Project Proposal Archive

Project Title: P.A.G.E.S: Picture books As Gateways to European Society
Date of Submission: April 27, 2025 (Sunday)**Status:** Archived / Implemented

---

1. Project Overview

P.A.G.E.S (Picture books As Gateways to European Society) leverages picture books as a powerful **visual medium** to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and foster a deeper understanding of major societal issues from a European perspective.

Aligned with the **EU 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, the workshops address fundamental European values such as **inclusion**, **diversity**, and **sustainability** through an innovative approach. Between July 2025 and March 2026, the project will conduct 2-3 workshops at both the **University of Padua** and the **University of Wrocław**. These sessions target a diverse audience including graduate students, faculty members, and undergraduates across various disciplines.

> **Core Philosophy:** Thanks to their visual nature, picture books naturally transcend language barriers, acting as a **"universal language"** that enables participants from diverse backgrounds to engage with complex topics in an accessible way.

Methodology & Structure

Each workshop centers around a specific social theme, such as environmental consciousness, cultural diversity, or social inclusion. The pedagogical structure follows a distinct flow: participants first freely explore a curated selection of picture books related to the theme, experiencing different forms of **visual storytelling**. This is followed by guided group discussions, allowing participants to critically analyze the selected societal issue through the lens of visual narratives. Here, picture books serve not as the final object of study, but as a **catalyst** that supports critical thinking, reflection, and dialogue.

Skill Acquisition & Sustainability

In addition to fostering meaningful dialogue, the workshops equip participants with essential skills in **visual text analysis**and interpretation. These competencies enable a more efficient and profound understanding of European values, representing valuable tools for future cross-cultural communication and academic exploration.

A distinctive feature of this project is its strong **replicability** and **sustainability**. Utilizing resources provided by the **LETIN Research Group (Padua)** and the **CYPLC Research Center (Wrocław)**, participants maintain ongoing access to a rich collection of picture books post-workshop. Furthermore, active consultation with other **Arqus Alliance** member universities aims to establish partnerships with relevant departments. This encourages participants to transfer the positive influence of visual narratives into their daily lives, extending the impact beyond the Arqus Alliance itself.

2. Key Objectives

The project sets out to achieve the following strategic goals:

[1] Foster Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Understanding

By utilising picture books as a visual, universally accessible medium, the project encourages participants from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to engage in critical conversations. The focus remains on complex societal topics relevant to European values and challenges, specifically **identity**, **inclusion**, **human rights**, and **sustainability**.

[2] Create an Inclusive, Multicultural Learning Community

Through interactive and participatory workshop activities, the project aims to build a respectful and open environment where diverse perspectives are valued and **cultural empathy** is nurtured.

[3] Challenge Traditional Perceptions of Picture Books

The project redefines picture books not as materials limited to children, but as **powerful tools** for discussing sophisticated academic and social issues at the university level.

[4] Strengthen Participants' Visual Literacy

Participants will develop competencies in interpreting and analysing visual narratives, empowering them to use picture books and other visual media in academic, intercultural, and everyday contexts.

---

3. Expected Outcomes

The project is designed to generate outcomes across multiple temporal stages:

- **Short Term:** Participants will enhance their **critical thinking**, **intercultural understanding**, and **media literacy skills**, enabling them to engage more effectively with complex societal issues through visual narratives.
- **Medium Term:** Drawing on extensive resources across Arqus member universities, participants will be encouraged to independently organise reading groups within their institutions, creating a **'transmission–expansion' effect**. The project also aims to integrate with existing platforms, such as the **Arqus UNIPD book club**, to foster sustained dialogue.
- **Long Term:** The ultimate goal is to produce a **standardised and replicable workshop model** adaptable for other Arqus universities and broader contexts. This supports the construction of an expanding network of intercultural learning, promoting intergenerational

communication and social cohesion.

---

4. Implementation Timeline

Phase I: Preparation (May – August 2025)

- **May 2025:** Initiate collaboration with **Human Rights Café (Padua)** and **Humankind Research Centre (Leipzig)**. Engage Arqus Student Ambassadors for network facilitation. Begin curating the thematic picture book collection with LETIN and CYPLC support.
- **June 2025:** Finalise thematic structures (Human Rights, Gender Diversity, War and Trauma, LGBTQ+ Identity). Design visual literacy guides and discussion frameworks. Develop a communication strategy including digital and eco-friendly printed posters.
- **July 2025:** Finalise logistics (venues, materials, book shipments). Open participant registration across the Arqus network.
- **August 2025:** Confirm logistics. Conduct internal preparatory sessions for facilitators. Launch intensive online promotion.

Phase II: Implementation (September 2025 – February 2026)

- **September 2025: First Workshop (Padua):** *"Human Rights through Visual Narratives"*. Immediate collection of feedback.
- **October 2025:** Reflection phase and planning adjustments.
- **November 2025: Second Workshop (Padua):** *"Gender Diversity and Inclusion"*. Internal review meetings.

- **December 2025:** Mid-project assessment and synthesis of best practices.
- **January 2026: Third Workshop (Wrocław):** *"War, Trauma, and Healing"*. Post-workshop feedback.
- **February 2026: Fourth Workshop (Wrocław):** *"LGBTQ+ Identity and Representation"*. Final reflections.

Phase III: Consolidation (March – April 2026)

- **March 2026:** Development of the **standardised, replicable workshop model**. Preparation of the final project report highlighting sustainable practices.
- **April 2026:** Dissemination of results across Arqus universities. Submission of final report. Presentation of outcomes at Arqus public events or digital platforms.