



European Education Area Strategic Framework **Working Group on Equality and Values**

Input Paper on the European Dimension in Citizenship Education

15th WG meeting, 20-21 May 2025



Input paper

The European Dimension in Citizenship Education

Working Group Equality and Values in Education and Training

Table of Contents

1.	<i>Introduction</i>	3
2.	<i>Background and institutional context</i>	4
3.	<i>Young people's attitudes and civic engagement</i>	7
4.	<i>Towards a citizenship competence framework with an EU dimension</i>	9
5.	<i>5 Teaching the European dimension: existing practices and national curricula</i>	11
6.	<i>European funding instruments and initiatives fostering European dimension in citizenship education</i>	12
7.	<i>Some inspiring practices fostering the European dimension in citizenship education</i>	15

1. Introduction¹

This Input paper was prepared to set the scene for the upcoming work in the Working Group on Equality and Values in Education in Training on the topic ‘the European dimension in citizenship education’. The theme will be discussed from several perspectives during (at least) two meetings in 2025. First, an online meeting will take place on 20-21 May, then a physical event will be organised in Brussels in October 2025.

This work will build on previous activities in the Working Group that took place in 2023, covering the broader theme of citizenship education. The Issue Paper on Citizenship Education² at the time summarised the series of discussions and presentations held in the Working Group during its meetings and a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in Madrid in 2023. By highlighting the main questions addressed, the Issue Paper provided a comprehensive overview of the European context and international initiatives in the field of citizenship education (CE), discussed main approaches in delivering CE and presented the most important challenges and points for attentions identified during the Working Group meetings in 2023. The summary is published in a related Policy brief on citizenship education³, available in 24 EU language.

Two years later, the Working Group is now revisiting the theme, focusing this time more specifically on the European dimension in citizenship education. The European dimension in education is most clearly defined in the 2018 Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension, which claims that ‘*Introducing a European dimension of teaching should aim to help learners experience European identity in all its diversity and strengthen a European positive and inclusive sense of belonging complementing their local, regional and national identities and traditions. It is also important for promoting a better understanding of the Union as well as an understanding of its Member States.*’ (page 3)

The European Commission's political priorities for 2024–2029 focus strongly on protecting democracy, enhancing the rule of law, and promoting civic participation across the EU. Educated young citizens play a crucial role - the more they understand the EU's significance in their lives, the more invested they become in shaping its future. This underscores the necessity of giving heightened attention to this area. Secondly – and relatedly – the 2023 Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training towards strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship explicitly invites the Commission to ‘*STRENGTHEN and PRIORITISE democratic citizenship education in the European Education Area strategic framework working groups, and especially in the Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training.*’ (page 7)

During 2025, the Working Group will therefore organise (a minimum of) two events focusing on the European dimension in citizenship education, providing an opportunity for the Working Group members to learn about recent developments in this area and at the same time to share their experiences, discuss challenges and identify main points of interests.

¹ This input paper was prepared by Zsuzsa Blaskó, as part of the ICF Consulting Services Ltd support to the Working Group, and in consultation with the Working Group coordinators.

² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/03af1d4e-582b-11ee-9220-01aa75ed71a1>

³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2ef2a7b3-3366-11ef-b441-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

The present Input paper opens this exchange through presenting key background information on this topic, thereby creating a foundation to support discussions and reflections during the meetings.

The paper is structured in the following way. The next section presents the background and the institutional context, based on key documents from the European Commission as well as from the European Parliament. Together, they not only describe the complex notion of the European dimension in education, but they also establish the frame for actions in promoting the European dimension in the Member States' education systems. The 3rd section brings together recent evidence on European students' and young people's attitudes towards the European Union, as well as on their voting turnout in the last European elections in 2024. Section 4 explores the how the various aspects of the European dimension in citizenship education are currently included in existing competence frameworks. Section 5 provides evidence on existing teaching practices and the inclusion of the European dimensions in the national curricula in Europe. In the 6th section, the main European funding instruments and initiatives that promote the European dimension in education are presented, and section 7 concludes by listing some inspiring projects and initiatives in the field.

2. Background and institutional context

A 'European dimension' in education is intended to develop cohesion and a sense of common identity in the European Union since its foundation. Article 165 (ex Article 149 TEC) of the **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union**⁴ states that Union action shall be aimed at: *'developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States'*. Importantly, from the point of view of the European dimension in education, the Treaty also identifies the common values and general principles that form the basis of the Union – that are regularly referenced in later discussions of the European dimension. Specifically, Article 2 of the Treaty of the EU⁵ defines these values by enshrining that *'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail'*.

The **2018 Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching**⁶ further specifies the role of education in maintaining these values. It establishes that *'Education in all of its types and at all levels and from an early age plays a pivotal role in promoting common values. ... It provides opportunities to become active and critically aware citizens, and increases understanding of the European identity.'* More specifically, with regard to the European dimension in education, it states: *'Introducing a European dimension of teaching should aim to help learners experience European identity in all its diversity and strengthen a European positive and inclusive sense of belonging complementing their local, regional and national identities and traditions. It is also important*

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12008E165#:~:text=The%20Union%20shall%20contribute%20to,organisatio n%20of%20education%20systems%20and>

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012M002#d1e40-13-1>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29>

for promoting a better understanding of the Union as well as an understanding of its Member States.’ Member States are therefore called to support this European dimension of teaching through promoting:

- a) *‘an understanding of the European context and common heritage and values and an awareness of the unity and diversity, social, cultural and historical, of the Union and the Member States of the Union;*
- b) *an understanding of the origins, values and functioning of the Union;*
- c) *the participation of pupils and teachers in the e-Twinning network, in cross-border mobility, and transnational projects, especially for schools;*
- d) *grass-roots projects to raise awareness of and improve understanding of the European Union in learning settings, notably through direct interaction with young people, such as an annual celebration, on a voluntary basis, of a ‘Day of the European Union’ in learning settings;’* (page 4)

Two years later, in 2020, the **Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025**⁷ underlines that the Commission will continue supporting the Member States and stakeholders in implementing the 2018 Recommendations through the Erasmus+ programme.

Citizenship competences are considered to be among the eight key competences as set out in the **Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning**.⁸ A European dimension in the broader concept of citizenship competences can be identified in several specific knowledge areas that clearly focus on European aspects. In particular, according to the Recommendation, citizenship competences involve *‘an understanding of the European common values, as expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.’* Furthermore, citizenship competences also include knowledge of and a critical understanding of recent events and major developments at the national, European and global levels. The document further states that *‘Knowledge of European integration as well as an awareness of diversity and cultural identities in Europe and the world is essential. This includes an understanding of the multi-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of European societies, and how national cultural identity contributes to the European identity.’*

The **European Parliament in its resolution on the European Education Area** in 2021⁹ reinforces the objectives set in the Commission’s documents. In fact, the Parliament calls for placing an even stronger emphasis to the ‘European perspective’, both in curricula and in teacher training programmes across all levels of education. It calls on the Commission and the Member States *‘to develop a comprehensive European strategy and a common framework on citizenship education with a European dimension’* in order to *‘foster a European civic culture and a sense of European belonging, complementing local, regional, national and global dimensions’*. The Resolution makes concrete references to what is meant by a European perspective by underlining the importance of European history and cultural heritage education and learning about the EU, including about the European integration process, the

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625>

⁸ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01))

⁹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0452_EN.html

institutions and policies of the EU, and about how citizens can actively participate in the European democratic processes, as well as learning about European values.

The **European Parliament resolution of 6 April 2022** on the implementation of citizenship education actions¹⁰ expresses further concerns about the limited focus on the European aspects of citizenship in national curricula and about the strong differences between education systems in how citizenship education is being taught in the various Member States. Beside encouraging national, regional and local actors to strengthen the European dimension in their education systems, at all education levels, the Resolution *'underlines the need to invest more in education formats about the European Union at school and university level by strengthening existing networks and developing new curricula adapted for this type of training; calls for the involvement of specialised faculties of European affairs in researching and deploying the best teaching methods and tools for citizenship education, while using available EU funds and resources.'* To facilitate the process, the Commission is requested to propose an indicative curriculum for its voluntary adoption by the Member States in full respect of the Treaty provisions. Such a curricula should *'...foster a better understanding of the history of European integration, the organisation and structure of the existing EU institutions, the European electoral and decision-making processes, including the means of citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU'*.

In recent years, economic, social, political and technological challenges at global, European as and national levels have led to increased attention to the role of education and training systems in supporting European values. **The 2024-2029 Political Guidelines**¹¹ address threats to democratic systems in Europe, including those from internal and external actors, particularly through digital tools and social media. To tackle these challenges, the Political Guidelines call for increasing the resilience of our democratic systems and societies and emphasize the need to protect democracy and uphold our common values, including the rule of law and the fundamental law. Referring to the role of education, it further calls for 'reuniting our society through education', supporting young people and 'building on the things that we have in common as Europeans'. In the Guidelines, President von der Leyen announced the upcoming European Democracy Shield, which will build on the European Democracy Action Plan (2020)¹² and the Defence of Democracy Package (2023)¹³.

In 2023, the **Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship**¹⁴ were released, emphasizing the responsibility of education and training systems in upholding European values. More specifically, with regard to the European dimension in education, it states that this should involve:

- a) *'...understanding the common European values that underpin the Union*
- b) *having a knowledge of the history of European integration, the EU, its aims and the functioning of its institutions, so that all citizens are in a position to reflect on its*

¹⁰ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0114_EN.html

¹¹ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ga/ip_20_2250

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6453

¹⁴ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202301339

relevance and added value and can participate actively in European democratic processes;

- c) having the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable practical and active engagement in the democratic processes in the EU*
 - d) becoming more aware of diversity and of European and global cultural identities.'*
- (page 3).

The Council conclusions invite the Member States and the Commission to ‘...GIVE MORE RELEVANCE to education on common European values and the promotion of democratic citizenship in the education and training policy agenda.’ (page 6)

More recently, the 2025 **Union of Skills Communication**¹⁵ acknowledges that education and skills represent an investment – rather than a cost – particularly in ‘... *strengthening the European social model and the protection of European values and democracy*’ (page 16). The Communication was developed as a response to increasing evidence on skills shortages and gaps identified across Europe, across all levels of education and in several skills areas. Through its **Basic Skills Action Plan**¹⁶, the Union of Skills calls for developing a sound foundation in education and training. The Action Plan introduces an expanded concept of basic skills, including, for the first time, citizenship and digital skills. Citizenship skills and civic knowledge are recognised as essential for fostering active participation in democratic societies. This encompasses understanding democracy, media literacy, crisis preparedness, respect for others, and freedom of speech, as well as the ability to act responsibly and engage fully in civic life. Furthermore, the Action Plan underscores the importance of promoting citizenship skills from the early stages of education to strengthen and uphold democratic values.

3. Young people's attitudes and civic engagement

This section presents some evidence on students’ and young people’s attitudes and behaviours when it comes to European citizenship.

The latest **International Civic and Citizenship Study**¹⁷ (**ICCS**) **2022 European Report** provides a comprehensive assessment of Grade 8 (13.5 years) students’ views and attitudes concerning various questions related to Europe and European values. Overall, the study shows a mixed picture. Importantly, the great majority of students in the participating countries¹⁸ reported seeing themselves as Europeans, feeling proud to be European and feeling themselves to be part of Europe. Moreover, European identity of students had even increased since the earlier survey rounds and show relatively small variations across the participating countries. At the same time, the majority of students also support common European actions in a range of policy areas, including for example the recognition of qualifications, having a European army for international missions and having common rules for combatting terrorism. The study generally revealed positive views, particularly when students were asked to express their level

¹⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en

¹⁶ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-03/Graphic%20version%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Basic%20Skills.pdf>

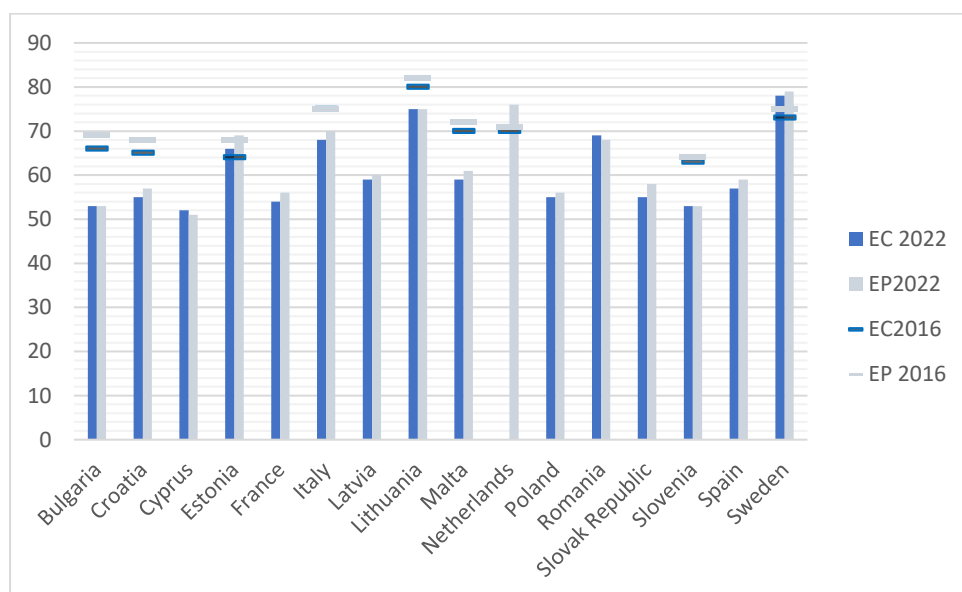
¹⁷ <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-68631-3>

¹⁸ European countries that meet the sampling requirements include: BG, CR, CY, ET, FR, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, NO, PL, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE

of agreement with statements such as ‘the EU promotes respect for human rights all over Europe’ or ‘the EU is good for the economy of the individual countries’.

However, it's noteworthy that critical views about the EU also persist. Around 70% of the 13–14-year-olds agreed that ‘the EU institutions cost too much money’, that ‘EU policies are too strongly influenced by the richest Member States’ and that ‘the adoption of EU policies takes too long to be effective’. Moreover, on average, only six out of ten students expressed either complete, or ‘quite a lot of’ trust in the European institutions, specifically in the European Commission and the Parliament. While still exceeding the level of trust towards their national governments, trust in the European institutions had significantly decreased from 2016 to 2022 in most of the participating European countries.

Table 1 Percentage of students who have “complete” or “quite a lot” of trust in the European Commission and in the European Parliament



Source: ICCS 2022, *Young Citizens’ Views and Engagement in a Changing Europe*. Own compilation from Table 5.9, page 59

From the perspective of citizenship education, it is important to note that, on average and across the various measures¹⁹, students with higher levels of civic knowledge tended to indicate more positive attitudes toward the EU, while lower levels of civic knowledge were associated with more negative attitudes²⁰.

¹⁹ This observation does not hold for trust in European Institutions, as the report includes no information on the associations between trust and citizenship competences.

²⁰ Civic knowledge in ICCS is measured through 55 items covering four content domains (civic institutions and systems; civic principles; civic participation; civic roles and identities) and two cognitive domains (knowing; reasoning and applying). Students that reach the highest level (Level A) on this scale can „...make connections between the processes of social and political organisation and influence, and the legal and institutional mechanisms used to control them. They generate accurate hypotheses on the benefits, motivations, and likely outcomes of institutional policies and citizens’ actions. They integrate, justify, and evaluate given positions, policies, or laws based on the principles that underpin them. Students demonstrate familiarity with broad international economic forces and the strategic nature of active participation.”
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-65603-3> page 50.

A sense of European identity and interest in European affairs can be demonstrated during the **European elections**, which take place every four years. Although they were not yet eligible for voting in 2024, it is still indicative that, in the ICCS 2022 study, 61% of the 8th grade students surveyed reported that they would ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ vote in European elections. Variations across countries were significant, the ratio being between 49% and 75%. Moreover, in most of the countries, a decrease in the voting intention of students could be observed when comparing the 2022 results to those from 2016.

Similarly, low levels of intended engagement with the European election process were found in the **Flash Eurobarometer 545 survey on Youth and Democracy**²¹ in April 2024, approximately two months before the actual elections took place. In this survey, young European citizens, aged 15 to 30 were interviewed across all the 27 Member States. The results showed that even though the elections represent the most widely known way of engaging with the EU, only 46% of the young people reported they were aware of the European elections. At the same time, 64% reported their intention to vote in the upcoming voting. 8% of the respondents said that they were not eligible to vote and 9% was unsure about their edibility. A clear and significant difference in the willingness to vote was found by highest level of education: young people with post-secondary or higher education exhibited notably higher intentions to vote (72%) than those with lower levels of education (55%).

Compared to the pre-election surveys, the **EU post-electoral survey in 2024**²² suggests a much lower actual turnout rate in this age group, together with a clear negative trend as compared to the previous elections. While the overall turnover in the EP elections remained unchanged since the previous election, the participation rates of the older age groups had increased, while the participating rate of younger people decreased. Among young people aged 15 to 24, only 36% reported that they had voted – representing a negative change of 6 percentage points from 2020.²³

In the **2024 Youth survey** commissioned by the European Parliament²⁴, young people that chose not to vote in the European elections in 2024 referred to not having enough information to make a choice (16%), not finding a candidate that represented their views (15%) having a general distrust in politics and politicians (15%) and a sense that their vote is not making any difference (10%) among their main reasons to not participate in the elections. A further 7% reported that they had not been aware of the elections taking place and 6% said that they chose not to vote as none of their friends had voted, while 9% said that they never vote.

4. Towards a citizenship competence framework with an EU dimension

Existing international competence frameworks on citizenship education do not explicitly involve any reference to a European dimension – which is quite understandable given their

²¹ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3181>

²² <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3292>

²³ It is important to note that not all the respondents in this age group were eligible to vote as in the majority of the Member States, the voting age is set at 18. Exceptions include Belgium, Germany and Malta where the voting age is 16 and Greece, where the age is set at 17. See:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/749767/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)749767_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/749767/EPRS_ATA(2023)749767_EN.pdf)

²⁴ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3392>

global scope. Nevertheless, significant overlaps can be identified between the values identified as part of a European dimension approach and the values considered by these more universal guiding documents to CE.

UNESCO's 'Global Citizenship Education: Preparing learners for the challenges of the twenty-first century'²⁵ document was developed with a global perspective in mind, emphasizing the relevance of education '*... in understanding and resolving global issues in their social, political, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions.*' (page 9) Rather than developing a comprehensive framework, UNESCO reviews existing practices and identifies common elements of the different approaches to global citizenship education. These include for example references to '*universal values such as justice, equality, dignity and respect*', which are close to some of the values identified in the Treaties as part of the key European values.

The **Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture**²⁶ (RFCDC) on the other hand offers a comprehensive foundation to education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. RFCDC develops 20 descriptors in four competence areas, i.e. in Values, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and Critical Understanding²⁷. Overall, the Framework takes a global and international approach and as a consequence, none of these descriptors do explicitly refer to either 'Europe' or to 'European values' as such. For example, under *Attitudes*, the RFCDC distinguishes between local, national and global levels of active citizenship – excluding the European level – while under *Knowledge and Critical Understanding*, knowledge about global level processes is considered. At the same time, the *Values* domain is developed from a human rights' perspective and focuses on values that align well with the European values outlined in the Treaties. Valuing human dignity and human rights – corresponding to respect for human dignity and respect for human rights in the Treaty – represents the Nr 1 descriptor under Values in the RFCDC, while Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law (Nr 3 in the RFCDC) is related to democracy, equality and the rule of law as mentioned in Treaty. Finally, it can be argued that the Nr 2 under values in the RFCDC – Valuing cultural diversity – is closely linked to respect for '*... the rights of people belonging to minorities*' as stated in the Treaties.

At the European level, the **Joint Research Centre** of the European Commission (JRC) has developed several comprehensive **competence frameworks** for policymakers and practitioners, building on the Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.²⁸ The eight key competences are all strongly interlinked with each other and they include also "Active citizenship". Nonetheless, none of the JRC frameworks developed so far explicitly focus on citizenship competence or its European dimension. Still, all these frameworks were created with European values and priorities in mind, and with an understanding of various key competences, making them relevant for teaching certain aspects of the European dimensions in citizenship education. First, **DigComp**²⁹, the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens was designed to foster '*...the confident, critical and*

²⁵ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227729>

²⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture>

²⁷ Best described in Volume 2: Descriptors of competences. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/rfcdc-volumes>

²⁸ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/key-competences>

²⁹ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/projects-and-activities/education-and-training/digital-transformation-education/digital-competence-framework-citizens-digcomp_en

responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society'³⁰. Some of the main competence areas included, such as Information and Data Literacy as well as Communication and Collaboration are closely aligned with the objectives of (digital) citizenship education. **LifeComp**³¹ on the other hand is the European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence and it includes Critical Thinking and Collaboration in- and outside the digital world, that are again interrelated with citizenship competences, as well as – potentially – its European dimensions. **GreenComp**³², the European sustainability competence framework, has a very specific thematic focus on sustainability. Nevertheless, it covers Supporting Fairness in the context of equity and justice for current and future generations as well as Critical Thinking. Finally, **EntreComp**³³, the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, is indirectly related to citizenship education, e.g. through competences of Valuing Ideas and Ethical and Sustainable Thinking.

5. 5 Teaching the European dimension: existing practices and national curricula

The latest study on **Citizenship education at school in Europe from Eurydice** dates back to 2017³⁴. The report provides a detailed review of the curriculum organisation and content, the teaching and learning process, the practices of student assessment and school evaluation as well as on teacher education and professional development in the field of CE. In this analysis, however, a European dimension is neither distinguished nor specifically explored in the national curricula of citizenship education, although some elements can still be identified. Currently, Eurydice is working on a new report, expected by the end of 2026, which will provide information on the latest developments in teaching and learning CE in Europe. Compared to previous Eurydice report editions on citizenship education, this edition will place additional emphasis on the European dimension in citizenship education.

A study by the European Parliament in 2017, titled '**Teaching Common Values in Europe**'³⁵ focuses on the values of democracy and tolerance as taught in secondary schools in Europe. The study builds on the analysis of relevant policy documents in the EU-28, complemented by in-depth curriculum studies in 12 Member States³⁶. The analysis of the policy documents reveals that '*...though there is adequate policy attention to teaching democracy and tolerance, there are still two areas of concern: teaching democracy in education policy is often about knowing democracy rather than fostering attitudes, and tolerance is not always actively inclusive of all social and cultural groups.*' (p 33.). Moreover, the in-depth analysis of 12 countries identifies notable gaps between high-level policies and actual teaching practices. For example, it shows that only a few countries systematically incorporate democratic politics

³⁰ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/297a33c8-a1f3-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

³¹ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC120911>

³² <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128040>

³³ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC101581>

³⁴ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6b50c5b0-d651-11e7-a506-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

³⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6f527dc2-3c40-11e7-a08e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

³⁶ Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom

and the international dimension of democracy in their secondary school curricula. Additionally, there are limited opportunities at the school level for students to participate in activities that address school and community issues.

More recently, a 2021 study '**Learning about the EU: European Topics and School Curricula in EU Member States**' investigated how the EU dimension is integrated into school and VET curricula, education legislation, and teaching practices.³⁷ Similarly to the EP study discussed above, this comparison also finds significant gaps between policy and practice, showing that even when EU-related topics are officially included in national curricula, this does not guarantee consistent teaching and learning of these topics. At the same time, highly innovative practices were also revealed, especially in systems where teachers have a high level of autonomy. However, such practices remained sporadic. Finally, the country profiles further point to '*...potential politicisation of the concept of 'European citizenship', and this is clearly contested in the context of rising populism across some countries.*' (page 128).

Additional, relatively recent information on the practices of teaching about Europe can also be found in the above mentioned **ICCS 2022 Study**³⁸. Across the 17 countries surveyed, on average, 84% of the 8th grade students stated that they had learned about Europe's history in school and 75% had learned about the European Union. Further, 60 to 65% of the students learned about the political and social issues in other European countries, about the political and economic cooperation between European countries and about political and economic systems of other European countries. The role and the functions of the EU institutions was mentioned by 56% as a topic that they had discussed in school. Cross-country variations are notable, with students in some countries reporting far more opportunities to learn about Europe than others. European topics appear to be relatively weekly covered in Cyprus, Malta and Spain, while students in Italy, Lithuania, Norway and also in Slovenia reported above-averages opportunities.

Teachers' preparedness is key to effective learning. In this regard, ICCS 2022 found that 3 out of 4 teachers in the studied European countries³⁹ feel very well or quite well prepared to teach about the European Union, with the share ranging from 58 (Croatia and Spain) to as much as 97% in Poland. These are reasonably high numbers, considering that only 45% reported having participated in training courses during pre-service and/or in-service training about the EU. Again, variations are significant with values around 20% in some countries (Croatia, Italy, Spain) and around 60% in others (Bulgaria, Slovenia). The respective ratio was particularly high in Poland, where 82% of the teachers had participated in such a training.

6. European funding instruments and initiatives fostering European dimension in citizenship education

The main funding instrument supporting the development of a European dimension in education is the **Erasmus+ programme**, which is the EU's key instrument for building the

³⁷ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/learning-eu-topics-school-curricula-report.pdf>

³⁸ <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-68631-3>

³⁹ In this case, the data refers to 11 EU countries (BG, CR, IT, LT, MT, NO, PL, RO, SK, SI, ES) plus Norway, that met the sampling requirements.

European Education Area. The Erasmus+ **Jean Monnet Actions**⁴⁰ (JMA) provide funding for teaching, learning and research the European Union, its history and values. JMA in the field of *Higher Education* promotes EU studies, by supporting teaching and research, as well as policy debates related to the European integration and various EU priorities. The *School Actions* under JMA on the other hand, cater for the other fields of education and training, i.e. for primary and secondary schools as well as for the VET sector. The School Actions promote knowledge and critical awareness about the EU through supporting the development and delivery of teaching content as well as through contributing to teacher training. The *JM Teacher Training* offers opportunities for institutions engaged in teacher education. A *JM EU Learning initiative* targets schools and VET providers that are willing to develop and deliver activities on specific EU related subjects. Finally, the *JM Networks* for schools and VET promotes cooperation with higher education institutions to engage in the EU policy debate. In addition to the Jean Monnet Actions that support teacher training, **Erasmus+ Teacher Academies**⁴¹ also promote teaching about '*EU priorities such as learning in the digital world, sustainability, equality and inclusion*' by supporting European partnerships of teacher education institutions and training providers. Teacher Academies should choose one or more priorities that are especially relevant to their partnership. Among these is the priority of common values and civic engagement priority, with the aim of equipping teachers to promote active citizenship, ethics, social and intercultural competence, critical thinking, and media literacy.

As mentioned, apart from the JMA, other Erasmus+ actions also contribute to non-formal learning about- and for the EU, mainly through various mobility activities. These initiatives provide young people, as well as teachers and youth workers, the opportunity to experience other European cultures and interact with peers from different Member States through both short- and longer term mobilities. **DiscoverEU**⁴² in particular offers 18-year-old Europeans the possibility to travel across Europe by rail and visit various European destinations. The **European Youth Together**⁴³ (Key action 3) supports projects that that build partnerships in cooperation with young people across Europe. These projects organise exchanges, promote training and set up joint projects and activities.

Targeting young people aged 18 to 30, the **EU Youth Strategy**⁴⁴ is based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018 and supports democratic participation as well as active social and civic engagement through various actions and initiatives. For example, the **EU Youth Dialogue**⁴⁵ provides an online forum for young people and youth organisations to discuss European thematic priorities with decision makers, researchers and representatives of the civil society. In the context of the **Youth Policy Dialogues**⁴⁶, on the other hand, a small group of European young people is invited to Brussels to exchange views with Commissioners

⁴⁰ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/jean-monnet-actions> and <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/jean-monnet-actions>

⁴¹ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/school-education/erasmus-teacher-academies>

⁴² <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/discovereu>

⁴³ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-3/youth-together>

⁴⁴ https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en

⁴⁵ https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/euyouthdialogue_en

⁴⁶ https://youth.europa.eu/youth-policy/dialogues_en

on current EU policy initiatives. Every two years, the **European Youth Week**⁴⁷, organised by the European Commission, offers a series of events across Europe to encourage young people to become more active in European activities and decisions. In 2024, the event focused on the importance of participating in the approaching European elections as well as on other topics relevant to young people in Europe. The biannual European Youth Week is alternating with the **European Youth Event**⁴⁸ in Strasbourg, held by the European Parliament, where 16- to 30-year-old Europeans get the opportunity to discuss with Members of the European Parliament as well as with other decisionmakers.

The **European Solidarity Corps**⁴⁹ provide funding for young people aged 18 to 30 to get involved in cross-border volunteering activities, solidarity projects and humanitarian aid volunteering, including in the fields of citizenship and democratic participation.

The **European Parliament's Ambassador School Programme** (EPAS)⁵⁰ seeks to raise students' understanding of European parliamentary democracy, the function of the European Parliament, and the core values of the European Union. It also promotes active student engagement in democratic processes within the EU. Schools participating in the Ambassador program are invited to use the **Youth Hub**⁵¹, where a range of learning resources, including active lessons, thematic modules, pedagogical toolkits and audiovisual materials that can promote discussions and debate on different topics related to Europe. These include for example European History, Human Rights, as well as Art in Democracy.

In addition, as part of the overall communication efforts about the EU, an online **Learning Corner**⁵² offers educational resources to the public. School pupils can find games, activity books and competitions that support learning about the EU. The Learning Corner also provides a broad set of teaching materials to educators who wish to teach about the EU, its history, institutions, Member States and more. These materials are available in 24 EU languages.

⁴⁷ <https://youthforeurope.eu/european-youth-week-2024-join-the-event/#:~:text=The%20event%20will%20happen%20from,youth%20participation%20in%20these%20elections>

⁴⁸ <https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/en>

⁴⁹ https://youth.europa.eu/solidarity_en

⁵⁰ <https://youth.europarl.europa.eu/more-information/ambassador-school/about-epas.html>

⁵¹ <https://youth.europarl.europa.eu/more-information/ambassador-school.html>

⁵² https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/index_en

7. Some inspiring practices fostering the European dimension in citizenship education

Teach Europe: a classrooms' roadmap to Europe by European Schoolnet offered online courses between March and April 2025 with 4 modules for teachers and educators to help them 'teach for' and 'teach about' Europe in the context of various school subjects, both in Humanities and Sciences. Course content included the deconstruction of European values and identities, the relevance of the EU for its citizens as well the European democratic processes. The project is co-funded by the European Union, with the Jean Monnet Actions under the Erasmus+ Programme. <https://www.europeanschoolnetacademy.eu/courses/course-v1:TeachEurope+EuropeInClassroom+2025/about>

Case4EU: Empowering EU citizens provides a variety of online teaching materials to support teaching about Europe. By applying an innovative approach, the project developed case studies, based on case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU to help learning about the European Union through the real-life stories of ordinary citizens. The downloadable case studies are accompanied by detailed guidance and teaching methods to support classroom applications, and their use can be integrated into the teaching of different school subjects. The materials build on the Case4EU Jean-Monnet project at KU Leuven, in cooperation with the College of Europe in Bruges. <https://ghum.kuleuven.be/case4eu/en> and <https://www.law.kuleuven.be/pub/en/CASE4EUatschool/indexENG>

EuroClio is a network of historians and history educators that aims to inspire and empower history and citizenship educators, helping them promote learners' critical thinking and becoming responsible and active citizens. Several projects run by EuroClio focus specifically on learning and teaching European history. For example, the project *Critical History Tours*⁵³ for example creates walking tours in European public spaces affected by conflicts and historical debates. *Facts not Fiction*⁵⁴ engages young people in creating local history projects related to the Holocaust and Nazi persecution. *In Europe Schools*⁵⁵ offers interactive online Education Kits and invites schools to use them to find a partner school in Europe, collaborating to make documentaries about recent history related to topics such as migration, climate challenge, gender equality and more. EuroClio is co-funded by the European Union. <https://euroclio.eu>

The **CITeDEV: Citizenship Education in the context of European Values** project ran between 2022 and 2024 and involved 28 universities across 19 countries. The project delivered research on young people's values and citizenship-related behaviours and developed recommendations for teaching tolerance in European history, as well as for teaching European values in higher education. Charles University in Prague coordinated the project which was co-funded by the European Union, through the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Actions. <https://citedev.eu/about-us/>

EUTeam: European Teachers on the Move created free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to equip teachers with innovative teaching methodologies to teach about the EU, its institutions, history and values. The six 5-hour courses target both primary- and secondary

⁵³ <https://euroclio.eu/projects/critical-history-tours/>

⁵⁴ <https://euroclio.eu/projects/facts-not-fiction/>

⁵⁵ <https://euroclio.eu/projects/in-europe-now/>

school teachers, and cover topics like promoting an inclusive and multicultural classroom; using collaborative and student-centred learning to teach about the EU and becoming an active citizen of the EU. In addition, online lesson plans are also offered on EU-related topics including human rights, gender equality, diversity, history etc. The project was coordinated by Europass SRL and was co-funded by the European Union, through the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Actions. <https://euteam.teacheracademy.eu/project/>

Fit4EU: Teacher Trainings for a Target Group-Specific Civic Education on the European Union offers both online and on-site courses targeted at teachers separately at the various education levels (primary, secondary and VET, grammar and comprehensive schools) in English and in German. The project's website further provides downloadable teaching materials, games and quizzes so support teaching about the EU. Simulation games based on real-life scenarios are also offered for students at the primary and at the secondary level to engage with topics like environment protection or animal welfare. The project is coordinated by Goethe-University Frankfurt a.M. and is co-funded by the European Union, through the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Actions. <https://fit4eu.org/en/homepage/>

BEAT – Be an Active EU Teacher: Enhancing the Teaching of the EU through Teacher Trainings project ran between 2022 and March 2025, and aimed at empowering Slovenian ISCED 3 teachers to start teaching a newly introduced subject and cross-curricular theme of Active Citizenship. Activities involved developing educational handbooks, developing and delivering teacher offline and online trainings and producing educative videos. The project is coordinated by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana and is co-funded through the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Actions. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/101047737>

EuroFly Classroom Program is a Greek project involving a group of secondary school teachers in a Greek VET institution (Sivitanidios Public School of Arts and Crafts), who implement European citizenship education in their school through lessons of Greek language, political education and “Creativity Action” zones. Creativity Action zones in particular build on students' initiatives and involve both formal learning and out-of-school activities. Between 2022 and 2025 the project aims at delivering a minimum of 240 educational hours, involving learning about the EU, its history and the challenges it is facing and the opportunities it offers to young people. The project was co-funded through the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Actions. <https://eurofly.sites.sch.gr>

KMKEU – Knowing me – Knowing EU focuses on primary and secondary education and develops training materials and Continuing Professional Development Courses to support learning about the EU in Ireland. The project is implemented by the University College Cork, Ireland and it is part of a Hub in Active European Citizenship (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/hub-in-active-european-citizenship/>), that has delivered various JMA funded programmes since 2017, including My Big Friendly Guide to the European Union(<https://bfgtoeu.com>), and Jean Monnet Chair in Active European Citizenship – ACTIVEUC. The Hub's mission is to connect all levels of education on teaching active European citizenship to young people. The project was co-funded by the European Union, through the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Actions. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/101047579>