



**AECED**

aesthetic and embodied  
learning for democracy

**PROGRESS  
REPORT 1**

**Deliverable 1.2**

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2.0	18.3.2025	Edits on WP subsections, formulating the gender dimension section	Pilvikki Lantela, Susan Meriläinen
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## PROGRESS REPORT

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## **1. Explanation of the work carried out by the beneficiaries and overview of the progress**

### **1.1. Overview of the AECED project**

Most education for democracy omits a fundamental dimension of learning – that is, the aesthetic and embodied nature of learning. The ambition of the AECED project is to remedy this omission by enhancing and enriching education for democracy through a focus on aesthetic and embodied learning. The project will create an innovative Pedagogical Framework and associated Guides for education professionals and stakeholders, through which they can apply aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy in their educational, organisational and cultural context. The Framework and Guides have been tested in 19 case studies in 6 different European countries: Croatia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Portugal, and the UK.

The project's societal impact will be achieved through new pedagogical approaches to education for democracy that engage learners' and educators' hearts as well as minds, increase capacity to engage actively in democratic citizenship that connects and evolves locally, and strengthens the ways in which practising democracy challenges social injustices and engages with conflict and antagonisms. The project will introduce new innovative pedagogies and engage educators' creativity in developing aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy, through the use of the project's Pedagogical Framework and Guides by 'early adopter' education stakeholders in all phases of education (primary, secondary, higher education and adult/professional) and ensuring research results and pedagogical resources are available after the project's funded period.

During the second project year, all six partners completed their case studies (testing the prototype Framework and Guides through Participatory Action Research) and compiled national reports to be followed by a transnational cross-case analysis. These findings will feed into planning and formulating the launch-ready Pedagogical Framework and associated Guides, to be finalised by the end of November 2026. To crystallise the conceptual foundation for aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy, and to make a scientific impact, the project's Concepts group has produced, and is producing, AECED position papers explaining the core concepts related to aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy.

By the end of the second year, the AECED project has submitted 16 deliverables and reached four milestones, according to the plan. All deliverables submitted in year two are further elaborated in each WP subsection.

Years	Deliverable	Due Date / New Due Date	Submitted in the portal/ Status
First Year	D6.1 Appointment of the Ethics Advisor	30 Apr 2023 / 24 May 2023	15 Apr 2024 / approved
	D1.1 Project Handbook	30 Jun 2023	20 July 2023 / approved
	D3.1 Prototype Framework	31 Jul 2023 / 04 Aug 2023	04 Aug 2023 / approved
	D1.3 Completed Data Management Plan	30 Sep 2023	29 Sep 2023 / approved
	D2.1 DEC plan/Communication activity report 1	30 Sep 2023	29 Sep 2023 / approved
	D6.2 1st report from the Ethics Advisor	30 Sep 2023	30 Sep 2023 / approved
	D3.2 Prototype Guides	30 Sep 2023 / 31 Oct 2023	31 Oct 2023 / approved
	D4.1 Report of methodological Framework	31 Dec 2023	22 Dec 2023 / approved
	D4.2 Reports of case research designs	31 Jan 2024 / 29 Feb 2024	28 Feb 2024 / approved
	D6.3 2nd report from the Ethics Advisor	31 Mar 2024	02 Apr 2024 / approved
Second year	D1.4 Updated Data Management Plan	30 Sep 2024	30 Sep 2024
	D2.8 Policy brief 1	30 Sep 2024	30 Sep 2024
	D2.2 DEC plan (1st Update) / Communication activity report 2	30 Sep 2024 / 31 Oct 2024	30 Oct 2024
	D4.3 Reports of case research completion	30 Sep 2024 / 31 Dec 2024	20 Dec 2024
	D4.4 Data analysis reports	31 Mar 2025	31 Mar 2025
	D6.4 3rd report from the Ethics Advisor	31 Mar 2025	31 Mar 2025

## 1.2. Overall work of the consortium during the second year

The consortium worked through the organisational structure laid out in the management handbook. The Project Management Group has worked as the operational lead of the project, with every partner represented. WP leaders are responsible to report to this group and all essential consortium wide ideas, plans, and questions are discussed and solved at PMG meetings, which were held approximately monthly from April to December 2024, and bi-weekly from January 2025 onwards. This group is chaired by the project manager, Pilvikki Lantela.

The Steering committee, chaired by the project PI, Professor Susan Meriläinen, oversees the overall project development and use of funds. All partners are represented in this group as well. During the second year, the Steering Committee met twice: May and December 2024, to assess the work of active WPs, discuss the project's overall direction, critical milestones, and future tasks. The Coordinator gathers feedback every six months and this feedback informs the discussion of the Steering committee. This feedback is assessed at PMG as well.

The whole consortium came together in a series of online meetings in May-June 2024 (21.5., 29.5., 5.6.) to present ongoing case studies, and in October-November 2024 (23.10., 30.10., 6.11.) to present preliminary findings. All partners presented their work and received critical feedback. The consortium works mainly online; thus, all meetings are held online via Teams/ Zoom, except the annual on-site consortium meeting. In 2025 the annual on-site meeting was held in Lisbon 24–26.3.2025, followed by two days of publication meetings. In 2026, the project will meet in Latvia.

All WPs have had autonomy to organise their working groups and ways of working. There have been smaller working groups, which are focused on WP specific tasks: the Communications Contact Group (CCG, with representation from each partner, chaired by the WP2 lead Suzanne Culshaw), WP4 Group (open to all researchers, chaired by the WP4 lead Dr Lea Spahn until Oct 2024, and subsequently by WP4 lead Kardelen Cazgir in liaison with Professor Susanne Weber), Ethics Group (with representation from each partner, and the independent Ethics Advisor Dr Simo Kyllönen, chaired by the project manager, Pilvikki Lantela), and the Concepts Group (chaired by Dr Lea Spahn until Oct 2024, and subsequently by Professor Philip Woods).

Overall, all partners have been engaged with various consortium bodies and working groups, and all have contributed to the project's outcomes in equal manner. The engagement, enthusiasm and collaborative spirit of all research partners is to be commended. Through various tasks and meetings, the AECED consortium has also been practising democracy as a process of becoming, experientially pondering and testing how a research process such as this could be democratically led and realised.

### 1.2.1. Mitigating risks

Although all deliverables were successfully submitted, there were some delays, which were negotiated in advance with the Project Officer. D2.2 was submitted one month later than originally planned and the submission of D4.3 was postponed until the end of 2024, because of the extended period for some case studies. Five deliverables (D1.3, D2.1, D3.1, D3.2 and D4.1) were revised according to the feedback received in the periodic review, held in June 2024, and submitted in autumn 2024 and subsequently approved.

During the second year, the biggest risk for the consortium has concerned changes in the staff, including the recruitment of new staff. One WP leader commenced a period of parental leave in October

2024. Engaged researchers from Latvia and Finland left the project in September and by the end of 2024 due to other work commitments. These changes were anticipated; however, there have also been unanticipated changes due to extended periods of sick leave. While these issues have necessitated adjustments and re-organisation of work within partner teams and, more broadly, in the whole consortium, all partners have been able to mitigate the potentially negative effect of these changes. Recruitment of new team members has been successful, and the consortium has been strengthened by new staff members in the UK, Finnish, Latvian and German teams.

### **1.2.2. Looking ahead – making an impact**

The year 2025 is extremely important for the AECED consortium, as the fourth milestone is reached by the end of March 2025 (completion of case analysis reports), and the project transits from individual case analysis into the cross-case analysis to reach transnational conclusions. Five milestones remain ahead. These are the transnational conclusions (May 2025), Launch-ready Framework and Guides (Nov 2025), and their incorporation into the project website (Dec 2025), followed by the Launch-ready webinar event in January 2026 and early adopter use (March 2026). The deadlines of D5.1 (Launch-ready Framework), D5.2 (Launch-ready Guides), D2.4 (Incorporation into the project website), and D2.5 (Webinar event) were postponed 1-2 months, in agreement with the project officer, to assure the quality of the deliverables, especially the key outputs of the project: The Pedagogical Framework and Guides.

Further, the 2025 will be important in strengthening and broadening the project's impact. This will happen in close contact with stakeholders and policy actors, and in liaison with Sister projects DEMOCRAT and Critical ChangeLab. The communication and collaboration with the Sister projects has been ongoing, fostered by WP2 and the Coordinator. In 2024 two online inspiration events were held together with the Sister projects (18.4., 26.9.) and the AECED project has been invited by DEMOCRAT to present on two 2025 Democracy Talks (online, 21.5.2025 and 1.10.2025). The three sister projects held a joint workshop at the ECER conference in Cyprus 2024 (August 27-30) and a proposal on joint symposia is in planning for ECER 2025 – WP4 has been influential in initiating these efforts. Further, the three projects are committed to organise joint policy roundtables, most likely the first in November 2025 and the second in early 2026. The AECED project will also participate in and co-organise DEMOCRAT's final conference in Barcelona in November 2025. These plans are currently being developed. All joint efforts will enhance mutual learning across the three Sister projects and the AECED project's impact and visibility across Europe.

All AECED partners have established contacts with national stakeholders, such as the German Society of Educational Science, Dialogue Academy (Finland), the Portuguese ministry of education (Plano Nacional das Artes), the National Centre for Education (NCE, Latvia), the National Culture Centre of Latvia, GOOD Initiative (Croatia), the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT, UK), and Big Education Trust (UK). An example of a national dissemination event to take place is a dialogue evening in Helsinki (28.4.) organised in collaboration with DialogiAkademia (Dialogue Academy), in which the AECED project facilitates discussion on the potential relationship of aesthetic and embodied dialogue with democracy. On a European level, the AECED project has established ties with EERA (European Educational Research Association), the NICE Network (New Initiatives and Challenges in Europe), UNESCO, and the European Youth Forum, to name a few. Obtaining visibility with a broader stakeholder audience at both a national and a European level is an ongoing task for the consortium.

Strategies are in development to ensure that the project will continue to have impact in educational circles after its end. The upcoming task of the project is to find and engage different target groups and

trailblazer users who will adopt the Launch-ready Framework and Guides. The project aims to see aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy implemented in each phase of education, across Europe. The pedagogical Framework and associated Guides to practice will be open access, accessible and downloadable via the [aeced.org](https://aeced.org) website. Other relevant outlets to share these materials are also being considered.

### 1.2.3. Addressing the Gender Dimension

In the periodic report (2024) the AECED project received feedback regarding ‘the gender dimension’. The project took the feedback very seriously and used it as an opportunity for self-reflection and improvement. Rather than a fixed identity or characteristic tied solely to biological or social categories, gender is understood in the AECED project as a practice, something that is continuously constructed through action and representation. Viewing gender as a practice means that gender equality isn’t just about comparing men and women in terms of numbers or outcomes; it’s about recognising how structural practices in society shape gendered opportunities, expectations, and outcomes. As the project focuses on examining democracy-as-becoming in the European educational context, it is crucial to take into account the gender imbalance of this field. In 2018, for example, women accounted for much of the workforce (72%) in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. In higher education the gender balance is, however, the other way round. Less than half of teachers in higher education are female. In 2020, women represented 43.6% of all higher education teachers in Europe. Yet, the vast majority of educators (recruited in a voluntary basis), who were involved in the AECED higher education phase are women. Rather than thinking how to increase the number of men in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and women in higher education, we perceive it crucial to ask how structural practices in society shape gendered opportunities, expectations, and outcomes in the field of education. Our decision to look at gender as a practice was also influenced by the project’s aim to transform education for democracy through aesthetic and embodied learning, which often involves practices traditionally associated with femininity. These aspects of the project require a nuanced understanding of gender that goes beyond static categories.

During the second year, the Coordinator in liaison with the UMR researcher formulated a Gender Dimension Guideline (see Appendix 1). The Gender Dimension Guideline is intended to be a living document, flexible enough to evolve with the project and its ongoing developments. This contrasts with a predefined framework that might risk becoming too mechanical or disconnected from the ongoing discussions and discoveries within the project. The potential risk we perceive in assessing gender and related effects is oversimplifying or overlooking the complexities of how gender is enacted in the project’s various contexts. The AECED project aims for a more dynamic approach leading to a deeper and more sustained integration of gender perspectives across all phases of research, development, and implementation, which will allow the project to reflect on gender as the project progresses. While a systematic assessment framework for each deliverable could offer clear evaluation criteria, we saw it as potentially more effective to provide WP leaders with a Gender Dimension Guideline that allows for greater flexibility in applying gender perspectives to their specific areas of work. This Guideline encourages each WP leader to engage with gender considerations in a way that is most relevant to their tasks and deliverables while still ensuring that gender is integrated across the project. The Gender Dimension Guideline provides an understanding of gender as a practice and various suggestions as to how gender can be considered in different tasks and deliverables. It allows for adaptability, which is particularly important given the diverse nature of national contexts in which the AECED research is conducted. All WP leaders are responsible to apply this Guideline in their deliverables and reports.

The Gender Dimension Guideline was discussed at a PMG meeting and a capacity building event for the consortium was held in the form of a WP4 meeting on 28.1.2025. The project's PI, Susan Meriläinen, presented an introduction to the topic, followed by discussion in smaller groups. The groups discussed gender aspects in PAR research, gender responsive communication, and stakeholder engagement. The gender dimension was further discussed in the consortium meeting held in Lisbon 24–26.3.2025. The capacity building efforts will continue throughout the project. Recognising the need to rethink how gender is understood within the project demonstrates an openness to critical analysis and growth. This response indicates that the project is committed to not just complying with requirements but genuinely embedding gender considerations into the heart of the project's objectives and practices.

### List of recommendations received in the Periodic Review Report, 2024

Recommendations: Periodic Review, 2024	Activities undertaken
<p>Gender Analysis Framework: Develop and implement a gender analysis framework tailored to the specific objectives and outcomes of each deliverable. This framework should include systematic assessment criteria to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into all phases of research, development and implementation.</p>	<p>A Gender Dimension Guideline was formulated, to be applied by each WP leader into their outputs.</p> <p>Thus far, the guideline has been applied in integrating the gender dimension into D4.3, D4.4 and D4.5. Further, the project's understanding on gender has been furthered through discussion across various work groups and team meetings.</p>
<p>Inclusive Content Development: Ensure that project deliverables, including reports, educational materials and tools, reflect gender diversity and address gender-related issues. Incorporate case studies, examples, and data that highlight the impact of democratic education on different gender identities and roles.</p>	<p>The gender dimension has been addressed in deliverables over the second year of the project. Work on this is an ongoing process.</p>
<p>Gender-Responsive Communication: Adopt gender-sensitive language and imagery in all communication materials related to the project. Ensure that promotional activities, websites, social media posts, and publications reflect inclusive messaging that resonates with diverse audiences.</p>	<p>Gender responsive communication has been applied in all project outputs: reports, social media posts and on the website. WP2 staff will seek training to consider this more fully in all Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation activities and outputs.</p>
<p>Capacity Building: Provide training and resources to project staff and stakeholders on gender mainstreaming and the importance of integrating gender perspectives into research and innovation activities. Foster a gender-responsive culture within the project consortium through workshops, webinars, and knowledge-sharing sessions.</p>	<p>The gender dimension has been discussed in various project meetings. A capacity building event held at a WP4 meeting on 28.1.2025 was focused on the gender dimension.</p>
<p>Stakeholder Engagement: Actively involve stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and civil society organisations, in discussions and consultations regarding the integration of the gender</p>	<p>Two joint policy roundtables are planned in collaboration with the Sister projects DEMOCRAT and Critical ChangeLab – the gender dimension is to be considered in these events.</p>

dimension. Encourage feedback and collaboration to ensure that gender considerations are embedded in project strategies and outcomes.	Feedback has been acquired from <i>European Alternatives</i> on the AECED Gender Dimension Guideline.
Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish gender-sensitive indicators and benchmarks to monitor the impact of project activities on gender equality and social inclusion. Regularly evaluate progress against these indicators and adjust strategies as needed to enhance the project's gender responsiveness.	Gender-sensitive indicators and benchmarks are being prepared.

## 2. Explanation of the work carried out per WP

### 2.1. Work Package 1 – Management and co-ordination activities

The objectives of this Work Package are to (1) ensure that the vision of the project's impact imbues the work of the project, (2) to facilitate collaboration and transnational working between partners on project progress and organisation, (3) to oversee the progress of the project and ensure partners are aware of project deadlines, (4) to monitor progress and the achievement of milestones, deliverables and outcomes, (5) to take steps to deal with problems that arise in progressing the project and meeting deadlines, and (6) to check that partners submit financial reports at the required times.

The Coordinator, represented by PI Professor Susan Meriläinen and project manager Pilvikki Lantela, has been responsible for setting up a meeting schedule for the PMG and the Steering Committee, and the Coordinator's responsibility is to chair both meetings (PI, Steering Committee; project manager, PMG). Further, the Coordinator has organised online consortium meetings to facilitate and foster collaboration and transnational working between partners across the year, according to the project's needs, and has met with individual project partners to solve project work related questions and issues. The Portuguese team was responsible for organising the onsite consortium meeting in Lisbon, in March 2025, but the programme for the event was planned in liaison with the Coordinator. The Coordinator has informed the Project Officer of the project's progress in online meetings held every three months.

The Coordinator has been responsible for internal communication, welcoming new staff members, keeping the online Teams workspace, Lucit, up to date, updating the project e-mail lists, and compiling internal newsletters (in liaison with the Portuguese team). The Coordinator gathers internal feedback every six months via a Microsoft Form, to foster project progress and to offer an opportunity to voice questions and concerns about the project's progress and WP leadership anonymously. The collected feedback has helped each WP leader to improve their ways of working and all partners to reflect on what has been learnt along the way. All these operations will continue until the end of the project.

WP1 has overseen the submission of each deliverable, organised instructions and a schedule for internal review and proofreading, and monitored the overall quality of all deliverables, in close collaboration with the respective WP leaders. Further, the Coordinator has provided support for WP leaders through one-on-one online meetings as needed, to foster collaboration between partners, and the timely delivery of deliverables.

During the second project year, WP1 was directly responsible for one deliverable: D1.4 Updated Data Management Plan, which was submitted on time by the end of September 2024. An essential process

aligned with this deliverable was to determine a repository for the AECED project's metadata. The Coordinator formulated the decision with the help of the University of Lapland library staff. An information specialist, Tiina Harjumaa, from the University of Lapland, gave a presentation on publishing metadata in the AECED consortium meeting which took place on 6.11.2024. It was later decided that B2Share should be used for the AECED project to publish their metadata, and internal instructions have been circulated among partners for this purpose. It remains as Coordinator's responsibility to ensure that all partners will publish their metadata, at the latest when scientific results are published.

Looking ahead to the third project year, WP1 will be responsible for writing the Final Data Management Plan (D1.5) and the Final periodic report. It will also help in coordinating work between work packages, and in ensuring the AECED project's lasting impact. In liaison with the WP2 team, the Coordinator is leading the collaboration with the Sisters and involved in planning the joint policy roundtables and other events with them. Further, the Coordinator is reminding the consortium bodies of the overall vision of the project – to see aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy implemented in various European contexts. The challenge for the next months is to find the best trailblazer users for the launch-ready Framework and Guides, and to gain stronger visibility nationally, and across Europe.

List of WP1 Key Achievements:

- Submission of D1.4 Updated Data Management Plan
- Coordination and facilitation of project management meetings, work processes and successful submission of deliverables
- Continuous support for WP leaders
- Tangible results on the ongoing collaboration with the Sisters, in liaison with WP2, such as the Online Inspiration Events and plans for joint policy roundtables
- Formulating the Gender Dimension Guideline for the consortium
- The annual on-site consortium meeting, in liaison with WP5, in Lisbon 24–26.3.2025.

## **2.2. Work Package 2 – Communication, dissemination and exploitation**

Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation (CDE) forms the focus of Work Package 2. Its objectives are to 1) ensure communication takes place throughout the project and an active public profile for the project is sustained, 2) disseminate information and engage interest in the AECED Pedagogical Framework and Guides, and 3) activate exploitation by trailblazer users of the Framework and Guides.

Work package 2 is led by the University of Hertfordshire. Dr Suzanne Culshaw is leading this WP, with the support of new UK team members Philippa Mulberry and Marie Toseland, who joined the project in September 2024 and October 2024, respectively. WP2 spans the whole project, and the strategy development, planning and tracking of CDE activity is the responsibility of all partners across the project. The WP2 lead therefore facilitates regular scheduled Communications Contact Group (CCG) meetings, with representatives from each partner institution. During the reporting period, the CCG met regularly to focus on WP2, share progress, achievements and challenges, and plan next steps. There were 9 CCG meetings in the reporting period (the first in April 2024 and the most recent in March 2025). Additionally, a small working group focused on further developing the website was established in March 2025.

In addition to the CCG working group, a WP2/WP5 small working group was launched in November 2024 to coordinate activities that interconnect across the two work packages and to offer mutual support. Liaison between these Work Packages is a key strategic priority, coordinating activities that

interconnect across the two work packages and to offer mutual support in the production and sharing of the revised AECED Pedagogical Framework and Guides to Practice in autumn 2025. There were three WP2/WP5 meetings (27.11.2024, 11.2.2025, 12.3.2025) within the reporting period. As part of the interconnection with the WP5 team, work is underway to create a style guide to support the creation of a cohesive, accessible and visually identifiable collection of outputs.

### 2.2.1. Deliverables 2.2 and 2.8

The aim of the project’s Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation strategy (CDE) is to guide and inform all CDE planning and activity throughout the duration of the project and beyond the formal end of the project. The strategy is a living document; it is in an ongoing process of development and updating. Its first iteration was detailed in Deliverable D2.1, submitted in September 2023. The updated CDE strategy (second iteration) was submitted as a project deliverable on 31.10.2024 (D2.2), an extension having been granted from September 2024 to accommodate staff absence due to illness. Its third iteration will be delivered in March 2026 (D2.3).

Part 1 of deliverable D2.2 outlined how CDE is being planned strategically throughout the project. Part 2 of the deliverable reported all CDE activity in the period 29.9.2023 to 1.10.2024. Deliverable D2.8 (Policy Brief 1) was submitted on 30.9.2024. This policy brief presented an initial set of ideas to encourage policy actors to think about education for democracy differently by seeing how aesthetic and embodied learning helps promote a democratic sensibility, essential to effective democracy. More specific recommendations will be developed as the project proceeds and will feature in the next policy brief (D2.9, March 2026).

### 2.2.2. Response to feedback from the Periodic Review concerning WP2, D2.1

Feedback from the first periodic review (June 2024) highlighted that the AECED project had demonstrated proactive engagement and strong foundations in communication activities, especially in the early stages. A recommendation was made that to maximise impact and effectively achieve strategic objectives, further work to define audience groups, diversify communication channels, increase the frequency of social media activities, strengthen policy actor engagement practices, integrate robust feedback mechanisms and standardise documentation and reporting practices across all project partners was desirable.

The project response to the recommendations above is intended to contribute to a more cohesive and effective communication strategy throughout the project lifecycle. Work undertaken within this reporting period in response to these recommendations includes:

#### List of recommendations received in the Periodic Review Report, 2024

Recommendations: Periodic Review, 2024	Activities undertaken
<p>Further work to define audience groups.</p> <p>Making sure the Framework and Guides will be taken up by primary, secondary, higher and adult education after the project has come to an end.</p>	<p>Partners are continuing to work on their CDE plans; work is well underway in identifying named policy actor contacts at local, national and international levels, which will assist in defining audience groups. This is a priority for the CCG over the coming months</p>

	and a topic of discussion at the March 2025 Consortium meeting in Lisbon.
Strengthen dissemination activities by diversifying communication channels.	Providing a greater range of social media by facilitating the launch of an AECED Facebook page and Instagram account by ACED colleagues in Portugal, in order to extend reach, garner interest and provide a greater variety of social media platforms by which to communicate and disseminate.
Increase the frequency of social media activities.	It is the intention that each deliverable has a “communications package” that surrounds it, with postings of different types across all relevant channels (website blogs, LinkedIn, X, Facebook, Instagram). It is the intention that a post is made on at least one platform per week. This approach will be launched with upcoming deliverables including D1.2, D4.4 and D4.5. In addition, work is underway to produce short film clips to describe some of the concepts of the project in a way that will appeal to a wider audience.
Gender Dimension Integration: Integrate gender-sensitive communication strategies to ensure inclusivity and relevance. Consider translating key project outputs into multiple languages and promoting gender-balanced participation in dissemination events.	Gender sensitive communication strategies have been discussed and these are being applied in all public facing communications, including the Website and social media. Integrating the gender dimension in communication and dissemination activities is an ongoing process.
Strengthen policy actor engagement practices.	Partners are continuing to work on their CDE plans; work is well underway in identifying named contacts at local, national and international levels, which will assist in developing and strengthening policy actor engagement practices.  Join two half-day policy roundtable events with Sister projects.
Integrate robust feedback mechanisms.	Instituting feedback mechanisms, such as a comment facility on the AECED website.
Standardise documentation and reporting practices across all project partners.	Work is underway in liaison with WP5 to create a style guide to support the creation of a cohesive, accessible and visually identifiable collection of outputs.

### **2.2.3. CDE and CAL logging**

Partners are responsible for recording all CDE activities via the Communication Activity Log, which is a Microsoft Form. This form allows different types of activity to be logged throughout the project. The log captures the date and type of activity, as well as detail and scope of the activity. Ultimately, communication activities should align with the CDE strategy and CDE plans, although it continues to be important to allow some flexibility for partners to respond spontaneously as opportunities to communicate and promote the project arise. Following the submission of D2.1, the CAL Microsoft Form was updated to allow more specific detail regarding modes and channels of communication and greater clarity about the target audiences, at different levels, within our partner countries, as well as Europe-wide and even globally. Logged activities will be entered onto the EU portal regularly in support of deliverable D2.3 – CDE plan (2nd Update).

In this second year of the AECED project, WP2 activities have continued to have a primary focus on the communication and dissemination of information to engage interest, both in the project overall and in the Framework and Guides. Outcomes and associated resources that are generated from the analysis of the research findings will give rise to further dissemination activities and the commencement of exploitation activities over the final year of the project.

In terms of CDE work completed across the project partners, over the whole reporting period from 1.4.2024 to 31.3.2025, there were 69 activities (32 via CALForm1 + 37 via CAL Form2) reported (time of writing 6.3.2025). The target audiences for these activities were research communities or academic networks, individual institutions (e.g. school), national and local education authorities, professional associations, civil societies, charities, and citizens. Activity types included webinars, in-person events, conference presentations, and in-person and online meetings, among others. D2.2 provides a detailed analysis of the activities logged in the period 1.4.2024 to 30.9.2024. After September 2024 the activity log was updated to capture the CDE activities more accurately.

Included in forthcoming CDE activities, an AECED Launch Webinar (D2.5) aimed towards European-level stakeholders and policy actors is planned to take place in January 2026, the purpose of which is to launch, disseminate and inspire interest in, and the use of, the Framework and Guides. This overarching webinar will support subsequent individual webinars at partner level (online/f2f/hybrid at discretion of partner) about holistic and transnational findings rather than about individual cases.

### **2.2.4. Conferences and publications**

Partners are progressing a plan to publish four key peer-reviewed articles, one on each of the four educational phases: progress is being monitored. Further, a range of position papers are in development and will be made available, among other methods, via the [aeced.org](http://aeced.org) website, along with supporting videos. The position papers explain key concepts and ideas that inform and/or have emerged during the project. The first position paper on the Four Dimensions of Democracy is currently available on the [aeced.org](http://aeced.org) website.

To respond to recommendation made in the Periodic Review 2024 regarding output, to “consider an additional output” complementing the four key open access publications, plans for an AECED book are underway. The UK team shared the first proposal of the book in December 2024, which all partners could comment on. The book will be focused on the AECED position papers, and the editorial board of the book will be decided in the upcoming months. All scientific outputs (the AECED book, journal articles, conference papers and book chapters) will be published through open access platforms.

During the reporting period, the AECED research was presented in 37 different roundtable and conference events. The target audiences for most were research communities. The most impactful of these was ECER 2024, in which the AECED project (UMR, ULA, RTU, UH represented) conducted a joint symposium with sister project DEMOCRAT. Work is underway within the AECED project (UMR, ULA, RTU) in connection with a "Research Workshops TRILOGY" in liaison with the Sisters at the ECER 2025 conference. Further, plans are underway with Sister projects regarding (a) two presentations as part of DEMOCRACY TALKS (21.5.2025 and 1.10.2025), an initiative of the DEMOCRAT project, and (b) presenting at and co-organising a DEMOCRAT final conference in November 2025.

### **2.2.5. Social media and website**

Currently, The AECED project has social media presence on X, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. Further, there is an AECEDHorizon YouTube channel. AECED Facebook and Instagram presences were created by the WP5 team in Portugal in February 2025 to extend reach, diversify communication channels and increase the frequency of social media activities; these social media channels will work in tandem with the other AECED channels. There has been a conscious move away from frequent use of X and an increased use of LinkedIn, following a previously created minimum content schedule (where all partners contribute on a systematic and regular basis) and using the common hashtag agreed with Sisters, #Education4Democracy. Discussion is underway regarding a potential migration from X to Bluesky due to the current concerns about fact-checking, dissemination of hate speech, and lack of alignment with AECED principles.

The AECED website, [aeced.org](http://aeced.org), was made live in May 2024. Work continues with the intention to offer variety in terms of content and media type, with suggestions for podcast-type activity, short video clips (with subtitles and transcripts) and for more multi-language content. Work is in progress surrounding the production of short film clips to describe some of the concepts of the project in a way that will appeal to a wider audience. This media will support dissemination and exploitation activities and extend beyond the lifespan of the project by being made available on the [aeced.org](http://aeced.org) website.

Further, work is underway to improve the accessibility of AECED social media and online content by striving for WCAG Level A (e.g. adding captions, transcripts, alt-text) to ensure that our content is accessible to users who experience different barriers.

The resources page of [aeced.org](http://aeced.org) is currently being reviewed in terms of how project resources be organised and made available. Work is ongoing to maximise the potential of the site to engage interest in the resources offered and the incorporation of agreed Framework, Guide and pathway resources that will comprise deliverable D2.4.

List of WP2 Key Achievements:

- Submission of deliverables D2.2 Dec Plan (1st Update) and D2.8 (Policy Brief 1)
- Regular productive CCG meetings
- Established WP2/WP5 interconnectivity working group and scheduled meetings
- Launch of project website, May 2024
- Update of CAL form and process
- Facilitated launch of project Facebook and Instagram pages

### 2.3. Work Package 4 - Multi-case trialling

The key objectives of WP4 are to 1) refine a methodological framework for evaluating the guides to pedagogical practice (accomplished), 2) to design and carry out research to evaluate the prototypes (accomplished), and 3) to use the findings to identify how the prototypes can be improved and made ready for launch (in process). WP4 is led by the University of Marburg, by Kardelen Cazgir and Professor Susanne Weber.

Throughout the reporting period, WP4 functioned effectively through structured coordination and collaboration. The work of WP4 has been organised mainly through regular WP4 meetings, open for all AECED researchers. Further, the Concept Group re-organised and continued its work, after former organisers WP4 leader Dr Lea Spahn left for parental leave and researcher Dr Joonas Vola left the project. Also, collaborations with WP2 and WP5 leaders have been ensured, to align activities and foster impact in disseminating the project results and revising the Prototype Framework and Guides. The liaison between different work packages has provided room to discuss publication strategies within WP4 meetings and begin a deliberate dialogue in how to apply the research findings on refining the Prototype Pedagogical Framework and Guides in the work of WP5. Professor Susanne Weber organised an online workshop to develop symposium ideas for ECER 2025, inviting Sister project partners as well. This led to a collaboration, and three research workshop submissions were made with the Sister project partners.

During the reporting period, 15 WP4 meetings were held, covering topics such as: Shared Memoing Matrix training, discussions on memoing, data overview and initial findings by each partner, data collection and analysis process, case reporting template discussions (D4.3, D4.4, D4.5), establishing a Cross-Case Analysis Group, gender dimension in AECED research, planning two stages of cross-case analysis, and starting discussions on findings for refining the Framework and Guides. Overall, the WP4 meetings provided a platform for collaborative peer learning and participatory research exchange.

The most prominent focus of WP4 during the second project year was progressing the multi-case trialling process: conducting national case research, presenting their progress and critically discussing findings, learnings and challenges in the PAR process via Consortium Meetings and WP4 meetings. Further, WP4 in liaison with the Ethics Advisor and the Coordinator ensured ethical issues, data security and management, and the gender dimension were discussed in relation to the case research. Thus, task 4.2 “Conducting and analysing cases to trial the pedagogical Framework and Guides, ensuring ethical compliance, participant recruitment, and secure data storage” was completed successfully within the reporting period. The WP4 leader coordinated the sharing of research designs and progress (T4.2.1) within the consortium, and each partner conducted case research, analysed their findings, and submitted individual case reports on completing their case research and on the research findings.

WP4 delivered two deliverables over the reporting period; the first, D4.3, comprised partner reports of case research completion. This deliverable was agreed with the Project Officer to be submitted three months later (December 2024) than the initial proposal suggested, due to an extended case trialling period. The Deliverable 4.4 Data analysis reports, in which case research findings from all 19 cases are presented, was submitted on time by the end of March 2025.

During the trialling process, the WP4 leader prepared draft templates of the national case reports, which were presented for feedback from national partners during the WP4 meetings. Feedback was also gathered via email. In each deliverable, national reports were reviewed by the WP4 leader, and an internal review process, including comments from the Ethics Advisor, was incorporated. Following the Periodic Review (June 2024), ethics and gender dimension sections were added to each WP4

deliverable (D4.3, D4.4, D4.5). So far, all partners have reported on these sections for each case research. Overall, the WP4 leader facilitated engaging discussions and encouraged critical consideration of the case reports, fostering input from all national partners.

The next step involves submitting transnational conclusions by May 2025. The WP4 leader has planned a two-stage cross-case and cross-partner analysis and reporting process (T4.3), as outlined in the proposal. In the first stage, individual case reports will be discussed and critically reflected (T4.3.1). In the second stage, the cross-case analysis group will prepare key project findings and conclusions (T4.3.2) and coordinate the transnational analysis (T4.3.3).

In the AECED Consortium Meeting in Lisbon, 24–26.3.2025, educational-phase parallel groups engaged in discussions and critically considered each case research in the educational phase (T4.3.1). With a cross-case analysis perspective, findings from these discussions were compiled and presented in a plenary session, with each of the four educational phases having the opportunity to present their insights for the transnational report. The Consortium then critically reflected and discussed these findings.

Following the Lisbon meeting, the Cross-Case Analysis Group will start drafting the transnational report. These evidence-based learnings will support the next phase of the AECED project, focusing on refining the Prototype Pedagogical Framework and Guides. As of April 2025, as the last phase of WP4, transnational conclusions will be developed and submitted by the end of May 2025.

List of WP4 Key Achievements:

- Submission of deliverables 4.3 Reports of Case Research Completion, and 4.4. Data Analysis Reports
- Coordinating a schedule for and chairing WP4 meetings
- Coordination, planning, and facilitation of research processes
- Establishment of the Cross-Case Analysis Group
- Operationalisation of the Shared Memoing Matrix
- Enhanced cooperation across WP2, WP4, and WP5
- Consortium capacity building through facilitating discussion on the gender dimension at WP4 meeting 28.1.2025.

WP4 has successfully coordinated the multi-case trialling process, ensuring effective research progress and collaboration among partners. The submission of key deliverables, the establishment of the Cross-Case Analysis Group, and ongoing collaboration with WP2 and WP5 have reinforced the methodological and analytical rigour of the research. The upcoming submission of D4.5 will mark the next critical milestone in WP4's contribution to the AECED project.

## **2.4. Work Package 5 - Design launch-ready Framework and Guides**

The goal of WP5 is 1) to develop and design a revised and improved Pedagogical Framework and Guides in user-friendly formats, informed by insights from previous project phases, and 2) to design guidance on adapting the templates to differing contexts (regional, national, cultural, local). WP5 is led by the University of Aberta, by Assistant Professor Cláudia Neves.

To revise the Framework and Guides, deliberative dialogues are to take place (T5.1.1). These dialogues will be organised both nationally and at the European level to translate cross-case findings into practical recommendations. Each partner has a responsibility to facilitate a national dialogue, and the WP5 lead is responsible for facilitating the European-level deliberative dialogue. A redesign team composed of

partners and key European stakeholders will address these recommendations, resolving fundamental or contradictory inputs to create practical, context-sensitive pedagogical Guides. The final product will be a launch-ready Framework and Guides that support aesthetic and embodied learning, responsive pedagogy, and democratic education.

To achieve these goals, the WP5 leading partner is preparing a comprehensive process for the revision of the Framework and Guides. A significant milestone in this regard was the face-to-face meeting of the Consortium in Marburg, which played a crucial role in facilitating coordination between the WP4 and WP5 teams, allowing for meticulous planning and alignment of processes.

During the second year of the project, WP5 has remained in the preparatory phase and has not yet officially commenced. However, significant efforts were undertaken to set the stage for its future implementation. Several initiatives and meetings were organised to discuss the structure, objectives, and key activities of WP5. These preparatory discussions were essential for aligning the vision and setting the groundwork for the forthcoming tasks. Moreover, coordination meetings with other work packages, particularly WP2 and WP4, have been instrumental in fostering collaboration and sharing insights.

The WP5 leading team has been actively preparing for the design of the launch-ready responsive aesthetic and embodied Pedagogical Framework and Guides. As part of this effort, the team has been developing videos and experimenting with various design concepts and document templates. Additionally, the process of hiring a graphic designer is underway to ensure professional and visually appealing outputs.

To support the creation of launch-ready Guides to pedagogical practice in diverse, user-friendly formats, the WP5 leading team has been consulting project partners to gather insights and reflect on the most suitable final formats. This collaborative approach ensures that the Guides will be practical and accessible to different educational contexts.

Furthermore, to address the need for adaptable templates suited to various regional, national, cultural and local contexts, data from case studies has been collected to identify necessary adjustments. These insights will guide the creation of flexible and context-responsive templates.

One of the primary focuses during this period was the discussion and development of design principles for the launch-ready version of the pedagogical Framework and Guides. These principles aim to ensure that the Framework is practical, adaptable, and context-sensitive, while maintaining coherence with the project's overarching objectives. Key aspects under consideration include user-friendliness, flexibility to accommodate diverse educational settings, and a strong emphasis on participatory and democratic approaches to learning. Collaborative efforts, particularly with WP4, have helped refine these principles and align them with the project's mission and values.

Another key focus was the initiation of discussions regarding the formats and processes for launching the Framework and Guides. These conversations, mainly conducted in collaboration with WP4, aimed to develop a coherent and actionable plan for implementing the Framework. The outcome of these discussions will directly impact the efficiency and effectiveness of WP5 when it begins.

There were no submitted deliverables for WP5 during this reporting period; however, progress was made in other work packages, which indirectly support the readiness of WP5.

Looking ahead, efforts are ongoing to finalise the process and guiding principles that will shape WP5's execution. Draft versions are being prepared, and feedback from involved stakeholders is being integrated to ensure coherence with the overall project objectives.

List of WP5 Key Achievements:

- Conducted two preparatory meetings to define WP5's objectives and structure.
- Established a collaborative dialogue with WP2 and WP4 to develop launch formats of the pedagogical Framework and Guides.
- Finalised the planning for upcoming deliverables, ensuring alignment with project timelines.
- Created the design principles for the launch-ready versions of the pedagogical Framework and Guides.

## **2.5. Work Package 6 Ethics requirements**

The objective of WP6 is to ensure compliance with the 'ethics requirements' set out for the project. Dr Simo Kyllönen from the University of Helsinki was appointed as the independent Ethics Advisor at the beginning of the project, in May 2023. His task is to ensure that data subjects, especially vulnerable data subjects, can be well protected in their fundamental rights and freedoms. Further, to build and strengthen ethics-related capacity over the consortium, an Ethics Group (chaired by the project manager) was established in June 2023 to discuss essential ethical matters with the Ethics Advisor. All partners are represented in the Ethics Group and the group met three times (April 2024, May 2024, February 2025) during the second year. Ethical reflections and considerations were integrated into work of the consortium also by addressing ethics in the case presentations held in consortium meetings in May–June 2024, and in October–November 2024.

The ongoing co-operation between the Coordinator and the Ethics Advisor has been seamless, and the Ethics Advisor's advice and comments have been valuable first in planning and formulating the case studies, and later on, in the conduct of the case studies and in the data analysis phase. The Ethics Advisor provided the Ethics Group detailed comments over D4.3 (Reports of Case Completion) and D4.4 (Data analysis reports). The Ethics Advisor has emphasised Data Security, for instance, reminding the consortium of the nature of audio and video recordings and photographs of people as personal data, and the clarity in planning a suitable anonymisation/pseudo anonymisation process with different cases.

### ***The Ethics Check***

The AECED project went through the first Ethics Check in March 2024 (the Ethics Check Report was submitted on 21.3.2024). In the Ethics Check report by the Commission (received April 2024) the AECED project received the following recommendations:

- To ensure safety and Data security requirements in potential data transfers between EU/Non-EU (UK) partners.
- To carry all project activities with ethical principles that comply, and are applicable, to national, EU and international law.
- Clear instructions on how to proceed with data security with all case studies.
- Safeguarding and inclusion of the subjects, particularly students and minors, involved in AECED activities.
- To address ethics and positionality in research with children/ minors/ students.
- The Ethics Check Report recommended a further Ethics Check to clarify the
- Methods, on how the participants, in particular vulnerable data subjects, would be protected in the (then) upcoming 19 case activities.
- Guidance on how researchers would provide protection for participants.

- Guidance on the positions of researchers in formulating research questions, conducting the research, and its eventual impact.

The Ethics Check Report was discussed with the Ethics Advisor, followed by an action plan. The AECED project responded to the recommendations made by formulating an Ethics Report (May 2024), in which all partners clarified the participant recruitment process for each case study, methods to protect participants in case activities, and the positionality of the researchers in different case studies. Further, all partners sent additional documentation to the Ethics Advisor for monitoring purposes, such as an informed consent template, a privacy notice for participants, interview questions/ questionnaires, and information about the project for institutions and partners. The aim of the Ethics Advisor was to specifically monitor the participant recruitment process for each case, questionnaire design, and consent forms (for participants and for parents/ guardians, when necessary).

In light of this information, the Ethics Advisor revised D6.2 and D6.3 (1st and 2nd report from the Ethics Advisor). D6.3 was part of the Second Ethics Check, which took place in June 2024. In the final report, the independent evaluator concluded that the AECED project has addressed all relevant ethics issues and Ethics Check Requirements in full. No further ethics requirements were identified.

Further, the report mandated the Ethics Advisor to monitor GDPR procedures and handling of personal data on the upcoming AECED website and data security and data safety transfer between EU and non-EU countries. Thus far, no transfers of data have been made, and developing the AECED website is an ongoing process, in which handling of personal data is carefully considered.

During the second year, the Ethics Advisor was responsible to deliver the third report (D6.4), due by the end of March 2025. D4.3 and D4.4 have been provided to the Ethics Advisor in order to write the report.

List of WP6 Key Achievements:

- Submission of D6.4 3rd Report from the Ethics Advisor
- Guidance and feedback for partners in Data Security and other ethical matters
- Ongoing contact between the Coordinator, Ethics Advisor and the Ethics Group



**AECED**  
aesthetic and embodied  
learning for democracy

# AECED GENDER DIMENSION GUIDELINES FOR PARTNERS

October, 2024



Funded by  
the European Union



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and Innovation

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In the 12-month Review the AECED project received feedback to consider Gender related aspects in its all deliverables. This guideline offers an approach to gender, to be considered in creating the deliverables. The WP leader is responsible for applying this guideline to each deliverable as appropriate.

In the AECED project, gender is not viewed as a variable, but as a part of each person's identity, intertwined with cultural stereotypes, expectations and practices. As a cultural phenomenon, gender organises the world and is often times one factor which impacts how cultural boundaries and possibilities are drawn between different people. Further, socialization into a certain gender orients the way people position and habit themselves in their cultural context.

In the AECED project gender is understood as a non-binary concept, and we acknowledge that people might identify themselves in a category which does not fit the concept of a man or a woman. However, in a world in which people are often categorised in to these two categories, and in which inequalities persist between men and women, it is reasonable to maintain these two categories, as long as they are not understood as pervasive.

Further, the AECED project acknowledges that gender is not the only potential dimension of identity producing inequalities or difference in possibilities, but it intersects with other dimensions of identity, such as disability, age, educational background, ethnicity, religion, and others. Gender(ing) is a process embedded in power relations and particular historical material conditions, including practices of masculinity as well as identities formed in these intersectionalities. The AECED researchers do not stand outside of these power dynamics nor the categories and their intersections, but experience the world and their research through their positionality. This positionality should be critically acknowledged.

The research group of the AECED project is female-dominated and completely white. Whether it is a coincidence that the theme of embodied and aesthetic learning is connected mainly with researchers who identify as a female, is to be critically pondered. The researchers should pay attention to the gender aspect when doing fieldwork, analysing their results and disseminating them to wider audiences. Is there diversity among the participants, and how the gender dimension and intersectional differences are regarded in the offered activities and outcomes?

In line with the AECED project's interest in responsive pedagogies and democratic values in research practice, we have generated a set of questions mindful of the gender dimension in our project. National leaders can adopt these questions to their specific research settings to make visible the impact of gender within the participatory research process. WP leaders are responsible to adapt the list of questions to their specific deliverables.

## KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WITHIN THE PROJECT WORK

### Collected Data and the Gender Dimension

- What kind of role gender or other intersectional differences play in your research?
- How gender diversity or other intersectional differences are considered in the conducted research/ in the analysis phase/ in disseminating the results?
- What kind of impact democratic education which the AECED project promotes can have on different gender identities and roles?

### Gender-responsive Communication

- Assess if the report/ other outcome is written in gender-sensitive language.
- Does the material (including the text and imagery) resonate with diverse audiences?

### Gender analysis on the AECED action and deliverables

- Who is the target (both direct and indirect) of the proposed policy, programme or project? Women, men or both? Who will benefit, who may lose? Which women? Which men? How about other genders?
- Have women and men who are challenged by a certain issue been consulted about its solution? How have they been involved in the development of the solution?
- What specific mechanisms can be proposed to encourage and enable women to participate in the policy initiative or programme?
- Who does what? What do women and men do, and where and when do these activities take place?
- Who has what? Who has access to and control of resources, services and decision-making?
- Does the policy, programme or project potentially challenge the existing division of tasks, responsibilities and resources among men and women?
- How are activity, access and control patterns shaped by the socioeconomic context, structural factors (demographic, legal and institutional) and by cultural and religious aspects?
- Where do opportunities or entry points for change exist? And how can they best be used?

Gender analysis questions retrieved and adapted from:

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/tools-methods/gender-analysis#toc-gender-analysis-frameworks>

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE	MAIN MODIFICATIONS	AUTHOR
The first draft	30.10.2024		Pilvikki Lantela Susan Meriläinen Lea Spahn

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