Module 1 VibeSpark ACTIVITY

VIBES

Visionary Initiatives for a Balanced and Eco-conscious Society for Youth

European Identity, Citizenship & Shared Values



Project Number: 2025-1-EL02-KA151-YOU-000296864

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VIBES

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Introduction

Europe is more than a geographical space. It is also a community shaped by shared principles, different cultures, democratic traditions, and the participation of its citizens. For young people, understanding what it means to be European can help them recognise that they are part of a wider community while still maintaining their local and national identities.
Youth work has an important role in this process. Through dialogue, non-formal learning, intercultural exchange, and participation, youth workers can help young people explore European identity, understand democratic values, and recognise their ability to contribute to society.
This is at the heart of VibeSpark, which aims to strengthen participants' understanding of European identity, citizenship and shared values while encouraging active engagement in democratic life.



Understanding European Identity

European identity does not mean that people must think, live, or identify in the same way. Europe is characterised by different languages, cultures, histories, traditions, and perspectives.

European identity can instead be understood as a sense of connection to a wider community based on cooperation and shared principles.

A young person can feel connected to their city, region, country and Europe at the same time. These identities do not have to compete with one another. They can coexist and contribute to a richer understanding of belonging.

For youth workers, exploring identity creates opportunities for young people to reflect on questions such as:

Who am I? Where do I belong? What connects me with people from other European countries? What kind of Europe do I want to be part of?





What Connects Europeans?

People across Europe have very different experiences and backgrounds, but cooperation becomes possible when societies recognise certain shared principles.

Within VibeSpark, particular attention is given to:

Democracy • Human Rights • Solidarity • Equality • Respect for Diversity

These values provide a common foundation for participation and peaceful coexistence.

They are not only abstract political ideas. They influence everyday experiences: whether people can express their views, participate in decisions, live without discrimination, access opportunities, and feel respected within their communities.

Understanding European values therefore begins by connecting them with real life.

European Values in Everyday Life



Values become meaningful when people can see how they affect their everyday experiences.

Democracy can be present when young people are invited to participate in decisions that affect them.

Equality becomes visible when people have fair opportunities regardless of their background.

Solidarity can appear when communities support people facing difficulties.

Respect for diversity means recognising difference without treating it as a threat.

Human rights protect the dignity and freedoms of every person.

Youth workers can help young people move beyond simply knowing these words and explore what they actually mean in schools, workplaces, organisations, neighbourhoods and digital spaces.

Citizenship: More Than a Legal Status



Citizenship is often associated with passports, nationality, or legal rights. But active citizenship goes further.

It means understanding that individuals are members of a community and can contribute to its development.

An active citizen does not necessarily need to be involved in formal politics. Participation can happen through volunteering, community initiatives, youth organisations, public discussions, local actions, advocacy, environmental initiatives, cultural activities, or simply by speaking up when something is unfair.

VibeSpark encourages participants to understand civic rights and responsibilities at local, national and European levels, helping young people become informed and responsible citizens.

Rights and Responsibilities

Democratic citizenship involves both rights and responsibilities.
Young people have the right to express opinions, participate, receive information, organise themselves, and be treated equally.
At the same time, democratic participation also requires respect for the rights and dignity of others.
Responsibilities may include listening to different perspectives, checking information before sharing it, rejecting discrimination, participating constructively in dialogue, and contributing to the wellbeing of the community.
Citizenship therefore involves asking two questions:
“What rights do I have?”
and
“How can I use those rights responsibly?”
Understanding this balance helps young people move from passive membership of society toward active participation.





Democracy Is More Than Voting

Voting is an important democratic process, but democracy does not exist only during elections.

Democracy also depends on dialogue, participation, access to information, freedom of expression, respect for different opinions, and opportunities for citizens to influence decisions.

Young people can participate democratically through youth councils, consultations, associations, campaigns, community projects, public discussions, volunteering and many other forms of civic engagement.

VibeSpark specifically seeks to strengthen active civic engagement and democratic participation, encouraging participants to develop critical thinking, dialogue and participation.

Youth work can therefore become a practical space where democracy is experienced rather than only discussed.

Young People as Democratic Actors

Young people are sometimes described as the “citizens of tomorrow.” But they are already citizens and community members today.

Their experiences, concerns and ideas can contribute to public debate and community development.

Meaningful youth participation means giving young people real opportunities to:

express their views, contribute ideas, take responsibility, participate in decisions, develop initiatives and influence issues that affect their lives.

Youth workers can create environments where young people feel confident enough to participate, question, propose solutions and take initiative.

When young people understand that their voice has value, participation becomes more meaningful and democratic engagement becomes part of everyday life.



Human Rights and Human Dignity



Human rights begin with a simple principle: every person has value and deserves dignity and respect.

For young people, human rights can relate to many aspects of daily life — education, equality, participation, freedom of expression, privacy, inclusion, safety and access to opportunities.

Human rights education should therefore not remain theoretical.

Youth workers can encourage participants to recognise situations where rights are respected, restricted or challenged and to discuss how individuals and communities can respond.

Connecting rights with real experiences helps young people understand that protecting human dignity is not only the responsibility of institutions. Citizens and communities also play an important role.

Equality and Respect for Diversity

European societies are diverse. People differ in culture, language, gender, religion, abilities, experiences, beliefs and social backgrounds.

Diversity can strengthen communities by bringing different experiences and perspectives together. However, diversity alone does not automatically create inclusion.

People must also have genuine opportunities to participate.

VibeSpark places particular emphasis on inclusion, diversity and participation, including young people from different cultural and social backgrounds and people facing fewer opportunities.

Youth workers therefore have an important responsibility: creating spaces where differences are respected and where every participant feels able to contribute.



Solidarity and Social Cohesion

Solidarity means recognising that people and communities are connected.

When individuals support others, respond to shared challenges and take responsibility beyond their own personal interests, stronger communities can develop.

Solidarity may appear through volunteering, community support, peer assistance, social initiatives, environmental action or cooperation between different groups.

For young people, practising solidarity can strengthen empathy and help them understand that citizenship is not only about individual rights but also about collective responsibility.

VibeSpark connects active European citizenship with social cohesion at local, national and European levels.



Intercultural Dialogue: Learning Across Differences

European identity develops through interaction between different cultures and perspectives.

Intercultural dialogue allows people to discover both their differences and what they share.

For youth workers, international and multicultural activities provide valuable opportunities to challenge stereotypes, explore different viewpoints and develop mutual understanding.

Effective intercultural dialogue requires curiosity rather than judgement. Participants should feel able to ask questions, share experiences and listen to perspectives different from their own.

When young people learn to communicate across cultural differences, diversity becomes a source of learning rather than division.

This is particularly relevant to VibeSpark, whose participant profile emphasises cross-cultural communication and collaboration.



Critical Thinking and Constructive Dialogue

Democratic societies need citizens who can think critically.

Critical thinking does not mean automatically rejecting information or disagreeing with others. It means asking questions, considering evidence, recognising different perspectives and reflecting before forming conclusions.

Constructive dialogue is equally important.

People will not always agree, especially on social or political issues. Democracy depends on the ability to disagree while continuing to respect other people.

Youth workers can help create spaces where young people learn how to:

listen actively, explain their opinions, ask questions, challenge ideas without attacking people and remain open to changing their views.

These competences strengthen democratic participation and responsible citizenship.



Learning Citizenship Through Experience

Citizenship cannot be learned only through lectures.

Young people understand participation more deeply when they experience it. Non-formal education can create opportunities for simulations, debates, role-playing, group challenges, reflection, collaborative projects and community actions. The VibeSpark mobility itself uses non-formal education, experiential learning and collaborative activities to help participants explore active European citizenship.

Through learning by doing, participants can practise communication, cooperation, decision-making and reflection.

Youth work therefore becomes a small democratic environment where young people can experiment safely with participation before transferring those skills into their communities.



Youth Workers as Multipliers of European Values

Youth workers have an important role beyond organising activities.
They can become multipliers who help young people understand values, discover opportunities for participation and develop confidence to act. This does not mean telling young people what they should believe. The role of the youth worker is to create spaces for exploration, questioning, discussion and participation. A youth worker can encourage young people to:
recognise their rights, listen to others, question stereotypes, take initiative, participate in community life and transform ideas into action. VibeSpark expects participants to bring their learning back to their organisations and communities and act as multipliers of positive change.

From European Values to Local Action

European citizenship becomes meaningful when broad values are translated into actions close to home. A young person does not need to launch a large international initiative to make a difference.

Change can begin with a small action: creating a local discussion, organising an inclusive youth activity, volunteering, improving accessibility, starting an awareness campaign, bringing young people together, participating in a consultation or proposing an idea to a local authority.

The important step is moving from:

“I understand this issue”

to

“What can I do about it?”

This connection between reflection and action is central to active citizenship.



Building a Sense of European Belonging

Belonging develops when people feel that they are recognised, connected and able to contribute.

European belonging should therefore not be based on everyone becoming the same. It can grow from recognising diversity while discovering common goals and values.

Mobility experiences provide young people with a particularly strong opportunity to experience this idea. Meeting peers from different countries allows participants to discover that different experiences can coexist with shared concerns, aspirations and responsibilities.

A European identity can therefore be understood not as replacing national or cultural identities, but as adding another level of connection and responsibility.



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