# Critical Language Awareness in Action: Changing the World One Story at a Time

**Place:** Brussels, Belgium
**Location:** European Parliament, Room ASP 3G2
**Date:** 2 December 2026, 14h-17h30

## Concept

CLADES (Critical Language Awareness, Democratic Engagement and Sustainability) is an Erasmus+ funded project running from October 2024 to August 2027, coordinated by the University of Groningen alongside SOLIDAR+, Comenius University, the University of Ghent, and the University of Gloucestershire. It responds to a context of declining civic engagement, eroding trust in institutions, and the rise of populist and extremist discourse, arguing that citizenship education has focused too much on skills and too little on the role communication itself plays in shaping democratic life and a sustainable society. Its core aim is to strengthen participants' critical language awareness, helping them understand language as a force shaping social reality and become more confident in using their own voice for positive change.

The conference builds on the materials developed under CLADES Resource Lab 1 and 2, opening them up to a wider European audience. The event aims to engage education and training stakeholders from across Europe, including academics, stakeholders working in formal and non-formal education, and EU level policymakers. Participants will engage with the materials, exchange experiences with peers, and feed structured input back into the project while discussing the project's results and their relevance to the wider EU policy agenda on lifelong learning.

*This event is organised in the framework of the CLADES project and is part of the **2026 Lifelong Learning Week**.*

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CLADES

**Programme**

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| 14h-14h15 | *Registrations* |
| 14h15-14h30 | **Welcome & Opening**<br><br>SOLIDAR+<br>Erika Darics, University of Groningen & CLADES project coordinator<br><br>**Why language matters? And why should we care?**<br><br>Topic: *The importance of embedding critical language awareness in education across Europe* |
| 14h30-14h40 | **Opening Remarks**<br><br>Victor Negrescu, Vice-President of the European Parliament, S&D Group |
| 14h40-15h50 | **Critical Language Awareness in Action: Changing the World One Story at a Time**<br><br>Part 1: **CLA and leaders of the future**<br>Speaker: Arran Stibbe, Professor of Narrative Ecology, University of Gloucestershire<br><br>Part 2: **Fostering sustainability through critical language awareness in entrepreneurial thinking**<br>Speaker: Bernard De Clerck, Ghent University<br><br>Part 3: **CLA as a core competence in European Curricula**<br>A model for embedding and assessment |
| 15h50-16h | Discussion |
| 16h-17h00 | **Roundtable discussion:** *Embedding Critical Language Awareness within the EU's frameworks for lifelong learning and citizenship education*<br><br>*Moderator: SOLIDAR+*<br><br>- MEP Emma Rafowicz, S&D Group (TBD) |

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| | - Daria Arlavi, Policy Officer, DG EAC<br>- Tatjana Babrauskiene, ETUCE expert on Democracy<br>- Brikena Xhomaqi, Director Lifelong Learning Platform<br>- Erika Darics, University of Groningen |
| 17h-17h15 | **Q&A** |
| 17h15-17h30 | **Concluding Remarks**<br><br>SOLIDAR+ |

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