider and adopt these approaches in their own contexts; and
- developed an outline of a European Curriculum for Education for Democracy, providing a shared reference for integrating EfD across educational contexts¹

Drawing on a review of DEMOCRAT Deliverables D5.2² and D5.3³, the Local Pilot Projects implemented across the DEMOCRAT partner countries have now been completed, comprising forty- two pilot interventions across a wide range of age groups, educational levels, durations, and institutional contexts. Taken together, these

¹ See DEMOCRAT deliverable D4.1.: Hytti, M.; Sandström, N.; Kalev, L.; Mallon, B. & Eren, E. (2024) OUTLINE of a European EfD Curriculum Democrat Deliverable 4.1. <https://democrat-horizon.eu>. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14512483.

² See DEMOCRAT deliverable D5.2.: Kostakos, G. ed et al (2025). Evaluation of Local Pilot Projects. Democrat Project, Barcelona.

³ See Serra, J. A., Kostakos, G. & Salamon, E. (2025) Comparative evaluation of local pilot projects. Deliverable 5.3. <https://democrat-horizon.eu>.

pilots demonstrate the feasibility of enacting Education for Democracy across diverse educational systems and pedagogical traditions, while maintaining coherence in democratic aims.

The interventions employed a broad range of participatory and learner-centred methodologies and addressed shared thematic areas, including democratic participation, civic engagement, media literacy, and critical thinking. At the same time, variation in duration and forms of curriculum integration across countries points to different organisational pathways for embedding EfD within educational practice, rather than a single model of implementation.

These experiences underline the need to consider how Education for Democracy can move beyond individual pilot sites and be sustained at scale. This Policy Brief therefore focuses on the next stage: scaling. Drawing on both the OECD Implementation Framework for Effective Change in Schools (OECD, 2020) and the ScaleDem Analytical Framework (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025), it sets out how the DEMOCRAT model can:

- **expand its reach** to a wider range of learners, institutions, and learning settings (horizontal expansion / *scaling out*);
- **be embedded within education systems** through curricula, assessment practices, teacher education programmes, and sustainable funding structures (vertical institutionalisation / *scaling high*); and
- **adapt and deepen democratic practice** across different age groups, subject areas, and modes of delivery—including digital and community-based formats—while strengthening internal learning and quality (*scaling deep* and *scaling in*).

2. Context for Scaling up Transformative Education for Democracy

Europe has been placing increasing emphasis on democratic competences in response to concerns about civic disengagement, information disorder and social fragmentation. The analysis presented in this section draws on the desk-based comparative curriculum mapping conducted under DEMOCRAT Work Package 4, which examined European-level frameworks and national education policies across all partner countries during the project's initial phase.

At the policy level, the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC, 2022 update) provides a model for embedding democratic values, skills, and attitudes across all levels of education and has been actively promoted for use in both school and higher education settings. This ambition is reinforced by the Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024–2030, which calls for “renewing the democratic and civic mission of education” and embedding democratic culture across entire education systems. Joint EU–Council of Europe guidelines—most recently the 2025 document *Democratic Competences Through a Cross-Curricular Approach*—offer practical guidance on integrating democratic competences into national curricula across sectors and levels of education. This policy momentum is mirrored at EU level: in November 2023, the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport configuration) concluded that schools and universities must equip learners with the critical thinking skills and civic dispositions needed to participate in democratic, fair, sustainable, and digital societies.

DEMOCRAT WP4 analysis indicated that these developments together created a receptive and increasingly coherent policy environment for Education for Democracy initiatives across Europe. These ongoing developments have created a sustained demand—and a receptive policy climate—for robust EfD models and initiatives like DEMOCRAT.

National curriculum reforms across the DEMOCRAT partner countries reinforce Europe-wide policy commitments to Education for Democracy. Finland's 2014 National Core Curriculum, implemented, designates "participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship" as a transversal competence and embeds critical thinking, civic action and global responsibility across subjects. Ireland's re-designed Junior-Cycle programme (rolled out 2017-22) and the ongoing Senior Cycle redevelopment/reform place civic, social and political education at the heart of learning outcomes (NCCA, 2023), while whole-school initiatives such as Student Councils and Green Schools formalise student voice. Spain's LOMLOE reform (2020) and the 2022 royal decrees operationalise a cross-curricular citizenship-competence framework, complemented in Catalonia by a compulsory service-learning module in lower-secondary education. Estonia's 2023 upgrade of the social-sciences and civic-education curriculum continues a long sequence of revisions aimed at reducing overload and shifting from factual knowledge to students' capacity to act as responsible citizens. Polish guidelines now allow schools to experiment with participatory budgeting and project-based civic activities, supported by national teacher-training courses on inclusive, democracy-oriented pedagogy. In Germany several Länder—among them Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia—have revised secondary-school regulations since 2021 to strengthen Demokratiepädagogik, mandate project learning and expand student participation. These reforms were systematically reviewed and compared in the WP4 country analyses, providing a shared empirical baseline for the DEMOCRAT project's subsequent design and implementation work.

In this context, DEMOCRAT was launched to strengthen democracy through education. Over the course of the project, this mandate was operationalised in three main strands. First, the project elaborated a European Curriculum for Education for Democracy built around a Responsible Democratic Competence (RDC) framework that links civic values to sustainability, digital literacy and human-rights commitments set out in SDG 4.7⁴. Second, this curriculum was stress-tested in open, locally embedded Living Lab projects—innovative learning settings where teachers, learners, parents and community actors co-designed and trialled local projects using democratic pedagogies. Third, it translated the lessons generated through these processes into a toolbox that enables educators across the EU (and beyond) to adopt transformative EfD practices at scale. Together, these WP4-informed foundations supported the design of the Local Pilot Projects and underpin the scaling strategy presented in this policy brief.

3. Purpose and Scope of This Strategy

This document serves as a bridge between DEMOCRAT's pilot phase and the wider scaling of Education for Democracy (EfD). Its purpose is to:

- translate insights from Local Pilot Projects into a practical and evidence-informed roadmap for scaling EfD at regional, national, and European levels;
- provide a shared reference point for policymakers, school leaders, and practitioners involved in the scale-up process; and
- specify monitoring and evidence-generation mechanisms that support learning, accountability, and continuous improvement.

⁴ SDG 4.7 refers to the UN Sustainable Development Goal target on education for sustainable development, human rights and global citizenship.

The strategy draws on experiences from all six partner countries and is intended for use during and beyond the DEMOCRAT project period (2023–2026). At its core, the strategy adopts the ScaleDem framework, which conceptualises scaling as a four-dimensional process: scaling out, scaling high, scaling deep, and scaling in. Together, these dimensions capture how democratic education expands in reach, embeds institutionally, deepens cultural change, and strengthens internal coherence and learning.

To support implementation, the strategy also draws on the OECD Implementation Framework for Effective Change in Schools (2020), which identifies the enabling conditions—smart policy design, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and a conducive environment—through which these four dimensions of scaling can be realised in practice.

For clarity and alignment with established policy language, the four ScaleDem dimensions are also related to three commonly used policy lenses:

- Horizontal expansion, referring primarily to scaling out;
- Vertical institutionalisation, relating mainly to scaling high; and
- Diversification, cutting across scaling in and scaling deep through adaptation to different age groups, subject areas, and delivery modes, including digital and community-based formats.

The strategy is intended for practitioners and school leaders seeking to develop or replicate EfD locally; teacher education providers and support teams involved in professional learning and resource development; policymakers and funders responsible for enabling mainstream adoption; and consortium partners, to guide collaboration beyond the project's lifetime.

4. DEMOCRAT Local Pilot Projects: Implementation and Lessons Learned

During the 2024–25 period, all DEMOCRAT country teams implemented a total of 42 Local Pilot Projects (LPPs - see Appendix A) across six EU Member States (Finland, Ireland, Spain, Estonia, Poland, and Germany) designed to explore how Education for Democracy can be developed, adapted, and sustained in diverse educational contexts. While the projects were locally tailored, they were developed through a shared Living Lab approach, involving collaboration between educators, learners, and local partners.

Across countries, projects were implemented across multiple education levels, including primary (n=15), post-primary and secondary education (n=19), and higher education (n=5), with additional initiatives in teacher education, vocational, and community-linked settings. Interventions addressed one or more dimensions of the Responsible Democratic Competence framework, including solidary participation, deliberation, critical judgement, and democratic resilience. Although contexts and formats varied, projects shared a common focus on embedding democratic learning within everyday educational practice rather than treating it as a stand-alone activity.

Pedagogically, the LPPs employed a wide range of learner-centred and participatory approaches, including dialogic inquiry, media and information literacy activities, creative and arts-based methods, role-play and simulation, service-learning projects, and structured reflection. Several initiatives extended beyond individual classrooms to involve whole-school or cross-community engagement, often in partnership with NGOs, local authorities, or cultural organisations. This common assessment architecture enabled comparability and collective learning across countries while allowing teachers to adapt tools to age, context, and learner needs.

Each LPP drew on a shared DEMOCRAT assessment toolkit, most commonly combining student self-assessment (often implemented as pre- and post-activity reflection and frequently simplified for age and

literacy levels) with a teacher observation diary, and in several cases supplemented by guided oral or class-based reflections. Where full pre/post measurement was not feasible, projects applied an initial assessment round and formative reflection instead. Experiences from the design and implementation of these pilots generated an evidence base of practical and contextualised lessons that now inform the project's approach to scaling Education for Democracy. These lessons synthesise insights from 42 interventions implemented across diverse national, institutional, and pedagogical contexts and form the empirical foundation for the country-level analyses presented below. An overview of the key implementation phases, actions, and tools used across the Local Pilot Projects is provided in Table 1.

Implementation Guideline for Local Pilot Projects			
Phase	Key actions	Tools / recourses	Typical timing
Diagnose local needs	Use RDC self-assessment with staff and learners; conduct a local context scan (curriculum links, stakeholder mapping, available resources)	RDC self-assessment rubric	~2–3 weeks
Co-design the LPP	Convene Living Lab partners to agree objectives and co-design activities adapted to local context	Planning templates; co-design workshops	~3–4 weeks
Pilot & reflect	Implement the intervention; gather teacher observation diaries, learner reflections and assessment tools; adjust activities where needed	Teacher observation diary; pre-/post assessment forms; learner reflection tools	~one school term
Embed & expand	Explore alignment with school, local, or municipal priorities; support peer learning and potential transfer to new settings	Peer exchange activities; internal documentation	Ongoing

Table 1: Implementation Guideline for Local Pilot Projects.

4.1. Lessons Learned from the Local Pilot Projects

The policy recommendations that follow are grounded in lessons learned from the implementation of 42 DEMOCRAT Local Pilot Projects across six partner countries. Comparative analysis of these pilots revealed recurring patterns regarding how Education for Democracy can be effectively embedded within diverse educational contexts. In particular, the findings highlight the importance of experiential and participatory pedagogies, whole-school and cross-community approaches, collaboration with external actors, and the central role of teacher capacity and professional judgement in fostering responsible democratic agency. Together, these lessons provide an evidence-informed foundation for the policy directions outlined below.

The recommendations presented in the following section are reproduced from *the DEMOCRAT Policy Brief Education for Responsible Democratic Citizenship: A European Vision (Deliverable 2.2)*⁵.

Recommendations 1 and 2 in Deliverable 2.2 establish the conceptual and structural foundations for Education for Democracy at European level, including the underlying understanding of democracy and the RDC competence framework. The recommendations presented here therefore begin with Recommendation 3, which draws directly on evidence from the 42 Local Pilot Projects and focuses on practice-based and implementation-oriented lessons.

RECOMMENDATION 3 Schools have to be laboratories of democratic practice on a daily basis and across subjects, not just for a few hours of civic education or education for democracy per week, and need to connect with the local, global and digital environment by introducing participatory leadership methods. Local communities and society at large need to be conducive to learning and practising responsible democratic agency, through the actions of citizens, teachers, parents, authorities and other relevant actors. An essential step for EfD is the creation of opportunities for direct engagement of students with diverse community members, including minority groups, local artisans, and intergenerational dialogue partners.

Schools are central educational institutions for children and young people. This means that they are in a key position to hone their democratic competences. Nevertheless, it has been proven that citizenship education that is based simply on imparting factual knowledge of political institutions and procedures in traditional classes does not lead to the development of democratic agency and to strengthening the will to act democratically.

The analysis of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) and European Social Survey (ESS) carried out by DEMOCRAT indicated that self-perception of political effectiveness is one major driver of future political participation⁶. For this, it is necessary that democracy be practised within the school and outside of the school, thus enabling its internalisation by young people for the totality of their lives. In fact, EfD should not be conceived as a purely school-based matter, but as a social mandate. To strengthen responsible democratic agency, the cooperation of different actors is necessary, such as state institutions at different political and administrative levels, non-governmental organisations, social partners, neighbourhood associations and citizens, with the schools and other educational establishments as central actors regarding their students. The 42 interventions of DEMOCRAT showed that cooperation with external entities is a major way to improve formal education for democracy, as it complements the learning of factual knowledge and any interactive experience at school with real-world democratic experience outside school. "Learning by doing" encourages students' engagement and competence development. Creating space for students' voices throughout the entire process and assigning them distinct roles increases engagement, responsibility, and autonomy. This shift from passive reception to active engagement proves particularly effective when students work independently, take initiative, and assume responsibility for outcomes.

⁵ See DEMOCRAT Deliverable 2.2.: Kostakos, G.; Krüger, K. & Virchow, F. (2025) Policy Brief. Education for Responsible Democratic Citizenship. A European Vision. DEMOCRAT deliverable 2.2. <https://democrat-horizon.eu>. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17777839

⁶ See the DEMOCRAT deliverable D3.2.: Warat, M.; et al (Eds.) (2025) Education inequalities and political participation. Deliverable 3.2. <https://democrat-horizon.eu> DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14550660 and DEMOCRAT deliverable D3.3: Krüger, K. et al. (Eds.) (2025) Policy Brief: Education inequalities and political participation. <https://democrat-horizon.eu>. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15302926

RECOMMENDATION 4 Students need to be aware of both their rights and responsibilities, and be guided to act on both, within their peer groups and in relation to their teachers, parents, local authorities, and other relevant stakeholders. For this reason, participatory and experiential methodologies including problem-based learning, project-based approaches, peer teaching, and service learning should be prioritized using diverse flexible learning formats such as workshops, fieldwork, interviews, exhibitions, and public presentations, instead of rigid lesson formats. Such approaches allow students to conceive themselves as active citizens, curators, decision-makers, and co-shapers of the future rather than passive recipients.

The focus on practical experience with democracy is intended to strengthen the students' democratic agency so that they become aware of their democratic rights and duties and perceive them as guides for their actions at all levels of society, such as in the family, at school, in their dealings with friends and acquaintances, but also at local, regional, national, European, and global societal/political/economic levels. This does not imply that formal democratic procedures apply to all life situations, but that actions in all life situations should not violate basic democratic values, such as respect for human dignity and the rights of others, be they individuals or groups.

Most of the pilots were project-based, engaging students not only in learning but also in co-creating activities and solutions. Elements of political simulation (e.g. participatory budgeting), service learning, and community-based learning enriched the approaches, allowing young people to move beyond abstract concepts into concrete democratic practice. Project-based learning that combines training, fieldwork, and public presentation engages students in moving from concepts to action and makes democratic principles meaningful. Also, theatre-based approaches were tested. Combining diverse methodologies fosters deeper reflection and accommodates different learning needs. Integrating lecture-based input from external experts with experiential workshops balances theoretical frameworks with practical application. Peer teaching consolidates knowledge, while also developing practical skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership.

RECOMMENDATION 5 Education for Democracy should be recognised as a strategic lever for gender equality and civic inclusion, ensuring that participatory learning environments empower all learners, especially girls and under-represented groups, to act as confident, competent democratic agents. Education for Democracy must be designed to reduce structural barriers to participation by addressing socio-economic disadvantage, migration background, and disability. Inclusive pedagogies, such as cooperative inquiry, storytelling, and community-based learning, enable learners from diverse contexts to experience recognition, belonging, and agency, reinforcing democracy as a lived and equitable social order.

The analysis of main data bases, such as those of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) and European Social Survey (ESS), has revealed persistent factors that influence political participation, such as socio-economic inequality, gender and being a member of an immigrant family.⁷ Gender responsive and socially inclusive approaches were applied in several national pilots. Several national pilots across partner countries integrated gender-responsive pedagogies that strengthened democratic competencies through inclusive participation. One example is an Irish local pilot which worked exclusively with female students in a DEIS⁸ post-primary setting, using participatory approaches to enhance their civic voice, confidence, and

⁷ See Warat, M.; Krüger, K.; Montolio, D. Sekuła, P.; Ostafińska-Molik, B. (Eds.) (2025) Education inequalities and political participation. Deliverable 3.2. <https://democrat-horizon.eu> DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14550660

⁸ Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) is a national policy initiative of the Department of Education and Youth. It provides targeted support to schools with a high concentration of disadvantage and aims to reduce educational inequality (DEIS Plan 2017, Department of Education and Youth).

judgement. The inclusive approach was also adopted in pedagogical methods across countries. In Spain, for example, two projects promoted democratic competences in order to strengthen the integration of children from recently immigrated families. One pilot promoted awareness of human and children's rights through collective lectures on specialised literature, followed by debates among pupils. The other pilot promoted the establishment of a children and youth council in the local area, with the aim of improving relations between the native population and those who had recently immigrated. In Germany, a local project tackled diversity and anti-racism in schools by using theatre training methods.

RECOMMENDATION 6 A crucial aspect of any approach to education for democracy is the competence of the teacher to steer the whole process and create a learning environment in which the students can deeply internalise democracy. For this, the EU institutions, as well as member states, should create learning and mentoring opportunities for teachers, in addition to enriching their university curricula and continuous training programmes.

A critical point of this approach is the preparation and willingness of teachers, trainers and other education professionals to apply EfD principles. Teaching competence for democratic education is not a central element of teacher training either at universities or in continuing teacher training programmes. Therefore, a central requirement is to strengthen teachers' competences in the field of education for democracy. Ideally, this does not only refer to teachers in public or private schools, but also to all those individuals who are involved in shaping characters outside the formal education system. This is especially important for countries where democracy as a social order is at risk or not fully-fledged yet.

A Finnish pilot project for training future teachers tested a phenomenon-based approach, treating those studying to become teachers as designers of democratic learning rather than merely implementers. This approach promoted personal responsibility and interdisciplinary transfer, as well as facilitated the rapid development of ready-to-use teaching materials, such as debates on misinformation, maps on ethical dilemmas and a prototype game on global responsibility. Iterative learning cycles involving joint design, testing, presentation and reflection have proven to be a promising model for teacher training. In an interdisciplinary pilot project in Estonia, university students conducted mini studies on civic education in several schools, focusing on the DEMOCRAT competence model. The students gained practical experience in the field, gathering practical knowledge about the situation regarding citizenship education in Estonia, and acquainted themselves with the tools developed by the DEMOCRAT project, including the competence assessment tools.

The Irish pilot “Form Concept to Classroom” was developed within a postgraduate teacher education module, “Social and Environmental Education” (Global Citizenship Education). It combined visual and participatory approaches, such as the Walking Gallery, Philosophy for Children activities, which modelled a transition from teacher-led to student-led dialogue, the Graffiti Wall and small-group discussions, which allowed participants to explore philosophical questions around democracy⁹.

Both pilots show the importance of integrating RDC competences into teacher education curricula, rather than treating them as optional or isolated modules. Student teachers benefit most when they are supported in understanding democratic principles both conceptually and in terms of their practical application in the classroom. Therefore, teacher training programmes should combine academic and experiential approaches to ensure sustainability. There should be a particular focus on the competence of “democratic resilience” to

⁹ See DEMOCRAT deliverable D5.2.: Kostakos, G. ed et al (2025). Evaluation of Local Pilot Projects. Democrat Project, Barcelona

prepare teachers to manage disagreement, misinformation stress, and conflict resolution, with explicit moves and clear actions for tense moments, and care for learner well-being when discomfort arises. A more comprehensive framework for teacher training in democracy views learning modules as workshops for professional judgement and growth, rather than simply courses on methodology. Instead of tying learning to a single cycle, the focus should shift to recurring practices that prepare teachers to design, promote and assess democratic competence across contexts and subjects.

5. Objectives for a Transformative EfD

Guided by the evidence gathered through the completed DEMOCRAT Local Pilot Projects and aligned with European policy priorities, the strategy pursues a number of objectives. It aims to:

- Empower every learner with the knowledge, critical-thinking habits, media-literacy skills and civic dispositions to question, deliberate and take constructive action on issues that shape their communities.
- Embed democratic practice in everyday schooling by making civic participation a regular feature of lessons, assessment and shared governance—so that participation becomes a daily habit rather than a special event.
- Mainstream the RDC framework by integrating it into curricula, assessment rubrics and teacher-education programmes, providing a clear reference for democratic learning.
- Close participation gaps by ensuring that learners who are often excluded—due to socio-economic disadvantage, migration background or special educational needs—have equal opportunities to engage and be heard.
- Secure long-term sustainability by anchoring EfD in policies, funding structures and professional development systems that outlast individual projects or funding cycles.

6. A strategy for Scaling Up

For DEMOCRAT, scaling is not about replicating isolated pilots but about expanding, embedding, and diversifying Education for Democracy (EfD) so that far more learners and institutions benefit, EfD practices become part of core systems—curricula, assessment, teacher education, and funding—and the model flexes across ages, subjects, and delivery modalities. Success is measured not only by the numbers reached, but by the depth of adoption, durability, and contextual adaptability of reforms. To this end, scaling considerations have been woven into every strand of the project—from developing the Responsible Democratic Competence (RDC) framework and Living Lab design, through pilot implementation and data collection, to the finalisation of a Toolbox capturing lessons learned and good practice.

The scaling approach presented here combines two complementary frameworks. The ScaleDem Analytical Framework (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025) is used to conceptualise different dimensions of scaling democratic innovations, while the OECD Implementation Framework for Effective Change in Schools (OECD, 2020) is used to identify the system-level conditions that enable sustainable educational change. Together, these frameworks allow the strategy to distinguish between how Education for Democracy (EfD) scales and the conditions required to support that scaling over time.

6.1. The OECD Framework

The OECD framework identifies three inseparable levers—Smart Policy Design, Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement, and a Conducive Environment. Within this strategy, these three levers are used to describe the enabling conditions that support the scaling of Education for Democracy, rather than as a separate or competing scaling framework.

At the level of smart policy design, reform goals, curriculum links, learning materials, timelines, and resources must be clear and coherent so that schools understand expectations and have the capacity to deliver. Inclusive stakeholder engagement brings teachers, learners, parents, unions, NGOs, and local authorities into co-design and decision-making, supporting ownership and legitimacy. A conducive environment—comprising supportive legislation, governance arrangements, funding streams, data systems, and professional-development pathways—anchors innovation within the everyday functioning of education systems.

Within this strategy, the OECD framework is used explicitly to structure the system-level conditions that support different forms of scaling, rather than as a model of scaling in itself. For DEMOCRAT, this means aligning EfD goals with practical tools, engaging stakeholders early, and embedding democratic learning within the institutional structures that sustain education systems over time.

6.1.1. Smart Policy Design

Effective scale-up begins with clear and coherent policy design. For DEMOCRAT, this involves ensuring that the Responsible Democratic Competence (RDC) framework and associated practices and resources are well defined, accessible, and feasible for schools and educators to implement across different contexts.

Policy design should support flexibility in implementation while maintaining clarity about core principles and intended outcomes. Materials, goals, timelines, and support mechanisms must align with existing national curricula and reform priorities across countries, while allowing space for local adaptation. Such alignment helps ensure that Education for Democracy is understood not as an additional burden, but as a meaningful extension of existing educational aims.

Crucially, policy signals must be matched by appropriate guidance, resources, and realistic timelines. When schools and educators are supported by coherent frameworks and practical tools, they are better positioned to integrate democratic education into everyday teaching and learning in sustainable ways.

6.1.2. Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

Scaling Education for Democracy depends not only on policy frameworks, but on people. Teachers, learners, parents, school leaders, NGOs, unions, and municipal actors all play a critical role in shaping how democratic education is understood and enacted in practice.

The DEMOCRAT approach places stakeholder voice at the centre through the Living Lab model, in which interventions were co-designed, piloted, and refined in partnership with local actors. This collaborative approach supports shared ownership, ensures relevance to local contexts, and strengthens commitment to implementation.

Inclusive stakeholder engagement also supports learning across contexts. By bringing diverse perspectives into dialogue, Living Labs created spaces for reflection, adaptation, and collective problem-solving, helping to align democratic education with the realities of schools and communities.

6.1.3. A Conducive Environment

A conducive environment refers to the broader system conditions that allow innovations such as transformative Education for Democracy to take root and be sustained over time. This includes supportive policy frameworks, institutional leadership, infrastructure, and ongoing professional learning opportunities.

For EfD to become part of the everyday ecosystem of education, it must be embedded within teacher education, professional development pathways, and quality assurance mechanisms. Data systems, assessment practices, and resourcing arrangements also play a key role in reinforcing democratic priorities and supporting continuous improvement.

Where a conducive environment is in place, schools and educators are better able to sustain democratic practices beyond individual projects or funding cycles, supporting long-term cultural and institutional change. The application of these three OECD system-level levers to Education for Democracy is summarised in Table 2.

Applying OECD System-Level Levers to Education for Democracy		
Smart Policy Design	Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement	Conducive Environment
Clear guidance and flexible frameworks enabling adaptation across new schools and contexts	Engagement of new schools, learner groups, and community partners	Accessible resources and support structures enabling wider uptake
Alignment with curricula, assessment frameworks, teacher education, and funding structures	Involvement of policymakers, inspectorates, and system-level actors	Governance, regulation, and funding mechanisms that embed EfD system-wide
Policy space for adaptation across age groups, subjects, and delivery modes	Collaboration with diverse actors across sectors and contexts	Infrastructure and professional learning supporting innovation and adaptation

Table 2: Applying OECD System-Level Levers to Education for Democracy

6.2. ScaleDem Framework: Understanding the Four Dimensions of Scaling

This section draws explicitly on the [ScaleDem Analytical Framework: Four Dimensions for Scaling Democratic Innovations](#) (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025). The framework conceptualises scaling not as linear growth or simple replication, but as a multidimensional and dynamic process through which democratic innovations may expand their reach, deepen their cultural impact, strengthen internal quality, and become embedded within formal institutions.

ScaleDem identifies four analytically distinct yet interrelated dimensions of scaling: Scaling Out, Scaling Deep, Scaling In, and Scaling High. These dimensions describe different ways in which democratic innovations may evolve over time. Importantly, progress along one dimension can enable, reinforce, or constrain progress along others, generating feedback loops rather than fixed sequences.

In this strategy, the ScaleDem framework is used as the primary analytical lens for interpreting evidence from the DEMOCRAT Local Pilot Projects and for structuring reflections on how Education for Democracy can grow and endure across diverse educational contexts. Understanding scaling as a dynamic and interconnected process allows DEMOCRAT to move beyond simplistic models of growth and to develop more realistic, context-sensitive strategies for sustaining Education for Democracy over time.

6.2.1. Scaling High

Scaling High refers to the embedding of democratic innovations within formal institutional, policy, and governance structures. It captures how practices developed in participatory or experimental settings become aligned with administrative logics, legal frameworks, and policymaking processes.

ScaleDem highlights that institutionalisation is more likely when innovations are framed in ways that resonate with existing institutional norms and decision-making structures. Strategic alignment, advocacy, coalition-building, and access to formal policymaking channels are therefore central to this dimension (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025, pp. 19–22).

In the context of DEMOCRAT, Scaling High involves aligning Education for Democracy with curricula, teacher-education standards, assessment frameworks, and system-level priorities. This ensures that learning from the project is not confined to pilot sites but becomes part of the formal architecture of education systems, supported by policy recognition, stable resourcing, and institutional mandates.

6.2.2. Scaling Deep

Scaling Deep concerns the cultural, emotional, and normative dimensions of democratic change. Rather than focusing on expansion or institutionalisation, it examines how democratic values, identities, and dispositions become internalised within individuals and communities.

ScaleDem emphasises that Scaling Deep is fostered through design features that support emotional resonance and sustained engagement, including repeated participation formats, opportunities for reflection, and the integration of lived experience through testimony, storytelling, or parallel group formats. These approaches help bridge abstract democratic principles with everyday realities, supporting value internalisation and civic identity formation (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025, p. 19).

Within DEMOCRAT, Scaling Deep is evident when democratic practices become embedded in everyday educational relationships and pedagogies. This includes shifts in classroom dialogue, increased openness to deliberation and empathy, and a growing sense of trust, belonging, and shared responsibility within learning communities.

6.2.3. Scaling In

Scaling In refers to the internal strengthening and quality assurance of democratic innovations as they develop over time. It addresses how processes maintain coherence, legitimacy, and effectiveness as participation expands or contexts change.

In the ScaleDem framework, Scaling In depends on fine-grained procedural scaffolding, including clear rules of interaction, carefully designed agendas, multi-phase deliberative structures, and appropriate selection procedures. Attention to facilitation quality, issue framing, and process integrity is central to sustaining legitimacy and trust (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025, pp. 19–22).

For DEMOCRAT, Scaling In encompasses the reflective and iterative processes through which the Responsible Democratic Competence (RDC) framework, the Living Lab methodology, and the EfD Toolbox were refined.

Formative assessment, practitioner reflection, cross-country learning, and participatory feedback loops supported continuous improvement and helped translate project experience into durable internal capacity.

6.2.4. Scaling Out

Scaling Out refers to the expansion of reach across space, contexts, and participant groups. It focuses on how democratic innovations include more—and more diverse—participants and how practices can be replicated or transferred across settings.

Within the ScaleDem framework, Scaling Out is supported by design features that enable inclusion and replicability, such as hybrid or flexible formats, selection strategies that extend participation beyond already engaged groups, and structured processes that can be reproduced “as is” or adapted with minimal redesign. Toolkits, facilitation guides, and clearly articulated process templates are highlighted as key mechanisms for supporting transfer across contexts (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025, pp. 19–20).

In DEMOCRAT, Scaling Out is reflected in the extension of Education for Democracy practices beyond individual Living Labs to additional schools, learner groups, teacher-education settings, and community-linked initiatives. It also includes adaptation across languages, age groups, and cultural contexts, ensuring that democratic education remains accessible and relevant to diverse learners.

6.3. Linking ScaleDem Scaling Dimensions with OECD System-Level Levers

In this strategy, what is being scaled is transformative Education for Democracy (EfD) practices, rather than a single programme or intervention. Scaling refers to the ways in which EfD pedagogies, competences, assessment approaches, and institutional arrangements are expanded, embedded, deepened, and strengthened across education systems. Drawing on ScaleDem, Table 3 below maps the four dimensions of scaling against the system-level levers identified in the OECD Implementation Framework, illustrating how different forms of scaling can be supported in practice.

Table 3 illustrates how the four dimensions of scaling, scaling high, scaling deep, scaling out, and scaling in, can be strengthened through three key system-level levers: policy, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and a conducive environment. It highlights the different levers required to support the sustainable and context-responsive scaling of transformative Education for Democracy.

Mapping ScaleDem Scaling Dimensions to OECD System-Level Levers			
	Smart Policy Design	Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement	Conducive Environment
Scaling High	Alignment with national curriculum frameworks, teacher education policy, legal frameworks, and Education for Democracy priorities.	Engagement of policymakers, inspectors, initial and in-service teacher education providers, and system-level actors.	Clear governance structures, sustained funding streams, and institutional mandates.
Scaling Deep	Policy support for democratic competences, participatory learning, and reflective pedagogies.	Teachers, students, and school communities actively reflect on and shape practice.	Trust-based school cultures, time for reflection, and professional learning spaces.
Scaling In	Support for evaluation, feedback, and continuous improvement within programmes.	Project teams, educators, and partners engaged in reflective practice.	Structures for monitoring, shared learning, and iterative development.
Scaling Out	Structures for monitoring, shared learning, and iterative development.	New schools, learner groups, teacher networks, and community organisations.	Accessible resources, adaptable materials, and support for contextual translation

Table 3: Mapping ScaleDem Scaling Dimensions to OECD System-Level Levers

6.4. Scaling in Practice: Illustrative Partner Experiences

Following the conceptual discussion of scaling deep, out, high and in, this section illustrates how these dimensions were enacted in practice across the DEMOCRAT project. Examples are drawn from local interventions implemented by partner countries in primary, post-primary and higher education, as well as in community and teacher education contexts.

6.4.1. Scaling High

Several partner experiences illustrate how EfD initiatives were linked to institutional leadership and policy frameworks.

In **Catalonia/Spain**, sustained collaboration with the regional Department of Education enabled close alignment between local interventions and curriculum reforms in global citizenship and digital education, strengthening the policy relevance of classroom practices.

In **Ireland**, engagement with senior policymakers and participation in national education fora helped connect evidence from local school projects to broader policy discussions on Education for Democracy.

In **Germany**, interdisciplinary cooperation within higher education institutions and visibility at ministerial level demonstrated how EfD practices can gain legitimacy when embedded within formal institutional structures.

In **Estonia**, continuous dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Research, alongside recent curriculum reforms in social sciences, created opportunities for DEMOCRAT interventions to be showcased on official curriculum platforms and informed discussions on follow-up development projects.

In **Finland**, dissemination through public events and parliamentary settings, together with the integration of DEMOCRAT approaches into formal teacher education at the University of Jyväskylä, supported institutional visibility and longer-term policy relevance.

6.4.2. Scaling Deep

Across partner countries, “scaling deep” focused on strengthening learners’ democratic competences by enabling them to experience democracy in action through dialogue, inquiry and participatory practice.

In **Ireland**, classroom-based interventions using structured dialogue, media-literacy activities and picturebooks supported learners in developing critical awareness of mis- and disinformation, greater confidence in expressing views, and more respectful listening. Teachers observed increased trust and more democratic classroom relationships.

In **Catalonia/Spain**, rights-based and participatory initiatives such as children’s councils, sustainability-focused projects and student involvement in evaluating teaching practices—reinforced learners’ democratic agency and self-confidence across primary and lower secondary education.

In **Germany**, the use of “third spaces”, including universities and community venues, helped learners connect democratic learning to real-life social contexts. Visiting new places and engaging with external facilitators supported feelings of recognition, openness and civic identity.

In **Poland**, school democracy projects, participatory budgeting and human rights workshops contributed to a shift in how young people understood democracy, moving from abstract procedures towards a relational, dialogic and everyday practice grounded in shared responsibility.

In **Estonia**, project-based learning and democratic simulations, such as mock local elections and media-literacy projects, enabled students to explore democratic processes in depth. Learners reported improved understanding of democratic decision-making, as well as growth in cooperation, communication and shared responsibility, indicating meaningful internalisation of Responsible Democratic Competences.

In **Finland**, classroom-based and dialogic interventions embedded Responsible Democratic Competence within everyday learning through participatory inquiry, media- and information-literacy activities, and structured reflection across primary and secondary settings.

6.4.3. Scaling In

Scaling is focused on reinforcing internal practices, professional learning and organisational ownership.

Across **Ireland, Poland and Catalonia/Spain**, Living Lab processes supported iterative reflection, peer learning and the refinement of facilitation strategies and materials. Shared assessment tools, including pre- and post-intervention self-assessments and teacher observation diaries, supported reflective practice and consistency across contexts.

In **Germany**, partners emphasised iterative design processes involving students, educators and developers, highlighting the importance of feedback and time for reflection in improving EfD materials and methods.

In **Estonia**, participation in the project supported the development of professional networks and increased clarity around what EfD can entail in practice. Teachers reported using their involvement and associated in-service training recognition to support progression within national competency frameworks, strengthening the sustainability of EfD beyond the project.

In **Finland**, cross-partner co-design, shared reflection and adapted assessment tools supported internal learning, professional networks and the sustainability of EfD practices beyond individual interventions.

6.4.4. Scaling Out

Scaling out was evident in the transfer and adaptation of EfD approaches across different age groups, institutions and educational levels.

In **Ireland**, core pedagogical ideas were successfully applied across primary, post-primary and higher education settings, including within classes with children with special educational needs, demonstrating the adaptability of dialogic and media-literacy approaches. Partners highlighted strong potential for further extension through teacher networks and initial teacher education.

In **Catalonia/Spain and Poland**, interventions reached multiple grades and schools and were delivered in collaboration with community partners, including cultural institutions, libraries and civil society organisations. These partnerships facilitated horizontal expansion while preserving core democratic principles.

In **Germany**, scaling out was supported through network-building and by making materials openly available online, enabling replication in new locations and exchange among educators.

In **Estonia**, although most interventions were implemented at upper secondary level, methods such as structured opinion-based activities proved equally effective in lower secondary contexts. Plans are underway to integrate these approaches into pre-service teacher education at Tallinn University, supporting wider uptake.

In **Finland**, reusable materials and short intervention modules developed across school and teacher education contexts supported the transfer of EfD approaches to new age groups and institutional settings.

6.4.5. Concluding Insight

Taken together, experiences from DEMOCRAT partner countries demonstrate that effective scaling of Education for Democracy requires integrated action across deep, out, high and in dimensions. Local interventions in schools and higher education show that these dimensions are mutually reinforcing, and that policy approaches supporting long-term embedding, institutional alignment and professional capacity-building are essential for lasting impact.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy

Monitoring and evaluation within DEMOCRAT were carried out through formative, project-based practices embedded in the Local Pilot Projects and Living Lab processes. Rather than operating as a single, unified monitoring system, evidence was generated through a combination of shared tools and reflective activities used across countries during the pilot phase.

All Local Pilot Projects made use of common assessment instruments, including teacher observation diaries and pre- and post- self-assessment tools. The main assessment tools were developed specifically for use within the DEMOCRAT Living Labs and Local Pilot Projects, with the aim of capturing changes in classroom practice, learner engagement, and dimensions of Responsible Democratic Competence, while also supporting structured reflection among teachers and project teams. Their purpose was formative: to inform adaptation, learning, and refinement during implementation rather than to produce standardised or comparative performance measures.

In addition, focus group and one-to-one discussions with Living Lab participants were conducted to gather qualitative insights into how interventions were designed, implemented, and experienced in different contexts. These discussions supported collective reflection on what worked, what proved challenging, and how local conditions shaped implementation choices.

Evidence generated through these tools and reflective processes was reviewed within individual project teams and across the wider partnership to identify emerging patterns and shared lessons. These insights have informed the development of this scaling strategy, including the identification of key considerations related to reach, institutional embedding, learning cultures, and internal project learning. Together, these monitoring and evaluation practices provide a grounded evidence base for the strategy, while also highlighting areas where more systematic monitoring could be developed as Education for Democracy is scaled beyond the pilot phase.

Monitoring progress is therefore understood in analytical rather than metric terms. It is approached through the four ScaleDem dimensions (scaling high, scaling deep, scaling in, and scaling out) and the enabling levers identified in the previous section (policy alignment, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and a conducive environment), rather than through a single set of indicators or performance measures.

To support structured reflection on these dimensions, an illustrative scaling profile is presented below. The illustrative scaling profile is intended as a sense-making and reflective tool, rather than as a measurement, scoring, or evaluation instrument. The 1–5 scale does not represent calibrated levels, benchmarks, or performance ratings, nor is it intended to support comparison across sites, countries, or interventions. Instead, the scale is used heuristically to indicate relative positioning along each of the four ScaleDem dimensions (scaling high, scaling deep, scaling in, and scaling out), based on informed qualitative judgement drawing on implementation evidence, stakeholder reflections, and contextual knowledge. Its purpose is to support structured reflection and discussion about the balance and interaction of different scaling dimensions, helping policymakers and practitioners to identify strengths, gaps, and strategic priorities, rather than to assess progress or success in linear or quantitative terms.

For policymakers, in particular, this involves structured reflection on available qualitative evidence such as policy alignment, implementation experiences, and stakeholder feedback to assess where EfD initiatives are gaining traction and where further support may be required across different dimensions of scaling.

Developing such a profile relies on informed judgement rather than measurement, drawing on questions such as: how far EfD is institutionally embedded (scaling high), how widely it is reaching learners and settings (scaling out), whether democratic practices are becoming culturally embedded in everyday teaching (scaling deep), and how internal learning, reflection, and quality assurance are supported (scaling in).

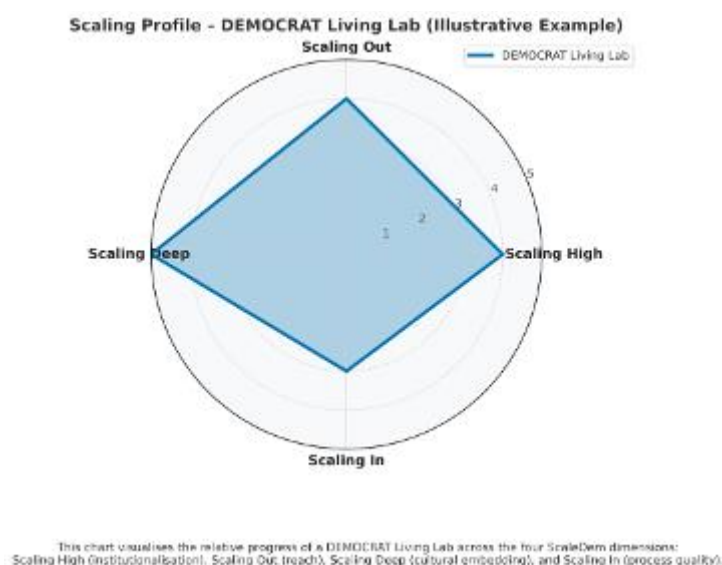


Figure 1: Illustrative Scaling Profile (adapted from the ScaleDem framework)

This chart visualises the relative progress of a DEMOCRAT Living Lab across the four ScaleDem dimensions adapted for the DEMOCRAT framework. Together, these dimensions capture institutionalisation, cultural transformation, and sustained quality. The approach integrates insights from ScaleDem’s Theory of Scaling (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025) and the OECD Implementation Framework (2020), positioning DEMOCRAT’s Living Labs as adaptable, evidence-informed models for transformative Education for Democracy.

Overall, the monitoring and evaluation approach outlined here supports policymakers and system-level actors in making sense of complex scaling processes rather than tracking linear progress. By combining formative evidence from local implementation with the ScaleDem framework, the strategy enables informed reflection on how Education for Democracy is evolving across institutional, cultural, and organisational dimensions. In line with the OECD Implementation Framework (2020), this approach emphasises learning, adaptation, and system-level coherence over compliance-driven monitoring. This perspective is intended to guide strategic learning and adjustment over time, rather than to prescribe fixed benchmarks or comparative judgements.

8. Policy Implications for Scaling Education for Democracy

This policy brief positions the scaling of Education for Democracy (EfD) as a systemic, relational, and long-term process rather than as the replication of discrete projects or short-term interventions. Evidence from the DEMOCRAT Local Pilot Projects demonstrates that durable democratic learning emerges most consistently where pedagogical innovation, institutional alignment, professional learning, and stakeholder engagement are developed in an integrated manner. Scaling EfD therefore involves shifts in how democratic learning is conceptualised, supported, and sustained across education systems, rather than expansion in numbers alone.

At system level, the findings underline the importance of embedding democratic competences within existing curriculum frameworks, assessment arrangements, and teacher education provision. EfD is shown to be most sustainable where it is aligned with broader educational priorities—such as inclusion, learner wellbeing, sustainability, and digital and media literacy—rather than positioned as an additional or competing agenda. Such alignment enables schools and educators to integrate democratic learning into everyday practice while

mitigating risks associated with curriculum overload and initiative fatigue. Coherent policy signalling across these domains supports continuity and legitimacy, particularly where education systems are already undergoing reform.

The evidence also highlights the significance of institutional leadership and governance arrangements in supporting scale-up. EfD initiatives benefit from organisational conditions that allow time, flexibility, and professional discretion for democratic pedagogies to take root. Participatory governance arrangements—within schools and across local education ecosystems—play an important role in reinforcing democratic culture by modelling shared decision-making and collective responsibility. Collaboration between schools, communities, civil society organisations, and local authorities strengthens the relevance of EfD initiatives and supports learners' experience of democracy as a lived and relational practice rather than an abstract concept.

From a professional perspective, sustained investment in teacher education and continuous professional learning emerges as a central enabling condition. The DEMOCRAT experience indicates that teachers require structured opportunities to develop professional judgement, facilitation skills, and confidence in navigating democratic dialogue, disagreement, and uncertainty. EfD is most effectively scaled where teachers are supported as reflective practitioners and co-designers of democratic learning, rather than as implementers of pre-defined programmes. Professional learning communities, peer exchange, and iterative reflection were shown to contribute to both the quality and sustainability of democratic pedagogies across diverse contexts.

Issues of equity and inclusion are also central to scaling EfD. The Local Pilot Projects demonstrate that participatory and experiential approaches can support the engagement of learners who are often marginalised due to socio-economic disadvantage, migration background, disability, or prior negative experiences of schooling. However, these benefits depend on the availability of supportive institutional conditions, inclusive pedagogical design, and partnerships that extend learning beyond the classroom. Scaling EfD therefore entails attention to how democratic practices are adapted to diverse learner needs and settings, rather than assuming uniform models of implementation.

Interpreted through the ScaleDem Analytical Framework for scaling democratic innovations (Camatarri, Dobler, & Vergne, 2025), effective scaling depends on maintaining balance across four interconnected dimensions: institutional embedding within policy and governance structures (scaling high); cultural and pedagogical change within classrooms and learning communities (scaling deep); internal learning, reflection, and quality assurance (scaling in); and expansion across educational levels, settings, and learner groups (scaling out). Evidence from DEMOCRAT suggests that progress along one dimension does not automatically translate into progress across others, and that neglecting internal learning or cultural change can undermine the effects of institutional or quantitative expansion.

Taken together, these policy implications point towards scaling Education for Democracy as a process of coordinated system development. Rather than privileging single instruments or isolated interventions, sustainable scale-up depends on the alignment of policy design, institutional support, professional learning, and stakeholder engagement. Such an approach enables EfD to move beyond pilot contexts and contribute to the long-term development of democratic culture within and through education systems, in line with European and international policy priorities.

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10. Appendices

Appendix A. Overview of DEMOCRAT Local Pilot Projects (alphabetical by country)

S. No.	Country	Intervention name	Target group	Short description
1	Estonia	Local government elections simulation	Children & Youth	In six lessons, 12th-graders form parties, draft local programmes, campaign and debate.
2	Estonia	Global education, argumentation and "opinion line"	Children & Youth	The global-education course uses thought-provoking statements to prompt students to take positions, listen and justify views, systematically building argumentation and dialogue skills.
3	Estonia	Kuristiku elections and TV debate	Children & Youth	Civics project lets students design political parties and NGOs, craft programmes and logos, then stage inter-class elections and media-student debates, simulating state functions and participatory politics.
4	Estonia	Developing critical thinking and deliberation skills	Children & Youth	Students create fake content (including deep fake video) and conclude with a debate.
5	Estonia	Creating student mini-companies	Children & Youth	Students create mini-companies, organise a fair and present their work.
6	Estonia	Argumentation and forming opinions based on SDG 12	Children & Youth	The course focuses on sustainable consumption through opinion lines, debates and elevator pitches.
7	Estonia	Politics day, practical workshops for today's decision-makers	Children & Youth	Students map issues and simulate a local government decision debated by the city council.
8	Estonia	Kogukonnapraktika (community practice/internship)	Children & Youth	Students volunteer with local NGOs and reflect on learning experience.
9	Estonia	I as a voter, and I as a local municipality decision-maker	Children & Youth	Brief simulation of local government elections and preparatory activities.
10	Estonia	Developing responsible democratic citizens and cooperation	Children & Youth	Interdisciplinary project-based university course with school partnerships.
11	Finland	Children as Agents, School as a Community	Children & Youth	Students in Helsinki track their RDC competence growth, earn points and visit Parliament to present digital avatars and insights, linking classroom practice with national democratic institutions.
12	Finland	Teacher Education – Developing RDC-Based Educational Interventions	Teacher Trainees	University of Jyväskylä course engages 200 teacher-students in designing and delivering RDC interventions.
13	Finland	Evaluating knowledge – dialogically	Children & Youth	Grade 4 class completed two lessons on critical thinking and information evaluation. Using dialogic teaching, pupils examined fake news, manipulated images and AI videos, practiced questioning, cross-checking and seeking adult help, comparing real versus AI content built awareness, caution, and confidence to verify media before sharing.

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14	Finland	Recognising reliable information.	Children & Youth	Module on Critical Thinking and Decision-Making for a multilingual cohort. Through pair/group discussions, vocabulary building, and media-literacy tasks, students self-assessed against an assessment framework, debated reliability of information, and practiced verification methods (reverse image search, source comparison), examined deepfakes and manipulation.
15	Germany	Discrimination-sensitive project days	Children & Youth	After theatre-method training, older students design and deliver peer-led project days.
16	Germany	Children conference	Children & Youth	Children take their time (1 hour a week) to make a conference, where all voices are heard. They debate and speak about wishes considering the group and how they interact with each other, enhancing conflict-resolution skills and participatory culture.
17	Germany	Mediator training	Children & Youth	Pupils have weekly training for about one hour to one and a half hour about how to become a mediator. The goal of the course is to have mediators in service who help other kids to solve their conflicts.
18	Germany	Against forgetting	Children & Youth	The extracurricular club organises local arts-based remembrance projects honouring a Jewish architect murdered in Auschwitz, engaging the community in Holocaust memory and democratic vigilance.
19	Germany	President of the jungle – jeu democratique.	Children & Youth	Using an allegorical animal story, younger pupils experience pre-election campaigns and voting.
20	Germany	Jeu Dramatique-Kindergarden-Students.	Teacher Trainees	Using an allegorical animal story, the educators prepare an experience game for Kindergarden-kids (age 5–6) with pre-election campaigns and voting. In a playful way the educators provide fundamentals of democratic choice in a playful context
21	Germany	Simulation game: A new Society	Children & Youth	Group simulation presents sequential challenges that students solve by applying deliberation, solidarity and other democratic competences, reinforcing collaborative problem-solving.
22	Ireland	What's the Story?	Children & Youth	Post-primary students in Dublin critically analyse news and social-media posts, check evidence and debate bias.
23	Ireland	Picturebook and (Mis)Information	Children & Youth	Five short lessons for 10–11-year-olds use a picturebook, drama, and games to help pupils recognise bias.
24	Ireland	Picturebook and (Mis)information: After the fall	Underrepresented Groups / Children & Youth	Small autism-friendly group of primary pupils uses picturebooks and visual supports to detect misinformation.
25	Ireland	From concept to classroom: theory and practice of democracy	Teacher Trainees	Two-hour postgraduate workshop models child-centred dialogue and equips

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				teachers to design classroom deliberations.
26	Ireland	Mis/Disinformation	Teacher Trainees	Two-hour undergraduate sessions help trainee teachers reflect on their media use and evaluate the reliability of information about migration.
27	Poland	Tolerance Project for Other Nationalities, Religions, or Lack Thereof	Children & Youth	Vocational seniors explore minority rights through historical case studies and synagogue visits, fostering solidarity, openness and critical thinking about diversity and tolerance.
28	Poland	Participatory Budgeting	Children & Youth	Modular activities teach voting, idea submission and digital tool design.
29	Poland	Democratic Project	Children & Youth	Interactive workshops unpack political ideologies and party systems.
30	Poland	Active Student Council Project	Children & Youth	"Active Student Council project focused on student council activities and built related initiatives that engage the entire school community.
31	Poland	Little School of Democracy	Children & Youth	The "Little School of Democracy" project aims to introduce students to the fundamentals of how a student council functions and to support the development of their social and organizational competences.
32	Poland	Anne Frank Exhibition	Children & Youth	Students train as guides for an Anne Frank exhibition, examine mechanisms of exclusion and later lead tours for peers, reinforcing empathy and a sense of civic responsibility.
33	Poland	Ursynów's Craftspeople Through the Eyes of the Youngest	Children & Youth	By recording oral histories of local artisan shops, students learn about soft skills, community reliance and independent trades, linking grassroots storytelling to democratic society building.
34	Poland	Democracy and Human Rights	Children & Youth	The multi-subject programme combines lectures and workshops on democracy and human rights; students analyse the Universal Declaration and debate whether democracy guarantees freedom, deepening civic understanding.
35	Poland	How Do We Depend on Each Other?	Children & Youth	Students co-design an educational board game on civic engagement, test it in school, then run sessions in a primary school—promoting democratic principles and inter-generational dialogue while honing project-management skills.
36	Spain	Children and Youth Council	Children & Youth	School partners with the village council to establish a children and youth council.
37	Spain	Children and Human Right (Read Right - Reads Rights)	Children & Youth	The whole-school programme links children and human rights to reading and debate.
38	Spain	KAOS	Children & Youth	Interdisciplinary unit on discrimination and genocide spans geography, history, foreign languages, the Catalan language, visual and plastic arts, and natural sciences.

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39	Spain	Ecodelegates	Children & Youth	Elected secondary students from all grades lead the Green Delegates initiative to raise climate-crisis awareness.
40	Spain	Urban Design	Children & Youth	A small elective group interviews nursing-home residents about the neighbourhood's history, then co-creates plans to revitalise the area.
41	Spain	Parliament simulation	Children & Youth	Three Grade-3 classes stage a parliamentary simulation: students join fictional parties, craft platforms and negotiate coalitions to form a government.
42	Spain	Teachers' Assessment	Children & Youth	Quarterly 'Teaching Quality Assessment' has each class conduct small-group reviews of teaching methods, combine pupil self-assessment and deliver consensual feedback to staff.