
THE CIVICS Innovation Hub

STRATEGY

2030

A shared direction for a changing world



DIRECTION

Strategy at a glance

THE CIVICS treats civic education as social infrastructure – the learning, relational and institutional conditions that help people and organisations make sense of change, assess information, cooperate across difference and act collectively.

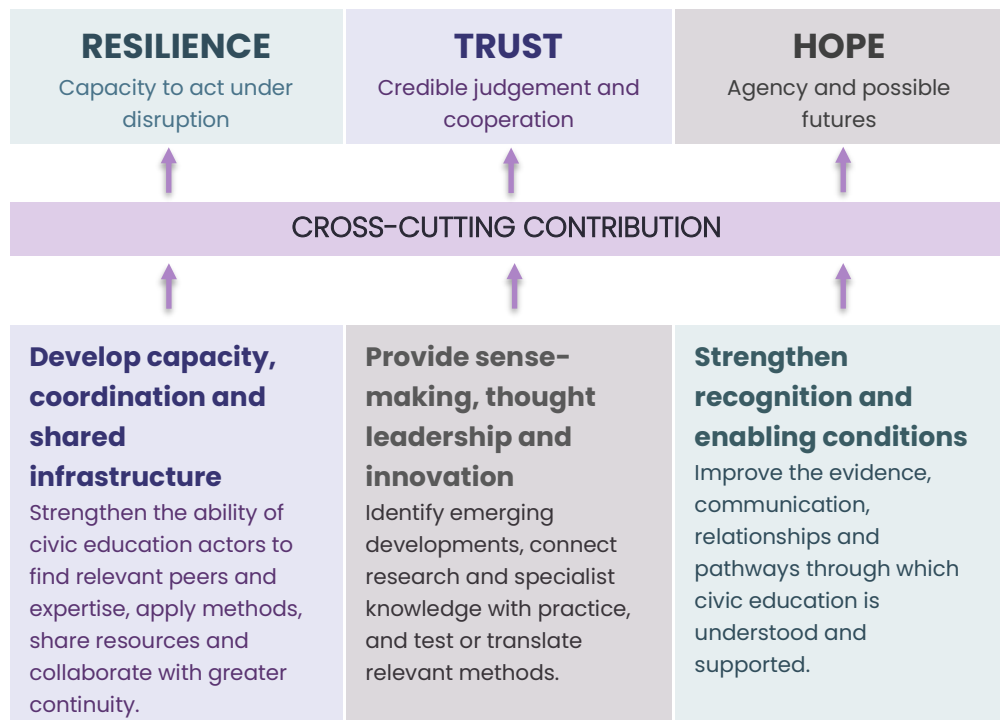
VISION	European societies in which people and institutions have the judgement, civic agency, relationships and capacity required to leverage democratic life.
MISSION	To develop the European civic education ecosystem by building shared infrastructure, connecting actors and expertise, identifying emerging needs and methods, enabling innovation, and providing grounded sense-making and thought leadership that strengthen the field's capacity, coordination and influence.

How the strategy is structured

The strategic architecture describes what THE CIVICS does. The focus areas describe the capacities to which this work contributes.

Focus areas

Capacities this work contributes to



Strategic architecture

What THE CIVICS does

The three goals work together across all three focus areas.

CONTEXT

Why this strategy is needed

Civic education is operating in a more insecure, fragmented and politicised environment. Pressures interact and compound one another, affecting both material conditions and the ways people understand public life.

War and geopolitical competition, climate and migration pressures, economic strain, population ageing, technological disruption, shrinking civic space and declining trust are changing the conditions under which people and institutions cooperate. Fear, cognitive rigidity and social separation can reduce the ability to revise assumptions, tolerate uncertainty and act with others.

Digital platforms and artificial intelligence influence attention, emotional response, identity and perceptions of consensus. The challenge extends beyond correcting false information. It concerns the capacity to recognise manipulation, examine assumptions, engage with dissonant perspectives and retain agency in information environments shaped by uncertainty and manipulation.

Civic education can strengthen these capacities through experiential learning, dialogue, reflection, social connection and collective action. This work takes place across schools, civil society, workplaces, cultural settings, media, communities, sport, libraries and digital environments.

The European civic education ecosystem remains fragmented across countries, sectors and funding programmes. Methods and knowledge do not travel reliably, professional standards and evidence are uneven, and there are limited interfaces between practice, research, policy, funding and communication. This strategy responds to that coordination and translation gap.

Directional evidence from our network

92%	83%	63%	50%
remained in contact	reported a concrete opportunity	established a new partnership	developed a new project or format

**Upon an intervention by THE CIVICS; Impact Survey, July 2026*

Strategic implication

Relationships and exchange create lasting value when learning is applied, shared and retained beyond individual participation. The next phase will strengthen organisational transfer, reusable knowledge and purposeful follow-up.

ORGANISATIONAL ROLE

Our role in the ecosystem

THE CIVICS combines two roles: it strengthens the wider civic education field through shared infrastructure, while running a limited number of direct programmes that test, demonstrate and spread relevant methods.

Ecosystem intelligence Maintain a functional view of actors, expertise, methods, funding and institutional settings, including gaps and unmet needs.	Connection and coordination Create pathways from contact to purposeful collaboration and support clear, differentiated roles across the ecosystem.
Sense-making and translation Interpret emerging political, social, technological and methodological developments and translate relevant knowledge into usable orientation.	Innovation and selective delivery Use Labs, masterclasses, pilots and related formats where direct delivery is necessary to test or distribute the strategy.
Recognition and enabling conditions Communicate credible evidence and practice, and help institutions and funders understand where civic education contributes.	Learning infrastructure Document methods, conditions, limitations and adaptations, support follow-up and maintain proportionate monitoring and learning.

Four operating identities

Scout and pathfinder Identify where topics, methods and institutional conditions are moving.	Trusted curator Help actors assess what is credible, relevant and transferable.	Backbone Sustain shared intelligence, relationships, coordination and communication.	Selective provider Deliver directly when this is necessary to test or distribute an approach.
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Boundaries

- We work at the connecting European layer and do not replace local or national delivery organisations.
- Training is one instrument among several; it is not the default response to every need.
- We do not seek to perform every function required by the field or claim sole ownership of field development.
- Policy engagement remains evidence-based, selective and undertaken with partners that hold the relevant access and expertise.

AUDIENCES AND GEOGRAPHY

Who the strategy is for

The strategy prioritises civic education multipliers, organisations and institutions. The wider public benefits through the learning environments, programmes and institutions these actors shape.

PRIMARY DELIVERY AUDIENCE	Civic education multipliers, organisations and institutions that design, deliver, commission, fund or influence civic learning across civil society, formal and non-formal education, culture, youth work, workplaces, media, community settings and selected public institutions.
KNOWLEDGE AND ENABLING ACTORS	Researchers, academics, technology specialists, think tanks, foundations, European and national institutions, businesses and professional networks that contribute expertise, funding, institutional access or wider reach.
PUBLIC AMPLIFIERS AND AUDIENCES	Media, cultural actors and trusted public figures who can extend selected ideas, increase visibility and support the public legitimacy of civic education.

Different audiences require different pathways

- Practitioners require methods, peers, specialist input and support for application.
- Organisations require strategic collaboration and routes for organisational transfer.
- Institutions and funders require credible evidence, a clear account of field needs and practical routes for support.

Pan-European added value

THE CIVICS operates between local practice and European systems. This position enables comparative intelligence, reciprocal learning, adaptation of methods, cross-border partnerships and access for actors who may be under-connected or under-resourced.

The European frame is a strategic geography rather than a claim of cultural ownership. The strategy is grounded in universal democratic principles, recognises contradictions in European policy and practice, and gives deliberate attention to knowledge from Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and societies with longer experience of instability. Reciprocal alliances beyond Europe will be developed where they improve learning and practice.

Local and national organisations remain responsible for contextual delivery. THE CIVICS provides the connecting, comparative and enabling layer that is difficult to maintain within individual projects or countries.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Strategic goals

1

Develop capacity, coordination and shared infrastructure

THE CIVICS will strengthen the capacity of multipliers, organisations and institutions to act under changing conditions, while improving coordination and access to shared field infrastructure.

This includes ecosystem intelligence and mapping, structured relationship pathways, practical resources, organisational transfer, peer learning, specialist input and proportionate follow-up.

WHAT THIS LEADS TO

- Actors can find relevant peers, expertise, methods and opportunities more efficiently.
- Relationships continue with clearer purpose and lead more often to active collaboration.
- Practitioners and organisations apply and adapt methods with greater confidence and contextual judgement.
- Shared resources and programme outputs are reused beyond their original setting.
- Coordination improves and unnecessary duplication is reduced.

2

Provide sense-making, thought leadership and innovation

THE CIVICS will identify emerging political, social, technological and methodological developments, connect relevant expertise with practice, and provide grounded orientation on where civic education needs to develop.

Thought leadership is a disciplined function: scanning the research and practice frontier, testing assumptions with diverse experts and practitioners, distinguishing evidence from advocacy, and producing concise outputs that help the field make decisions.

WHAT THIS LEADS TO

- Civic education actors have earlier and more reliable orientation on emerging needs, risks and methods.
- Relevant research and specialist knowledge are translated into questions, principles and tools that practitioners can use.
- A limited number of approaches are tested, documented and distributed through appropriate formats and partners.
- The field has a clearer account of transfer conditions, limitations and the contexts in which methods are useful.

3

Strengthen recognition and enabling conditions

THE CIVICS will improve the evidence, communication, relationships and pathways through which civic education is understood and supported by institutions, foundations and adjacent sectors.

This includes documenting credible practice, communicating authentic cases, bringing field knowledge into relevant institutional conversations, and working with partners that hold policy, funding or public reach.

WHAT THIS LEADS TO

- Institutions and funders receive a clearer account of field needs and credible practice.
- Civic education is more consistently recognised as relevant to democratic resilience, cooperation and civic agency.
- Evidence and communication support more informed investment and stronger institutional relationships.
- Field knowledge is represented in relevant conversations through appropriate partnerships.

Partnership and division of labour

Partnerships will be organised by function and contribution rather than by sector label. THE CIVICS will lead where it has a credible advantage or where partners expect it to provide a backbone function. Partner-led delivery will be used where another organisation has stronger local, policy or technical competence.

Practice	Research	Infrastructure	Access	Communication
Local delivery and contextual knowledge	Evidence and specialist knowledge	Coordination and shared services	Institutional and funding pathways	Public reach and field recognition

Partnership tests

- A defined system or participation problem.
- A clear contribution from each partner.
- Value that would not arise through separate work.
- A feasible pathway for application, evidence and continuation.

A disciplined role

THE CIVICS may convene, curate, translate, communicate or provide shared infrastructure without acting as the principal implementer. The purpose is to strengthen the ecosystem, not to expand organisational ownership.

WHAT THE WORK CONTRIBUTES TO

Three focus areas

Resilience, Trust and Hope are the substantive areas through which THE CIVICS selects and organises work. The goals describe what THE CIVICS does; the focus areas describe the societal and field capacities to which the work contributes.

RESILIENCE	TRUST	HOPE
Adaptive capacity to prepare for, absorb and learn from disruption while sustaining democratic agency and institutional function. Indicative scope: Preparedness; democratic security; institutional resilience; financial and economic literacy; technological, climatic and social change.	Conditions for credible judgement and cooperation across difference. The aim is not indiscriminate trust. Indicative scope: Dialogue; relationships; social cohesion; credibility; trust-brokering; tolerance for ambiguity.	A credible orientation towards the future that supports agency, imagination and sustained participation. Indicative scope: Foresight; future literacy; intergenerational fairness; future narratives; practical pathways for action.

Cross-cutting civic capacities

Across all three focus areas

Judgement • cognitive flexibility • tolerance for ambiguity • awareness of manipulation • social connection • civic agency

Indicative thematic lenses

AI & technological change • security & preparedness • climate • financial & economic literacy • demographic change & intergenerational fairness • memory & history • wellbeing.

Lenses are selected where evidence, urgency and strategic fit justify the work.

Goals × focus areas

THE CIVICS FUNCTIONS	RESILIENCE	TRUST	HOPE
1. Capacity, coordination and infrastructure	Preparedness and practical support	Dialogue, relationships and trust-brokering	Future literacy and pathways to action
2. Sense-making and innovation	Emerging risks, evidence and methods	Credibility, cognitive flexibility and cooperation	Scenarios, narratives and intergenerational questions
3. Recognition and enabling conditions	Position civic education within resilience agendas	Show its contribution to cohesion and credible judgement	Build support for long-term civic agency and participation

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

How we work

The strategy is implemented through a small number of principles that connect convening, knowledge, application and learning. They apply across programmes, partnerships and communication.

Purpose before format Each major activity has a defined purpose, audience, output, route to application and follow-up point.	Events as pathways Convenings support preparation, relationship-building, documentation, application and continued collaboration. They are not outcomes in themselves.
Methods with context Methods are documented with their purpose, resource requirements, transfer conditions, limitations and available evidence.	Communication as knowledge Communication combines orientation, practical knowledge, authentic cases and institutional messages.
Research with use Research supports ecosystem intelligence, method development, evidence or reusable infrastructure.	Partnerships with clear roles Cross-sector work is used where it adds expertise, reach, institutional access or new application settings.
Evidence-based engagement Institutional and policy engagement is grounded in credible practice and undertaken with appropriate partners.	Plural and accessible formats Participation expectations, accessibility conditions and the intended level of involvement are made clear.

How we select work

New work should strengthen the strategy rather than expand activity for its own sake. We will prioritise initiatives that meet the following tests:

Strategic contribution Advances at least one goal and contributes to Resilience, Trust or Hope.	Distinctive role THE CIVICS has a credible function and partner roles are explicit.	Reusable value Creates knowledge, methods, relationships, evidence or infrastructure that remain useful.	European additionality Produces cross-context value that would not emerge through separate national work.
Evidence and learning Progress can be observed and the work addresses a defined learning question.	Feasibility The intended contribution is proportionate to the time, governance and resources required.	Continuation There is a credible route for continued use, transfer or responsible closure.	Integrity The work preserves independence, pluralism, safeguarding and clear participation boundaries.

THEORY OF CHANGE AND LEARNING

From activity to contribution

How strategic functions translate into outcomes, learning and longer-term field change.

Shared intelligence We identify needs, gaps and emerging developments.	Connection We bring relevant actors, experience and expertise together.	Testing and translation We turn knowledge into methods, cases and practical orientation.
Application and adaptation We support organisations to use and adapt approaches in context.	Evidence and recognition We build credible cases and strengthen institutional understanding.	A more capable ecosystem We improve coordination, professional practice and the ability to respond to change.

What we will track

Relationships Sustained contact and active collaboration	Application Use and adaptation of methods or resources	Transfer Organisational uptake and team-level use	Continuation Further use or development of supported pilots
Reuse Use of outputs beyond original participants	Reach Application in additional settings and sectors	Recognition Institutional and funder engagement	Learning Evidence that informs strategic choices

Learning approach

A small set of questions will be used before participation, immediately afterwards and after three to twelve months. Programme records will be combined with case studies, network analysis and structured reflection. We will distinguish outputs from outcomes and remain open about uncertainty, limitations and differences between contexts.

Long-term contribution

People and institutions have stronger judgement, civic agency, relationships and practical capacity to leverage democratic life under conditions of uncertainty and disagreement.

THE CIVICS Strategy 2030 is a defined contribution to a wider, long-term effort. Its purpose is to strengthen the conditions in which civic education actors can learn, coordinate, innovate and act with greater confidence and continuity.