

Project Title: Embedding ‘citizen deliberation’ and ‘deliberative democracy’ for sustainable development into the official VET curricula (GreenVETers).

Project Number: 2021-2-NL01-KA220-VET-000048185

## Key messages of the “Pedagogical Guide: Citizen Engagement and Deliberative Democracy for Climate Action in Vocational Education and Training (VET)”

This document is a synthesis of an open access publication serving as a pedagogical guide, with the title “Citizen Engagement and Deliberative Democracy for Climate Action in Vocational Education and Training (VET)”.

The scope of this guide is to

- help VET educators understand how climate action can be operationalised through citizen deliberation and deliberative democracy principles, and
- offer concrete examples to VET educators on how to adopt citizen science as a bridge between citizen engagement and deliberation for climate action.

The full version of the guide is available at the [GreenVETers](#) official website.



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## Introduction

This document is a synthesis of the pedagogical guide “Citizen Engagement and Deliberative Democracy for Climate Action in Vocational Education and Training (VET)” for the GreenVETers project (‘Embedding ‘citizen deliberation’ and ‘deliberative democracy’ for sustainable development into the official VET curricula’). The full version of the guide is available in English at the [GreenVETers](#) official website.

The pedagogical guide is composed by 6 units, namely:

1. Pedagogical approaches for using citizen deliberation (CD) in the context of the Green Deal for VET-specific courses.
2. Deliberative democracy: Barriers and opportunities for adoption in VET sector.
3. Radical climate action: understanding motivations, combating radicalisation.
4. Democracy in practice: how democratic principles of argumentation can be adopted in “heated” topics of discussion and leverage the VET sector.
5. Insights into the Agriculture sector in VET.
6. Citizen Science in VET schools as a bridge between citizen engagement, deliberative democracy and active learning in education contexts.

A synthesis of each of the six units follows.

## Wider context and objective of the publication

As the world is experiencing the consequences of human-induced climate change, the need to engage all social actors and citizens in collective efforts to mitigate its effects is a number one priority set in public agendas on this matter. The emergence of climate and environmental movements that carry out several actions to raise awareness and demand bolder climate policies is a manifestation of citizens’ increasing willingness to participate in public discourses and shape public policies. However, it is observed that not all citizens have the opportunity to get involved and influence these actions, while movements often adopt a more radical stand towards democratic practices and values.

Therefore, the GreenVETers project turns on the VET sector, its educators and students, with the aim to enhance its engagement in climate action by the means of citizen deliberation, citizen science and deliberative democracy principles. This way, the project seeks to encourage informed argumentation and exchange of ideas and knowledge on climate-related issues between VET students of the Agriculture and Engineering sector, thus contributing to foster citizen engagement in climate action among the VET community.

This synthesis presents each unit of the guide in a very condensed form hereafter.

### **1. Pedagogical approaches for using citizen deliberation (CD) in the context of the Green Deal for VET-specific courses**

Dealing effectively with climate change is a demanding task, as the world economies need to adopt new solutions and apply transformative changes in order to minimise the effects of the climate’s deregulation. At EU level, the European Green Deal, introduced in late 2019, includes reforms and new targets affecting the Agriculture and Energy sector, the ones that contribute the most to climate change. To make these policies a reality, it is fundamental to bring environmental education as well as education for sustainability skills (see GreenComp, European Commission, 2022) in VET curricula, thus generating eco-conscious and skilled future citizens. Moreover, as climate action entails also public discussions and dialogue that shape policies on this field, integrating citizen deliberation for climate action in VET will enhance VET students’ social participation and engagement in democratic processes and politics.



## **2. Deliberative democracy: Barriers and opportunities for adoption in VET sector**

In the last decades, an increase in deliberative democracy practices and events, such as citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries, has been observed worldwide (OECD, 2020). The participation in these processes necessitates well-informed citizens able to critically think of and assess ideas and solutions put forth during deliberation. The guide highlights that there is a lack of deliberative democracy practices and processes in VET curricula due to two main barriers. The first obstacle refers to the standardised and labour-skills oriented programmes of the sector, and the second points to social prejudice and public perceptions on VET students and their role in society. Despite this negative background, the guide's authors identify opportunities to integrate citizen deliberation in VET through existing courses on climate change and sustainability, while training VET educators on how to adopt deliberation in their courses can further enhance VET sector's contribution to climate action.

## **3. Radical climate action: understanding motivations, combating radicalisation**

To engage in climate action demands that we share a common understanding of it. In this context, the guide perceives climate action as an expression of civic engagement that aims to put pressure on policymakers to adopt direct measures to tackle climate change. Motivations to get involved in climate action vary, especially among youth, as recent studies bring light to emergent distresses associated with climate change, such as climate anxiety. To depict the diversity of climate movements, the guide presents three of them (Camp for Climate Action, Fridays For Future, Extinction Rebellion), while it refers to Scientist Rebellion to showcase the importance of educators' and teachers' participation in climate action. Finally, authors point to the need for citizens and policymakers to go beyond negative perceptions of climate movements and rather focus on motivations and reasons that make people eager to engage in radical and more participatory forms of climate action.

## **4. Democracy in practice: how democratic principles of argumentation can be adopted in "heated" topics of discussion and leverage the VET sector**

The way democracy and its principles are taught and transmitted to students will affect their understanding of democratic processes and will shape their participation in the socio-economic and political life of their communities later on. This is why it is indispensable for VET educators to understand what deliberative processes entail in practice. In this context, deliberation's main principles -inclusion, equality and considered judgement- are presented together with three democratic principles that accompany citizen deliberation practices, namely the majority rule, freedom of speech and equal representation. As new climate policies bring changes in the agriculture and engineering sectors throughout Europe, VET students should engage in deliberation on those matters, thus helping them better understand their value as well as bring their ideas and solutions to public discourses and policies.

## **5. Insights into the Agriculture sector in VET**

Agriculture has been a fundamental activity that allowed human societies to grow and prosper. In the contemporary world, industrial agriculture contributes heavily to climate change, making it thus necessary to reconsider our way of doing agriculture. In this unit, the guide looks at the impact of modern agriculture in the environment, while it points to the need of creating VET curricula in which students become aware of climate change and engage in dialogue regarding more sustainable and eco-friendly practices in agriculture.

## **6. Citizen Science in VET schools as a bridge between citizen engagement, deliberative democracy and active learning in education contexts**

As the educational and learning value of citizen science becomes increasingly recognised across the EU, it is important to consider it as an effective tool that can raise awareness on



climate change to VET students, while it can foster their engagement in climate action. Since citizen science brings people closer to data collection and data analysis, as well as helps them gain knowledge on environmental topics, it can be combined with deliberative democracy practices in order to democratise science and enhance trust in democratic values. This way, VET curricula can be enriched with citizen science and citizen deliberation practices, thus creating the necessary conditions for deliberative democracy for climate action to thrive among VET students.

### Conclusions

The synthesis of the GreenVETers pedagogical guide aimed to provide a short overview of the topics and ideas developed and treated in the guide. By understanding the current status of environmental education and citizen deliberation practices in VET at European level, the GreenVETers guide seeks to identify barriers and opportunities for integrating deliberative democracy for climate action in VET curricula, thus suggesting a new approach to this issue based on citizen deliberation. As young people become more involved in climate movements, it is crucial to better understand motivations behind several types of climate action, as well as look at innovative ways to engage youth in climate-related discussions and policies. Finally, the guide proposes the adoption of citizen science in VET curricula as a unifying element that can foster citizen engagement as well as active and collaborative learning between VET students.

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