



Citizenship Education in Europe

Encouraging citizens, particularly young people, to actively engage in social and political life has recently become a growing political priority both at national and European level. Social and civic competences feature, for example, among the eight key competences for lifelong learning as identified by the Council and the European Parliament in 2006. Promoting active citizenship has also become one of the main objectives for education systems throughout Europe as identified in the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020).

Because education is viewed as a principal means to promote active citizenship, the 2012 Eurydice report on *Citizenship Education in Europe* aims to capture how policies and measures relating to citizenship education have evolved over recent years in European countries. To this end, the report provides an overview of the state of play on five main topics: 1) Curriculum aims and organisation; 2) student and parent participation in schools; 3) school culture and student participation in society; 4) assessment and evaluation; and 5) support for teachers and school heads.

In this report, citizenship education refers to aspects of education at school level that prepare students to become active citizens by ensuring that they have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to contribute to the development and well-being of the society in which they live. The definition not only encompasses teaching and learning in the classroom but also practical experiences gained through school life and community activities.

The report provides information on 31 of the Eurydice Network countries (EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Croatia and Turkey) and highlights progress made, whenever evident, since the last Eurydice study on the topic published in 2005. All political reforms planned for the coming years have also been taken into account wherever relevant. The reference year is 2010/11.

The full study

'Citizenship Education in Europe'

can be found in English on the Eurydice website

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_studies_en.php

Printed copies of the report

are available upon request at: eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu

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What is Eurydice

The **Eurydice Network** provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. As of 2011, it consists of 37 national units based in all 33 countries participating in the EU's Lifelong Learning programme (EU Member States, EFTA countries, Croatia and Turkey) and is coordinated and managed by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels, which drafts its publications and *databases*.

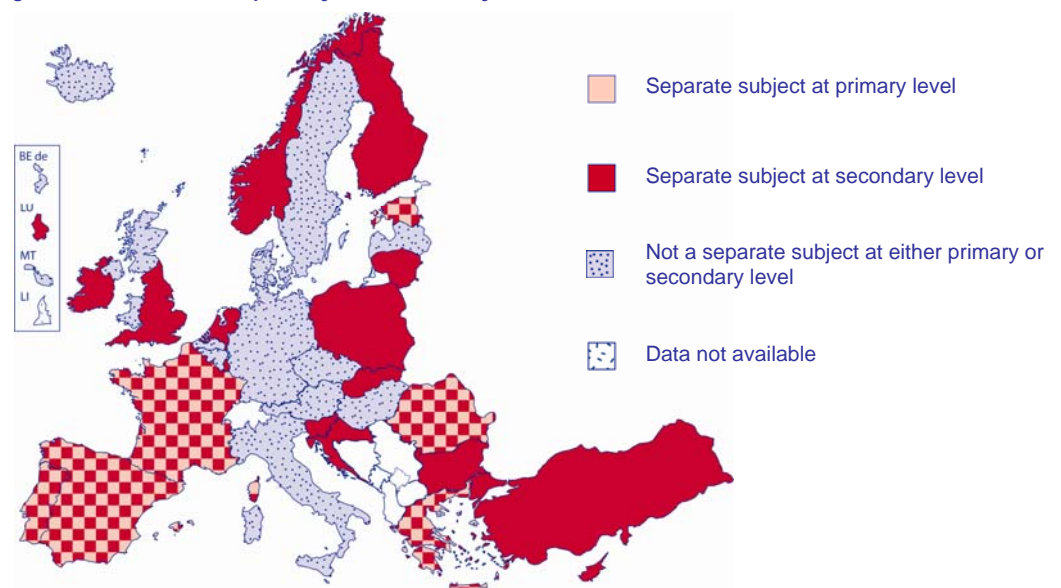


CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IS PRESENT IN ALL EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND ACROSS ALL SCHOOL LEVELS

In recent years, citizenship education has clearly gained prominence in national curricula across Europe. Indeed, all countries emphasise the importance of acquiring social and civic competences in their steering documents, and this applies to all school levels. The ways in which countries implement citizenship education, however, differs from country to country. Overall, three main approaches, which are often combined, can be noted:

1) *Citizenship education as a stand-alone subject.* 20 education systems (3 more compared to the 2005 study) treat citizenship education as a compulsory separate subject, sometimes starting at primary level, but more usually at secondary level. The length of taught time varies greatly within this approach across countries, ranging from one year in Bulgaria and Turkey to 12 years in France.

Provision of a separate, compulsory subject focused on elements of citizenship education, according to national curricula (primary and secondary level), 2010/11



Source: Eurydice.

2) *Integration of citizenship education into wider subjects/curriculum areas:* Whether or not it is taught as a separate subject, citizenship education is embedded into the curriculum of other subjects in the vast majority of countries. This integration can take place, for example, in the form of teaching blocs decided upon at school level (as is the case in the Czech Republic). Subjects that integrate citizenship education mostly consist of social sciences, history, geography, languages, and ethics/religious education.

3) *Citizenship education as a cross-curricular dimension of the curriculum:* This approach exists alongside one or both of the above-mentioned approaches in all countries. As a cross-curricular dimension, all teachers must contribute to implementing citizenship education and its related objectives as defined by national curricula.

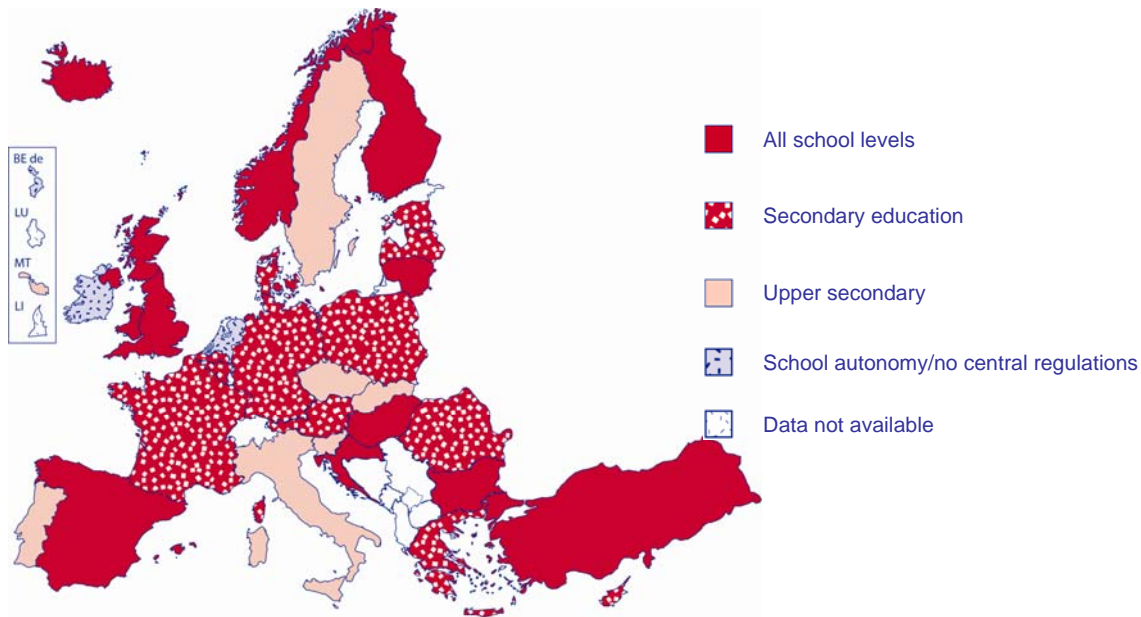
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SHARE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF BOTH THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Across Europe, four main categories of objectives surface in citizenship education curricula: 1) achieving political literacy, 2) developing critical thinking, analytical skills, 3) and attitudes and values; and 4) fostering active participation in school and/or in the community. The most common subject themes addressed across Europe relate to knowledge and understanding of the socio-political system of the country, to human rights and democratic values as well as to equity and justice. However, the national context is not the only focus of citizenship education. European and international dimensions also tend to play important roles.

LEARNING-BY-DOING BECOMES THE PREMISE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

While imparting the necessary knowledge of citizenship education to students constitutes an important basis, the nature of the subject calls for learning objectives which are more likely to be met through learning-by-doing than traditional teaching methods. To this end, all countries have introduced some form of central regulations to promote the involvement of pupils and students in school governance, allowing them to have a voice in the running of their school. Involvement ranges from the election of class representatives to the establishment of a student council and/or a student representation on school governing bodies. Although subject to further research, report findings suggest that central regulations could play an important role in encouraging real-life democratic practices within schools, such as increased participation in student elections for class representatives or student council elections.

Regulations and official recommendations providing for student representatives on school governing bodies (primary and secondary level), 2010/11



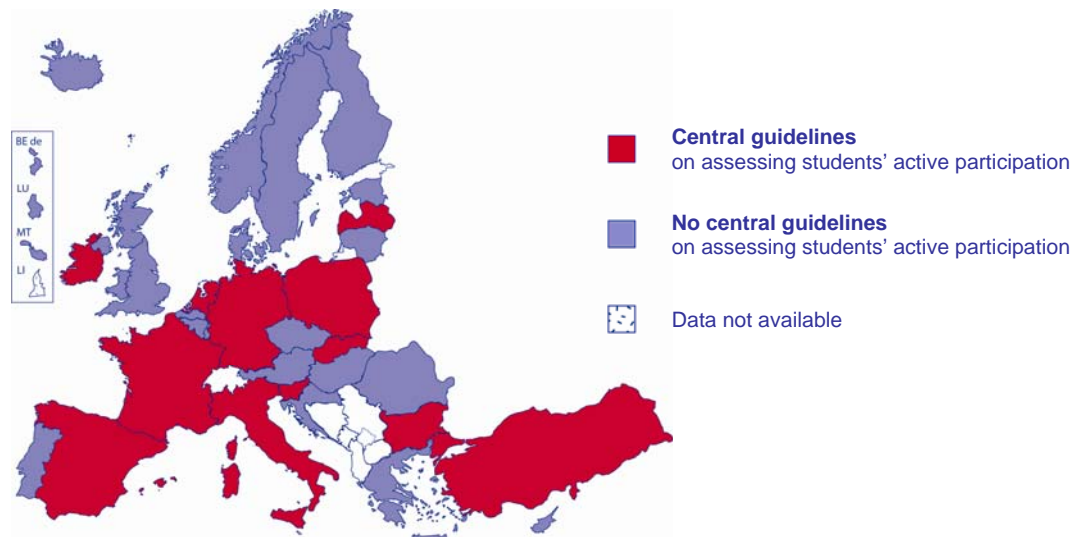
Source: Eurydice.

Other policy initiatives focusing on practical activities include nation-wide programmes or projects that cultivate citizenship-related values and attitudes outside school. In Latvia, for example, one such project focused on engaging students from different ethnic and socio-economic groups in common community activities. More than half of the participating countries have implemented at least one such programme or project since 2007. However, the uneven spread of participation opportunities for students in community activities among countries, as noted by the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS – <http://www.iccs.edu.au/>), suggests that efforts in developing these initiatives must be reinforced.

ASSESSING AND EVALUATING PERFORMANCE IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION REMAINS CHALLENGING

In the majority of cases where citizenship education constitutes a stand-alone subject, marks are taken into account in the decision on whether or not students' progress to the next level of education. However, because citizenship education is greatly based on practice, developing appropriate assessment methods that go beyond the evaluation of theoretical knowledge was identified as a major challenge in the 2005 study. The current study reveals that one third of countries now take student participation in school or in community activities into account in their assessment, e.g. by validating active participation through a final certificate. For example, in the Netherlands, students have to complete 30 hours of community service in order to obtain their upper secondary certificate.

Central guidelines for assessing students' active participation in school or in the community (secondary education), 2010/11



Source: Eurydice.

In addition to student assessment, citizenship education plays an increasing role in the evaluation of the school or education system as a whole. In fact, 19 countries include citizenship-related issues in regulations and/or recommendations on external school evaluation and 17 on internal evaluation. Areas of evaluation include school culture, school governance, relationship with the wider community and teaching and learning. Including citizenship education in the criteria for monitoring the whole education system is becoming a widespread practice in Europe. Over the last ten years, around two thirds of countries have carried out national monitoring processes (such as research projects, surveys, etc.) which were targeted at teaching and learning citizenship education.

MORE EFFORTS NEEDED TO PREPARE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS TO BECOME QUALIFIED LEADERS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Improving teachers' knowledge and skills for teaching citizenship remains an issue in Europe. While in general, citizenship education is integrated into initial teacher education courses for secondary education specialists in subjects such as history and geography, only two countries (United Kingdom [England] and Slovakia) offer the opportunity to train prospective teachers as a specialist in citizenship education. Furthermore, while several countries have reformed their citizenship education curricula over the last years, these reforms have rarely been introduced in initial teacher education or continuing professional development programmes (CDPs). On the upside, CDPs focusing on citizenship education are available to teachers in most European countries. In addition, various other support measures, such as official websites, handbooks or teaching manuals, have been introduced across Europe.

Besides teachers, school heads also play a major role in citizenship education. Fostering a favourable school culture or promoting pupils active participation within the (school) community are some examples. In almost half of European countries, special training programmes for headship exist, some of which refer explicitly to issues related to citizenship education (e.g. human rights education). In most countries offering CDPs for school heads, elements relating to citizenship education, such as school culture, are addressed. More investigation into this topic is, however, necessary to paint a more comprehensive picture of the situation today.