

Impacts and Results Evaluation



AKTYWNI DLA ŁAJSK

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D.6.1



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	03
Project overview, background and scope of the evaluation	
<u>Methodology</u>	07
Evaluation methodology and monitoring framework	
<u>Work Package Analysis</u>	11
Performance analysis for each work package	
<u>Impact Assessment</u>	17
Multilevel assessment on the short, medium, and long term	
<u>Target Group Engagement</u>	20
Intergenerationality and other targets' outreach strategies	
<u>Sustainability</u>	22
Democracywise's Legacy and sustainability	
<u>Conclusions</u>	22
Summary of achievements and lessons learned	

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Summary

DEMOCRACYWISE, officially titled "Defending Empowered Media, Openly Cultivating Resilience and Creating YouthWise Inclusive Social Engagement," is a dynamic initiative centered on fostering robust citizen engagement and participation across the European Union.

Its core mission was to equip communities with the necessary knowledge, tools, and platforms to actively combat disinformation, while nurturing an informed and resilient citizenry. The project was developed in response to two intertwined challenges: a growing democratic deficit, where citizens feel disconnected from EU decision-making, and the pervasive spread of manipulative narratives that erode trust in democratic institutions and the media.

To address these issues, utilizes a multifaceted approach that focuses on:

- Citizen empowerment: moving individuals from passive consumers of information to resilient democratic actors through training in media literacy, fact-checking, and critical thinking;
- Intergenerational dialogue: fostering cooperation between youth (18-30 y/o) and seniors (60+ y/o) to bridge the gap between digital-native fluency and traditional civic experience;
- Inclusive participation: actively involving marginalized and "hard-to-reach" groups to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented and that no segment of society is left vulnerable to information manipulation;
- Community-led discourse: catalyzing open dialogues and establishing Local Citizens' Panels to create a more transparent, fact-based, and participatory public sphere.

Ultimately, the project aims to rebuild trust in democratic processes and foster a cultural shift where active citizenship and media literacy become societal norms, ensuring a more cohesive and prosperous collective future for the European Union





1.2 Purpose of the Evaluation: Defining the scope of the WP6 Impact and Results Evaluation

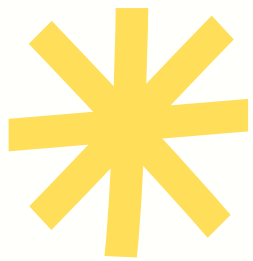
The primary purpose of this evaluation report, conducted under the framework of Work Package 6 (Project Closure), is to provide a comprehensive and rigorous assessment of the DEMOCRACYWISE project's journey, its effectiveness in achieving its stated goals, and the tangible impact it has generated across the European Union. As the project reaches its conclusion in months 23 and 24, it is essential to move beyond a mere summary of completed activities and instead delve into a critical analysis of the results achieved in relation to the original mission: defending empowered media, cultivating civic resilience, and fostering inclusive social engagement.

The scope of this evaluation is multi-dimensional, covering both quantitative outputs and qualitative shifts in civic attitudes. Quantitatively, the report analyzes the reach of the project, including the engagement of at least 605 to 726 direct participants in international and local events, as well as the successful dissemination of project results to an indirect audience of over 70,000 European citizens. A critical component of this analysis is the assessment of target group representation, ensuring that at least 50% of participants were women and that at least one-third belonged to marginalized or "hard-to-reach" communities.

Qualitatively, the evaluation seeks to determine the depth of the project's impact on the resilience of participants. It utilizes data gathered through the questionnaires distributed throughout the project's lifecycle, to verify if at least 75% of participants experienced enhanced trust in EU institutions and if 70% felt a reduction in the democratic deficit.

Methodologically, the evaluation adopts a "Structured Agile" approach, reflecting the project's management philosophy. This involves synthesizing feedback from the Local Coordination Teams (LCTs) and the Project Management Team (PMT), as well as qualitative insights from the "Talking Tools" circle time sessions used during international workshops in Italy, Cyprus, Spain, and Hungary. By reviewing the periodic reporting cycles and the results of quality evaluation questionnaires, the report identifies not only the successes but also the areas where future initiatives can improve, particularly regarding language barriers and the mitigation of disinformation campaigns.

Ultimately, the purpose of this evaluation extends beyond the project's duration. It provides the evidential basis for sustainability, outlining how the project's legacy—including the established Citizens' Panels and the permanent teams of community fact-checkers—will continue to influence local and EU-level policy-making. By documenting lessons learned and best practices, this report serves as a vital resource for stakeholders and decision-makers in Brussels during the final closure meeting, ensuring that the results of DEMOCRACYWISE contribute to a long-term cultural shift toward a more informed and participatory European society



1.3 Background and Identified Needs: Reviewing the democratic deficit and media literacy gaps identified in the Needs Assessment

The DEMOCRACYWISE needs analysis was structured as a comprehensive examination of democratic perceptions and practices across seven diverse European nations: Italy, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Hungary. This analysis, which gathered data from over 50 participants in each country, revealed a complex democratic landscape characterized by shared systemic challenges and unique national contexts. One of the most urgent issues identified is the lack of meaningful citizen participation in democratic processes, which has led to widespread apathy and a profound sense of disconnection from political decision-making. This disconnect is frequently exacerbated by institutional barriers that make it difficult for citizens, particularly those from marginalized or "hard-to-reach" communities, to contribute to discussions that affect their daily lives.

Statistical evidence from the Summer 2022 Standard Eurobarometer survey underscores this "Democratic Gap," revealing that only 46% of Europeans believe their voice counts in the EU. While 61% of respondents still feel a sense of attachment to the Union, there is a growing pessimism regarding the future, with 56% believing that life will be significantly harder for the next generation. This sentiment is rooted in a global environment dominated by a "polycrisis", encompassing climate change, socioeconomic disruption, migration, and war, which requires radical actions that often seem distant and unresponsive to the general public. Participants in the needs assessment expressed deep concerns about opaque decision-making processes and the difficulty of holding elected officials accountable, which breeds cynicism and diminishes public trust in governance.

The erosion of information integrity emerged as a second critical pillar of concern. The analysis highlighted a pervasive mistrust in media, with participants citing bias, sensationalism, and the failure of news outlets to provide reliable information as major factors in the fragmentation of public discourse. This vacuum of trust is increasingly filled by alternative sources that may perpetuate misinformation. According to European Commission data, 83% of EU citizens view disinformation as a direct threat to democracy, a phenomenon that looms large in the current political climate. Disinformation is strategically used to delegitimize electoral processes, foster the belief that voting does not yield political change, and portray national governments as puppets of external forces.

The impact of this "Information Disorder" is felt most acutely among younger Europeans, with 63% encountering false news on a weekly basis. Furthermore, 51% of Europeans acknowledge that they have been exposed to misleading online content, yet there remains a significant gap in the skills required to navigate this landscape. Studies indicate that 43% of 14-year-olds in Europe do not reach a basic level of digital skills, leaving them vulnerable to manipulative narratives. The rise of AI-generated synthetic media, such as deepfakes, has introduced the "Liar's Dividend," an epistemic threat where citizens find it impossible to distinguish reality from fabrication, allowing public figures to deny real evidence by claiming it is digital manipulation.



The needs assessment also identified a vulnerability gap linked to socioeconomic status. Individuals with lower educational and socioeconomic levels living in marginalized areas face unique challenges, as they often lack access to reliable EU-related information and are disproportionately targeted by disinformation campaigns. Their limited access to quality educational resources reinforces a sense of alienation and makes them more susceptible to the harmful effects of manipulative narratives. Furthermore, structural, cultural, and language barriers frequently exclude ethnic minorities and non-native speakers from participating in traditional governance structures.

To address these needs, the project identified a requirement for a "whole-of-society" approach that moves beyond individual skill acquisition toward community empowerment. There is a clear call for participatory mechanisms, such as citizens' assemblies and digital interaction tools, to bridge the gap between citizens and decision-makers. Additionally, the analysis highlighted the necessity of intergenerational knowledge exchange, pairing the technical fluency of digital-native youth with the contextual experience and critical skepticism of senior citizens. Ultimately, the needs assessment serves as a roadmap to rebuild trust, enhance media literacy, and foster a more resilient and inclusive European citizenry.



Section 1: Democracy Perception

How would you rate the state of democracy in your community? *

1 2 3 4 5

Very weak ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very strong

In your opinion, what are the most important aspects of a healthy democracy? *

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Free and fair elections
- ☐ Freedom of speech
- ☐ Independent media
- ☐ Active citizen participation
- ☐ Accountability of public officials
- ☐ Rule of law
- ☐ Altro: _____



2. Evaluation Methodology and Monitoring Framework

2.1 Strategic Approach: Implementation of the "Structured Agile" methodology

The DemocracyWise project is executed through a strategic management framework defined as "Structured Agile." This innovative methodology was specifically selected to address the complex requirements of a transnational initiative funded under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme, which necessitates a high degree of administrative rigor alongside the flexibility required for effective grassroots community engagement. By integrating these two seemingly opposing concepts, the consortium established a robust foundation for achieving its ultimate goal: fostering a positive impact on diverse European communities while remaining strictly aligned with the Grant Agreement's objectives.

The "Structured" component of this methodology provides the project's backbone. It involves the initial establishment of a fundamental project architecture, characterized by clearly delineated Work Packages (WPs), high-level deadlines, and specific deliverables. This structure ensures that the Project Management Team (PMT) maintains effective control over the project's trajectory, budget expenditures, and quality standards. By defining the sequence of activities—from the initial Needs Assessment (WP2) to the final Impact Evaluation (WP6)—the "Structured" approach provides all seven partner nations with a reliable roadmap, ensuring accountability to the European Commission and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Conversely, the "Agile" component introduces the necessary flexibility during the practical implementation of activities at the local level. The consortium recognized that a "one-size-fits-all" approach would be ineffective across such diverse national contexts as those of Italy, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Hungary. Therefore, while the high-level goals remained fixed, the specific methodologies used for Local Awareness-raising Events and Citizens' Panels were adapted to meet the unique linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic needs of local residents. This agility allowed Local Coordination Teams (LCTs) to respond in real-time to challenges such as fluctuating participant engagement or language barriers, making the project truly responsive to the communities it serves.

This methodology is deeply rooted in a bottom-up and democratic approach, prioritizing non-discrimination and equal accessibility for all participants. By involving citizens and communities in the planning and execution of activities, the "Structured Agile" framework nurtures a sense of belonging and ownership. A prime example of this is the "Community Learning" methodology (Citizen Action), where young participants share their digital fluency with seniors, who in turn provide contextual experience and critical skepticism. This participatory knowledge exchange ensures that the project activities are not merely top-down instructions but are instead co-created spaces for intergenerational dialogue.



The governance of this methodology is managed through a dual structure consisting of the PMT and the LCTs. The PMT, acting as the authoritative body for decision-making, oversees the selection of methodologies and the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Meanwhile, each partner organization establishes its own LCT to manage local actions, adhere to schedules, and gather best practices directly from their community. This synergy is maintained through a periodic reporting cycle, where LCTs provide informal reports every four months, allowing the PMT to generate official assessments and make data-driven adjustments.

Ultimately, the implementation of the "Structured Agile" methodology has proven essential for the success of DemocracyWise. It allows the consortium to maintain high-quality standards and meet strict project timelines while simultaneously empowering citizens to become "Information Guardians" within their local contexts. By balancing administrative control with local adaptability, this strategic approach ensures that the project's impact is both measurable at the EU level and deeply meaningful for the individual European citizen.

2.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Quantitative and qualitative metrics for success

The DEMOCRACYWISE project employs a structured evaluation framework designed to track progress and verify the effectiveness of its actions through a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. These metrics were established to ensure that the project not only met its administrative obligations under the CERV programme but also achieved a meaningful shift in civic resilience and institutional trust across the seven partner nations.

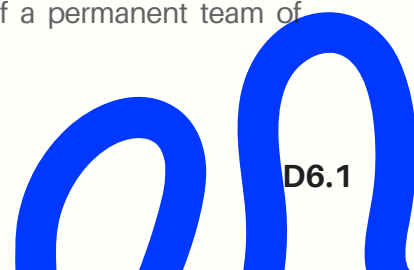
Quantitative Indicators

The project's quantitative success is measured by its ability to reach specific targets regarding participation and output completion.

Quantitative Indicators

The project's quantitative success is measured by its ability to reach specific targets regarding participation and output completion.

- Direct participant engagement: the project set a target to involve between 605 and 726 direct participants in its international workshops and local awareness-raising events.
- Inclusive representation: a critical KPI for DemocracyWise is the diversity of its audience. The framework mandates that at least 50% of all participants are women and that at least one-third (33%) belong to marginalized or "hard-to-reach" groups.
- Indirect reach and dissemination: through communication, networking, and multiplier activities, the project aims to indirectly impact at least 70,000 European citizens.
- Event and output completion: success is also defined by the 100% implementation of planned activities, including the Kick-off meeting, two specialized international workshops, 14 local awareness-raising events, and the final closure meeting in Brussels.
- Production of deliverables: a primary quantitative output is the successful creation and dissemination of the DemocracyWise Toolkit (Deliverable D5.1) and the establishment of a permanent team of community fact-checkers





Qualitative Indicators

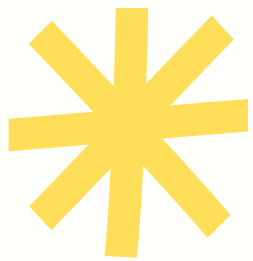
Qualitative metrics focus on the depth of the project's impact and the attitudinal changes experienced by the participants.

- Enhanced institutional trust: a core goal of the project is that at least 75% of participants report an increased level of trust in EU institutions following their involvement;
- Reduction of the democratic deficit: the project evaluates its effectiveness in bridging the gap between citizens and decision-makers, with a target of 70% of participants feeling a reduction in the perceived democratic deficit;
- Growth in media literacy: success is verified by participants' increased confidence in identifying disinformation, detecting "red flags" in news feeds, and utilizing fact-checking tools;
- Intergenerational knowledge exchange: the project monitors the quality of dialogue between youth (18-35) and seniors (65+), measuring how effectively digital fluency and traditional civic experience were shared;
- Best practices and policy influence: the collection and sharing of best practices and the creation of a "Recommendations Kit" for local and EU decision-makers serve as indicators of the project's long-term policy impact.

Verification and Monitoring Mechanisms

To ensure these KPIs are accurately tracked, the Project Management Team (PMT) and Local Coordination Teams (LCTs) utilize a multi-layered monitoring process. Verification is achieved through the systematic use of interactive feedback tools like Mentimeter, and the collection of qualitative insights during "circle time" debriefings. Furthermore, LCTs provide informal reports every four months, which allow the PMT to perform real-time quality control assessments and make data-driven adjustments to ensure all success metrics are met by the project's conclusion





2.3 Data Collection Tools: use of Mentimeter, quality evaluation questionnaires, and "Talking Tools"

To ensure a rigorous and transparent assessment of the DEMOCRACYWISE project's performance, the consortium implemented a diverse array of data collection tools tailored to capture a wide spectrum of results. This multi-layered framework was designed to measure both the statistical reach of the activities and the nuanced attitudinal shifts within the target communities. By employing a mix of digital interaction platforms, standardized assessments, and non-formal qualitative techniques, the project team was able to triangulate data and generate a holistic view of the project's impact across all seven partner nations.

Evaluation Questionnaires Prepared by the Team

The primary instrument for tracking progress against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) consisted of evaluation questionnaires specifically designed and predisposed by the project team. These questionnaires were utilized at critical stages of the project lifecycle to ensure continuous monitoring. Initially, they served as a baseline assessment tool during the Needs Assessment (WP2), allowing the team to collect essential data on existing knowledge levels and attitudes regarding disinformation and media literacy. Subsequently, these questionnaires were systematically distributed at the conclusion of all local awareness-raising events and international workshops to measure immediate outcomes, participant satisfaction, and the quality of the activities. This approach ensured that the Project Management Team (PMT) received continuous, data-driven insights to perform real-time quality control assessments and make necessary adjustments.

During international workshops and community-driven meetings, the project successfully incorporated Mentimeter, an interactive digital tool used to facilitate direct engagement and collect real-time evaluations. This tool proved essential in transforming traditionally passive presentations into dynamic dialogues, particularly during sessions focused on Effective Participation and Citizens' Panels. Participants utilized Mentimeter to respond to live polls, share immediate reflections, and provide feedback on the various methodologies being tested. This digital interaction not only provided the team with instant data for evaluation but was also highly appreciated by both youth and senior participants for fostering an environment of active engagement rather than passive listening.

The data gathered through these various tools was further synthesized through a periodic reporting cycle. Local Coordination Teams (LCTs) were responsible for compiling the results from questionnaires, Mentimeter sessions, and "talking tool" debriefings into informal reports every four months. These reports, which included detailed records of participants and implementation status, were then submitted to the PMT to generate official assessments. This comprehensive data collection ecosystem ensured that the final evaluation of DEMOCRACYWISE remained rigorous, participatory, and grounded in the real-world experiences of European citizens.

3. Work Package (WP) Performance Analysis

3.1 WP1 – Project Initiation: Evaluation of consortium alignment and the Kick-off in Orte

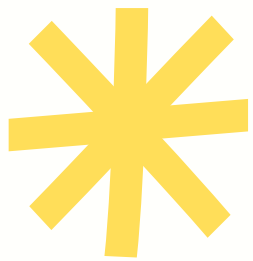
The first phase of DEMOCRACYWISE, designated as Work Package 1 (Project Initiation), was strategically designed to establish a solid administrative and cooperative foundation for the 24-month project duration. The primary objectives of this WP were to ensure a smooth transition from the proposal stage to implementation, finalize essential governance documents, and align all seven partner organizations—representing Italy, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Hungary—with the project's overarching mission. Central to this initiation phase was the Project Kick-off Meeting, which served as the official launch of the initiative and the first major milestone for consortium alignment.

During the initial months, the Project Management Team (PMT) focused on finalizing the Consortium Agreement (Task 1.1) and the Project Communication Plan (Task 1.2). These efforts were crucial for defining the "Structured Agile" methodology, which balances high-level EU reporting requirements with the flexibility needed for local grassroots engagement. The operational alignment was further solidified through an internal staff meeting held in Orte, where the consortium finalized the comprehensive timetable for future activities and debated the most effective methodologies for reaching intergenerational target groups (youth 18–30 and seniors 60+) and marginalized communities. This initiation ensured that all partners were equipped with a clear roadmap and understood their specific roles within the "dual management structure" of PMT and Local Coordination Teams.

The DEMOCRACYWISE Kick-off Meeting took place in Orte, Italy, from September 6th to 9th, 2024. Hosted by the coordinator, Lighthouse Languages, the event functioned as an international public forum that successfully involved 88 direct participants from all seven partner nations. The diversity of the participants was a key success factor, with an excellent gender balance (45 females and 43 males) and the presence of both digital-native youth and experienced senior citizens.

The implementation of WP1 was highly effective, achieving all its intended outcomes. It successfully launched the project by triggering public debate on the democratic deficit and established a highly cooperative environment for the consortium. Furthermore, the logistics of the event demonstrated a commitment to sustainability, utilizing local housing in the historical center and public transportation (trains) to minimize the environmental footprint. By the conclusion of Month 2, the consortium was fully aligned, having transformed a theoretical work plan into an operational network ready to commence the Needs Assessment phase.

Read the Event Description Sheet here: <https://tinyurl.com/DEMOWISE>



3.2 WP2 – Needs Assessment: Analysis of baseline data collection and local engagement

Work Package 2, designated as Needs Assessment, represented a critical phase in the DEMOCRACYWISE project, focused on bridging the gap between theoretical objectives and the grassroots realities of European citizens. This WP was executed between Months 3 and 6 of the project lifecycle. The primary goal was to conduct a robust examination of democratic perceptions and media literacy across the seven partner nations (Italy, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Hungary) to establish a factual baseline for all subsequent project activities.

The consortium employed a multi-pronged data collection strategy to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive dataset. This involved the distribution of localized surveys, translated into national languages to remove participation barriers, which combined quantitative scaling questions with open-ended qualitative prompts. To maximize outreach, the project leveraged four distinct channels:

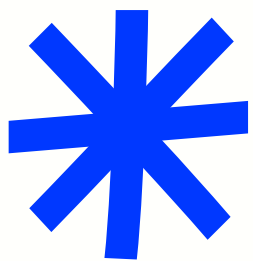
- Local community networks: utilizing neighborhoods and grassroots organizations for direct outreach;
- Social media platforms: targeted messaging and advertisements are effective in reaching younger, digital-native demographics;
- Project website: a centralized hub for survey contributions and project information;
- Direct outreach: email campaigns and personalized communication with civic and advocacy groups to establish trust.

This effort resulted in a high-quality dataset gathering input from over 50 participants per country, providing a multifaceted view of the democratic landscape. The data was systematically disaggregated by gender and age, ensuring that the needs of youth (18-30) and seniors (60+) were clearly identified. The findings revealed a profound "Democratic Gap," with many citizens feeling their voices did not count in EU decision-making and expressing significant concerns regarding media bias and the significance of disinformation as a threat to democratic stability.

Parallel to the data collection, the consortium organized a series of Local Engagement Events (Task 2.3) across all partner communities. These events were highly effective, reaching a total of 197 direct participants across seven countries. The sessions were structured to move beyond simple data gathering, functioning as forums for active civic education.

The effectiveness of these events was verified through immediate feedback; participants gained a clearer understanding of EU democratic mechanisms and expressed increased motivation to join subsequent project phases, such as the establishment of Citizens' Panels.

The results of WP2 provided the essential roadmap for the development of the DemocracyWise Toolkit (D5.1) and the design of the international workshops. By identifying specific barriers—such as socioeconomic vulnerability and language barriers—the consortium was able to refine its "Structured Agile" approach, ensuring that future interventions were tailored to the most urgent needs of marginalized and "hard-to-reach" groups. Ultimately, WP2 successfully transformed raw community data into actionable insights, establishing a strong foundation for a more informed and resilient European public sphere.



3.3 WP3 – Capacity Building: impact of international workshops on citizenship skills and facilitator training

Work Package 3, titled Capacity Building for Citizens Engagement, represented a transformative phase in the DEMOCRACYWISE project, focused on moving from the theoretical findings of the Needs Assessment to the practical empowerment of participants. Led by ILEWASI (Spain) and implemented between Months 7 and 12, this WP was designed to satisfy two primary strategic needs: equipping local citizens with essential citizenship skills and training a dedicated cohort of facilitators capable of leading future engagement activities within their respective communities.

The initiation of WP3 involved the meticulous Design of Citizen Engagement Workshop Materials (Task 3.1). These resources, which culminated in Deliverable D3.1, provided a comprehensive methodological framework focused on critical thinking, media literacy, and active civic engagement. Following the design phase, the consortium implemented the Training of Facilitators (Task 3.2), identifying and preparing individuals within each partner organization to lead community-driven sessions. This approach ensured that each of the seven partner nations established a permanent local capacity to facilitate democratic dialogue, thereby guaranteeing the project's scalability and long-term institutional memory.

The cornerstone of this Work Package was the International Workshop on Effective Participation, hosted by ILEWASI in Castellon de la Plana, Spain, from March 24th to 27th, 2025. This event successfully brought together 79 direct participants from all seven partner nations. In strict alignment with the project's inclusive mission, the workshop maintained a strong intergenerational character, involving 35 youth (18–30), 24 seniors (60+), and 20 participants from marginalized or "hard-to-reach" groups.

The workshop program was structured to maximize peer-to-peer learning and practical skill acquisition:

- Exchange of best practices: partners shared multilevel case studies, ranging from grassroots initiatives like the Hungarian Historical Jousts to structured EU-level actions like the Conference on the Future of Europe. A particularly moving Spanish case study demonstrated how citizen-led activation filled institutional gaps following the Dana floods in Valencia;
- Digital interaction tools: the workshop introduced the use of Mentimeter to facilitate direct engagement during meetings and collect real-time evaluations. This tool was highly praised by both youth and adult participants for transforming passive presentations into dynamic dialogues.
- EU participatory mechanisms: a significant portion of the training focused on "Transferring the participatory level" to the European Union. Participants received hands-on training on EU Public Consultations ("Have your say") and the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), even collaborating in groups to draft their own mock initiatives.

The impact was particularly evident in the intergenerational synergy generated during the sessions. Young participants found the non-formal methodologies highly effective for knowledge transmission, while older participants reported that the mixed methodology successfully guided them in the use of both digital participatory tools and traditional reflection techniques. By combining academic perspectives from the international participants with local cultural integration during the Magdalena Festival, the workshop reinforced the idea that European democracy is a shared responsibility rooted in both intellectual progress and cultural heritage.



3.4 WP4 – Community Engagement: Local Citizens’ Panels and pre-bunking strategies

Work Package 4, titled Community Engagement to Combat Disinformation, represented the project's strategic transition from individual capacity building to collective community action. Led by VAMOS (Cyprus) and implemented between Months 13 and 18, this WP focused on equipping active citizens with advanced media literacy tools to enhance their resilience against disinformation campaigns. The core of this phase was the establishment of Local Citizens’ Panels and the execution of a specialized international workshop centered on the proactive strategy of "pre-bunking".

The initiation of WP4 involved organizing local meetings across the seven partner nations to establish Local Citizens’ Panels (Task 4.1). These panels were designed as advisory bodies composed of interested community members dedicated to identifying and debating relevant news that could impact local, national, and EU democratic debates. By acquisition of specific competencies during the project's workshops, panel members were empowered to co-design recommendations for policy-makers and MEPs, effectively bridging the "Democratic Gap" through a direct channel to institutional representatives. International Workshop for Citizens’ Panels (Larnaka, Cyprus)

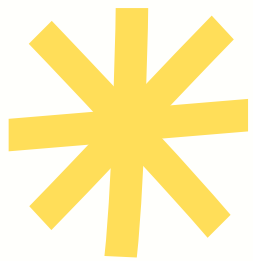
The pivotal event of this Work Package was the International Workshop for Citizens’ Panels, hosted by VAMOS in Larnaka, Cyprus, from October 9th to 13th, 2025. The workshop successfully involved 82 direct participants from all seven partner nations, maintaining a strong intergenerational balance with 51 females and 31 males.

The evaluation of WP4 highlights the high effectiveness of non-formal methodologies, particularly "Serious Games" like "Bad News" and "Under Pressure". These simulations allowed participants to step into the role of a disinformation producer in a safe environment to build "mental antibodies" against real-world manipulation. Feedback indicated that young participants found these activities most effective for knowledge acquisition, while older participants successfully utilized the mixed methodology to navigate digital participatory tools.

The implementation of WP4 successfully created a dedicated group of citizens in each involved organization ready to act as "Information Guardians" and pre-bunkers within their local communities. The workshop reinforced community resilience against systemic democratic threats and established a cooperative environment for future advocacy. By combining academic insights with moving cultural experiences—such as the meeting with the Kythrea Municipality regarding historical memory—the project fostered an informed and empathetic European public sphere. Ultimately, WP4 satisfied its objective of transforming passive information consumers into resilient, active participants in the defense of democratic discourse.

Read the event description sheet here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc42zxue>





3.5 WP5 – Awareness Campaign: the Toolkit reach and local awareness-raising events

Work Package 5, titled Media Literacy and Disinformation Awareness Campaign, represented the culmination of the project's educational and engagement efforts. Led by Lighthouse Languages, this WP was designed to transform the insights and methodologies developed throughout the project into permanent, accessible impacts for the European public. The strategic objective was to raise widespread awareness about the importance of active citizenship in safeguarding democratic discourse and countering the spread of manipulative narratives.

A central achievement of WP5 was the creation of the DEMOCRACYWISE Toolkit for Participation and Critical Thinking. This 40-page comprehensive roadmap was designed as an open-access digital resource to serve as a legacy hub for fact-checking tools and civic engagement strategies.

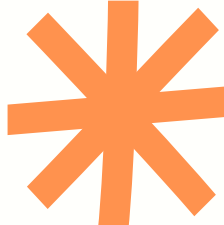
By making these resources publicly available on the project's website, the consortium ensured a multiplier effect, reaching beyond the direct participants to a broader audience across the seven involved countries.

Following the production of the toolkit, the consortium organized a series of Local Awareness-Raising Events in Italy, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Hungary. These events were highly effective, surpassing the initial participation targets. While the original proposal aimed to involve at least 276 citizens, the final implementation successfully engaged 290 direct participants.

The events were characterized by a strong commitment to inclusivity and gender balance, featuring 149 female and 141 male participants. These sessions functioned as practical testing grounds for the toolkit's contents, where facilitators trained in WP3 led workshops on identifying "red flags" in media and utilizing interactive digital tools like Mentimeter for collective fact-checking. The feedback from these sessions indicated that participants felt significantly more empowered to navigate complex news feeds and were motivated to continue their roles as community fact-checkers.

The implementation of WP5 successfully fulfilled its mission to heighten media literacy norms within the involved communities. By combining the top-down coordination of the PMT with the grassroots agility of the Local Coordination Teams, the campaign ensured that the project's results reached diverse socio-economic groups. The high attendance rates and the successful distribution of the toolkit verified that the consortium had established a robust foundation for civic resilience. This phase effectively prepared the ground for the final Project Closure (WP6), ensuring that the results achieved were ready for comprehensive evaluation and presentation to EU policy-makers in Brussels.





3.6 WP6 – Project Closure: Impact evaluation, sustainability planning, and EU-level communication

Work Package 6, led by Lighthouse Languages (Italy) during Months 23 and 24, focused on synthesizing the project's achievements and ensuring a lasting legacy. This final phase transformed two years of grassroots activity into a strategic framework for future civic resilience.

The project team conducted a rigorous final evaluation (Deliverable D6.1: this publication), integrating data from evaluation questionnaires, qualitative "Talking Tools" sessions, and real-time Mentimeter feedback. The results confirmed that DEMOCRACYWISE successfully addressed the "Democratic Gap" by empowering a diverse, intergenerational cohort of "Information Guardians" across seven nations.

The initiative concluded with a high-level Closure Meeting in Brussels (May 6th–9th, 2026), involving 86 participants from all partner countries. Key highlights included:

- European Parliament: delegations met with Vice President Antonella Sberna and MEPs Cynthia Ni Mhurchú and Vicent Marzà to present the "Recommendations Kit," ensuring grassroots voices reached EU policy-makers.
- EACEA Visit: participants visited the European Education and Culture Executive Agency to explore EU programs like Erasmus+, strengthening the link between local action and institutional support. This transition from local workshops to the European quarter provided participants, especially youth, with a tangible sense of political agency.

The final pillar focused on the Sustainability Plan to maintain the project's impact beyond EU funding. The core of this legacy is the DEMOCRACYWISE Toolkit, presented as a "roadmap for future civic resilience". By making this a permanent, open-access digital resource, the consortium established a resilient European network equipped to safeguard the public sphere and initiate future collaborations.

4. Multi-level Impact Assessment

4.1 Short-term Effects: Increased awareness of EU processes and disinformation identification tools

The short-term impact of the DemocracyWise project focuses on the immediate changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills experienced by participants following their engagement in project activities. These effects primarily benefit citizens who previously had limited engagement in EU affairs, with a specific emphasis on those from marginalized backgrounds and individuals with lower socio-economic and educational levels. By providing direct access to reliable information and practical training, the project successfully initiated a transition from passive information consumption to proactive civic participation.

Increased Awareness of EU Processes and Democratic Mechanisms

One of the most significant immediate results was a marked increase in participants' understanding of the EU's democratic architecture. Through the Local Engagement Events (WP2) and the International Workshop on Effective Participation (WP3), citizens were introduced to the European Commission's priority "A New Push for European Democracy" and the opportunities provided by the CERV Programme.

Key areas of knowledge acquisition included:

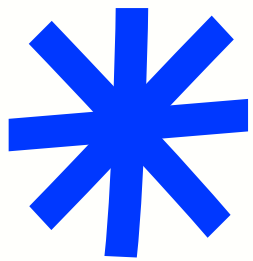
- Direct democracy instruments: participants received hands-on training on how to utilize the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and EU Public Consultations ("Have your say"). These sessions demystified institutional processes, empowering citizens to see these tools as viable channels for influencing policy-making;
- Institutional dialogue: direct contact with EU representatives, such as the visit to the House of Europe and meetings with European Commission spokespersons, clarified how citizen input directly impacts the functioning of EU institutions;
- Reduction of the "Democratic Gap": early evaluation data indicate that the project is on track to meet its objective to grant participants feeling a reduction in the perceived democratic deficit.

Enhanced Media Literacy and Disinformation Identification

In addition to institutional knowledge, the project provided immediate "cognitive vaccines" to help participants navigate the "Information Disorder". The short-term benefits in this area focused on equipping citizens with the "Information Guardian" skillset needed to identify and neutralize manipulative narratives.

Immediate gains in media literacy included:

- Identification of "Red Flags": participants learned to systematically scrutinize headlines and news feeds for signs of emotional baiting, false experts, and decontextualized content;
- Mastery of fact-checking tools: interactive sessions provided practical experience with source verification, lateral reading techniques (investigating a source's credibility across multiple tabs), and data verification platforms.
- Psychological resilience through pre-bunking: through the Cyprus workshop and local events, participants were introduced to pre-bunking (proactive debunking).



4.2 Medium-term Effects: Strengthened active citizenship and established media literacy norms

The medium-term effects of the DEMOCRACYWISE project are characterized by a strategic transition from individual skill acquisition to the establishment of sustainable civic infrastructures and collective behavioral norms across the seven partner nations. While short-term impacts focused on immediate knowledge gains, the medium-term effects aim to bridge the "Democratic Gap" by institutionalizing media literacy and active participation as foundational values within European communities.

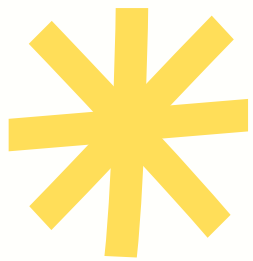
A primary pillar of the project's medium-term success is the creation of a permanent local capacity for democratic facilitation. By training a dedicated cohort of facilitators within each partner organization (WP3), the consortium has ensured that the project's methodologies for critical engagement remain available for ongoing community use. These facilitators now serve as local experts capable of leading citizen engagement workshops and promoting involvement in EU affairs long after the project's official conclusion.

Central to this strengthened citizenship is the establishment of Local Citizens' Panels. These panels have evolved from temporary discussion groups into recognized advisory bodies dedicated to identifying and debating news that impacts local and national democratic discourse. By co-designing recommendations for policy-makers and MEPs, panel members have moved from being passive observers to proactive participants with a tangible sense of political agency. Feedback indicates that this transition has successfully reduced the perceived democratic deficit, with many participants committing to follow-up actions and becoming "awareness ambassadors" within their own neighborhoods.

Beyond individual training, the project has achieved a profound shift in how information is consumed by establishing media literacy as a societal norm. The development and dissemination of the DemocracyWise Toolkit (Deliverable 5.1) has provided communities with a permanent, open-access "roadmap" for critical thinking and resilience. This resource serves as a legacy hub for fact-checking tools, ensuring that the "Information Guardian" skillset remains a standard part of civic life.

Sustained Intergenerational and Inclusive Synergy

The medium-term impact is also visible in the strengthened public discourse fostered by the project's inclusive methodology. By creating spaces where youth, seniors, and marginalized "hard-to-reach" groups engage on equal footing, DemocracyWise has built a resilient social infrastructure. This collaborative environment has humanized qualitative data and broken down cultural and socioeconomic barriers that previously excluded certain demographics from the political sphere. Ultimately, these effects ensure that the project's legacy is not just a finished set of activities, but a cohesive European network equipped to protect the "common public space" and advocate for a more transparent and participatory Union.



4.3 Long-term Effects: Rebuilding trust in democratic institutions and fostering a cultural shift toward resilience

The long-term effects of the DEMOCRACYWISE project are designed to transcend individual participation, fostering a transformative legacy that benefits society as a whole. By addressing the structural roots of civic alienation and information manipulation, the project aims to produce a sustainable reduction in the democratic deficit and establish a robust, networked defense against future threats to information integrity across the European Union.

Trust is the essential cornerstone of a functioning democracy, and the project's long-term strategy focuses on reversing the cynicism fueled by opaque decision-making and perceived institutional unresponsiveness. Through the continuous promotion of transparency and accountability, highlighted by the delivery of citizen-led Recommendations Kits directly to the European Parliament, the project has demonstrated that active engagement can lead to tangible policy influence. Over time, this demonstrated responsiveness is expected to substantially increase public confidence in democratic institutions, ensuring that citizens view their participation as a meaningful and impactful component of governance.

Fostering a Cultural Shift Toward Resilience

A primary long-term ambition of DEMOCRACYWISE is to trigger a profound cultural shift where media literacy and active citizenship become ingrained societal norms rather than occasional activities. By empowering communities to move from a state of reactive suspicion to proactive resilience, the project has established a new standard for navigating the "Information Disorder".

Ultimately, the cumulative effect of these actions is a significant and long-lasting reduction in the influence of disinformation campaigns. As communities adopt media literacy as a habit, the profit motives and political objectives of threat actors are neutralized. This indirectly strengthens the foundations of European democracy and protects the common public space necessary for rational, facts-based debate. Through enhanced cross-border collaboration and the sharing of best practices, the DemocracyWise network remains a vigilant guardian of European values, ensuring a more cohesive, informed, and prosperous collective future.

5. Inclusion and Target Group Engagement

5.1 Intergenerational Dialogue

A defining feature of the DEMOCRACYWISE project was its commitment to fostering an intergenerational knowledge exchange, pairing the digital fluency of youth with the traditional civic experience of senior citizens. This dialogue was central to the project's methodology, particularly through "Community Learning" (Citizen Action), where young participants shared technical skills in digital citizenship while older members provided critical context for evaluating information. Feedback from international workshops consistently highlighted the effectiveness of this approach. At the Kick-off Meeting in Orte, youth participants emphasized the need for more digital engagement tools, while seniors valued the accessible discussions on the "democratic gap" and requested further intergenerational workshops to deepen mutual understanding.

During the Spanish workshop, it was noted that young participants found non-formal methodologies highly effective for knowledge transmission, while adult participants successfully navigated digital tools like Mentimeter through the project's mixed-methodology guidance. This synergy was also evident in the Brussels closure meeting, where each partner delegation was intentionally structured to include at least one participant over 45 and one youth aged 18–30, ensuring a representative microcosm of the European population when meeting with EU officials.

5.2 Reaching Marginalized Communities

The project recognized that individuals with lower socio-economic status and limited access to information are disproportionately vulnerable to manipulation. To address this, DEMOCRACYWISE implemented a targeted engagement strategy involving personalized outreach, multi-language communication, and workshops tailored to overcome cultural and socioeconomic barriers. The project exceeded its commitment to ensuring that at least one-third (33%) of all participants belonged to marginalized or "hard-to-reach" groups.

Tangible examples of this inclusion were recorded throughout the implementation:

- The International Workshop in Spain successfully integrated 20 participants from marginalized groups;
- The Cyprus workshop involved 28 direct participants from hard-to-reach communities;
- The Brussels event specifically included members of the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as neurodivergent and diabetic participants, ensuring that voices often excluded from the political sphere reached the European Parliament;



5.3 Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination

In alignment with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, DemocracyWise prioritized gender equality and non-discrimination in both its management structure and participant engagement. The project mandated that at least 50% of the Project Management Team and 50% of all event participants were women.

Statistical data confirms the success of these measures:

- The Kick-off Meeting in Orte achieved a near-perfect balance with 45 females and 43 males;
- The Spanish workshop featured a strong female majority with 49 female and 30 male participants;
- The Cyprus workshop recorded 51 females and 31 males.
- Local Awareness-Raising Events (WP5) involved 149 female and 141 male participants, surpassing

Beyond numbers, the project integrated gender-responsive content into its materials, including the DEMOCRACYWISE Toolkit, and utilized communication strategies that avoided gendered stereotypes to ensure a truly inclusive environment. Regular audits and gender impact assessments were conducted to monitor progress and verify that the project remained a safe and equitable space for all European citizens.



6. Sustainability and Project Legacy

6.1 Utilization of the Toolkit: Long-term roadmap for civic resilience

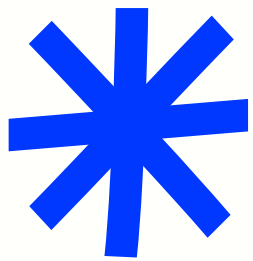
The Toolkit for Participation and Critical Thinking (Deliverable D5.1) stands as the primary tangible legacy of the initiative, designed to serve as a permanent, strategic roadmap for fostering civic resilience across the European Union. This comprehensive resource is not merely a summary of project activities but a functional guide that consolidates the collective wisdom, methodologies, and practical tools developed over the 24-month project lifecycle. The toolkit is structured to transform citizens from passive content consumers into proactive "Information Guardians". It provides a deep dive into the "Information Disorder" ecosystem, offering clear distinctions between disinformation and misinformation while introducing citizens to the innovative strategy of pre-bunking (proactive debunking)

By acting as a "mental vaccine," the toolkit equips users with the cognitive tools and counterarguments needed to identify rhetorical manipulation techniques such as emotional baiting, false experts, and impersonation.

To maximize its impact beyond the project's direct participants, the toolkit is hosted as an open-access digital resource on the project website. This ensures a continuous multiplier effect, allowing educators, civil society organizations (CSOs), and local authorities across all EU member states to download and adapt these resources for their own contexts. By making these materials freely available in English, the consortium has provided a scalable model for cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange.

The long-term utilization of the toolkit is further guaranteed through its integration into the ongoing training programs of the seven partner organizations. Having trained a dedicated cohort of facilitators (WP3), the consortium ensures that the toolkit's methodologies—such as community learning and intergenerational mentoring—will continue to be utilized in local workshops long after EU funding has concluded.

Ultimately, the toolkit represents the project's transition from a set of time-bound activities to a sustainable social infrastructure. It serves as a permanent bridge between local grassroots needs and the European institutional level, providing a clear pathway for communities to protect the "common public space" and foster a more resilient, informed, and participatory European democracy.



6.2 Post-Project Continuity Plan: Strategies for sustaining impact after EU funding ends

The sustainability of DEMOCRACYWISE is not viewed as a final task but as an integral outcome of the project's "Structured Agile" methodology, which prioritised community ownership from the initiation phase. The Sustainability Plan (Task 6.2) outlines a multi-dimensional strategy to ensure that the project's impact, rebuilding trust, enhancing media literacy, and bridging the democratic gap, continues to flourish across the European Union long after the official 24-month duration.

A primary pillar of the project's continuity is the institutionalisation of the Local Citizens' Panels established during the community engagement phase. These panels are designed to function as enduring advisory bodies that maintain a permanent channel for dialogue between grassroots communities and policy-makers, including MEPs. By co-designing the "Recommendations Kit" presented at the European Parliament in Brussels, these panels have demonstrated their capacity to influence policy, encouraging participants to remain committed as proactive democratic actors. Furthermore, the consortium has established a permanent local capacity for democratic facilitation by training a dedicated cohort of facilitators in each partner nation, ensuring that the project's methodologies remain available for ongoing community workshops.

The Toolkit (D5.1) serves as the project's permanent "roadmap for civic resilience". Hosted as an open-access digital resource, it ensures a continuous multiplier effect, allowing educators, NGOs, and local authorities across all EU member states to download and adapt its fact-checking and engagement strategies. This knowledge legacy is reinforced by the project's "awareness ambassadors"—participants who have formally committed to utilising their new "Information Guardian" skillset within their own neighbourhoods and social networks, thereby sustaining the community's collective resistance against disinformation.

The project's long-term impact is further secured through the continued cooperation of the transnational network formed by the seven partner nations. The visit to the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) during the Brussels closure meeting was specifically aimed at the sustainability of the network; it provided partners with the inner workings of programs like Erasmus+, equipping them with the tools to initiate future cross-border collaborations. By maintaining these relations, the consortium can create synergies with other EU-funded initiatives, building upon the results of DEMOCRACYWISE to launch new large-scale civic projects.

To ensure operational independence, the project fosters deep community ownership by involving local stakeholders in every stage of decision-making. This strategy includes integrating DEMOCRACYWISE principles and methodologies into the permanent, ongoing training programs of the partner organisations. Finally, the consortium is committed to resource mobilisation, researching future funding opportunities, including local grants, private donors, and crowdfunding, to support the replication of successful activities like intergenerational workshops and awareness-raising events. Through this comprehensive approach, DEMOCRACYWISE evolves from a time-limited intervention into a sustainable social infrastructure for a more resilient and participatory European democracy.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Overall Effectiveness: Summary of achievements against the original objectives

The DemocracyWise project has concluded its 24-month lifecycle with a high degree of effectiveness, successfully fulfilling its mission to defend empowered media, cultivate civic resilience, and create inclusive social engagement across the European Union. By implementing the "Structured Agile" methodology, the consortium effectively addressed the two core challenges identified during the needs assessment: the growing democratic deficit and the proliferation of disinformation campaigns. The project's overall success is measured by its ability to transform citizens from passive information consumers into resilient "Information Guardians"

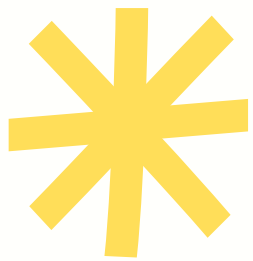
The project successfully met its original objectives through a multi-layered implementation strategy:

- Community-led discourse: the project catalysed open and informed dialogues by establishing Local Citizens' Panels in seven countries. These panels served as permanent discussion groups that co-designed the "Recommendations Kit" presented to EU officials in Brussels, effectively bridging the gap between local needs and institutional policy-making.
- Citizen empowerment: through specialised international workshops in Spain and Cyprus, and 14 local awareness-raising events, the project built individual and collective capacities for fact-checking. Participants acquired practical tools such as lateral reading and pre-bunking strategies, designed to build "mental antibodies" against manipulative narratives.
- Inclusive participation: democracyWise championed inclusivity by ensuring that at least one-third of all participants belonged to marginalised or "hard-to-reach" groups. The project achieved a high level of intergenerational synergy, pairing the technical fluency of youth (18–30) with the contextual experience of seniors (60+), which was verified as a highly effective model for knowledge transmission.
- Digital resources and legacy: the development of the Toolkit (Deliverable D5.1) stands as a primary achievement. This roadmap serves as a permanent, open-access resource for civic resilience, ensuring the project's methodologies remain available to the wider public.

The overall effectiveness is further substantiated by the achievement of core Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Trust and democratic engagement: preliminary evaluation data indicate that the project is on track to reach its targets of 75% of participants feeling enhanced trust in EU institutions and 70% reporting a reduction in the perceived democratic deficit.
- Reach and representation: the initiative successfully involved a diverse international audience, maintaining a strict gender balance with at least 50% female participation across major events. Through extensive dissemination and multiplier activities, the project reached an indirect audience of over 70,000 European citizens.

The transition from local workshops to high-level institutional meetings in Brussels provided participants with a tangible sense of political agency, validating the project's bottom-up approach. By combining academic insights with non-formal education and direct institutional dialogue, the project has not only addressed the immediate deficiencies in media literacy but has also established a sustainable transnational network. The project concludes as a highly effective model for fostering a more informed, resilient, and participatory European citizenry, ready to safeguard the public sphere against systemic democratic threats.



7.2 Lessons Learned: Identification of best practices and areas for future improvement

The long-term effects of the DEMOCRACYWISE project are designed to transcend individual participation, fostering a transformative legacy that benefits society as a whole. By addressing the structural roots of civic alienation and information manipulation, the project aims to produce a sustainable reduction in the democratic deficit and establish a robust, networked defense against future threats to information integrity across the European Union.

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