

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AT SCHOOL IN EUROPE

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Council of Europe – Project on
Education for Democratic Citizenship

The definition of the term
'responsible citizenship' is closely
associated with the concept of
'citizenship education'

Citizenship education

refers to school education for young people, in order to ensure that they become active and responsible citizens, capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live

Citizenship education is normally meant to guide pupils towards

- **political literacy**
- **critical thinking and the development of certain attitudes and values**
- **active participation**

The development of **political literacy** may involve:

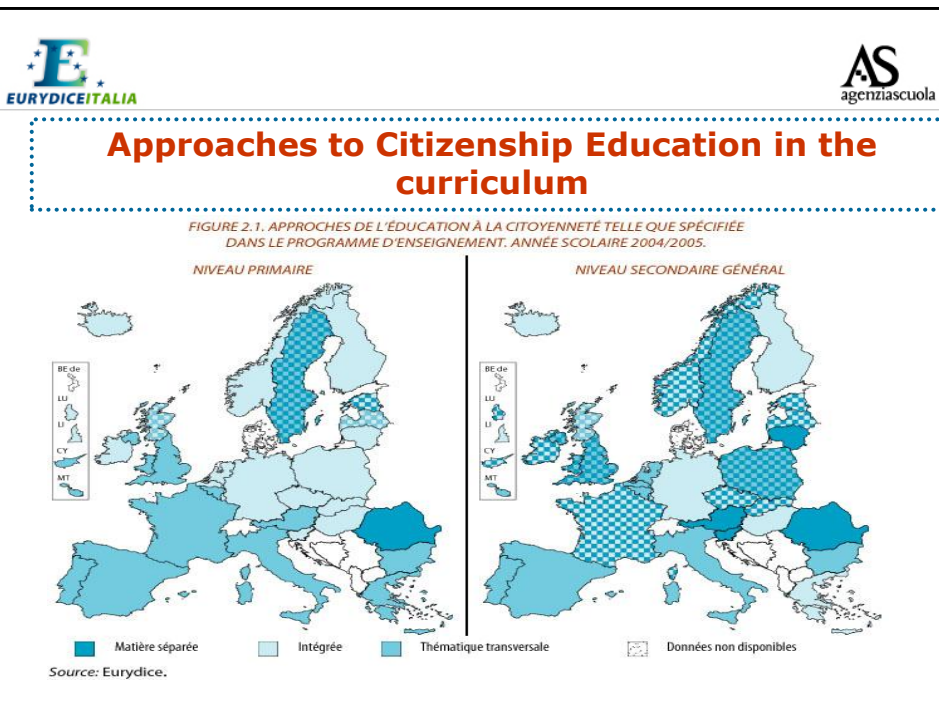
- learning about **social, political and civic institutions**, as well as **human rights**
- the study of conditions under which **people may live harmoniously together**, **social issues and ongoing social problems**
- teaching young people about **national constitutions** so that they are better prepared to exercise **their rights and responsibilities**
- promoting recognition of the **cultural and historical heritage**
- promoting recognition of the **cultural and linguistic diversity of society**

The development of **critical thinking and certain attitudes and values** may entail:

- acquiring the skills needed to **participate actively in public life**
- developing **recognition of and respect for oneself and others** with a view to achieving **greater mutual understanding**
- acquiring **social and moral responsibility**, including **self-confidence**, and learning to **behave responsibly towards others**
- strengthening a **spirit of solidarity**
- learning to **listen and resolve conflicts peacefully**
- learning to contribute to a **safe environment**
- developing more effective strategies for **fighting racism and xenophobia**

Active participation of pupils may be promoted by:

- enabling them to become **more involved** in the community at large (at international, national, local and school levels)
- offering them **practical experience of democracy at school**
- developing their **capacity to engage with each other**
- encouraging pupils to **develop project initiatives in conjunction with other organisations** (such as community associations, public bodies and international organisations)



Citizenship Education in the curriculum can be offered as:

- **separated subject**
- **integrated subject**
- **cross-curricular theme**

Where it is integrated within other subjects, citizenship education is at all levels most commonly included in:

- **history**
- **social studies**
- **geography**
- **religious and moral education**
- **ethics**
- **philosophy**
- **foreign languages**
- **language of instruction**

In some countries, **citizenship education** is also included in subjects such as an introduction to the **world of science** (the French Community of Belgium), the **environment** (the Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Hungary and Slovenia), **regional geography and basic scientific and technical instruction** (Germany and Cyprus), **ancient literature** (Greece and Cyprus), **psychology** (Greece and Bulgaria), **Latin** (Spain), **economics** (Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary and Bulgaria), **health education** (the Netherlands and Latvia), the **homeland** (Slovakia) and **life skills** (Iceland)

Aims and Content of Citizenship Education

✓ **In primary education:** to learn the principles governing life in society; to develop respect in relations with other children and adults; to reinforce the sense of belonging to the community

In secondary education: to know the human rights; to appreciate the cultural diversity, the commitment, the values; to practise the tolerance

Competencies to be acquired

- ✓ In most cases, **competencies** are an integral part of educational objectives
- ✓ **Competencies** adjusted in accordance with the age, maturity and ability of pupils.

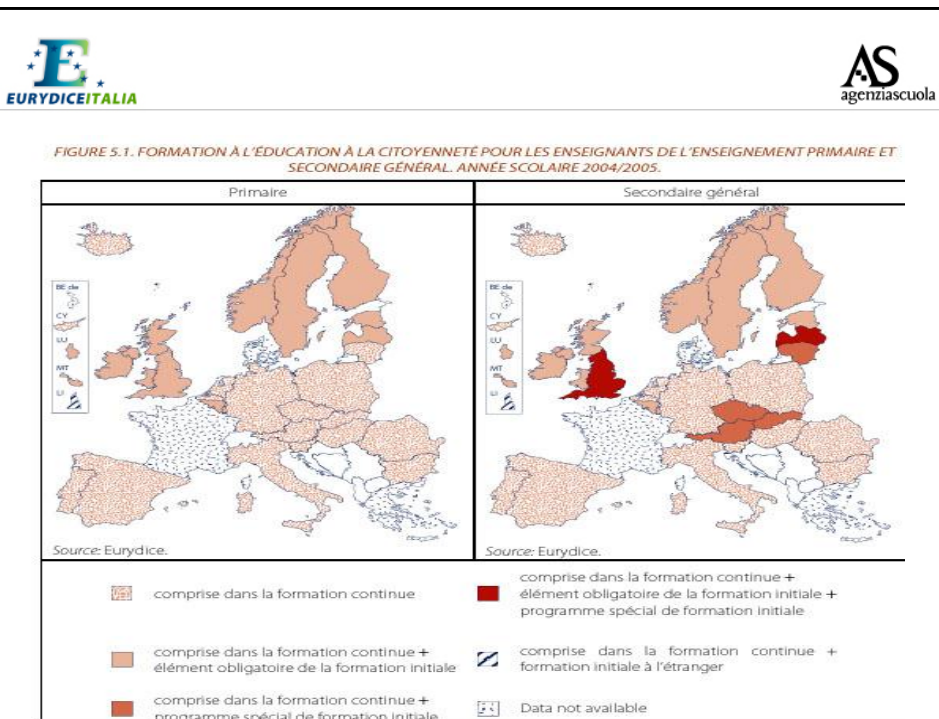
Teacher Education

- ✓ **In primary education:** In most countries, teachers are general (non-specialist) teachers who may cover all subjects.
- ✓ **In secondary education:** In the majority of Countries, teachers are specialists qualified to teach one, two or, at most, three subjects

Three distinct approaches to teacher education

The acquisition of competence or skills relevant to **citizenship** may be:

- ✓ included in the initial education of all teachers
- ✓ a special programme taken only by those intending to teach citizenship education
- ✓ included solely in in-service teacher education



Support

- ✓ **Finland:** the Association of history and citizenship teachers offers curricular advice and teaching material for teachers of citizenship and arranges training for its members
- ✓ **United Kingdom (England):** funds for teaching posts specifically for the support of citizenship in schools. The role of the teachers concerned is to raise standards in the planning, teaching, learning and assessment of citizenship education in schools

Support

- ✓ **Sweden:** Since 2002, advisers known as 'equality guides' have been supporting teachers at local level
- ✓ **Lithuania:** an expert committee for social and moral education addresses problems related to the strategy, policies and practical implementation of citizenship education in schools and makes appropriate recommendations. It also assesses the quality of textbooks and proposed teaching methods or materials

Support

✓ **Germany:** as part of a pilot-project known as '*Learning and Living Democracy*', a special training programme was initiated in 2004 for persons involved in promoting **citizenship education**. Its main aim is to impart knowledge and competence in the area of **democratic pedagogy** for teachers, social workers or psychologists who work in schools

Support

✓ **Non-governmental organisations, particularly those working in the area of human rights, democracy and the promotion of peace, are instrumental in the provision of teaching materials and practical advice to help teachers and develop new approaches to their work on citizenship**

The European dimension of citizenship education

Joint interim report of the Council and the European Commission on the situation regarding the education and training objectives set for 2010:

*"School has a fundamental role to play allowing everyone to be informed and understand the meaning of European integration. All education systems should ensure that their pupils have by the end of their secondary education the knowledge and competences they need to prepare them for their role as a future citizen in Europe. This entails (...) strengthening the European dimension in the training of teachers and in the primary and secondary level curriculum."
(2004)*

The European dimension of citizenship education

The European dimension of citizenship education is taken into account in initial teacher education or in the provision of in-service teacher training

The European dimension of citizenship education

In Germany, Spain, France and Latvia the European dimension of citizenship education is compulsory in initial teacher education

School culture and participation in community life

- Citizenship education should not therefore be provided solely via the formal curriculum
- Citizenship education should also form a natural part of the daily life of schools and the way they are organised

School culture and participation in community life

Three main action lines:

- Pupil participation at school level
- Parental involvement
- School Participation in Society

Pupil participation

- Contributing to life at school in general (school regulations, transport, uniform or canteen menus)
- Preparing the school curriculum and expressing the opinions of pupils on curricular aims and content
- Cooperation with other schools at national and international levels
- Promoting positive behaviour and preventing bullying and racism
- Disciplinary issues or dealing with pupils who have behavioural difficulties
- Editing and publishing a school newspaper
- Organising cultural projects, educational and sports activities, with school supervision

Parental involvement

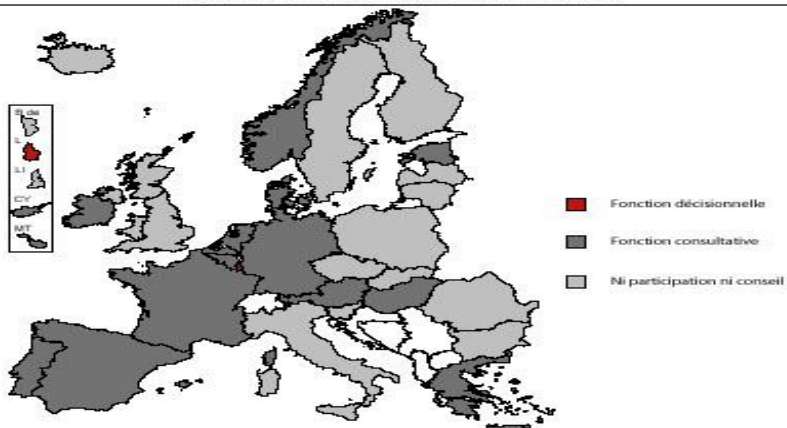
- **Collective advisory or decision-making bodies**
- **Parent councils or associations**

Some examples:

- In the **French Community of Belgium**, a special Ministry of Education campaign was organised with the aim to prepare parent representatives for their work in school councils
- In **Lithuania**, 'contracts' are concluded between pupils, their parents and the individual school
- In the **Netherlands**, parents may be involved in classroom work in primary education or employed as assistant teachers

Parental involvement

FIGURE 3.3: RÔLE DES ORGANES CENTRAUX AVEC REPRÉSENTANTS DES PARENTS.
ENSEIGNEMENT OBLIGATOIRE, ANNÉE SCOLAIRE 2004/2005.



Source: Eurydice

School Participation in Society

- **Open school days** at which the local community is invited to visit schools to find out how they function and meet pupils
- **Visits to neighbourhood institutions or community groups**, including the police, fire brigade, museums, local or national authorities, special vocational guidance centres for graduates, religious institutions, NGOs, homes for children with special needs, elderly people or asylum seekers

School Participation in Society

- **mock elections** modelled on national or European Parliament elections and games simulating the work of town councils or national parliaments
- **fund-raising** to support charity or solidarity projects
- **voluntary work**

School Participation in Society

In **Lithuania**, there are so-called **action days** on which urban authorities Entrust young people with official powers

- In **Finland**, a **Hunger Day campaign** is organised annually. Its aim is to raise awareness and to show that poverty and hunger still are serious Issues in Africa and other developing countries
- In **Norway**, an **action day** has been organised annually for the last 40 years. Pupils try to collect as much money as possible for a solidarity cause that they themselves choose beforehand. This **Operation Day** is usually preceded by the **International Week**, which aims at providing information on international questions and more specifically on the specific project for which the funds are being raised.

School Participation in Society

In conclusion:

- to give pupils an opportunity to experience directly what **responsible civic action means**
- to assume prior responsibilities within the structure and organisation of the school
- to **bridge the gap** between school as a miniature paradigm for society on the one hand, and society in the real world beyond it on the other;
- to give the opportunities to become involved in the **daily functioning of the local community**

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