



European  
Commission

# Eurydice *Brief*

## Citizenship Education

at School in Europe 2017



Education and  
Training





## Eurydice Brief

# Citizenship Education at School in Europe 2017

This Eurydice Brief presents the main findings of the Eurydice report *Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017*, published in October 2017 and produced under the auspices of the European Commission. Data is based on existing regulations and recommendations gathered by the Eurydice Network in 42 education systems, complemented by findings from the academic literature and by interviews with relevant actors at national level.

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# WHY IS CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

## The importance of citizenship education

### *Meeting modern challenges*

Europe is currently facing significant challenges. Socio-economic problems, violent extremism and a lack of trust in democratic processes are amongst the biggest threats to peace, democracy, freedom and tolerance. Education and training can help counter these threats by fostering mutual respect and promoting fundamental values – citizenship education has a special part to play in this regard and, across Europe, there are high expectations from it.

Citizenship education is a fluid concept because the understanding of what it is and what its aims should be varies between countries and changes over time. The definition used here applies to modern democratic societies.

### *What is citizenship education?*

#### **Definition of citizenship education:**

**Citizenship education is a subject area which aims to promote harmonious co-existence and foster the mutually beneficial development of individuals and the communities in which they live. In democratic societies, citizenship education supports students in becoming active, informed and responsible citizens, who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and for their communities at the national, European and international level.**

In the wake of the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, the EU Education Ministers and the European Commission signed the Paris Declaration, which called for action at European, national, regional and local levels to reinforce the role of education in promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination (European Commission, 2015).

It is clear from this declaration that public expectations of education and especially of citizenship education have grown. Whilst citizenship education is not a panacea against all social ills, it is anticipated that it can contribute toward the common good.

Education is intrinsically connected to the development and growth of individuals within a social context. All forms of responsible education are beneficial not only to individuals themselves, but also to society as a whole. Citizenship education, however, has a special connection with the welfare of society and its institutions.

Education authorities throughout Europe are aware of the need to teach children and young people how to behave responsibly taking into account not only their own interest but also that of others, including the communities of which they are a part. Children must also be taught to understand the role of the institutions that are necessary for a well-functioning society.

In democratic societies all members have, by definition, a social and political role to play. This typically includes voting and standing for elections, scrutinising public authorities and working for social change. Young people therefore need to acquire the necessary competences to perform these social and political duties. Education authorities in democratic countries endeavour, to a greater or lesser extent, to promote personal, inter-personal and social competences, in addition to creating awareness of political institutions and practices.

## The policy framework

On top of the Paris Declaration (European Commission, 2015) and the Key Competences Framework (1), the EU has expressed its commitment to citizenship education through a number of policy initiatives.

*Expectations of citizenship education are high*

The EU Education Council has focused, amongst other things, on the role of the youth sector in an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to 'prevent and combat violent radicalisation among young people' (Council of the European Union, 2016a). It has also encouraged the development of media literacy and critical thinking through education and training (Council of the European Union, 2016b) and has emphasised the need for 'inclusion in diversity to achieve a high quality education for all' (Council of the European Union, 2017).

Furthermore, a Commission Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism has set out a number of initiatives to support Member States ranging from promoting inclusive education and common values, to tackling extremist propaganda online and radicalisation in prisons (European Commission, 2016).

Since 2016, the Education and Training 2020 Working Group on 'Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education' has been providing a forum for exchange on the key policy issues highlighted in the Paris Declaration. The main focus has been on citizenship, fundamental values and non-discrimination. One of the outputs of this working group is an online compendium of good practices (2).

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(1) Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December on key competences for lifelong learning, OJ L 394, 30.12.2006.

(2) <https://ec.europa.eu/education/compendium>

In addition to the EU, other international actors are also active in the field of citizenship education. The Council of Europe, for example, has published results from its monitoring of the implementation of its 'Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education', which was adopted by all EU Member States (Council of Europe, 2017). Furthermore, the Council of Europe published its reference framework 'Competences for democratic culture: Living together as equals in culturally diverse societies' (Council of Europe, 2016). UNESCO has likewise been actively promoting the idea of citizenship education on a global scale through its Global Citizenship Education Model (UNESCO, 2015). And finally, in 2017, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement published the results of its international civic and citizenship education study (Schulz et al., 2017).

## The Eurydice report

The 2017 Eurydice report on citizenship education at school in Europe is the third Eurydice report on this subject area reflecting, firstly, the continued interest of the EU and national authorities and, secondly, the need to make available to all stakeholders the latest evidence regarding the current structure, content and means of delivering of citizenship education.

The full report can be downloaded from the EACEA website <sup>(3)</sup>.

The objective of the report is to provide a current and comprehensive picture of national policies in the area of citizenship education in schools across Europe. The report has four chapters, each addressing different aspects of citizenship education: 1. Curriculum organisation and content; 2. Teaching, learning and active participation; 3. Student assessment and school evaluation; and 4. Teacher education, professional development and support. Four case studies on recent policy initiatives in the area of citizenship education in Belgium (Flemish Community), Estonia, France and Austria accompany the chapters.

The report is based on qualitative data provided by the Eurydice Network on the relevant official regulations and recommendations and is complemented by both findings from the academic literature and interviews with key national actors.

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<sup>(3)</sup> [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Citizenship\\_Education\\_at\\_School\\_in\\_Europe\\_%E2%80%93\\_2017](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Citizenship_Education_at_School_in_Europe_%E2%80%93_2017)

## The conceptual framework

Taking into account the current policy context outlined above and the latest research findings, the conceptual framework is centred on four citizenship education competence areas (i.e. areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes).

Area 1: **Interacting effectively and constructively with others**, including personal development (self-confidence, personal responsibility and empathy); communicating and listening; and cooperating with others.

Area 2: **Thinking critically**, including reasoning and analysis, media literacy, knowledge and discovery, and use of sources.

Area 3: **Acting in a socially responsible manner**, including respect for the principle of justice and human rights; respect for other human beings, for other cultures and other religions; developing a sense of belonging; and understanding issues relating to the environment and sustainability.

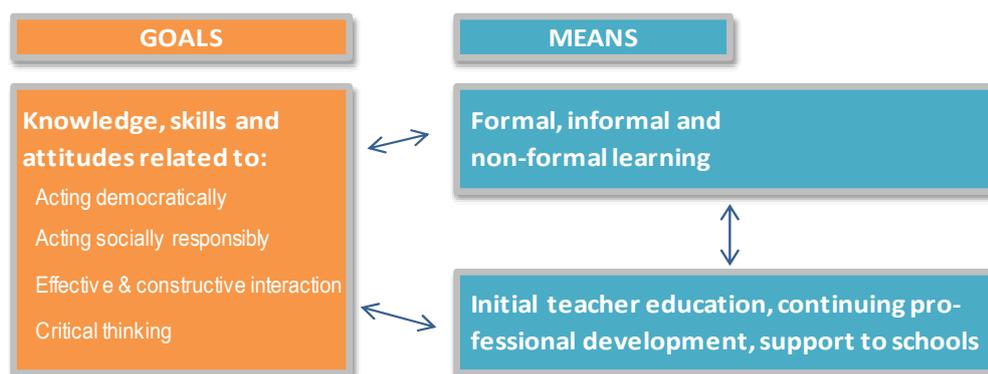
Area 4: **Acting democratically**, including respect for democratic principles; knowledge and understanding of political processes, institutions and organisations; and knowledge and understanding of fundamental social and political concepts <sup>(4)</sup>.

Even though the emphasis is on students and on what takes place in school, the report acknowledges that teachers play a vital role in the learning process, and it recognises that activities outside the classroom (such as study visits or volunteering in community projects) can contribute to the goals of citizenship education.

Figure 1 illustrates the links between the goals and the means of delivering citizenship education.

*Citizenship education competences help young people interact effectively, think critically, act in a socially responsible way and democratically*

Figure 1: The conceptual framework: goals and means of delivering citizenship education in school



<sup>(4)</sup> The complete competences list can be found in Figure 1.7 of the report.

# WHAT IS CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION ABOUT?

## Civic or citizenship education?

*Citizenship education tends to have a broader scope than civic education*

The boundary between civic and citizenship education is not perfectly clear, but the former has a narrower scope than the latter. Whereas civic education or civics usually refers to the process of transmitting knowledge concerning a country's constitutional structure and political institutions, citizenship education covers additional competences, such as social responsibility, as well as skills for ensuring effective interpersonal relations and successful personal development. The Eurydice report has adopted the broader concept of citizenship education in order to be as inclusive as possible and to capture the diversity of national curricula.

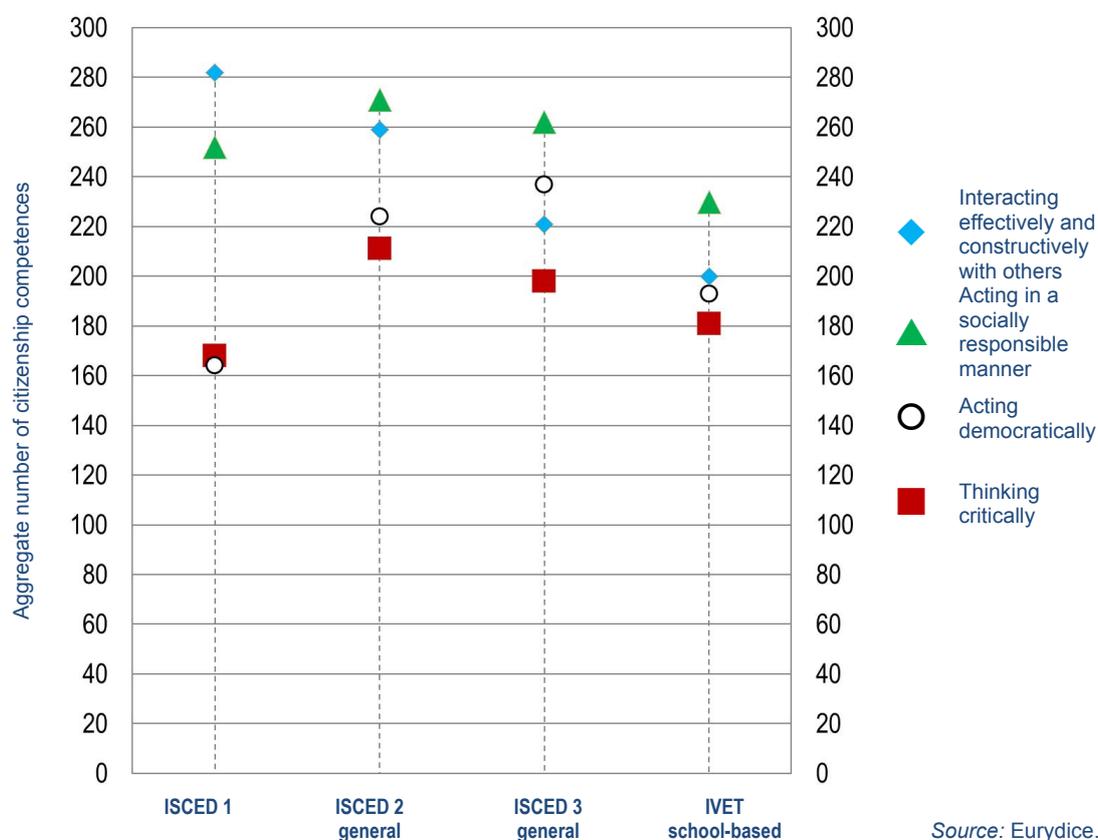
The 2017 Eurydice study confirmed that citizenship education is part of national curricula for general education in all countries. It also confirmed that citizenship education is far more than simply teaching students about a country's political institutions or history. All countries have ambitious curricula to develop competences related to interacting effectively and constructively with others, acting in a socially responsible manner, acting democratically and thinking critically.

## The pedagogical priorities across education levels

*Acting democratically is addressed at upper secondary level*

In primary education there is a relatively greater emphasis on teaching children how to interact effectively and constructively with others, which includes competences related to students' personal development and inter-personal relations (see Figure 2). Unsurprisingly, thinking critically and acting democratically do not feature as prominently in ISCED 1. It makes more sense to prepare students to behave democratically towards the end of secondary education, which normally marks the end of compulsory education, because this is when, in most countries, students come of age and acquire the right to vote in their country's general election. Critical thinking presupposes the capacity for abstraction and analytical thinking, both of which are more developed in older students. In contrast, education authorities start teaching younger students early on how to behave towards others and how to act in a socially acceptable or responsible manner. In this way, it is hoped to instil these values deep within children's consciousness.

Figure 2: Frequency with which citizenship education competences occur in national curricula for citizenship education by area of competence at primary, general secondary education and school-based IVET, 2016/17



## Interacting effectively and constructively with others

Thirty-six European education systems report the development of personal responsibility as one of the objectives of citizenship education. Personal responsibility implies reflecting on one's own attitudes, imposing self-restraint and developing a sense of ownership of one's actions – which also makes it a socially useful skill. In lower secondary education, 35 countries mention responsibility in some form in their curriculum – 30 at ISCED 3 and in IVET (see Figure 1.10 in the report).

The second most common component of this competence area at primary level is communicating and listening, which implies making one's views known and supporting them with the help of arguments and listening respectfully to the views of others. No fewer than 33 education systems include these competences in their curriculum. In lower secondary education, communicating and listening features in 31 national curricula. Acquiring communication and listening skills is the third most common competence in the interacting effectively competence area in upper secondary. A similar pattern applies in IVET where communicating and listening is mentioned in 24 curricula and is the second most common component.

Learning how to cooperate with others is clearly another priority that many curricula across Europe have in common. Cooperation is the third most common competence in ISCED 1 and 2, but it ranks lower in ISCED 3 and IVET (see Figure 1.10 in the report).

*Personal responsibility, communication and cooperation skills are important in primary education*

## Thinking critically

*Critical thinking is an essential component of citizenship education*

Exercising judgement is by far the most common competence at ISCED 1 with thinking critically, reasoning and analysis skills, and media literacy following some way behind (see Figure 1.11 in the report). At ISCED 2 thinking critically is the frontrunner, with exercising judgement and understanding the present world coming joint second, and knowledge discovery and use of sources third. Thinking critically continues to lead the field at ISCED 3, with exercising judgement and understanding the present world coming second and reasoning and analysis skills third. Finally, in IVET, the order is thinking critically, reasoning and analysis followed by exercising judgement.

Most education systems tend to favour similar components related to critical thinking and some seem to be important enough to be included at all or nearly all education levels. First and foremost, is the ability to reflect critically on matters and choose between different options, particularly when ethical considerations are involved (thinking critically and exercising judgement). About half of the educational systems acknowledge media literacy (including social media literacy and dealing with cyber-bullying) as an important competence, incorporating it into the curriculum at ISCED levels 1, 2 and 3. Relatively fewer countries teach it in IVET. Understanding the present world or knowledge of current affairs is part of the curriculum in many countries, but mostly in secondary education. A similar pattern can be identified with knowledge discovery and use of sources. In contrast, creativity tends to be promoted in primary and lower secondary schools, but only in a minority of countries.

## Acting in a socially responsible manner

*Respect for others is taught throughout the school years*

Education authorities want students to graduate from school having a heightened sense of responsibility not only towards themselves or towards people in their immediate surroundings (e.g. family and peers), but also towards society as a whole.

Certain topics are taught in all school years. For example, more than half of the educational systems teach 'respect for other human beings and respect for human rights at all education levels (see Figure 1.12 in the report). Similarly, 23 countries mention respecting other cultures in the curriculum for ISCED 1. The figure rises to 26 and 28 for ISCED 2 and 3, respectively. For school-based vocational education knowing about or respecting other cultures is mentioned in 24 curricula. In comparison, fewer national curricula address knowing about or respecting other religions, especially in primary education (15 in ISCED 1, 22 in ISCED 2, 21 in ISCED 3 and 16 in IVET).

Topics related to sustainable development tend to be covered at the higher levels of school education, whereas environmental protection is more often dealt with in primary school. The same goes for creating a sense of belonging, which incorporates fostering a sense of patriotism and national identity.

Citizenship education, especially in previous eras, has been associated with the promotion of a national identity (Heater, 2002). The Eurydice report shows that at most, 27 out of 42 European education systems refer to the advancement of a sense of belonging in ISCED 1, while the number drops in ISCED 2, 3 and IVET. This finding, in combination with the fact that many countries promote competences related to non-discrimination and respect for other cultures, may reflect the fact that Europe has become more diverse and multi-cultural and that curricula have been adapted accordingly.

*A sense of belonging is cultivated mainly in primary school*

### Acting democratically

The competences associated with acting democratically are clearly the most political aspects of citizenship education. Figure 3 shows that encouraging students to participate in the democratic process is included in the curricula of most educational systems. Thus, modern citizenship education in Europe tends not simply to disseminate theoretical knowledge on democracy, but also encourages students to become active citizens who participate in public and political life.

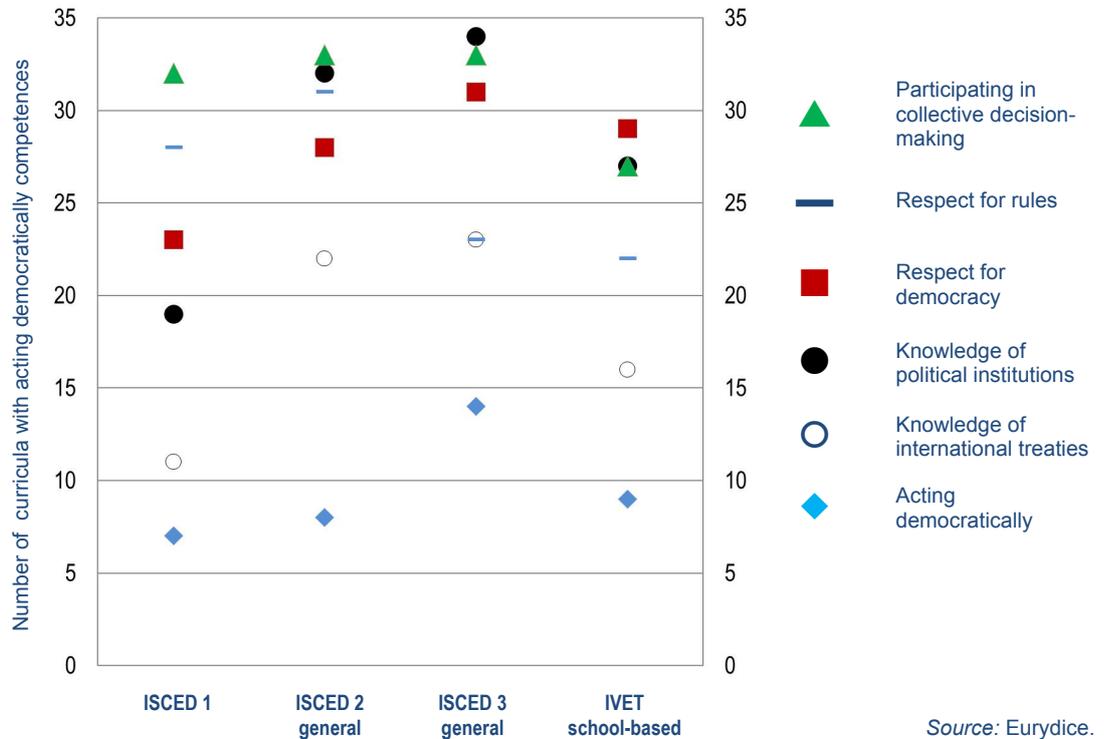
*Promoting participation is at least as important as knowledge of institutions*

Of course, imparting knowledge of political institutions and knowledge of political processes, as well as the more abstract learning involved in understanding of fundamental political and social concepts is also included in national curricula. However, this tends to take place when students are a bit older, in secondary education. In primary school more than half of the national curricula aim to instil in students the value of rules and the need to respect them. This is also the case in lower secondary education, but in upper secondary and IVET attention shifts away from this aspect. Promoting participation is something that takes place early on in the majority of countries. In primary and secondary education more than 30 countries mention participation in their curricula, but in IVET this number drops to 27 (see Figure 3).

Finally, at secondary level a substantial number of national curricula also cover topics related to international organisations, especially the EU, and international treaties, particularly UN treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Somewhat surprisingly, this is not shared by all the education systems examined.

*Citizenship education has an international dimension*

Figure 3: National curricula with competences related to acting democratically in primary, general secondary education and school-based IVET, 2016/17



### Case study: Strengthening citizenship education in Austria

Citizenship education in Austria is integrated within the subject of history and it is often taught by history teachers. As a result, the citizenship education topics would not always receive the attention due to them. To address this imbalance, the 2016 curriculum reform introduced nine compulsory 'modules' (thematic areas) two of which referred exclusively to citizenship education and two more jointly to history and citizenship education. While teachers generally have autonomy in what and how they teach, there is now an obligation to address the citizenship education topics included in the compulsory modules.

The modules cover topics in a way that combines cross-time and cross-sectional approaches, in contrast to the chronological order of the past. In addition, the curriculum now distinguishes between three interrelated yet distinct dimensions of the political landscape. First, the formal dimension ('polity'), which deals with the constitution and political institutions. Second, the content ('policy'), which covers the goals and tasks of the polity and the associated competing political interests and ideologies. Third, the process ('politics'), dealing with how political ideas translate into praxis, how the 'political will' is formed and how political consensus is built and conflict is resolved.

# CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

Unlike mathematics or languages, citizenship education is not a traditional school subject acknowledged consistently as a topic in its own right in the curricula issued by top-level authorities. It is often defined in terms of social and civic competences which, like the other cross-curricular or 'transversal' competences such as the digital, entrepreneurship and learning to learn competences (European Commission, 2012), have a wide application and are linked to many subjects across the whole curriculum. An important challenge for the integration of the transversal competences embodied within subjects such as citizenship education is to enhance their status to bring them more into line with the traditional subject-based competences (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012b).

**Three main curriculum approaches to citizenship education are used across Europe:**

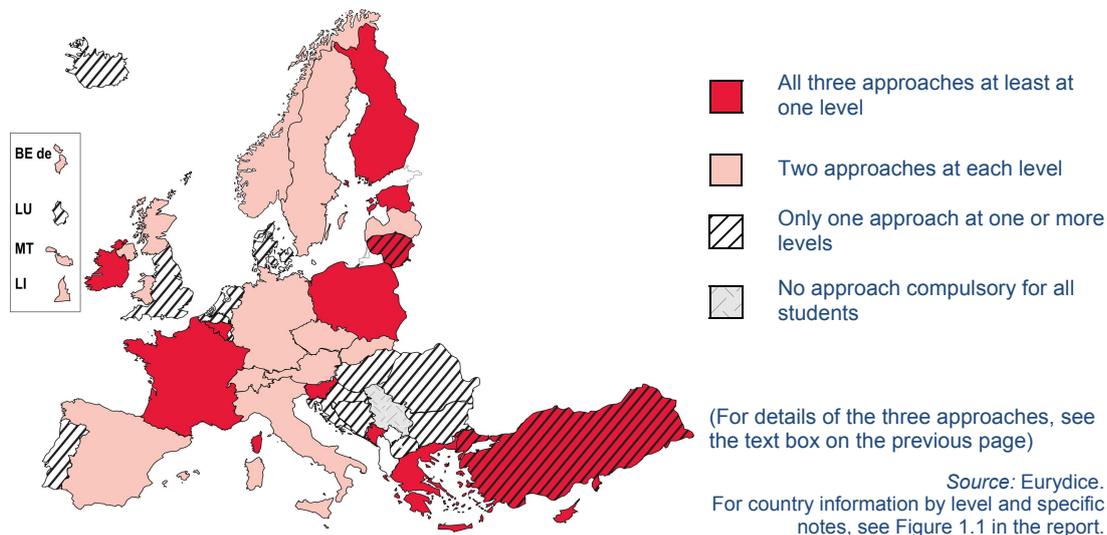
- **Cross-curricular theme:** citizenship education objectives, content or learning outcomes are designated as being transversal across the curriculum and all teachers share responsibility for delivery.
- **Integrated into other subjects:** citizenship education objectives, content or learning outcomes are included within the curriculum documents of wider subjects or learning areas, often concerned with the humanities/social sciences.
- **Separate subject:** citizenship education objectives, content or learning outcomes are contained within a distinct subject boundary primarily dedicated to citizenship.

*A combination of approaches to citizenship education is often used in national curricula*

Taking into account, for comparability purposes, only the subjects or learning areas compulsory for all students, the Eurydice report shows that the very vast majority of countries use at least one of the three curriculum approaches mentioned above at each level of education. Moreover, many countries use more than one approach: the most widespread model is to have the integrated approach combined with some teaching as a cross-curricular theme. This applies to 28 education systems across the whole general education pathway.

In addition to these two approaches, citizenship education is also taught as a compulsory separate subject at each of the three levels of the general education pathway in Estonia, Greece, France and Finland. This has also been the case in Belgium (French Community) since the 2017/18 school year in the schools that offer a choice between different courses in religion and moral studies. Furthermore, the compulsory separate subject of citizenship education is combined with the cross-curricular and integrated approaches at one education level in Cyprus, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Montenegro and Turkey – this combination was also used in Ireland until the 2016/17 school year.

Figure 4: Combination of approaches to citizenship education, according to national curricula for primary and general secondary education (ISCED 1-3), 2016/17



Fifteen education systems use a single approach to citizenship education at one or more education levels. This often means that citizenship education is either only integrated into other compulsory subjects or learning areas, or it is only incorporated into the curriculum as a cross-curricular theme. The latter applies for instance to Belgium (Flemish Community), where secondary school staff are collectively responsible for deciding how to implement the various broad curricular objectives relating to citizenship education (e.g. taking responsibility, showing respect, being critical, etc.) as well as other more specific objectives (e.g. those relating to the political-judicial context). Specifying citizenship education as a compulsory separate subject without being designated as a cross-curricular theme or integrated into other compulsory subjects is less widespread. This is the case at one or more education levels in Romania, the United Kingdom (England), Bosnia-Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the United Kingdom (England), a programme of study for citizenship, set out as a separate subject, is compulsory for students in grades 7 to 11 in maintained schools and may optionally be used by academies (publicly funded independent schools).

Serbia is the only country where there is no compulsory citizenship education for all students. However, an optional subject in citizenship education is offered as an alternative to religious education throughout the whole general education pathway.

## Separate subjects in citizenship education

Twenty education systems teach citizenship education as a compulsory separate subject, but there are substantial differences between them regarding the duration of provision. The number of school years in which it is taught ranges from 1 to 12 years. Thirteen education systems provide a compulsory separate subject only at secondary level. Belgium (French Community – in some schools since the 2017/18 school year), Estonia, France and Finland (with some flexibility in this matter at upper secondary level) are the only countries offering a continuous provision of a compulsory separate subject during general education starting from primary level. Furthermore, Greece and Romania also provide compulsory separate subject teaching at both primary and secondary levels, but this is not continuous. Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey have the shortest compulsory period of citizenship as a separate subject, since it is provided only in one grade of general education.

Figure 5: Compulsory separate subjects in citizenship education, 2016/17



*There are substantial differences between countries in the duration of provision of the separate subjects*

The curriculum cannot be stretched ad infinitum and countries need to make difficult choices if they want to add a new subject. Eurydice data show no clear-cut trends over time regarding the development of the separate subject approach as compared to the integration of citizenship education components into other subjects. A few countries have recently increased the compulsory provision of citizenship education as a separate subject. Indeed, a separate compulsory subject has been introduced in Belgium (French Community), while Greece and Finland have extended the number of grades in which the separate compulsory subject is taught. In contrast, in four countries, the compulsory separate subject taught in 2010/11<sup>(5)</sup> has since been removed from national curricula. In Spain, the 2013 national education reform removed the obligation for all Autonomous Communities to provide a compulsory separate subject throughout general education, so that they are now free to decide their own policy on the matter. In Ireland, Cyprus and

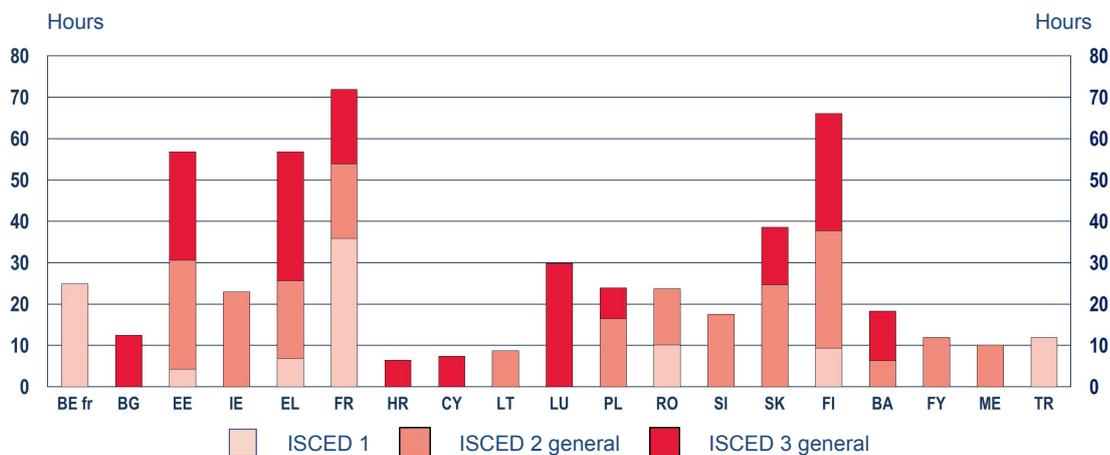
<sup>(5)</sup> 2010/11 was the reference year of the previous Eurydice report on the same topic. See European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012a.

Norway, the separate approach has now been supplanted by the integrated approaches.

### Instruction time

Almost all countries where citizenship education is taught as a separate subject have issued recommendations regarding instruction time. The only exception is the United Kingdom (England), where it is left to schools to decide how to distribute curriculum time to specific subjects within the framework of school autonomy.

Figure 6: Average recommended minimum number of hours per year of teaching citizenship education as a compulsory separate subject at each ISCED level, 2016/17



Source: Eurydice.

*Variations in taught time for citizenship education as a separate subject reflect differences in the length of provision*

At the three education levels examined, the average annual time devoted to citizenship education taught as a compulsory separate subject differs considerably between the European countries concerned. However, these differences are often related to the number of grades per education level during which citizenship education is taught as a compulsory separate subject. For instance, at lower secondary level, the four greatest average annual allocations are in Finland (28), Estonia (26), Slovakia (25) and Ireland (23) where citizenship education is taught at each grade of this education level. Similarly, Croatia, Cyprus and Poland, where citizenship education is taught in only one grade at upper secondary level, have the least number of recommended hours for that level, with seven hours only. Countries with the highest recommended time allocation are also usually among those where citizenship education is taught the longest.

# LEARNING CITIZENSHIP IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

## Curricular and extracurricular activities

There are 33 education systems in Europe which provide national guidance, including support material, on citizenship education for at least one level of education. Of these, 18 education systems provide guidance for all levels. However, it is at lower secondary level that the guidance is most prevalent (33 education systems), followed by upper secondary level (30 education systems). At primary level, the number drops to 29 education systems. In comparison, only 20 education systems offer such support for school-based IVET.

In addition to the more traditional model of teacher-directed learning, innovative pedagogies are also used. For example, active learning, whereby students can plan and initiate their own citizenship action project, is found in Ireland as well as other countries. Cyprus has invested in interactive learning by issuing a learning guide to support debates in schools which may focus on sensitive topics such as, for example, animal euthanasia. In Latvia, short films on real cases of discrimination are screened to encourage critical thinking and self-reflection. In Greece, students can use the online 'School Press' to facilitate collaborative learning, and in the Netherlands, community volunteering can be accredited as part of the curriculum.

Twenty-eight European education systems provide recommendations on extra-curricular activities for citizenship education (see Figure 2.2 in the report) – in countries with a degree of school autonomy these activities may also take place even when there is no specific guidance on the matter.

Extra-curricular activities tend to be more student-led than directed, with an emphasis on learning by doing. Such activities are more likely to apply from lower secondary education up to IVET; they rarely cover primary level.

Environmental awareness was the topic most commonly referred to in lists of the available extra-curricular activities – 23 education systems cover this in at least one level of education (from 19 in IVET to 22 at lower secondary level). Closely behind this were activities related to political life, with 23 education systems highlighting this at upper secondary level, though only 13 did so at primary level.

Environmental activities include a range of projects with different partners at both global and national level, from projects linked to United Nations' priorities, to the EU's Erasmus+ projects. Activities related to political life are aimed at raising awareness and engaging young people in political issues, processes and structures. For example, Lithuania promotes international youth debates between young people from central and eastern European countries. Austria has a youth parliament and the Austrian Parliament offers workshops and guided tours to students. Switzerland has developed a simple voting tool to foster political participation among young people.

*Innovative pedagogies are used alongside traditional ones*

*Most countries have recommendations promoting environmental awareness and activities relating to political life*

## Student participation in school life

Student participation in school life and governance is an important part of citizenship education. Even if student councils have limited (or no) formal powers, they provide students with practical experience of the democratic process.

*Student councils are now more common in primary schools*

Almost all of the countries surveyed confirm that student councils are used at one or more levels of education. Twenty-three countries evidence recommendations for student participation across all levels of education. Even though there has been an increase over time in the number of countries recommending student participation in schools, it has largely remained a feature of secondary education. Interestingly, however, a marked change has taken place. While in 2012 only 16 education systems indicated student councils at primary level, this has now increased to 28. This reflects a general effort to include even younger children in the democratic process and to embed this experience into school life from a very young age. Student participation is less pronounced in school-based IVET (30 education systems) than in lower and upper secondary education (37 and 38 education systems respectively), and attention should be paid to this.

Many countries highlight links to organisations at European and international level, such as the European Parliament's 'Model European Parliament' <sup>(6)</sup> or the 'European Youth Parliament' <sup>(7)</sup>. Other countries offer support for the development of student or youth parliaments at school level (such as Poland, Portugal, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Montenegro).

## Parent participation in school life

School governing bodies comprise parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners, and are usually chaired by the school head. They may have responsibilities ranging from involvement in discipline to teacher recruitment, as well as providing guidance on the future direction of the school.

All countries encourage parent participation in school life. Only Sweden and Finland do not have top-level level recommendations in this area, but this is largely down to school autonomy. Since 2012, Turkey has also adopted provisions for parent participation.

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<sup>(6)</sup> In the Model European Parliament, two EU 28+ sessions take place each year in a different European capital. Five students are chosen to represent each EU member state, and each delegate represents their country in one of ten committees to discuss international issues which appear on the agenda of the European Parliament. [www.mepeurope.eu](http://www.mepeurope.eu)

<sup>(7)</sup> European Youth Parliament (<http://eyp.org/>) involves: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

While there is no significant difference in the number of education systems involving parents at primary (40), lower (40) and upper secondary (38) levels, there is a large gap with respect to school-based IVET, where just 30 education systems involve parents in their governing bodies. The countries which have parent involvement in general education but not in IVET are: Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Cyprus, Romania, the United Kingdom (Scotland), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Montenegro.

*Parental participation is limited in IVET*

## THE ASSESSMENT OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Citizenship education is an integral part of curricula in all European countries and it is essential that this subject area, like others, is properly assessed. Assessment is a vital part of the teaching and learning process. Research attests to the strong influence of assessment on teaching and learning practices – what is taught in schools is often determined by what is assessed (Mons, 2009). Research also shows that assessment is one of the main tools for promoting effective learning (Black & William, 1999).

This section focuses on two of the main ways in which education authorities provide a framework for student assessment in citizenship education: central guidelines for classroom assessment by teachers, and national tests.

### National guidelines on classroom assessment

Twenty-six education systems provide teachers with official guidelines on assessing citizenship education in the classroom at primary and/or secondary levels (see Figure 3.1 in the report).

Assessing students in the area of citizenship education is a complex task, due to the wide range of curricular objectives assigned to this area. The objectives and learning outcomes assigned to the citizenship curriculum by European countries include the acquisition by students of a wide body of theoretical knowledge, the development of skills such as analytical skills and critical thinking, the adoption of certain values and attitudes such as a sense of tolerance and, last but not least, the active participation and engagement of students in school and community life.

*Assessing students in the area of citizenship education is a complex task, due to the wide range of curricular objectives assigned to this area*

A majority of countries with national guidelines on student assessment which apply to citizenship education recommend assessing knowledge, skills and attitudes. For instance, the official guidelines in Estonia recommend that 'knowledge and skills for civic and citizenship education are assessed through written projects and orally, through for instance presentations. The assessment of values and attitudes is facilitated by role plays, case studies and group work' <sup>(8)</sup>. In contrast, official guidelines in Austria, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Wales and Northern Ireland) limit the scope of assessment to knowledge and skills.

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<sup>(8)</sup> <https://www.hm.ee/en/national-curricula-2014>

Overall, there is not much difference in the degree to which the official guidelines promote traditional assessment methods or alternative methods considered to be particularly suitable for citizenship education <sup>(9)</sup>. On the one hand, written compositions or essays are used in 18 education systems and multiple choice questionnaires in 16, while on the other, project-based assessment and self/peer assessment are used in 17 education systems (see Figure 3.2 in the report). However, another alternative assessment method, the portfolio, is referred to less often in national guidelines on classroom assessment, with only eight countries recommending it across primary and secondary education.

### National testing in citizenship education

Citizenship education does not have a prominent status in national testing procedures, as compared to other subjects such as mathematics and languages which are systematically tested across Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016). Students' competences in citizenship are tested through standardised procedures at some point of primary and/or secondary education in slightly under half of the education systems covered.

*Nearly half of education systems administer national tests covering citizenship education*

Fourteen education systems organise such tests for certification purposes, and these are intended to summarise students' achievements at the end of a school year or an educational stage. The results are used to award certificates or take formal decisions with regard to student progression to the next stage of education. All the certification tests in citizenship education take place at the secondary level of education. Standardised examinations on citizenship education are compulsory for all students at some point in France, Latvia, Poland and Sweden, and this was also the case in Ireland until 2016/17. In the other countries, it is optional for students or for schools.

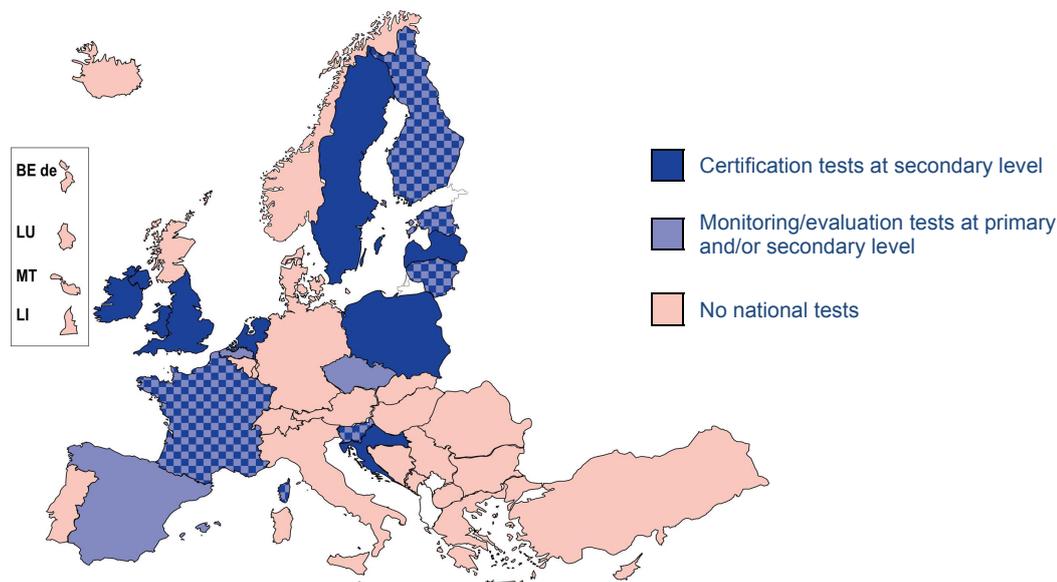
Eight education systems administer national tests covering citizenship education with a view to evaluating the education system as a whole and/or evaluating individual schools, in order to inform improvements in teaching and learning in the area of citizenship education; these tests are not used to make decisions on student progression. The tests organised for monitoring the education system are administered to a sample of students or schools, except in Estonia where all students in the grade concerned take the monitoring test.

National tests in citizenship education are more often targeted at students in general education. Only Belgium (Flemish Community), Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom (England) administer national tests in citizenship to IVET students

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<sup>(9)</sup> For more information on methods used for assessing social and civic competences in European countries, please consult European Commission, 2012.

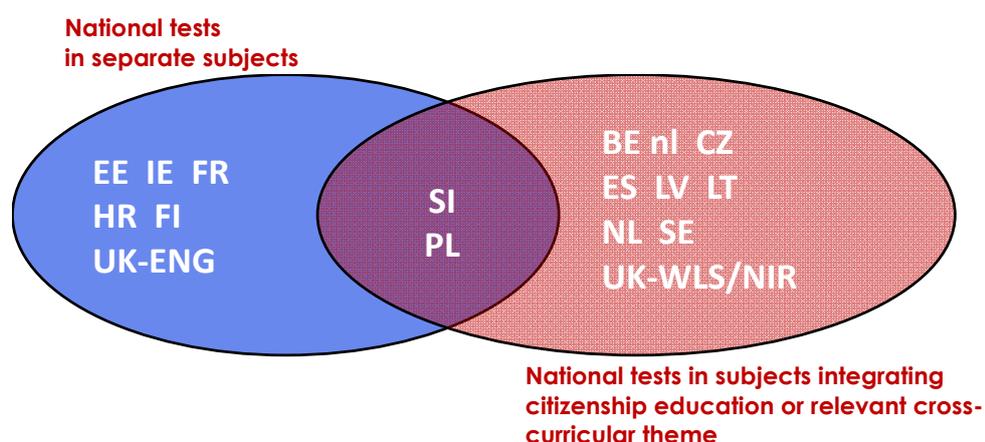
Figure 7: National tests in citizenship education: main purpose and levels of education involved, primary, general secondary education and school-based IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2016/17



Source: Eurydice.

It is interesting to note that standardised assessment in this area of learning takes place not only in the education systems where citizenship education is taught as a compulsory separate subject, but also in others where it is only provided as part of other subjects and/or as a cross-curricular theme. National tests in the separate subjects devoted to citizenship education and in the subjects or subject areas integrating components of citizenship education are organised in eight and eleven education systems respectively (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Relationship between national tests and curriculum approaches to citizenship education, primary, general secondary education and school-based IVET (ISCED 1-3), 2016/17



For instance, in Latvia, the centralised examinations in history and the Latvian language address topical issues relevant to citizenship education (meaning of citizenship, democracy, tolerance, patriotism, national identity, and attitudes towards migration). Assessing citizenship competences when the subject area is delivered across the curriculum is another challenge specific to assessment in

citizenship education which has been highlighted in the research literature (Kerr et al., 2009). National tests focusing on student performance in the cross-curricular attainment targets relevant to citizenship education can be found in Belgium (Flemish Community). In order to further support schools in implementing the cross curricular objectives for citizenship education set by the education authority, an additional standardised tool for student assessment has been developed in this education system – this is explained in the case study below.

Case study: Flemish Community of Belgium – Citizenship Booster

The Citizenship Booster is an online survey to elicit insight into the citizenship-related values, attitudes and behaviours of students. Starting in 2013, it was developed by the GO! education network (one of the three main educational networks in the Belgian Flemish Community) with the end-aim of using the information gathered to increase the effectiveness of school-level citizenship education. It also provides data which complements that of the 2016 Flanders-wide national assessment of progress towards citizenship education objectives. The questionnaire comprises a series of simple statements that students rank in order of importance; it has nine key themes and a miscellaneous section:

Democracy at school	Wellbeing
Diversity	Engagement
World citizenship	Sustainability and fair trade
Democracy	Cultural education
My educational path and choices	Other

Implementation in each school is supported by GO! pedagogical counsellors. The survey targets students at two levels, firstly 12- to 20-year-olds, and secondly 10- to 12-year-olds. Feedback is available at school level, in the form of a detailed report automatically produced by the system. The student does not get individual feedback, but each school is asked to provide follow-up discussions with students to share the results of the survey.

The use of the Citizenship Booster is optional for schools. Some of the schools that have already used the tool, have used it as part of diverse school-wide approaches: for example to support planning for a school citizenship day or event, as a follow-up activity after having completed a large school project or as a class activity within a relevant curriculum area e.g. history, language or religion.

# TRAINING TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

Teachers and school heads are key players in the provision of citizenship education in schools. This section looks at how top level education authorities address the availability of relevant, high quality training for citizenship education in their regulations and recommendations on initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers and school heads. It highlights that a number of countries have taken measures to support the development of teachers' professional competences in the area of citizenship education. However, it also shows that, despite progress in recent years, some countries still have significant policy gaps with regard to the initial education of citizenship education teachers.

*Significant gaps remain with regard to the initial education of citizenship education teachers*

## Specialisation in citizenship education

Teachers specialised in citizenship education can not only facilitate the provision of citizenship education as a separate subject but they can also share their expertise and help train other teachers in the school to teach the subject (Huddleston, 2005). A few countries have recently decided to offer teachers the possibility to become a specialist in citizenship education. Whereas in 2010/11, this was only the case in the United Kingdom (England), it is now possible in five more education systems (Belgium (French Community), Denmark since autumn 2017, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands). Moreover, seven other countries – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Poland and Slovakia – train teachers to become specialists in teaching citizenship education and two or three other subjects (semi-specialists). However, in a number of countries where compulsory separate subjects in citizenship education are taught, there are no top-level policies on training teachers for citizenship education. This is the case in Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Finland, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

## Competences in citizenship education for all prospective teachers

Another way in which education authorities influence ITE is by establishing sets of competences particularly relevant to citizenship education and ensuring that all prospective primary and/or secondary teachers acquire these before completing their training. The Education Council Conclusions on effective teacher education <sup>(10)</sup> encourages countries to develop comprehensive frameworks defining the professional competences and qualities teachers require in different teaching situations and use them to raise ITE quality. Nine education systems – the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (Wales) and Norway – have defined specific competences linked to citizenship education that all teachers should acquire.

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<sup>(10)</sup> Council conclusions on effective teacher education. OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, pp. 22-25.  
([http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0614\(05\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0614(05)&from=EN))

A review of the literature emphasises four dimensions of the competences considered essential for teachers of this area of learning (cf. Audigier, 2000; Bîrzéa, 2000; Dürr, Spajic-Vrakaš & Martins, 2000; Huddleston et al., 2007; Brett et al., 2009).

<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>	<b>Paedagogical capacity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ of general aims, purposes, content and core principles of the curriculum subject</li> <li>➤ of the range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are to be developed by students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ to plan and implement activities which promotes students' active learning, such as structured debates, role play, or brainstorming</li> <li>➤ which includes an understanding of how to assess students</li> </ul>
<b>Social competences needed to</b>	<b>Ability to evaluate and improve</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ encourage debates in the class within a learning climate in which everyone is able to speak freely and think critically, particularly when dealing with controversial topics</li> <li>➤ interact with parents, peer, civil society organisations and political representatives to provide opportunities for students to engage with citizenship issues in their communities and beyond</li> <li>➤ promote student participation in school life by giving them roles and responsibilities related to the running of the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ teaching and learning practices</li> <li>➤ the implementation of citizenship education across the whole school</li> </ul>

In the countries where sets of competences have been defined, equal weight is not given to each of the dimensions and issues considered essential for teachers of this area of learning. For example, top level guidelines in relatively more countries focus on teachers' understanding of the knowledge and skills to be transmitted and less on the values. The existing guidelines also promote teachers' capacity to plan relevant learning activities and the social skills needed to engage with students, parents, peers and the local community. Fewer countries, however, refer to competences related to teachers' ability to evaluate and improve their teaching and learning practices.

### Case study: France – Recent reforms to equip all teachers with the competences for citizenship education

A new framework issued in 2013 and further developed under the impetus of the Action plan 'The great school mobilisation for the values of the Republic' launched in January 2015 establishes a set of competences for prospective teachers which address several of the dimensions highlighted above as essential for teaching citizenship. According to this framework, all student teachers for primary and secondary education levels should be trained to:

- Promote secularism and reject all forms of violence and discrimination
- Promote the values of the Republic
- Take into account student diversity and accompany students in their learning process
- Act as a responsible and ethical educator
- Integrate digital tools into the teaching process
- Cooperate in teams, with parents and school partners
- Contribute to the actions of the school community.

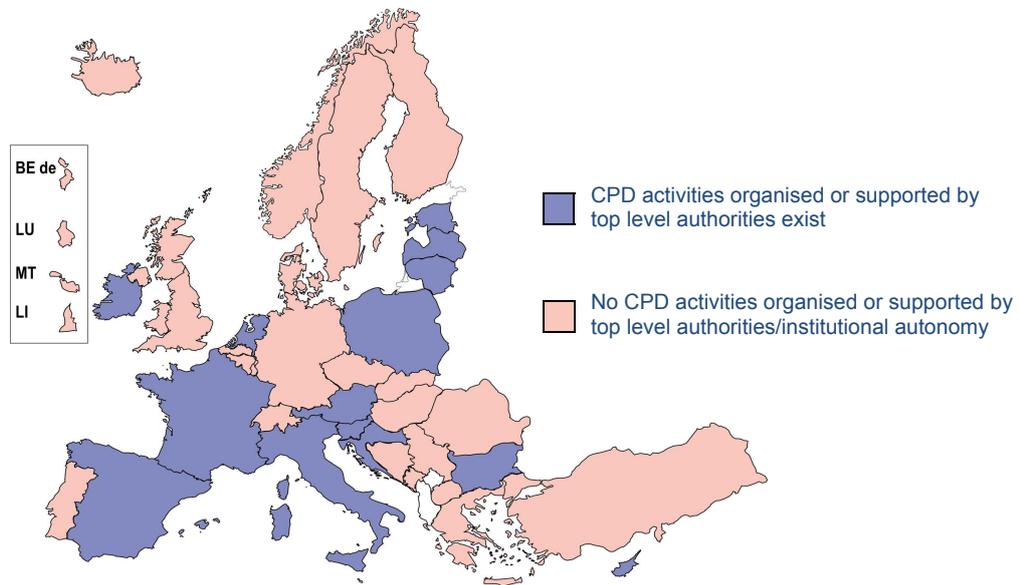
The above mentioned Action Plan also led to the creation of new nationwide opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD), in order to help teachers deal with issues relating to French and European citizenship, secularism and the fight against prejudice. Through practical experiences such as debating controversial issues, discussing moral dilemmas or performing role plays, these new CPD activities focus on shifting the teacher's role from transmitting knowledge to facilitating students' learning.

In total almost half of education systems have no top level regulations or recommendations on initial teacher education specifically addressing citizenship education – it is therefore left to higher education institutions to decide how this should be carried out. This raises some questions about whether those responsible for delivering citizenship education in the classroom are actually prepared for the task. This is particularly important given the significant number of countries where citizenship education has a cross-curricular status and consequently all teachers share the responsibility for developing their students' citizenship competences.

### CPD for school heads is rarely organised by education authorities

School heads have a key role to play in ensuring the successful implementation of citizenship education. They are, for instance, in a position to encourage a favourable school culture, promote the active participation of all members of the school community and create opportunities for citizenship related activities (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012a). Generally, school heads are free to participate in all the CPD activities offered to teachers, which in the area of citizenship education are organised or supported by education authorities in around two thirds of education systems. However, targeted professional training can help provide school heads with the specific competences they need for their role.

Figure 9: CPD activities organised or supported by top level education authorities to help school heads develop the competences needed to implement citizenship education, 2016/17



Source: Eurydice.

Country specific notes: See Figure 4.3 in the report.

*CPD in citizenship education targeting school heads is not commonly organized by education authorities*

In the 2016/17 school year, in 14 European countries, top-level education authorities were organising or supporting professional in-service training for school heads on how to promote citizenship education in schools through a range of measures, including through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, through work with parents, by promoting teacher cooperation and by creating a democratic school culture or democratic governance. While some CPD activities address several aspects of citizenship education provision, others are more specific. For instance, in Cyprus, top level education authorities provide CPD activities to school heads on the role of the school leadership (in primary and secondary schools) in teaching, managing and enhancing socio-cultural diversity <sup>(11)</sup>. In Spain, the Autonomous Communities and the MECD in its managed territories (the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla) must provide training courses for school heads which cover programmes and measures to improve co-existence in schools and prevention of conflicts and strategies.

<sup>(11)</sup> <http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/d/dme6871>

# CONCLUSIONS

Citizenship education is currently a priority at the European level and it is also under the spotlight in a number of countries. The Eurydice 2017 citizenship education report aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the present policies, structures and measures in place in European countries. The report does not seek to monitor the implementation of citizenship education in schools or to assess its effectiveness <sup>(12)</sup>.

Citizenship education is part of the national curriculum at each level of education in nearly all European countries. National curricula tend to be broad in scope in most education systems, covering all four areas of competence – interacting effectively and constructively, thinking critically, behaving in a socially responsible manner and acting democratically. Regulations promoting student and parent participation in school governance, in particular in general secondary education, have also been introduced almost everywhere. In addition, most of the countries provide teachers with guidance materials and other types of resources to support the teaching and learning of citizenship education in the classroom. It is also worth highlighting that some countries have increased the teaching hours for the compulsory provision of citizenship education in general education.

However, despite progress in recent years, nearly half of the countries have still not introduced regulations or recommendations on the inclusion of citizenship education competences in initial teacher education. Furthermore, although the majority of education authorities organise or support opportunities for teachers' continuing professional development, similar opportunities for school heads are limited. Many education authorities have also not issued guidelines for teachers on how to assess students in citizenship education – in a third of the education systems there are no central level regulations or recommendations on this matter. Finally, the report shows that education authorities pay less attention to citizenship education in school-based initial vocational education and training in comparison with general education.

Nevertheless, the resurgence of citizenship education and the reforms currently in the pipeline will continue shaping citizenship education at schools in Europe for some time to come. As awareness is raised and expectations grow, citizenship education is likely to receive even more attention and hopefully more resources.

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<sup>(12)</sup> The interested reader may wish to consult the ICCS 2016 report on students' civic attitudes and knowledge level (<http://iccs.iea.nl/cycles/2016/findings.html>).

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The Eurydice network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is coordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.

