

PARTNER SEARCH: HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-09: Lifelong learning of citizenship education and citizen participation

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The Research Centre Pedagogy in Practice at the KdG University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Belgium, Antwerp is seeking to join a consortium for the HORIZON call *Lifelong learning of citizenship education and citizen participation*

Context

Over the past years, Pedagogy in Practice has conducted research on implementing democratic values in pedagogical practices such as childcare organisations and schools and on citizen participation by means of policy labs, involving children and families in policy making processes. In Belgium, a lot of childcare workers have a vocational training (vet) or a qualification through adult education. Although democratic values take up a substantial part of their training, this happens in an implicit manner, often without mentioning terminology concerning democracy. At work as well, democratic values can be found in the Pedagogical Framework for Childcare and in a lot of practices, often implicitly. Lifelong learning opportunities for practitioners are scarce and often hands-on, focused on actions and interactions. Again, democratic values are implicit.

With respect to this call the centre would be able to:

- Work on a pilot on democratic values and citizenship education in vet and adult education for childcare practitioners. This is a particularly interesting approach, as these practitioners live democratic values in their practices with children.
- Work on a similar pilot in lifelong learning for childcare practitioners. The Research Centre itself, also provides lifelong learning courses for practitioners, both on pedagogical and organizational themes.
- Work on a pilot on policy participation for workers with vet training or adult education.
- Contribute to evaluation research of pilots.

Research Centre

Research Centre Pedagogy in Practice conducts practice-oriented research for and with professionals working with children up to 16 years of age.

Following competences are relevant to the call:

- Extensive experience with practice-oriented research for stakeholders in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care, After School Care and Leisure Time facilities and in staff training for this field.
- Strong networks in local organisations working with a diverse public of children (schools, childcare, leisure time and cultural activities, reception centers) and willing to participate in pilots and action research.
- Extensive experience in mixed-methods research, including experiential research with children, action research, evaluation research, research by design, as well as narratological analysis.
- Extensive experience in coaching methods for professionals working with young children, including coaching on the floor coaching of professionals with vet or adult education.
- Experience in developing hands-on tools, such as scripts for professional learning communities, a tool for evaluating access to nature in after school care, an instrument to assess the way children experience their time in reception centres, a digital tool to reflect on childcare's cooperation possibilities with families, a playful method to reflect on digital media in childcare facilities.
- Experience with creating digital learning platforms such as a narrative website linking the experiences of refugee children to inspirational materials for professionals, webinars about parental involvement and interactional possibilities with infants and babies.

Data gathering and analysis: The centre uses a variety of participatory methods to gather and analyse data and strives to involve research participants, respecting their agency. Researchers often include participants during data gathering (practitioners co-interview parents, organise focus groups with parents and employ pedagogic documentation; children engage in conversation through photo-voice, photo-elicitation, arts-based inquiry, ...) and experiment with co-analysis possibilities. At the heart of these methods lies the question how complex matters can be made tangible for all participants.

Philosophical frameworks: The centre adheres to a Care Ethics perspective, considering care for one another as a key element in a democratic society. It approaches the interconnected nature of the caregiver and the care receiver as a starting point and pleads to make care more democratic and democracy more caring (Tronto, 2009).

Results: The centre's research results range from action frameworks over policy recommendations and practical guides and toolboxes addressing certain topics in a variety of childcare environments.

The centre has been and is involved in several EU projects:

- Two social innovation projects in the Interreg 2seas Programme: PACE (Providing Access to Childcare and Employment) and VRAC (It takes a Village to Raise A Child), several Erasmus + projects (ProChill on training practitioners for childcare; the Value+ project on the principle of Educare), the AMIF-project MUST-a-LAB (Multi-Stakeholder labs for migrants and stakeholders), the CERV project GOTALK on children's councils in schools
- The centre is also presiding the national OMEP committee.

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