



## **Stand Up for Europe**

Argumentation training against undemocratic slogans:  
European extension and updating

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## **Exchange and Best Practices**

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### **Italian National Report**



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## 1. Current State of Argumentation Training in Italy

In Italy, argumentation training for young people is almost entirely linked to the debate methodology and spread on different levels of formal and informal education, from secondary school to university and post-graduates' education.

More generally speaking, European values are part of youth education as part of the subject Educazione Civica (lower and upper secondary school), specific subjects and courses at universities, projects and courses in the informal education system (linked to NGOs and associations).

We identified three main clusters of projects and initiatives related to argumentation training for young people in Italy: debate, democratic participation experiences, counter-narratives and alternative narratives campaigns.

### Debate

The debate methodology is part of the philosophical, rhetorical, and Italian legal tradition, which has in debate the privileged instrument of confrontation, dialogue, argumentation, refutation and persuasion. The use of debate has risen in recent years in the mandatory school system and beyond (lower and upper secondary school, students up to 18 years old), and many networks have sprouted to foster competition among students and to encourage argumentation skills' development through gamification.

Some examples of projects and initiatives at national level:

- [Debate Italia](#)

It is a project of the Ministry of Education, meant to foster debate's implementation as a learning method in upper secondary school (14-19 years old students), through the organisation of national Debate Olympics. All the practical activities connected to the tournaments are managed by the association [Società Nazionale Debate Italia](#). The first Debate Olympics were held in Rome in November 2017, and year after year the participation has considerably grown: in the 2023 edition, 380 teams took part in the competition, from almost every Italian region. Debate Italia focuses not only on students' abilities but also on **teachers' and educators** to train them appropriately. The teacher becomes the coach and guides students in their skills' development.

- [Palestra Botta e Risposta](#)

The Palestra Botta e Risposta ("Debate Gymnasium") project was started in 2006 by Adelino Cattani, Professor of Argumentation Theory at the University of Padua ([Università degli Studi di Padova](#)). It aims to enrich the primary and secondary school curriculum with debate training and the organization of regulated debate tournaments (target: from children up to 18 years old students). In these tournaments, after preparatory training, teams from different institutions participate, confronting each other on controversial issues, voted and awarded by a jury.

- [INDIRE's idea from Avanguardie Educative "Debate: Argomentare e dibattere"](#)

Avanguardie Educative is a research and action project focusing on Italian innovative teaching methods. The project became a movement in 2014 and it gathered the experience of 22 schools who signed a Manifesto for Innovation. Innovation paths are called "ideas": they are collected and disseminated through guidelines, and the schools that are part of the movement can apply them with their students. "Debate: augmenting and debating" is one of the ideas of the movement, with a specific set of guidelines (Cinganotto, Mosa, Panzavolta et al. 2019) to help schools to implement the

method. The target group for this method is formed by lower and upper secondary school students (11-18 years old).

### **Democratic participation experiences**

There are many projects meant to empower young people and let them experiment democratic processes and participation. Some examples:

- [Prime Minister](#) is a free political school for young women (14-19 years old) meant to foster their participation in the public and political sphere and make them aware of their possibilities. They have a national school network with physical schools in almost all regions in the country, and they deal with topics such as: women leadership, culture and education, civil rights, environment, Italian Republic and European Union's institutions, political parties' role and active citizenship. Each school offers 10-lessons courses, from April to May, to a class of maximum 30 young women. They are taught by experienced women professionals (writers, journalists, activists, diplomats, politicians, parliamentarians, scientists), and each lesson has a practical ending aimed at being engaged in citizenship projects. Guided visits are also included.
- [Model European Parliament by MEP Italia](#) is a project created almost twenty years ago by university students, meant to offer to secondary school students a simulation of the European Parliament processes. Thanks to a dedicated network, each year almost 3000 students from 36 schools in 9 Italian regions can experience what it means to be a member of the European Parliament through practice.

### **Counter narrative campaigns**

Populist, discriminatory and hate speeches are narratives: stories giving an account of events, true or fictional. They convey a value system, contributing to spreading it and replicating it, while excluding alternatives that are not "normal" and acceptable (Council of Europe, 2019). That's why counter narratives are the key to reacting to hate and discriminatory speech: they deconstruct the discriminatory narratives and propose an alternative based on human rights and democratic values.

«They may do so by providing alternative and accurate information, by using humour and appealing to emotions on the issues involved, and by accounting for different perspectives and views» (Council of Europe, 2019).

In Europe, counter narratives have been sponsored by the Council of Europe through the No Hate Speech Movement (which published a dedicated manual for young people and youth workers), but many national experiences were born in each country.

There are several examples of counter narrative-based projects in Italy, and each of them has some features which are worth analysing to the purposes of this report.

Generally, all the projects are based on what is called the *ADIE model* as a methodology to study and respond adequately to hate speech. ADIE is an acronym indicating the steps necessary to produce an effective counter narrative to hate speech:

1. *Assess* the oppressive narrative,
2. *Design* the counter narrative,
3. *Implement* the counter narrative,
4. *Evaluate* the counter narrative.

The path is iterative: this means that whoever produces the counter narrative will have to repeat the steps each time one cycle ends. That happens because oppressive narratives can't be countered by a single story: iterative effort is needed (Council of Europe, 2019).

The ADIE model influences the structure of the Italian projects based on counter narrative implementation. They all have a research-training-action structure: at the beginning, participants are trained to recognise and study the oppressive narratives, to deeply understand their topics and assumptions. Then, they are trained to build an effective counter narrative and they put into practice what they have learned, usually through campaign actions on social media.

- [Una Task Force per i discorsi d'odio](#) (A task force for countering hate speech) is a research-action project of Amnesty International Italia. Through **annual calls**, volunteers are selected to take part in training sessions focused on discrimination and hate speech, to prepare them to act as counter-narrative creators on social media channels and online forums. Volunteers are members of the civil society with many different competences (students, teachers, journalists, lawyers, photographers, video makers, etc.) that they use to reach the project's goals, along with the specific training received. They **act as a team** to be constantly present online to respond to discriminatory and antidemocratic comments and messages (Amnesty International Italia, 2019). The importance of being involved in discussions and not leave the floor to haters and populists, even though it might be stressful, is evident, as some of them might understand and start to be more self-aware:

*«A woman made a comment, and I replied giving her reliable information and a link to Amnesty reports. She thanked me and apologized [for her discriminatory comment] (Testimony of one of the activists from the Task Force Hate Speech) (Amnesty International Italia, 2019).*

- The Council of Europe's campaign No Hate Speech Movement inspired several projects in Italy. One of them is particularly interesting for its features, the **gamification and peer education** involvement: the [national competition "No Hate Speech"](#) organised by the Italian Ministry of Education for high school students (14-19 years old). The participants were required to write articles, create visual artworks or TV/radio products and videos to spread awareness among their peers on discriminatory and aggressive behaviors, and how to counter them. The best ones received an **award** during an official ceremony at the Italian Chamber of Deputies.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

The common aspect emerging from the three clusters is the **cooperative approach**, both national and international: debates, democratic simulations and counter-narrative campaigns take advantage of the building of a network meant to encourage dialogue and engagement beyond the local level. This aspect is both a challenge and an opportunity: it might be more expensive (in terms of time, funds and logistic) to **set up a multilevel and multiprofessional network** capable of working together and guarantee a real exchange among various professionals from different countries or regions (and with both bottom-up and top-down approaches: ministry and schools, State and local associations and NGOs, etc.), but learning from each other beyond borders is an **added value** that makes any project focusing on argumentation more effective and attractive at the same time.

## 2. European Values in the Italian National Context

### Democracy, civic participation and rule of law

Art.1 of the Italian Constitution states that Italy is a democratic republic. All rights and freedoms related to civic participation are regulated by the Constitution: the right to vote, to be part of political parties and run for elections (art. 48), to gather and demonstrate (art.17-18), the freedom of expression (art.21).

Nevertheless, civic participation is challenged by a strong abstentionism linked to a widespread distrust in the political system. This might be linked to some major issues highlighted by the European Commission (European Commission, 2024):

- Law decrees are used too often in the last legislature. They are temporary acts having force of law: the Constitution allows their adoption by the government in case of necessity and urgency (they must be converted into law by both chambers within 60 days of their publication), but they are used far beyond necessity. Their use limits the political agenda to the government's one, and their approval is often linked to confidence vote, with negative effects on the political system's health.
- Challenges in the governance and funding system of the public service media (RAI - Radiotelevisione Italiana). RAI is the source of information of most Italian citizens, and it has always been bound to political parties. Recent events showed that political interference from the government has been further increasing (a phenomenon which has been called TeleMeloni, after the President's name).
- Intimidations, violence and death threats to journalists, including cases of SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation): the Mapping Media Freedom platform (Mapping Media Freedom, 2024) registered 98 incidents in the first seven months of 2024. About SLAPPs: Most notably, on SLAPPs cases, stakeholders signalled an increase in the number of cases of legal intimidation, including from political figures, as also shown by the monitoring activity carried out by civil society, according to which the abusive lawsuits represented 34% of the overall registered and fact-checked cases of threats to the safety of journalists in 2023 (European Commission, 2024).
- Some cases of violence against demonstrators by police, including minors during pro-Palestinian manifestations, which caused a severe intervention by the President of the Republic (Police violence during Italian demonstrations in support of Gaza sparks controversy, 2024). In general, political dissent and activism is delegitimized in the public discourse (Amnesty International, 2024). Italy civic space is assessed as "narrowed" (CIVICUS Monitor - Tracking Civic Space, 2024).

Despite the distrust in the political system, civic engagement in community life is high, especially in cases of need and urgency. Among the virtuous examples, we can mention the solidarity movement activated by common people during the 2023 Emilia Romagna floods, or the huge movement in Florence to support the 400 workers of DKN facilities, abruptly dismissed in 2021 to relocate in countries where wages are lower.

### Human rights and equality

As for human rights, Italy has signed the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is bound to the European Convention on Human Rights as part of the Council of Europe. Human rights and equality are at the centre of the first articles of the Constitution (art. 2-3), among the fundamental principles of the State. Some challenges exist:

- Italy is still missing an independent National Human Rights Institution in line with UN Paris Principles: only an Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights exists, and it is not independent from the single governments (European Commission, 2024).
- Migrants' refoulement in Libya: the Piantedosi Law (L.1/2023) introduced administrative obstacles to humanitarian ships' capability to save castaways on their route to Italy as irregular migrants (SOS Mediterranee, 2023), relying on Libyan coast guard intervention to take migrants in their facilities. Rescue ships are assigned far away ports as final destinations, which makes it difficult for them to complete their missions. When they land, they are being detained and fined for not collaborating with Libyan authorities. The far-right parties criminalize these humanitarian organisations in public discourse.

- The Italian government confirmed its commitment to the Italy-Libya Memorandum, which indirectly externalizes migrants' rights violation in a non-EU country, known for its abusive behavior (Amnesty International, 2021).
- Prison overcrowding and violence on detainees (even minors) are major issues, leading to violating the right to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (ART.3 ECHR). In recent years, detainees' suicides have been growing. In Italy, torture is a crime only since 2017, but the Justice Parliamentary Commission is currently discussing whether to modify the law and abolish the crime.
- Remittance centers for administrative detention of illegal migrants (Centri di Permanenza per i Rimpatri) fail to serve their purpose while forcing migrants to detention without the legal protection of detainees (Tavolo Asilo e Immigrazione, 2024), and they have repeatedly been at the center of ECHR's condemnation to Italy for violating ART.3 ECHR (inhuman treatment) (Case of Darboe and Camara VS Italy, 2022) (Case of J.A. and others VS Italy, 2023).
- Many illegal migrants from the Global South are exploited in the agricultural sector (Romolo Tosiani, 2024), a phenomenon known as caporalato.
- On the other hand, there are several NGOs and civil society organizations which fight to defend human rights in danger, along with Italian courts:
- Humanitarian organisations are still rescuing migrants (at a slower pace), while Italian courts are gradually dismantling the administrative obstacles put by the government to the application of Search and Rescue international law. The Italian Supreme Court has stated that Libya can't be considered as a safe harbor for migrants, and that facilitating their interception by the Libyan coast guards is a crime (ANSA, 2024).
- Civil society is active in giving support and help to migrants, via religious (i.e: Caritas) and secular organisations, non-profit and NGOs such as Amnesty International, Emergency, Medici senza frontiere, etc.
- Civil society organisations and syndicates have activated groups supporting illegal migrants in their work and daily life.
- Many NGOs and onlus are constantly active to safeguard detainee's rights and to spread information and awareness about the current system's flaws and its negative effects on society. Among the most important ones, Antigone and Stefano Cucchi onlus.

### **Tolerance and non-discrimination, hate speech**

These values are safeguarded by international law (UN Declaration and ECHR) and by the Constitution. The current government is formed by the most xenophobic parties in the Italian political spectrum, and a recent survey (AMREF - IPSOS, 2024) shows that Italian people perceive that racism and discrimination are strong, especially against African people. According to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' survey on African descendants' life (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023) 40% of the respondents in Italy have been racially discriminated against while seeking a job, 57% in access to housing when they were in economic difficulty. This problem has structural causes, especially linked to the perception of migrants as a security threat as Italy is lacking adequate State resources to face the reception and integration challenges.

In this political framework, civil society organisations (Mat, Chiodi, & Schmidtke, 2024) (including the religious ones) are active in upholding positive values. For example, in 2024 a public school decided to interrupt lessons for the end of Ramadan as many students were Muslims. The event raised the protests of far-right parties and their voters but was more than welcomed by the Catholic church for its open mindedness (Avvenire, 2024).

As for LGBTQIA+ rights, Italy is the only western EU country not to recognise same sex marriage, probably because of its ties with the Catholic church (Pew Research Center, 2024). The actual government is particularly hostile to queer families: i.e, they asked to the city councils to stop registering children for same-sex couples, a decision harshly criticised by the European Parliament and by a great part of Italian civil society (Giuffrida, 2023). In 2022, a high percentage of homosexual and bisexual individuals reported to have experienced microaggressions and discrimination at work (UNAR-ISTAT, 2023): even though the civic space for LGBT communities is open, in Italy discrimination is high

Hate speech online addresses especially women, LGBTQI+ individuals, migrants and Roma people (Amnesty International, 2024). At the same time, many parts of civil society have repeatedly supported these categories during demonstrations (2024 Pride parade in Rome had more than 1 million

participants, 350.000 in Milan, and demonstrations against gender violence have been organised throughout the country in November 2023, as a response to Giulia Cecchettin's femicide).

### **Social justice, solidarity and inclusion**

Art. 3 of the Constitution states that all citizens are equal and have equal social dignity, without any difference in gender, race, spoken language, religion, political ideas and social and personal features. The article adds that the Republic (and not only the State, but all social actors) must remove all the economic and social obstacles limiting citizens' equality and freedom, because even though individuals are equal for the law, they are not in their daily life in society. In accordance with this article (and against all the previous negative tendencies), many parts of civil society are very active in standing up for social justice, solidarity and inclusion, often to compensate for the State's inability to guarantee equality. For example, in 2022, one fifth of the Italian population (and one fourth of foreign workers) was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (higher than the European average) (ISTAT, 2023).

Italy has signed the International [Labour Organization's Declaration on Social Justice for a fair Globalization](#), updated in 2022 to reflect the inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, many social injustice cases exist, such as the disastrous caporalato system, exploiting the work of migrants and Italian citizens finding themselves in a state of need. Again, civil society tries to contrast inequality with specific action (Italy: eight municipalities published plans to combat labour exploitation in agriculture, 2024).

### **Current situation of values**

In Italy, democracy, human rights, social justice, solidarity and the other European values are promoted through formal and informal education in the following ways:

**Curricular activities in compulsory education:** European values are part of a teaching called Educazione Civica (citizenship education), created in 2020 by the Italian Ministry of Education (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2020). As it is a transversal subject, all teachers can approach Educazione Civica's topics during their working hours: usually, they coordinate at class level to integrate these hours in their lessons, but the burden is not equally shared. The teaching has three main value groups: the International and national legal system (including human rights and solidarity), sustainable development and digital citizenship. Each class is meant to use at least 33 hours for Educazione Civica activities.

Curricular activities regarding participation and democracy are often based on national and European programmes, which give teachers educational resources and the possibility to create a network.

**Extracurricular activities in compulsory education:** Each school (and sometimes only some class groups) decides to take part in specific projects led by local or international associations, NGOs, etc. Some of these activities are classified as PCTO (Percorsi per le Competenze Trasversali e l'Orientamento), activities capable of giving students the transversal competences and give them an overview of the world of work in order to choose their career path with awareness.

**Projects are co-funded by the EU** under different programs and involving directly students and young people.

**Informal education and activism:** Courses, projects and activities organised by NGOs, local and national associations, research organisms, etc. An example is given by Amnesty International's Task Forces (Amnesty International), groups of activists formed by experts, educators and professionals to react effectively to specific challenges related to human rights' defence.

**University courses:** University faculties such as International Studies, Political Sciences, Communication and Sociology offer courses focused on democracy and populism, based on an academic and usually comparative approach.

In addition, there are summer, and winter courses offered by research institutions aimed at university students and professionals, such as Populism in contemporary world (ISPI, 2023), a 7-days course organised by the research institute ISPI (Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale), active in research and education in international politics. It requires a fee to participate, and its target are university students, recent graduates and professionals. The course has an academic approach: its objective is to analyse populism (especially the European one) with all its features and in relation to democracy.

The following are some specific activities meant to promote these values.

### **Democracy, rule of law and participation**

*Spendiamoli insieme* (Let's spend it together) (Parliament Watch Italia, 2022): a project created by the association Parliament Watch Italia to spread awareness and share knowledge on participatory democracy among the public in Sicily, where the regional law 5/2014 gives to each municipality the possibility to directly involve citizens in decisions about the destination of some public funds. Recently, the project evolved in *Scriviamola insieme* (Let's write it together), to foster a law amendment led by Sicilian citizens.

*Giovani agenti del cambiamento e partecipazione democratica* (Osservatorio Politiche Giovanili, 2022) : an ongoing project created by the foundation Fondazione per la Ricerca Economica e Sociale ETS and the Italian Government's Agenzia Italiana per la Gioventù (which administers the Erasmus+ projects for Youth and Sport), meant to guide secondary school students to study, calculate and act to reduce the gap generation index of their communities, by participating to the public discourse.

### **Human rights, equality, social justice**

*SCUDI - Scuola di Diritti Umani* (Cittadinanzattiva, 2024): an EU-funded CERV project led by the organisations Cittadinanzattiva and CILD, meant to contribute to the Chart of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union's implementation by training lawyers and activists for human rights, by developing a legal database and a specific online platform, and by creating a European network of civil society organisations active in sea rescuing.

NGOs such as [Amnesty International](#), [Emergency](#), [Medici senza Frontiere](#) have their educational courses for teachers and students, meant to spread awareness and build knowledge about human rights, equality and social justice.

### **Tolerance and non-discrimination**

*DiversaMente - Giovani contro le discriminazioni* (ICEI): a project led by the NGO ICEI, involving Italian municipalities, civil society organisations, local authorities and youth centres. It is meant to promote young people's leading activities to fight stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, and to build more inclusive communities and cities.

### **Social justice, solidarity and inclusion**

EPIC UP (European Association for Local Democracy): An ongoing EU-funded project coordinated by ALDA (European Association for Local Democracy), meant to develop and test integration strategies for the inclusion of migrants at the local level. It will establish a Community of Practices in six European countries.

*Aiutare chi aiuta* (Caritas): a programme by the catholic Caritas Italiana and Intesa San Paolo, which in 2020-2021 meant to combat poverty through food sharing, help in finding shelter, and support in job seeking and entrepreneurship. In 2021 and 2022, it aimed to support elderly people and fight youth poverty. In 2023-2024, it focuses on the detainees' integration in society.

### **Relevant populist slogans in Italy**

Populism is a key aspect of some political parties: that's why in order to elaborate a list of the trending populists and anti-democratic slogans, we focused on Italian political parties' communication on social media, and specifically on right-wing parties, which in the country are the ones in the political spectrum relying most on this kind of argumentation to widen their electoral consensus (Napoletano, 2023). Also, they have been recorded by scholars and analysts such as Amnesty International with its Hate Barometer (Amnesty International Italia, 2018).

Populistic slogans can change quickly. In the very last years, for example, in Italy some of them vanished from public debate because of the ending of COVID-19 pandemic, which eliminated one of the crucial issues (the pandemic management). When the emergency slowed down, some of the populistic and anti-democratic slogans of the previous year's became popular again because of remarked conflictual situations (immigration, anti-Roma discourses, family, and islamophobia) (Cataldi, 2024), and some others changed in their contents (European climate action).

1. Immigration and racism



***“Immigration from Africa is an invasion, and it is meant to produce a great replacement of white people with black and brown ones. Italian identity is in danger.”***

Given Italy’s position, immigration from the Mediterranean has always been very high, and poor countries’ migrants (even from Balkans in the 90s) have always been labelled by populists as invaders, capable of being a serious threat to internal security, especially because of the inadequacy of the system of reception and shelter (Action Aid and Openpolis, 2024). In the last decades, immigration from African and Muslim countries has been considered also as an attempt to replace white “true Christians and Italians” with black or brown people. Even Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni believes in this theory (Vohra, 2023).

## 2. European Climate Action

***“Green policies and ideologies are crazy and useless, Europe is against “real people and workers.”***

As climate change has become undeniable, people are suffering not only for its consequences but also for the adaptation measures perceived as an illogical burden. Changes are difficult and require time and policies capable of dealing with complexity and with the many flaws of the global economic system. Fear and uncertainty bring many people to consider sustainability an annoying diktat, and Europe an enemy of common people because of its commitment to climate action (Cotugno, 2024).

## 3. Sexual orientation and family

***“There is only one family, which is the one with a mother and a father. Queer people can’t bring up children nor start a family. They are a threat to traditional families.”***

Recent surveys show that the majority of Italians think that family is the union between two people, no matter which gender they are. But the percentage of people thinking that this is not the case is still relevant (37%) (IPSOS and Area Studi Legacoop, 2023), preventing queer people to be considered equal. Right-wing parties strongly support this belief (Amnesty International Italia, 2018).

## 4. Islamophobia

***“Muslims are a threat to security. They only want to impose their beliefs on us, to get rid of our Christian symbols, to make us all Muslim and to cancel our women’s rights.”***

It is one of the Italian right-wing parties’ trending slogans about Islam. It reemerges every time that segments of the Italian society (educational institutions, mayors, municipalities, NGOs, etc.) prove to recognise and answer to Muslim needs (with mosques or sharing religious celebrations). Recently, it came back as a school decided to close for the Ramadan’s ending (Il Post, 2024).

## 5. Anti-Roma discrimination

***“Roma people aren’t Italian. They are criminals and burglars; we give them anything they need while Italian people in need are left behind.”***

Roma people in Italy are approximately 15.000 - many of them living in the Roma camps (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali - UNAR, 2024) - and 6 out of 10 are Italian citizens (Associazione 21 Luglio, 2023). Antiziganism has always been very strong in Italy, and it is «constantly and uncritically reproduced, not only in the common sense and by the media, but also in political and institutional discourses and actions» (Pontranfolfo, 2020). This lack of elaboration of anti-Gypsyism as a discriminatory discourse makes it difficult to contrast Roma discrimination and further isolation from the rest of the Italian population.

### 3. Gaps and Limitations

As shown in the previous paragraphs, in the Italian education system there are many possibilities to study and get to know more about European values. The most important problem is the huge gap between available information (and courses) and teachers' time: they don't have enough time to look for (and find) exactly what they need, and sometimes the training they are engaged in is too theoretical. Usually, to keep updated, find information and be trained they work for 36 hours a week, the double of what they should do (18 hours) (Orizzonte Scuola, 2023). That's why educational resources should be brief, concise and practice-oriented, to help teachers in gathering the information they need to act.

In 2021, UNESCO's survey Teachers have their say revealed that teachers in the surveyed countries (Italy included) «feel more confident in teaching cognitive skills, and less confident and knowledgeable about behavioural learning and socio-emotional perspectives» (UNESCO, 2021). There is a general need for practical and pragmatic courses capable of training teachers to deal with global citizenship's themes (including human rights, democracy and other European values) in an effective way.

As for the argumentation training, Italy is lacking specific training and practice, if we don't consider the debate methodology, which is more varied in themes and not focused on democratic values and discourse. The huge diffusion of debate methodology, indeed, indicates that teachers are very keen on being trained to use innovative methodologies based on argumentation to bring their students to develop effective skills useful in their daily life as citizens.

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## 5. Best Practices from Italy

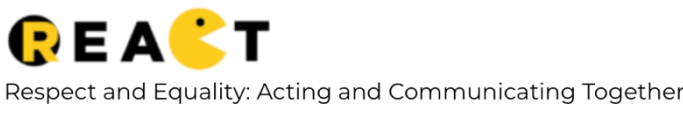
### Best Practice 1: Debate Italia

<p>Place the logo of the project/          initiative or other image of the          best practice</p>	
<p>Topic / Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Activity</li> <li>• National/International Project Implementation</li> <li>• School Activity</li> </ul>
<p>Title</p>	<p>Debate Italia</p>
<p>Target group</p>	<p>Students from upper secondary school (14-19 years old) and teachers.</p>
<p>Type</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Game/Simulation</li> </ul>
<p>Publication date</p>	<p>The first Debate Olympics were held in Rome in November 2017. The project is ongoing.</p>
<p>Partners / Network</p>	<p>Debate Italia is a project of the Ministry of Education          Società Nazionale Debate Italia (SN-DI) manages and coordinates the activities          The WeDebate network counts 270 Italian secondary schools</p>
<p>Level</p>	<p>National and International/EU</p>
<p>Description of the method /          approach, the theory</p>	<p>The national championships are governed by a set of rules that takes as its reference the debate model practiced at the World Schools Debating Championships and includes prepared and impromptu topics, based on improvisation. A debate requires a team that agrees with the assumption under discussion (pro) and another team that doesn't agree (against). Before starting the debate, each team communicates to the judge the names of the 3 speakers who will speak and their order. During the discussion, speakers from both teams alternate. The team against the assumption is entitled to make a question to the opponents. Speakers can communicate only with each other. A timekeeper keeps track of the speech length: they can last 8 minutes, while the final one is only 4 minutes. When the debate is over, the judge decides which team is the winner, based on contents, style and communication strategy. All topics are decided by a specific committee, and they can deal with a variety of subjects. SN-DI shared a set of resources to train teachers, which were the results of DEUS - Dealing with Euroscepticism, a EU-funded project they took part in as partners. The Guide for Depolarisation for Debate Coaches is a set of exercises for educators to use the debate methodology. It is proposed to be used with the research paper The Polarised Landscape in Europe, an analysis of the concepts at the basis of the European Union.</p>
<p>Purpose / Goal</p>	<p>The purpose is to provide students with techniques and strategies to manage a debate and develop argumentation skills to communicate effectively, to know how to speak in public and defend their own opinions, to know how to respond</p>



	to accusations or the other side based on valuable research. At the end of the project participants will gain awareness of the responsibilities, rights and duties involved in being a member of a community, pay attention and respect each other's point of view, critically evaluate information; recognize the values of Citizenship and the Constitution.
<b>Evaluation (result), re-search (if available)</b>	The debate is a mental sport capable of fostering awareness and participation, providing students with tools to independently understand reality and society. It also encourages teamwork. Developing interest in issues that affect society enables young people to take an active role in decision-making processes. Debating issues related to political, social, economic, scientific and cultural current events makes students grow, as they grasp the most concrete aspects of reality, beyond any easy populism. Teachers can consolidate more engaging and dynamic teaching methods.
<b>Overview of the relevant aspects that are important for this project</b>	The following insights can be drawn from the Debate Italia experience that can contribute to the effectiveness of argumentative practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the process and preparation steps; having a regulation, a clear structure and rules</li> <li>• training in communication, public speaking and listening</li> <li>• gamification; introducing healthy competition</li> <li>• use of prepared and impromptu topics, based on improvisation</li> <li>• propose different themes; one for the Italian competition and one in English for the international competition</li> <li>• refer to an international network; relations with other European countries</li> </ul>
<b>Weblink</b>	<a href="http://www.debateitalia.it">www.debateitalia.it</a>
<b>References, online sources</b>	Debate Italia, Regolamento, <a href="http://www.debateitalia.it">www.debateitalia.it</a>

**Best Practice 2: REACT – No Hate**

<b>Place the logo of the project/ initiative or other image of the best practice</b>	
<b>Topic / Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School subject</li> <li>• Youth Activity</li> <li>• Lesson Plan/Activity</li> <li>• Online Education Resource Activity</li> <li>• Civil Society Activity</li> <li>• National/International Project Implementation</li> <li>• Social/Cultural Activity</li> </ul>
<b>Title</b>	REACT – No Hate

<b>Target group</b>	Students from 14 to 18 years old
<b>Type</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Curriculum/ Course/Lesson plan/Learning activity</li> <li>● Toolkit</li> <li>● Digital Device (e.g., mobile)/ Online Tool(s), Application(s), LMS or Platform</li> <li>● Game/Simulation</li> <li>● Report</li> <li>● Handbook/ Guidelines</li> <li>● Assessment (type e.g., self-, peer-assessment) process</li> </ul>
<b>Partners / Network</b>	<p>List of the partners/organization/institution involved, if applicable</p> <p>a) Name of the partner b) Country of origin c) Role in the practice</p>
<b>Level</b>	
<b>Description of the method / approach, the theory</b>	<p><u><i>React - Respect and Equality: Acting and Communicating Together</i></u> is a project co-financed by the EU as part of the program "Rights, Equality and Citizenship" and it brings together partners from Italy, Spain, Germany France and UK to create resources to counter online hate speech. During the project, students from 14 to 18 were trained in <b>5 or 6 two-hour workshops in class over a period of about two months</b>. In this way, participants had the chance <b>to reflect, discuss and elaborate the work done</b>, while exploring and further deepening their knowledge about the topics involved.</p> <p><i>Meetings were organised in two phases: the first was dedicated to reflecting on the possible consequences of prejudices and violent or aggressive online messages; the second was devoted to constructing a counter-narrative campaign together.</i></p> <p>In the project's Educational Toolkit, a set of exercises for countering stereotypes is provided: activities meant to reflect on the stereotypes and prejudices we aren't aware of replicating and to understand their impact on our and others' lives.</p> <p>The strategy outlined to reach the objectives is based on a horizontal and multidisciplinary approach and on target groups active participation. It will be implemented through the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>systematic quantitative and qualitative monitoring</b> of hate speech and recording of counter narratives effective examples throughout a selection of online media, including social media, in Italy, UK, France, Germany and Spain: recording through an ad hoc ICT tool, qualitative analysis and reporting;</li> <li>2. <b>mutual learning and exchange of best practices among key actors</b> – teachers, youth operators, representatives of the targeted communities, researchers, policy-makers, social media platforms representatives, online press representatives and CSOs – on positive actions to foster tolerance, counter hate speech and on means and mechanisms to facilitate reporting and enhancing transparency of counter-speech;</li> <li>3. <b>capacity building and training activities</b> focusing on media literacy both addressed to teachers and youth workers and directly to young people. Particular attention will be given in addressing the capacity</li> </ol>





	<p>building and training activities to different categories of youngsters, including with minority background. Workshops will adopt a highly participatory approach; in particular youngsters will be actively involved in the construction of a solid counter-narrative. The communication tools elaborated by the youngsters will be then spread;</p> <p>4. <b>dissemination and awareness raising campaign</b> based on the use of the tools realised by the youngsters that will be presented at local level and spread thoroughly on social media and the Internet.</p>
<b>Purpose / Goal</b>	<p>In order to contribute to monitoring and counter online hate speech based on (and determining) anti-Muslim intolerance and hatred, the proposed project aimed at collecting qualitative and quantitative evidences of online hate speech and of counter narratives effective examples; identify positive actions to foster tolerance, counter hate speech, facilitate reporting and enhance transparency of counter-speech and share it among key actors, promoting media literacy and spreading counter-narrative among youngsters.</p>
<b>Overview of the relevant aspects that are important for this project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Workshops' frequency</b></li></ul> <p>Spreading the workshops over a medium/long period of time might encourage reflection and help to develop a habit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Preliminary study on one's own discriminatory and stereotypical beliefs (especially those of which we are unaware)</b></li></ul> <p>Being capable of self-doubt and critical thinking is important when dealing with populist and discriminatory speeches, in order to find the best ways to respond and react in a constructive way.</p>
<b>Weblink</b>	<a href="http://www.reactnohate.eu">http://www.reactnohate.eu</a>