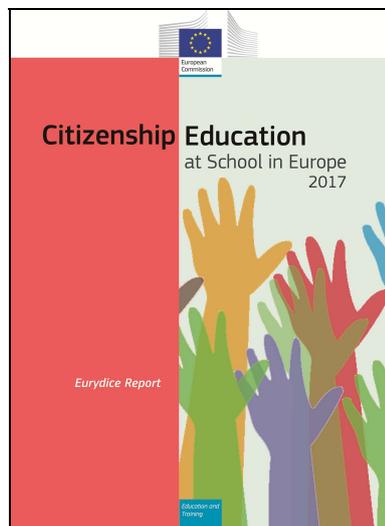


### What is Eurydice

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 co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>

## Eurydice Highlights

# Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017



Faced with increasing threats to fundamental values such as peace, equality and human rights, there has been a strong focus in recent years on the promotion of citizenship education, with several countries changing their official guidelines for this area of study. But what is citizenship education? How is it taught? Is it a separate discipline in its own right? How are students evaluated? How are citizenship skills developed through practical experiences outside the classroom? What training and support do teachers receive?

The Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017 report answers these questions and more, providing a comparative overview of how citizenship education is approached across Europe. It covers the 28 EU Member states as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey.

The report is largely based on qualitative data, drawing on the existing regulations and recommendations regarding citizenship education in public sector schools and includes general education and school-based initial vocational education training programmes. It focuses on four different areas, namely the curriculum; teaching, learning and active participation; student assessment and school evaluation; teacher education, professional development and support. Each chapter is supplemented by a case study which focuses on one particular country.

This 'Eurydice Highlights' provides a snapshot of some of the main findings of the report.

### The full study

*Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017*

can be found in English on the Eurydice website  
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>

### Printed copies of the report

are available upon request at:  
[eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu](mailto:eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu)

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## Citizenship education goes beyond political knowledge aiming at the development of democratic, social, but also personal and inter-personal competences

Contrary to old-fashioned views of citizenship education, which confined its role to conveying knowledge on political institutions and processes, modern citizenship education in Europe is more ambitious and multidimensional. By using mostly specific objectives to state the curriculum's goals, education authorities aspire to promote the development of competences related to the effective and constructive interaction (including personal development), thinking critically and acting in a socially responsible and democratic manner.

Students learn different competences in different levels. In primary education the focus tends to be on encouraging personal development and the

development of inter-personal competences. In secondary education interacting effectively and constructively with others gives way to acting in a socially responsible manner. Learning how to act democratically is taught mostly at upper secondary level, while competences related to critical thinking receive comparatively more attention at lower secondary level.

The more specific competences vary across countries; it is interesting to note that very few countries emphasise student adaptability to changing circumstances, and only a few encourage interaction with political authorities.

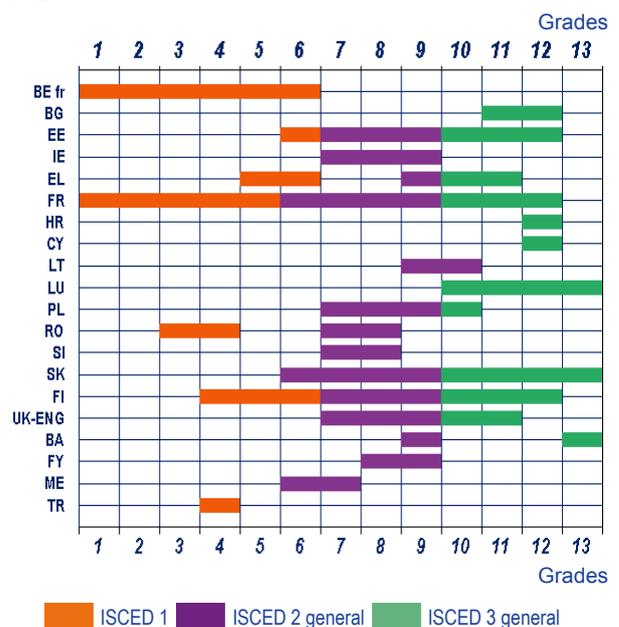
## Students receive citizenship education at primary and secondary levels of education in almost all countries

A challenge for transversal areas of learning such as entrepreneurship, creativity or citizenship is how to enhance their status compared to traditional school subjects. While citizenship education is widely promoted and its provision is compulsory at each level of general education in almost all European countries, although not necessarily in each grade, its status and place in the curricula varies between countries. According to national curricula, students are taught this topic in one of three main ways, which are often combined: it can be a separate subject, integrated into broader subjects or learning areas such as the social sciences or language studies, or it may be a cross-curricular objective delivered by all teachers. Most education systems use the last two approaches, and more than 30 of the 42 education systems reviewed use one of them at all levels of general education. In contrast, only 20 education systems provide compulsory separate subjects in general education, with substantial differences among them as to the duration of provision.

The number of school years in which the compulsory separate subject is taught ranges from 1 to 12 years. Thirteen education systems provide the compulsory separate subject only at secondary level. In contrast, France, Estonia and Finland (with some

flexibility in that matter at upper secondary level) offer this continuously throughout general education, starting at primary level. Furthermore, Greece and Romania also provide compulsory separate subject teaching distributed between primary and secondary levels, but not in the form of a continuous provision.

### Compulsory separate subjects in citizenship education, 2016/17



Source: Eurydice.

## Less attention is given to citizenship education in school-based IVET, compared to general education

Differences in citizenship education between the two pathways can be highlighted in national curricula, guidance material for teachers and participation in school governance. In a third of the education systems, there is less emphasis on citizenship education in national curricula for school-based IVET. The differences between general education and IVET involve for instance that students in the latter pathway are taught fewer subjects integrating components of citizenship education, or that separate subjects in citizenship education are not part of their options. Moreover, only half of education systems provide guidance materials to support teachers' capacity to implement citizenship

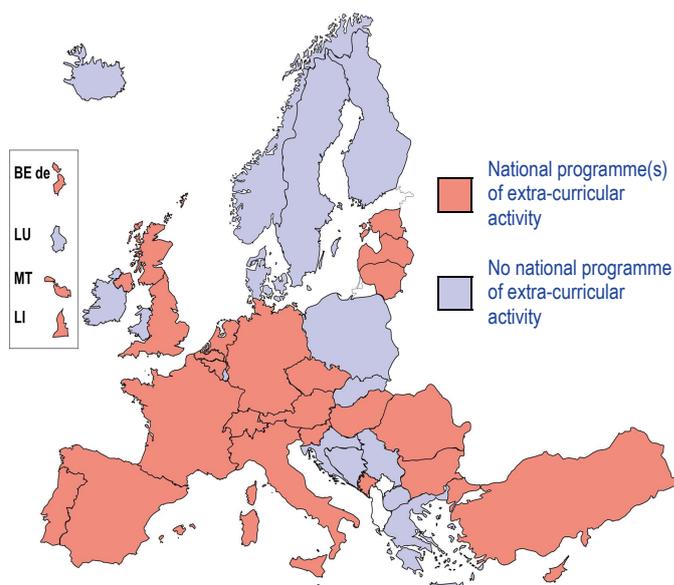
education in school-based IVET, while in general education about two thirds of countries offer such support. Finally, students and parents do not have the same opportunities for practical experiences of democratic participation in school governance in the IVET pathways as in general secondary schools. In general education, recommendations for lower and upper secondary levels on student councils and on parent representation on school governing bodies are almost universal. In contrast, in school-based IVET, the number of education systems making recommendations on these two means of participation falls to 30 in the case of both student and parents.

## The majority of countries offer opportunities for learning beyond the classroom

Outside the classroom, extra-curricular activities play an important role in developing citizenship competences. They can enable learners to participate in activities of their own choice, to explore different themes and to learn in external settings such as sports, democracy and political life, volunteering, environmental activities, international networks or arts and culture. In Europe, 29 countries provide top-level recommendations on extra-curricular provision supporting citizenship education, most frequently at lower and upper secondary levels. Countries most commonly recommend environmental activities, closely followed by activities to raise awareness of political life. In contrast, voluntary work was the least common, particularly at primary and lower secondary levels. A majority of countries (27) also directly support national programmes of extra-curricular activities linked to citizenship education, with different approaches such as debating networks in Germany, youth empowerment activities as part of a Youth Guarantee provision in Estonia or a National Citizen Service in the United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland). Citizenship education activities which take place beyond the

classroom are widely recognised to have a high impact on learners, and it is important to ensure access for learners to a range of opportunities at all levels.

### National programmes supporting extra-curricular activities, 2016/17



Source: Eurydice.

## Half of countries organise standardised assessment during general education

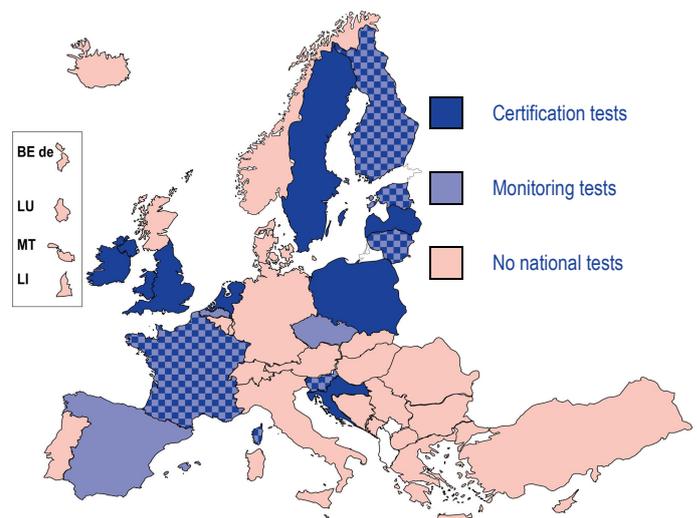
Research has highlighted that student assessment is a particularly challenging task in the area of citizenship education. Several types of support are provided to teachers dealing with citizenship education.

National guidelines for classroom assessment exist in 26 education systems. These guidelines commonly promote both traditional assessment methods such as multiple choice questionnaires and alternative methods, such as project-based assessment or self/peer assessment.

Seventeen education systems organise some form of national testing in separate subjects on citizenship education or in subjects that incorporate some form of citizenship education. This testing commonly aims to inform formal decisions on student progression (14 education systems) rather than evaluate the education system as a whole and/or individual schools in order to improve teaching and learning (8 education systems). However, standardised examinations on citizenship education are

compulsory for all students at some point in France, Ireland (until 2016/17), Latvia, Poland and Sweden only; in the other countries, it is optional.

### National tests in citizenship education administered during general education, 2016/17



Source: Eurydice.

## Despite some progress regarding the education and training of teachers and school heads in the area of citizenship education, significant policy gaps remain across Europe

Across Europe, five education systems – Belgium (French Community), Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (England) – offer prospective teachers the possibility to specialise in citizenship education in their initial teacher education (ITE). Since autumn 2017 this is now also the case in Denmark. In seven other countries – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Poland and Slovakia – student teachers can become semi-specialists, i.e. teachers who are specialised in civic or citizenship education as well one or two other subjects.

Moreover, nine education systems – the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (Wales) and Norway – have defined competences related to citizenship education to be acquired by all prospective primary and/or secondary teachers. And an additional ten education

systems promote general pedagogical competences that are not specific to but are relevant for teaching citizenship education.

Yet 17 education systems still have no regulations or recommendations on the development of prospective teachers' citizenship education competences through ITE – it is therefore left to higher education institutions to decide how this should be carried out.

Regarding continuing professional development (CPD) in the area of citizenship education, top-level authorities in 27 European education systems organise or support such activities for teachers. However, in contrast, there are only 14 European countries – Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland and Slovenia – in which top-level education authorities organise or support CPD activities in this area that specifically target the school heads.

The full study *Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017* can be found in English on the Eurydice website:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>