

ACES Newsletter

Ambiguity Competence for Education and Society

Issue #1

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PROJECT UPDATE

ACES: Where Do We Stand?

ACES – Ambiguity Competence for Education and Society – is an Erasmus+ project started in November 2025 with a **transnational kick-off meeting in Munich (LMU)**. Six partner institutions from Germany, Spain, Greece and Finland are working together to establish ambiguity competence as a key democratic competency in education and teacher training.

During the last months, the consortium's central focus has been the development of the **ACES Conceptual Framework**. The framework synthesises the current state of research on ambiguity tolerance and translates it into a coherent pedagogical model – providing a shared theoretical foundation that can guide both empirical research and practical implementation across different educational contexts.

The second **transnational project meeting in Palma de Mallorca (UIB)** in May 2026, brought the consortium together to debate and refine this framework – and to take the next big step: planning the **empirical research phase**. With research design and data collection instruments now finalised, the consortium is ready to go into the field. Teachers and school principals across all partner countries will be invited to take part – contributing to a richer understanding of how ambiguity competence manifests in real educational settings.

FIELD SNAPSHOT

Field Snapshot: Mallorca, May 2026

The second Transnational Project Meeting of ACES took place from 18 to 20 May 2026 in Palma de Mallorca, hosted by the Universitat de les Illes Balears (UIB). Alongside working sessions on the ACES Framework and research planning, the programme included three field-based visits to local schools – designed as situated pedagogical inquiry into how ambiguity is negotiated in real educational settings.

Each school offered a different lens. CEIP Verge de Lluc, a socially diverse primary school, raised questions about democratic complexity, inclusion and educational inequality. Esment Escola Professional – a vocational school focused on students with neurodiversity and special support needs – invited reflection on ambiguity, emotional safety and the tension between openness and structure. And CEIP Pintor Joan Miró, with its integrated community-oriented model, offered a space to explore educational continuity, democratic belonging and institutional culture as conditions for ambiguity-competent teaching.

Among the many impressions the visits left, one small detail from CEIP Verge de Lluc proved particularly thought-provoking: a small box of laminated cards in the hallway. Each card followed the same pattern: if you, as a woman, can read, work, divorce, or hold public office – thank a feminist. A visible, didactically sharp reminder of hard-won rights.

From the perspective of ACES and its work on ambiguity tolerance, the cards sparked a thought: what if they had been framed as questions instead? Who fought for this right? What struggles came before? Which battles remain open today? The same historical content, the same recognition – but as an invitation to reflect rather than as a settled answer. A small difference with significant pedagogical implications.

→ Read Markus Gloe's reflections on the school visit on LinkedIn: [here](#)

→ More from Mallorca and about the project on the ACES LinkedIn page: [follow](#)



VOICES FROM THE CONSORTIUM

Interview: Verena Männer (Team ACES LMU Munich)

1. How did you come to ACES – and how does it connect to your other work?

I am a research associate at LMU Munich, which is leading the ACES consortium, so the project has been part of my institutional context from the start. I personally joined the team in April 2026 and have since been working closely with Markus Gloe, Professor of Citizenship Education at LMU, on the conceptual framework – a process that brought me closer to questions I have been pursuing in my research and teaching: How can learning be designed in ways that resist premature closure – that keep questions genuinely open rather than steering students toward a single correct answer? What understanding of knowledge, and of teachers as so-called knowledge authorities, does that require? And, where my focus particularly lies: how might the combination of political and aesthetic education open up new paths here? These are questions that have occupied me for some time and ACES has made me see their particular significance with new clarity: they lead directly to the concept of ambiguity competence. And the framework brings them together, alongside many other threads, into something that is not just a conceptual, but also a pedagogical foundation – for teachers, but also for those of us working in teacher education.

2. One of the ideas running through the ACES framework is that a lesson ending with new questions is not a failure, but an achievement. In that spirit: what questions are currently occupying you – about ambiguity, about the project, or beyond?

- Thinking back to my last seminar with pre-service teachers on image analysis as an approach of arts-based learning: how do we navigate the line between productive openness to ambiguity and uncertainty that overwhelms learners rather than opens up – or collapses into "anything goes"?

- Looking out from my hot apartment onto the street below: how do we – in the street, in the city, as a society - let more trees grow?

READING CORNER

Recent Publications

Dejan Mihajlović (ZSL Baden-Württemberg) – Durch eine komplexe Welt navigieren als demokratische Kompetenz [Navigating a Complex World as a Democratic Competence]

A practice-oriented piece on what ambiguity competence means, why it is an educational task, and five concrete suggestions for teachers. Published in May 2026 on the Reflexionstool Demokratiebildung platform of the Deutsche Kinder- und Jugendstiftung.

→ Read the article (German): reflexionstool-demokratiebildung.de

Markus Gloe & Fabian Heindl (LMU Munich) – Rethinking Democratic Citizenship Education: Ambiguity Tolerance as a Neglected Future Competence

An empirical study on ambiguity tolerance among pre-service teachers, with and without a specialisation in democratic citizenship education. Published in the proceedings of the Asian Conference on Education 2025 (ACE2025), February 2026.

→ Read the paper (English): papers.iafor.org/submission97440

WHAT'S NEXT

Upcoming

Two strands of work will define the months ahead. In the field, surveys and structured interviews with teaching vignettes will explore how teachers and school principals across Germany, Spain, Greece and Finland navigate ambiguous situations in practice. In parallel, the consortium will begin developing the teacher training activities – with the first ACES Teacher Training Programme planned for Athens in 2027.
