

VISUAL-EU SUMMER SCHOOL

Module 4



Citizenship Design Sprint

European Citizenship & Community Engagement Projects

Dr. Habil. Olena Pimenowa
VIZJA University Professor



Funded by
the European Union



01

European Citizenship "From Below"

From normative rights to lived experience in everyday academic life. Understanding how citizenship manifests in student realities, local participation, and bottom-up initiatives.

- Everyday experience
- Practical barriers
- Lived citizenship

02

HEIs as Civic & Community Hubs

Higher education institutions as strategic ecosystems connecting students, lecturers, administrators, NGOs, local authorities, and community partners.

- Civic ecosystem model
- Stakeholder mapping
- Low-threshold engagement

03

Designing Micro-Engagement Projects

From ideas to credible, implementable project concepts. Project logic framework, stakeholder mapping, risk mitigation, and practical design principles.

- Project logic
- Target groups
- Activity design

04

Sustainability & Institutional Anchoring

Ensuring projects can be repeated, adapted, and remain visible. Resource realism, institutional embedding, and long-term impact strategies.

- Sustainability measures
- Risk management
- Strong vs. weak design



Funded by
the European Union

01

European Citizenship "From Below"

From normative rights to lived experience in everyday academic life

What Does "From Below" Mean?



Funded by
the European Union

Complementing legal definitions with lived experience

The "From Below" Perspective

Everyday Experience

How citizenship is **actually experienced** in daily campus life, not just how it's defined in treaties

Student Realities

The concrete conditions, constraints, and opportunities that shape student participation

Local Participation

Bottom-up initiatives that emerge from student needs rather than top-down mandates

Practical Barriers & Opportunities

Acknowledging what enables or prevents meaningful engagement

Informal & Formal Civic Engagement

Both structured programs and spontaneous student-led activities

Why This Matters

European citizenship becomes **meaningful** when visible in:

- ▶ Study opportunities
- ▶ Mobility pathways
- ▶ Inclusive campus culture
- ▶ Access to information
- ▶ Local participation
- ▶ Student voice
- ▶ Cross-cultural interaction

Without everyday visibility, citizenship remains abstract.

"A student who is formally included but practically invisible does not fully experience citizenship."

Rights, Opportunities & Constraints in Practice



Funded by
the European Union

What enables and what prevents lived citizenship

Opportunities in HEIs

Erasmus+ & Mobility Programs

Direct experience of European integration through study and work abroad

Project-Based Participation

Involvement in EU-funded initiatives, research collaborations, and student networks

Non-Discrimination Norms

Legal frameworks protecting equality and inclusion on campus

Access to European Opportunities

Information about funding, networks, and career pathways

Inclusion & Support Frameworks

Services for students with disabilities, international students, underrepresented groups

Multilingual & Intercultural Environments

Daily exposure to diversity and European pluralism

These are not only formal provisions; they shape student experience directly.

Constraints & Barriers

Socio-Economic Inequality

Financial barriers to mobility, participation in paid activities, or unpaid internships

Limited Time & Resources

Students working part-time, caregiving responsibilities, intensive study loads

Language Barriers

Information and activities not accessible in multiple languages

Digital Exclusion

Lack of devices, reliable internet, or digital literacy

Disability Access Issues

Physical and communication barriers preventing full participation

Weak Information Flow

Opportunities not effectively communicated to target groups

Low Confidence in Participation

Students feeling unwelcome, unprepared, or uncertain about engagement

A serious module cannot ignore these constraints.

From Normative to Lived Citizenship

The crucial shift for effective project design



Funded by
the European Union

Normative Citizenship Asks:

What rights and principles exist?

- Legal frameworks and treaties
- Institutional policies and procedures
- Formal rights and entitlements
- Official EU values and priorities

Lived Citizenship Asks:

Who can actually access them?

- Under what conditions?
- With what support?

This Shift Transforms Abstract Values Into Concrete Projects

Inclusion on Campus

→ Projects addressing visible and invisible barriers

Student Wellbeing

→ Initiatives connecting mental health with belonging

Mobility Awareness

→ Information campaigns targeting underrepresented groups

Anti-Discrimination

→ Bystander intervention training and reporting mechanisms

Digital Access

→ Device lending, digital literacy workshops

Regional Cooperation

→ Partnerships between HEIs and local communities

Intercultural Dialogue

→ Student-led exchange and storytelling initiatives



Funded by
the European Union

02

HEIs as Civic Ecosystems

Higher education institutions as strategic hubs for citizenship-oriented action
oriented action

The Civic Ecosystem Model



Funded by
the European Union

HEIs as interconnected networks of stakeholders

The Ecosystem Includes

Students

Diverse body with varied backgrounds, needs, and capacities for engagement

Lecturers

Academic staff who can integrate civic themes into teaching and teaching and research

Administrators

Staff who manage services, allocate resources, and enable programs

Student Organisations

Councils, clubs, and associations representing student interests interests

Local Authorities

Municipal government, regional bodies, public services

NGOs

Civil society organizations working on social issues

Media & Cultural Partners

Campus media, local press, cultural institutions

Neighbourhood Communities

Residents and organizations in the areas surrounding campus

Why HEIs Function as Civic Hubs

Gather Diverse Groups

Natural convergence of different backgrounds, disciplines, disciplines, and perspectives

Have Communication Infrastructure

Existing channels: email lists, social media, notice boards, boards, events

Host Events & Initiatives

Spaces, permissions, and experience in organizing activities activities

Connect Knowledge with Practice

Academic expertise applied to real community challenges challenges

Support Experimentation

Tolerance for pilot projects, learning from failure, iterative improvement

Mediate Between Levels

Bridge European policies, national contexts, and local realities

This wider ecosystem enables engagement that no single actor could achieve alone

Mapping & Low-Threshold Engagement



Funded by
the European Union

Design starts with institutional reality

Map What Already Exists

Before designing new projects, identify existing structures and initiatives:

Student Councils

Representative bodies, governance participation, advocacy channels

NGOs & Student Clubs

Thematic organizations, volunteer groups, interest-based communities

Volunteering Structures

Coordinated programs, service-learning, community service

Campus Media

Newspapers, radio, social media channels, communication teams

Inclusion Offices

Support services for underrepresented groups, accessibility services

International Offices

Mobility programs, international student support, partnerships

Local Partnerships

Existing relationships with community organizations, schools, authorities

Thematic Weeks & Events

Regular programming: diversity weeks, sustainability days, cultural festivals

Low-Threshold Activities

Especially valuable for inviting first-time engagement:

EU Visual Week

Campus-wide visual campaign on EU opportunities and values

Mini Debate Forums

Short, focused discussions on specific EU topics

Poster/Infographic Exhibitions

Visual storytelling about EU mobility, rights, opportunities

Student Story Walls

Peer-to-peer sharing of mobility experiences, challenges, advice

Short Workshops

1-hour sessions on mobility applications, rights awareness

Policy-in-Comics Activities

Creative visualization of EU policies and their local impact

Community Dialogue Cafés

Informal conversations between students and community members

Campus Micro-Campaigns

Targeted awareness campaigns on specific issues



Funded by
the European Union

03

Designing Micro-Engagement Projects

From ideas to credible, implementable project concepts

Project Logic Framework

Essential structure for credible project design



Funded by
the European Union

Simple Project Logic

1. Problem or Need

What specific issue are you addressing? Be concrete, not vague.

2. Target Group

Who is this for? A project for "everyone" is usually for no one.

3. Objective

What do you want to achieve? Specific, realistic, audience-centred.

4. Activities

What will you actually do? Feasible, visible, engaging, manageable.

5. Outputs

What tangible products will you create? Materials, events, documentation.

Defining the Problem Clearly

Weak projects begin with vague themes. Strong projects begin with specific problems:

✘ Weak:

"Promote European citizenship"

✓ Strong:

"Students do not know about EU mobility opportunities"

✓ Strong:

"Inclusion measures exist but are poorly communicated"

✓ Strong:

"Local partners are not engaged in EU-themed campus activities"

✓ Strong:

"EU values are present in discourse but invisible in daily student life"

Problem definition determines project quality.

Realistic Objectives

A good objective should be:

- Specific

Stakeholder Mapping & Partnerships



Funded by
the European Union

Identifying who is needed and why

Typical Stakeholders

Student Councils

Representation, legitimacy, communication channels, participant recruitment

International Offices

Mobility expertise, Erasmus+ knowledge, international student connections

Inclusion/Accessibility Units

Expertise on barriers, support services, underrepresented group group outreach

Local NGOs

Community connections, issue expertise, volunteer networks networks

Municipal Actors

Local government support, public space access, policy alignment

Schools

Youth outreach, educational partnerships, future student pipeline

Youth Organisations

Peer networks, youth perspective, engagement methodologies

Local Media

Visibility, public awareness, narrative shaping

Why Partnerships Matter

Broaden Reach

Access to networks and audiences you couldn't reach alone alone

Strengthen Credibility

Multiple endorsers increase trust and legitimacy

Connect Campus & Community

Bridge between university and local realities

Improve Sustainability

Shared ownership increases likelihood of continuation continuation

Create Shared Ownership

Partners invested in success, not just providing services

Increase Practical Relevance

Ground EU themes in concrete local issues and needs

Risk Mapping & Mitigation

Practical risk management for realistic project design



Funded by
the European Union

Identify Three Key Risks

Every project should identify at least:

1. Participation Risk

Low turnout

Target group not reached or not interested

Wrong audience

Participants don't match intended target group

Accessibility barriers

Physical, digital, or communication obstacles

2. Communication Risk

Unclear message

Participants don't understand purpose or value

Weak visibility

Information doesn't reach intended audience

Misinterpretation

Message misunderstood or misrepresented

Simple Mitigation Strategies

Risk management should be practical, not bureaucratic:

Narrow the Target Group

Focus on specific, reachable audience rather than "everyone"

Simplify Activities

Reduce complexity to ensure quality execution

Use Accessible Communication

Multiple channels, clear language, visual materials

Partner with Existing Structures

Build on established routines and trusted channels

Plan a Back-Up Format

Alternative delivery if primary plan fails

Limit Scope to Protect Quality

Better to do less well than more poorly

Create Clear Follow-Up Pathway

Next steps for participants who want to engage further

Sustainability & Institutional Anchoring



Funded by
the European Union

Ensuring projects can continue and remain visible

What Makes Projects Sustainable?

Can Be Repeated

Design for iteration, not one-time execution

Can Be Adapted by Others

Clear documentation enables replication

Remain Visible After Events

Materials, documentation, ongoing presence

Create Reusable Materials

Templates, toolkits, guides for future use

Connect with Existing Structures

Embedded in institutional routines and cycles

Attract Continuing Support

Demonstrated value encourages ongoing investment

Institutional Anchoring

Projects become more sustainable when anchored in:

Faculty or Department

Academic home with ongoing commitment

Student Organisation

Annual leadership transitions ensure continuity

Annual Event Cycle

Part of regular programming: welcome week, diversity month

Responsible Office

Inclusion, internationalisation, or student services

HEI-Community Partnership

Long-term relationship beyond single project

VISUAL-EU Digital Hub

Platform for sharing, visibility, and connection

Anchoring is often the difference between activity and continuity.

Resource Realism

Think realistically about:

- Minimal budget needs
- Free or low-cost tools

Strong vs. Weak Project Design



Funded by
the European Union

Common weaknesses and principles of strong concepts

Common Weaknesses

Frequent problems in engagement design:

No Clear Target Group

"For all students" means no specific audience

Too Broad a Message

Trying to say everything, communicating nothing

Weak Local Relevance

Abstract EU themes without campus connection

Symbolic Rather Than Meaningful Participation

Activities that look good but don't engage

No Stakeholder Ownership

Partners listed but not genuinely involved

No Sustainability Plan

One-off event with no follow-up pathway

Inaccessible Design

Barriers prevent full participation

Overly Ambitious Scope

Trying to do too much with limited resources

Strong Project Concepts

A strong concept should be:

Clearly Focused

Specific problem, specific audience, specific objective

Locally Relevant

EU themes connected to concrete campus issues

Connected to EU Value or Opportunity

Clear link to European citizenship, rights, or programs

Feasible

Realistic given time, resources, and capacity

Inclusive

Designed to reduce barriers and enable participation

Stakeholder-Aware

Partners with concrete roles and genuine involvement

Sustainable (at least minimally)

Pathway for continuation or replication

Transparent About Limitations

Honest about risks, constraints, and what can't be done

Key Takeaways & Follow-Up



Funded by
the European Union

Main conclusions and practical next steps

Today's Main Conclusions

1. European Citizenship in Everyday Life

Citizenship becomes meaningful when translated into everyday participation and belonging—not just abstract rights, but visible, accessible experiences in campus life.

2. HEIs as Civic & Community Hubs

Higher education institutions can act as strategic connectors when they link European themes with local realities, bringing together diverse stakeholders in civic ecosystems.

3. Strong Micro-Projects Require Clear Logic

Effective engagement requires realistic scope, clear problem definition, specific target groups, stakeholder awareness, and awareness, and practical design principles.

4. Low-Threshold Can Be Highly Effective

Small, well-designed activities can achieve significant impact when they are inclusive, evidence-based, visually strong, and strong, and strategically relevant.

Mini-Task for Participants

Draft a 1–2 page project concept for a campus-based or community-based initiative that uses **visual tools** to promote one **EU value or opportunity**.

- **Include:**
- Project title
 - Problem or need
 - Target group
 - Objective
 - 2–3 key activities
 - 3–5 stakeholders
 - 3 main risks and mitigation
 - 2–3 simple indicators
 - One sustainability measure



Funded by
the European Union

Thank You

Questions & Discussion

Dr. Habil. Olena Pimenowa
VIZJA University Professor

VISUAL-EU Summer School

Grant Agreement 101235890 — VISUAL-EU — ERASMUS-JMO-2025-HEI-TCH-RSCH