

Citizenship education in national curricula

SUMMARY

Citizenship education has become an education policy priority at EU level. The goal is to enable young people to develop self-awareness as members of a social group, and then possibly play a role and become active citizens at local, national or EU level. Similarly, the EU Member States have been placing a stronger focus on the teaching of values such as democracy and tolerance in their national educational policies, although this is not yet translating into practice in a systematic way.

School curricula reflect educational policy priorities; the nature, scope and time dedicated within those curricula to citizenship education indicate where citizenship education stands among those priorities. Based on broad [EU research](#) and a [study](#), this briefing first examines how EU programmes tackle citizenship education, what the European dimension is, and what place [active citizenship](#) occupies in the current 2021-2027 programming period. The briefing then offers an overview of citizenship education in the national curricula of five EU Member States, for the purpose of comparing them with the [previous state of play](#) and identifying best practice. All five Member States examined offer multifaceted citizenship education, focusing, among other things, on the EU's functions, integration process and core values, while taking into account new global challenges.

Teaching methods often combine the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills from an early age. EU programmes support this approach by targeting all EU citizens and by fostering lifelong learning through non-formal and formal educational activities. However, as pointed out in recent studies, there are perennial challenges in implementing a consistent and meaningful educational policy on citizenship in its various dimensions. Citizenship education is about establishing common values, and fostering certain behaviour and attitudes, both locally and in the EU, but this is not done consistently across the EU. For instance, some Member States give precedence to the national dimension of citizenship over the European one, while in others the implementation of policies is still slow. It is therefore important to monitor and evaluate measures taken by Member States to foster citizenship education and support its implementation. The Commission has indicated that it intends to include transversal skills, such as citizenship education and civic skills, in future editions of the [Education and Training Monitor](#).

Background

In this briefing, [citizenship education](#) is [understood](#) as 'the subject area promoted in schools with the aim of fostering the harmonious co-existence and mutually beneficial development of individuals and of their communities. 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 local, regional, national and international level'. [Active citizenship](#) is defined by the EU in the context of responsibility and participation in civic and social life, based on the understanding of socio-economic, legal and political structures.

Citizenship education has become increasingly visible and significant in EU and Member States' education policies in recent years. This trend became stronger when at their informal meeting of



17 March 2015 in Paris, the EU education ministers adopted the [Paris Declaration](#) on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination in education.

The most recent [Eurydice report on citizenship education](#)¹ showed that citizenship education is part of the curricula in EU countries as **a cross-curricular subject, as part of another subject or as a separate subject**. The report found that France had the highest number of course hours, followed by Finland, Estonia and Greece. In those four countries, the subject is compulsory and is taught separately at each of the three levels of general education (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary). However, despite progress in recent years, nearly [half of the EU countries](#) have no regulations or recommendations on the development of teachers' citizenship education competencies through initial teacher training.

In a 2022 [resolution on the implementation of citizenship education](#) across the EU, the European Parliament expressed concern about the limited focus on European and global aspects of citizenship in national curricula. The Parliament underlined the lack of a uniform approach in addressing the European dimension. It deplored the lack of a common definition of citizenship education and noted large differences among Member States on **teaching methodologies, dedicated hours** and **teacher training**. Moreover, it noted that reliable research on how civic education is being taught was missing and that the pedagogical tools used for delivering this education were inadequate. While EU programmes such as Erasmus+ or Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV), among others, have contributed indirectly to the active provision of citizenship education, there is still some untapped potential in this regard. Seeking to contribute to the development of European citizenship education, the resolution made a number of proposals.

These include:

- 1 the development of tangible and measurable objectives and benchmarks on citizenship education in the [European Education Area](#) before 2025;
- 2 the development of a common citizenship education competence framework for teachers and students for the key competence 'citizenship';
- 3 provision of mobility opportunities, peer-to-peer learning and exchanges of best practices among teachers, including training modules on EU topics. Along these lines, the resolution insists on promoting and developing 'Erasmus+ Teacher Academies' to foster a European dimension in education;
- 4 the creation of a permanent review and analysis mechanism at EU level to identify good practices across EU programmes (e.g. projects from Erasmus+, CERV, etc.) which can be disseminated and scaled up widely;
- 5 the inclusion of European citizenship learning modules in Erasmus+ and in the European Solidarity Corps as well as visits to heritage and memory sites of historical significance;
- 6 the introduction of a new specific strand in the CERV programme to foster citizenship education;
- 7 the launch of dedicated calls aimed at citizenship education under Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe;
- 8 the development of a comprehensive EU strategy on European civic and citizenship education;
- 9 the drafting by the Commission of a recommendation on primary, secondary and higher education curricula on the EU and global civic education for voluntary adoption by the Member States;
- 10 the creation of a permanent structure to support strategic work on EU citizenship education aiming to improve availability and quality of citizenship education across the EU. This structure would also manage the EU resources allocated for this purpose and coordinate efforts on common methods, practices, tools and content.

In its [response](#), the Commission highlighted the areas where it intended to take action, provided updates to a number of initiatives and responded to some points raised in the resolution. The Commission noted that the European framework on [key competences for lifelong learning](#) contains eight key competences, among them citizenship education. On teacher training, the Commission

highlighted that the Erasmus+ programme supports mobility for teachers and has a dedicated funding of up to €300 000 for teacher training institutions (e.g. the [Jean Monnet networks](#) in other areas of education and training and the new [Erasmus+ teacher academies](#)).

On review mechanisms called for in point 4 above, the Commission acknowledged the importance of solid objectives and benchmarks and indicated that it would include transversal skills, such as citizenship education and civic skills, in future editions of its [Education and training monitor](#).

With respect to **EU learning modules** for beneficiaries of EU programmes, as mentioned in point five above, there are several options under Erasmus+ and the European Solidary Corps, allowing beneficiaries to participate in the EU's democratic life. In particular, young people may enrol in **training courses** offered on online platforms ('[Become an Active European Citizen](#)'), or visit cultural heritage sites through the [DiscoverEU](#) initiative.

[Research](#) carried out in 2021 gave an overview of the EU policy framework for citizenship education and actions supported by EU funding programmes in the 2014-2020 period. This briefing builds on this research and first examines EU programmes such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and the Citizens Education and Rights Values (CERV) programmes in the **current 2021-2027 programming period**, while also highlighting some changes. It gives examples of projects under each of these EU programmes. The briefing then gives an overview of national curricula on citizenship education in five EU Member States to identify possible good practices and changes.

Erasmus + programme and citizenship education

The general objective of the Erasmus+ programme is to support the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to social cohesion and strengthening the **European identity** and **active citizenship**. In addition, Erasmus+ is key to advancing youth policy cooperation under the [European Union youth strategy 2019-2027](#) and developing the European dimension in sport.

The 2021 [Erasmus+ Regulation](#) notes that 'going abroad to study, learn, train and work or to participate in youth and sport activities contributes to strengthening that European identity in all its diversity. It reinforces the sense of being part of a cultural community and fosters intercultural learning, critical thinking and active citizenship among people of all ages' (recital 27). This is a broad interpretation of citizenship education: beyond schools or universities, it is a living idea that grows through formal, non-formal and informal learning, addressed in the programmes' activities. 'The programme' the regulation notes, 'should encourage the participation of young people in Europe's democratic life, including by supporting activities that contribute to citizenship education and participation projects for young people to engage and learn to participate in civic society'. Such processes are expected to raise awareness of 'European common values, including fundamental rights, as well as European history and culture ... contributing to the process of European integration' (recital 28).

To achieve its objectives over the [2021-2027 period](#), the Erasmus+ programme envisages the implementation of **three key actions** in addition to the Jean Monnet actions (see below). In 2021, the Erasmus+ [work programme](#) had three overarching priorities. The Erasmus+ 2022 [work programme](#) included yet another, fourth priority, on '**participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement**', under which Erasmus+ [supports](#) Member States in reaching the goals of the [Paris Declaration](#).

Erasmus+ priorities are transversal and overarching. Citizenship education is addressed in the context of some other specific priorities as well (e.g. in higher education and vocational education).

Paris Declaration goals

1. Ensuring that young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences
2. Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy
3. Fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people
4. Promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning.

The **participation of young people** is a key element. Erasmus+ annual programmes support **citizenship education** through [youth participation activities](#), many of which are **non-formal learning activities**. The activities are meant to help the participants strengthen their personal and social identity as well as their citizenship and digital competences and become active European citizens. Activities may take on many forms such as workshops, debates, role-plays, trainings, **volunteering** and **active participation in democratic and civic life**. They give young people the opportunity to learn and experience common values and democratic practices. National agencies offer a range of training opportunities for youth workers and youth leaders through their training and cooperation activities published in the [European Training Calendar](#) portal maintained by [SALTO](#). The latter is a network of seven resource centres based in different national agencies supporting the implementation of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.

Examples of youth participation activities funded under Erasmus +

[Rural Youth Training Activities](#): the RYTA is a consortium of organisations that forms a network for 'encouraging the participation of rural young people in democratic life in Europe' through the design and implementation of non-formal training and mobility activities. Partners come from the wider Mediterranean region (Greece, Italy, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon). Through its activities (research, needs assessment, training courses and training materials), RYTA fosters rural youth engagement and inclusion in democratic life. It furthermore seeks to bring together rural youth and decision-makers, raise awareness on environmental policies and sustainability, and encourage rural youth to actively participate in democratic life, policy development and advocacy.

[Promoting European Digital Citizenship in Young People through Cyber-animation approach](#). The increasing role of digitalisation has led to the concept of 'digital citizenship'. However, young people do not use digital tools to promote their democratic and social participation. In addition, many lack a critical approach when using digital tools. The objective of the project is to use cyber-animation to address digital citizenship and develop participants' related necessary skills. Online training of young people is organised to enable beneficiaries to implement new skills (e.g. critical thinking). Furthermore, activities are organised with the aim to foster democratic participation. The process should encourage cyber-communities (e.g. the socio-influencer hub) to continue developing activities (creation of online campaigns on issues of social importance for young people). The multiplier effect of a final event will broaden the impact of the project.

Source: [EC funding and tender opportunities](#) Single Electronic Data Interchange Area (SEDIA).

Through the **Jean Monnet actions**, Erasmus+ focuses on supporting **higher education institutions inside and outside the EU** to develop and offer new content on the EU as part of their curricula. These actions aim to promote active European citizenship and values, promote the role of the EU in the world, and facilitate intercultural dialogue. These actions should support students by instilling in them a sense of belonging to a common European area and a sense of common values, and possibly inspiring them to participate more actively in EU activities and public service and, in turn, to enhance the professional competences of those involved. The 2023 Erasmus+ [work programme](#) includes actions supporting many other institutions such as **schools, teacher training institutions and vocational education and training (VET) institutions**. The objective is to widen the pool of learners also by reaching out to their community (parents, local actors, public authorities).

Erasmus+ seeks to support the **skills and competences of teachers** through mobility, but also through dedicated funding to training institutions such as the new [Jean Monnet networks in other areas of education and training](#). The latter allow for exchanges between schools and teacher training institutions on good practices to enhance the quality of EU education in schools and VET institutions. Furthermore, [Erasmus+ teacher academies](#) create European partnerships and promote cooperation between teacher education institutions and training providers. Their objective is to offer support for teachers at the beginning of their career and strengthen their professional development.

Erasmus+ teachers academies

The Erasmus+ programme supports the creation of at least 25 teacher academies by 2025. With the selection of 11 projects in 2021 and 16 projects in 2022, the objective has been reached 2 years ahead of schedule. Two of these projects focus on developing European civic awareness and tackling challenges to democratic education and active citizenship. The **first project – Towards a European Syllabus in Teacher Education** – argues for the inclusion of global/societal topics in teacher education such as sustainability, challenges to democratic education and active citizenship, gender sensitivity, multilingualism and diversity, as well as for the digitalisation of learning spaces. The leading five universities and 11 training schools involved in the project will develop an interdisciplinary European syllabus providing an international perspective on global teaching challenges, create European communities of practice in initial and in-service teacher education and promote virtual and physical mobility in teacher education. The **second project – UNI-T Academy/eUropean civic Teacher Academy** – aims to enhance mobility, European civic awareness, multilingualism and cultural diversity awareness among teachers, in accordance with the EU policy in support of European teacher development. Based on a partnership with the European university CIVIS, the project leaders aim to improve the European dimension and internationalisation of teacher education through innovative and practical collaboration, with a focus on the key priorities of the EU.

Source: [European Commission, ERASMUS-EDU-2021-PEX-TEACH-ACA, ERASMUS-EDU-2021-PEX-TEACH-ACA](#).

European Solidarity Corps and citizenship education

The [Regulation](#) establishing the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) stresses that: 'solidarity activities should present potential European added value and should benefit communities and foster participants' personal, educational, social, civic and professional development. Solidarity activities should be developed in relation to different areas, such as citizenship and democratic participation; intercultural awareness and intercultural dialogue; social inclusion'.

The general objective is to enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in solidarity activities, primarily volunteering as a way to strengthen cohesion, solidarity, democracy, **European identity and active citizenship** in the Union and beyond (Article 3). Those are the unequivocal core values of the EU. Specific objectives are spelled out along the same lines and involve providing young people with opportunities for engagement in solidarity activities that facilitate their continuous engagement as active citizens (Article 3 para. 2). European citizenship and active citizenship are amongst the policies enounced in the European Solidarity Corps' [2021](#), [2022](#) and [2023 annual work programmes](#). Some of the priority policies are conceived to support democratic engagement and participation of young people. As of 2021, the work programme specifies that programme activities should aim to 'strengthen European identity (notably as regards common EU values, the principles of unity and diversity, and participating countries' social, cultural and historical heritage) and the participation of young people in democratic processes'. In 2022 and 2023, the programme specifies that young people's participation in democratic processes may include

European Solidarity Corps projects on the protection of cultural heritage as a common historical heritage fostering European identity

[Remembrance Trails](#) (a volunteering team with participants from Greece, Italy, Austria, Finland, Spain and Turkey). The objective of the project is to raise awareness of and preserve Europe's cultural heritage by fostering practical activities, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, shared values, common history and culture. Activities are aimed at 'bringing Europe closer to its citizens by promoting Europe's values, while preserving the memory of its past'. New participatory and inter-cultural approaches to heritage will be promoted. The results are meant to be used by schools and education institutes to enable longer-term benefits.

[Volunteers for Heritage and European Solidarity](#): The general objective of the project is to preserve the Czech cultural heritage through collective volunteer work. The activities will bring together groups of volunteers who will join forces and work on the reconstruction, maintenance and protection of Czech castles. Six groups of 10-12 volunteers from different countries will stay together for 2 weeks working alongside the local and international volunteers. Another objective is to increase awareness of the Czech cultural heritage and the impact of volunteers' efforts on its preservation.

involvement in other EU initiatives and platforms revolving around participation (e.g. the Conference on the Future of Europe).

CERV programme and citizenship education

The [citizens' equality rights and values programme](#) (CERV) aims to protect and promote EU rights and values as enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It contributes to sustaining and further developing open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law.

The [main objectives](#) of the strand on **citizens' engagement and participation** are to promote engagement and participation in EU democratic life while raising awareness of the common European history. There are three axes. The first one – 'European remembrance' – is about remembering and exploring recent European history for a better understanding of the EU, its origins, purpose and diversity. The second one – on citizens' participation – is aimed at fostering people's engagement in civil life as individuals or as members of civic associations. The third one – on town twinning and networks of towns – seeks to promote exchanges between people of different countries in order to reinforce mutual understanding and tolerance while developing a sense of European identity.

The CERV programme has four strands

- Equality, rights and gender equality
- Fighting violence, including gender-based violence and violence against children
- Protecting and promoting EU values
- Citizens' engagement and participation.

The [Regulation establishing the CERV programme puts citizenship education and active citizenship at its core](#). Ultimately, the programme aims to contribute to a European Union that is closer to its citizens and fosters democratic participation. The CERV programme touches upon issues related to both EU policymaking and EU core values. 'European citizenship and European identity should be developed and advanced by encouraging citizens' understanding of the policy-making process, and by promoting civic engagement in the actions of the Union'. Activities that 'promote mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, cultural and linguistic diversity, social inclusion and respect for others fosters a sense of belonging to the Union and of a common citizenship under a European identity' (recital 8).

Fostering active citizenship continues to be a **transversal policy priority** under the CERV [2023-2024 work programme](#). The new programme expands some of the [2021-2022](#) priorities while adapting to the actual context marked by the war in Ukraine and its various consequences. Through the 'citizens' engagement and participation' strand, the work programme will help people make their voices heard and increase inclusion and democratic participation. It notes that 'the legacy of recent European history is a crucial pillar of the values the EU stands for' and stresses the pertinence of remembrance and education in common modern history, in particular when there is historical distortion and revisionism. Therefore 'activities will aim to raise Europeans' awareness of their common historical experience, culture, cultural heritage and values and help them better understand the EU ... and the importance of fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law'.

As regards citizen participation, activities will focus on debates on the future of Europe, but also on citizens' societal engagement, independent election observation (including monitoring done by citizens) and innovative approaches and tools to help citizens make their voices heard and publicly exchange views on all areas of EU action. Particular focus will be placed on encouraging children's civic engagement.

In the area of town twinning and creating networks of towns, activities will promote exchanges between people of different countries, to reinforce mutual understanding and tolerance and contribute to the development of a sense of European belonging and identity.

Examples of CERV projects

[Building bridges between policymakers, academia and citizens \(EU bridges\)](#): the main objectives are to raise citizens' awareness and understanding of EU policymaking; to encourage citizens' democratic participation; and to build bridges and facilitate interaction between citizens, researchers and policymakers. Activities consist of awareness raising and dissemination, training and capacity building as well as analytical activities in unfamiliar circles. The aim is to engage citizens to take part in an open dialogue on what the EU is and how it can develop in the future.

[EuroClio – Inspiring History and Citizenship Educators in 2022](#) is a project illustrating the transversal nature of EU citizenship as a concept positioned between EU remembrance and civic participation. EuroClio is a network of professionals who are convinced that history and citizenship education should contribute to the building and strengthening of democratic values. Their objective is to inspire and empower educators to take action and change the old ways of learning and teaching through a new responsible approach to history, citizenship and heritage education. Students should learn to think critically, assess false claims and probe their sources – including those highlighting situations that are difficult, controversial or related to totalitarian past experiences.

Sources [EC funding tenders – projects-results 2021-2027](#).

Citizenship education in selected Member States

The present briefing analyses the national curricula on citizenship education, including its European dimension, in five Member States. Four of these were part of the 10 Member States presented in a 2021 [study on implementation of citizenship education actions in EU](#). They were selected on the basis of their geographical location, size, and length of EU membership and in some cases recent changes in educational policy. As France dedicates the highest number of hours to citizen education, it therefore constitutes a relevant additional example.

Croatia

Primary and lower secondary education in Croatia is a single structure system of compulsory education that covers a period of 8 years. It starts at the age of six/seven and ends at the age of 14-15. Upper secondary education is not compulsory but the majority of students enrol in it. Upper secondary education starts at the age of 14-15 and lasts 4 years. Citizenship education is a **mandatory cross-curricular** subject in primary and secondary schools, which means that it does not exist as a separate subject but as part of other subjects. The implementation of the 2019 national curriculum on citizenship education is still at an early stage. However, some teachers [criticise](#) the small amount of time available to teach cross-curricular topics, of which there are too many. In addition, this depends on the individual commitment of teachers. In Croatia, there are five cycles of citizenship education from grade 1 in primary schools (age 6-7) to grade 4 in secondary schools (age 17-18). Citizenship education is taught under three strands: 1) human rights; 2) democracy; and 3) society and community, where students learn about political systems. The aim is to empower students for **active and efficient performance of their civic roles**.

There is a **specific focus on EU-related issues in two strands** in the third cycle of the curriculum, which corresponds to the sixth, seventh and eighth grade of compulsory school (**ages 12, 13 and 15**).² Under the **democracy strand**, the students learn democratic principles and promote democratic values, learn about the governance structures at the local, regional and central level as well as Croatia's role in the EU. Students are taught to connect and compare their roles as citizens of Croatia and citizens of the EU. Under the **human rights strand**, students explore various texts such as the Croatian Constitution, Council of Europe documents, and EU and United Nations documents. This education is delivered during the classes on the Croatian language, and during history and geography classes.

In **upper secondary schools**, in **grade 4 (ages 15-16)**, under the **democracy strand**, students analyse governance structures in Croatia and in the EU. As part of their history classes, they compare the institutions of Croatia and of the EU. This includes trips to relevant institutions and project work. In **grade 5 (ages 16-17-18)**, under the **democracy strand**, they study the appointment procedure of Members to the European Parliament and are able to describe Croatia's role in the EU. Specifically,

they compare candidates' programmes for the elections to the European Parliament and learn about the preferential system of voting. Students are expected to understand the interests of Croatia in the European and international context. This includes visits to the Croatian parliament and other institutions.

Weaknesses in the implementation of citizenship education have forced Croatian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to address the issue through **non-formal education**, in particular on the local level, where in some cities and counties the non-formal and formal sector cooperate in developing teaching materials. One such example is the School and Community (ŠIZ) programme in Rijeka.

Rijeka programme of citizenship education³

The municipality of Rijeka integrated citizenship education in extra-curricular activities in primary schools in 2016 as a separate subject. The municipality funds the School and Community (ŠIZ) programme created jointly with the University of Rijeka, schools and experts. Teachers received 80 hours of training. Students initially had one class a week for the first year. Starting from 2018, there were two classes a week. From an initial six schools participating the first year, they grew to 25 in the third year, with around 700 participating students. The programme sparked interest in more than 10 cities, including [Zagreb](#), where civic education will be proposed as an optional extracurricular activity in primary and secondary schools. The [pilot phase](#) is scheduled for the second semester of 2023.

The programme aims to educate children about their role in the community and their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society. It emphasises the importance of tolerance, kindness, respect for oneself and others and having an active role in advocating for human rights. The authors of the programme wrote two manuals: 'Student citizen' for 5th and 6th grade students, and 'Students citizens: informed, active and responsible' for primary school students in the 7th and 8th grade. There are also materials for the teachers implementing the programme, which published [online](#) and are accessible to all.

The results of a two-year [first evaluation](#) done by scientists from the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, showed a high level of satisfaction among participants and teachers, the majority of students having gained skills and knowledge that enable them to act differently in their community. 'Students not only recognize the positive effects on their own behaviour, but it has been established that attending GOO has a positive effect on knowledge about relevant topics'.

Source: [Rijeka programme of citizenship education](#).

In 2022, [the EU Education and Training Monitor](#) reported that, compared to 2015, in 2021 Croatian students showed a lesser understanding of basic political terms, although their overall political knowledge had increased slightly.⁴ Political knowledge was strongly linked to the type of secondary school they attended (e.g. secondary school as opposed to vocational school), reflecting the fact that many schools continued to have no classes on civic education. In 2020, [the Ombudsman for Children](#) had already reported that civic education, being taught as a transversal subject, was insufficient and that there had been little progress in the training of teachers. That said, the Croatian Agency for Education has delivered a [set of teacher trainings](#) on citizenship education, which cover topics such as mediation, migration, judiciary, and gender equality.

Germany

Germany's education system is decentralised; the 16 German Länder are primarily responsible for their own education systems. A [standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder](#) coordinates and develops the educational policy. It helps in setting up educational standards that are binding for all Länder. The Ministry of Education of each Länder is responsible for developing its own curriculum. In general, the Länder curricula afford teachers considerable freedom with regard to content, objectives and teaching methods.

School is compulsory from the age of 6 to the ages of 15 or 16 (depending on the Länder). Children reaching the age of 6 are obliged to attend primary school (Grundschule) until they reach the age of 10 (or sometimes 12). Then they attend secondary school for 5-9 years, depending on the type of secondary school and Länder concerned. Secondary education in the Länder is characterised by division into various educational paths, with recent [reforms](#) offering more flexibility between those pathways.⁵

Once pupils have completed compulsory schooling, they go into upper secondary education.

Citizenship education is part of the primary and secondary school curriculum in at least 11 of the 16 Länder. [Education on democratic citizenship and human rights](#) is a core task and objective of formal education at all levels as well as of non-formal education. As such, it is incorporated into the history, social sciences and politics/citizenship educational programme.

Germany's federal structure allows the ministries of education and the local authorities/educational institutions, in cooperation with civil society, to carry out a broad range of activities.

Länder	Citizenship education curriculum and teaching resources
Baden Württemberg	The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Land developed in 2019 a 'Concept for strengthening democracy awareness in primary and secondary regional schools', accompanied by guidelines explaining it in detail. The concept covers various aspects of European identity (national and European identity) and history.
Bavaria	<p>The aim of civic education at school is to promote respect for the fundamental democratic values enshrined in the German Basic Law and the Constitution of Bavaria among all students, and prepare them for participation in democratic life. Its objectives are detailed in the General Concept for Civic Education in Schools in Bavaria (State Ministry for Education and Culture, 2017). Civic education includes a strong historical and political component, which also involves raising awareness of the challenges faced by the EU within the context of emerging threats to democracy, such as extremism. School activities include visits to the EU institutions, discussions about other Member States' political systems, simulation games on aspects related to the EU, visits to schools by representatives of EU institutions, etc.</p> <p>Teaching resources: The Institute for school quality and studies in the area of education supports and advises the Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Culture. It offers teachers resources on teaching EU values. These include online resources on 'Europe in the classroom' (virtual visit of the EU institutions, Europe-related material on history and current events, and materials produced by the Land Centre for political education and the Federal Centre for political education). A further focus is 'Europe in school life' with resources on an 'EU-projects' day at school and a section on 'Places to learn about European unification' (i.e. visits to the European Parliament, the Bavaria representation office in Brussels, the European Commission representation office in Bavaria, etc.)</p>
Berlin	The Land of Berlin School Act establishes the following mandatory subjects as part of civic education: diversity, creating democracy, education on Europe-related topics , prevention of violence, equal rights for men and women, intercultural education and education in cultural values (Integrative General Strategy for Civic Education in Berlin Schools , 2019). In 2021, the Berlin House of Representatives approved a new programme on 'Civic Education in Berlin Schools'. All Berlin primary and secondary schools should receive a budget of €2 000 to implement projects and activities focusing on civic education, democracy, human and fundamental rights.
Hesse	Teaching resources: The Ministry of Culture of the Land of Hesse produced guidelines for use by teachers in courses dedicated to education on citizenship and democracy (January 2021). The document covers a number of areas such as education in democratic values and fundamental rights, and the educational system's contribution to dealing with threats to democracy by political extremism, antisemitism and discrimination. Detailed guidelines (July 2021) give some more suggestions for citizenship education to teachers who teach courses on economics and politics.
Lower Saxony	In June 2021, the Land adopted a Decree on strengthening citizenship education in general, professional and private schools , following the recommendations of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder. The objective is to prepare school students for active participation in democratic political processes at national, European and global level, through school subjects such as 'politics and economics' and 'society'. Specific aspects of citizenship education include: democracy at schools , education towards peace , prevention of extremism and antisemitism , culture of remembrance and promotion of a culture of diversity .

Länder	Citizenship education curriculum and teaching resources
	<p>Other activities complementing these courses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Schools without racism and civic courage – involving 370 schools in Lower Saxony; ➤ Democratic school with excellence – winners of this competition must demonstrate pupils' democratic participation in school life and culture irrespective of origin and social status, as well as pluralism in teaching and school culture, along with respect for human rights and children's rights; ➤ School peace prize – awarded by the Lower Saxony Ministry of Culture, this prize aims to promote school pupils' initiatives on enhancing peaceful coexistence of people of a different origin, preventing violence, strengthening democratic attitudes and values, generating new ideas for developing democratic and environmentally sustainable society and engaging in civic initiatives on a voluntary basis.
North Rhine-Westphalia	<p>According to the website of the Land Agency for citizenship education (<i>Landeszentrale für politische Bildung</i>), citizenship education is included by law in the school curriculum with the aim of enabling pupils to play a responsible role in public and political life, by providing them with an understanding of the political system and political processes. As indicated in a 2021 report by this agency (see p. 23), some elements of citizenship education are already included in children's day care institutions. In schools, citizenship education focuses on empowering young people to stand up against discrimination, injustice and violence and in support of democracy and human rights.</p>
Saxony	<p>The Ministry of Education of the Free State of Saxony produced in 2022 a module aimed at supporting civic education in the spirit of democracy in the Land's secondary schools, focused on simulation games illustrating the functioning of democratic state institutions, e.g. the court system, to students. Other modules produced by the ministry focus on critical understanding of human rights, crimes against humanity and genocide as well as the defence of democracy.</p>
Rheinland-Palatinate	<p>Citizenship education is included in the Constitution of the Land, as well as in the School Act of Rheinland-Palatinate, and is meant to develop democratic competences among school children. Citizenship education includes simulation games focused on real-life situations and strategies for addressing such situations. Further initiatives involve the creation of networks, for instance, among model schools for participation and democracy, as well as projects aimed at the prevention of violence, Islamism and radicalisation, right-wing extremism and at teaching about EU-related issues.</p>
Saxony-Anhalt	<p>In June 2019, the Ministry of Education published guidelines for democracy education in schools in Sachsen-Anhalt, based closely on the 2018 recommendations of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (Democracy as an aim, subject and practice in the area of citizenship education in schools). According to the guidelines (p. 3), all curricular and extra-curricular activities in the area of citizenship education should aim to provide knowledge on democracy as a way of life and a form of organisation of society and the state, develop skills for participation in democratic decision-making, give an understanding of the historical context and contribute to a peaceful solution of conflicts. The curriculum, which covers levels ranging from pre-school to secondary school education, is aimed at countering right-wing extremism and racism. More specifically, courses on ethics and society focus on citizens' skills in a democratic society and issues such as constitutional values, human and civil rights. Visits to institutions (Bundestag and the European Parliament), as well as to museums and memorials to holocaust victims are an integral part of the curriculum.</p>
Brandenburg	<p>According to its website, the Land of Brandenburg offers schools and teachers resources on citizenship education on the following subjects: democracy and law; society and participation; conflict and conflict resolution; economy and global issues and Europe and world affairs.</p>
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	<p>According to its website, the Land of Mecklenburg – Western Pomerania offers citizenship education and notes that it is aimed at teaching objective facts about political systems while also providing a toolkit for participation in conflict resolution and exercising tolerance.</p>

Spain

In Spain, the competences are distributed among the central government, the autonomous communities and the city councils. In consequence, the education system is a combination of national rules with a decentralised administration where the 17 Spanish autonomous communities play a pivotal role. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) is responsible for providing guidance. There is a **general education curriculum**, explicitly aimed at preparing pupils for the active exercise of citizenship. In 2022, a [royal decree](#) incorporated 'citizen competences' in the eight key competences that make up a [student's profile](#) at the end of their basic education path.

The 2006 [Law on Education](#) (as amended in [2020](#)), provided **compulsory education on democratic citizenship and human rights** at both primary and secondary level (see table below).

All [primary education](#) students must receive [education in civic and ethical values](#) during any of the courses of the third (and last two-year) cycle, and then during their [secondary education](#). The [Royal Decree 157/2022](#) on the organisation and minimum teaching requirements for primary education provides further that **education in civic and ethical values** includes the development of four fundamental competency areas that are broken down in turn into four specific competencies for each of these areas. There is a two-tier approach towards each competency area; one is more theoretical and addresses concepts and values, the other is more practical and aims to foster behaviours and attitudes through critical thinking and dialogue. The methodology should be aligned to the values that the education seeks to transmit; students are invited to active and reasoned participation, respectful dialogue, critical and autonomous thinking, peaceful resolution of conflicts, safe use of information and communication technology, and an assertive management of emotions.

The **history, values and institutions of the EU** are approached from a civic and citizen perspective in subjects focused on nature, society and culture at the primary education level, and in subjects focused on geography and history at the secondary education level. Last, the [Ministry of Education and Vocational Training](#) and the educational administrations of the autonomous communities develop training materials and activities to assist teachers in the implementation of curricula.

Primary and secondary education curricula						
Key competences						
1 March 2022 a Royal Decree on the organisation and minimum teaching requirements of primary education	Royal Decree 29 March 2022 on the specificities of education in civic and ethical values in compulsory secondary education					
Primary – 3 cycles of 2 years Ages 6 to 12 5th or 6th grade At least 50 hours in any of the courses Special attention is paid to getting children to reflect on ethical issues and to learn about and develop respect for human and more specifically for children's rights, including those enshrined in the Spanish Constitution. Special attention is also paid to education for sustainable development and global citizenship; to the	Secondary Ages 12 to 15 or 17. 4th grade 35 hours in any of the courses provided for in Article 25.7 Law on education Further deepening and development of the four fundamental areas of competence and related specific competences	<p>Four KEY COMPETENCES related to education in civic and ethical values</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Self-knowledge and the development of students' personal autonomy</td> <td>In relation to civic and ethical values, students are led to pose questions to themselves as individuals and as citizens and thus be faced with ethical questions on their place and role in society, their values and criteria.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Understanding the social framework</td> <td>Understanding the social framework of coexistence and ethical commitment to</td> </tr> </table>	Self-knowledge and the development of students' personal autonomy	In relation to civic and ethical values, students are led to pose questions to themselves as individuals and as citizens and thus be faced with ethical questions on their place and role in society, their values and criteria.	Understanding the social framework	Understanding the social framework of coexistence and ethical commitment to
Self-knowledge and the development of students' personal autonomy	In relation to civic and ethical values, students are led to pose questions to themselves as individuals and as citizens and thus be faced with ethical questions on their place and role in society, their values and criteria.					
Understanding the social framework	Understanding the social framework of coexistence and ethical commitment to					

Primary and secondary education curricula			
Key competences			
equality of women and men; to respect for diversity and the social role of taxes and fiscal justice; and to promoting a critical spirit and a culture of peace and non-violence			democratic values and norms. Students first need to develop political and social ideas;
		Promotion of attitudes	Supporting a sustainable environment and an understanding of the relationship of interdependence between people and their environment
		Emotional education	Emotional education, here specifically within the framework of a wider reflection on ethical, civic and 'eco-social' values and issues

France

Citizenship education – more specifically civic and moral education – is part of the French national education mandatory curricula throughout both primary and secondary education cycles. Education on **Europe and the EU is not only part of the citizenship education courses** but is incorporated into multiple subjects (history, geography, languages, literature, philosophy etc.), as per the [official programme](#). For both the civic and moral education courses and the EU theme, the Ministry for Education makes support/training materials available to teachers at all levels.

School year	Citizenship education curriculum and teaching resources
Primary (école primaire/élémentaire) for ages 6 to 11 Early secondary education (college) for ages 12 to 15 Covering 9 years	Citizenship education is incorporated into different subjects at levels 2, 3 and 4 (official programme on the website of the French Ministry of Education). Teaching support: Ressources d'accompagnement pour l'enseignement moral et civique aux cycles 2, 3 et 4 . For the European/EU themes: Ressources pédagogiques pour mieux connaître l'Europe (resources and pedagogical guides for different courses at all levels of education).
Upper secondary education (general, technological or professional high school (lycée) covering 3 years, ages 16 to 18	There is a specific course on citizenship education in the 1st year (seconde), 2nd year (première) and in the 3rd year (terminale). It covers one thematic area per year. The programme allocates 18 hours per year to each thematic area. This is equivalent, in the framework of a uniform distribution, to a weekly timetable of 05 hours for each level. It includes: 1. Liberté (Freedom) taught in the first year and covering two axes: Axe 1 – Des libertés pour la liberté Axe 2 – Garantir les libertés, étendre les libertés : les libertés en débat The full programme is defined by an 'arrêté' (decree) from 17 January 2019, and was published in a special Official Bulletin N°1 from 22 January 2019. 2. Société (Society) taught in the second year and covering two axes: Axe 1 – Fondements et fragilités du lien social Axe 2 – Les recompositions du lien social The full programme is defined by the same 'arrêté' mentioned above. 3. Démocratie (Democracy) taught in the third year and covering two axes: Axe 1 – Fondements et expériences de la démocratie

School year	Citizenship education curriculum and teaching resources
	Axe 2 – Repenser et faire vivre la démocratie The full programme is defined by an 'arrêté' from 19 July 2019, published in a special Official Bulletin No 8 of 25 July 2019. Teaching support: Programmes et ressources en enseignement moral et civique – voie GT . For the European/EU themes: Ressources pédagogiques pour mieux connaître l'Europe (resources and pedagogical guides for different courses at all levels of education).

Greece

Citizenship education is part of the [primary](#)-level course (ages 6-12) on **social and political education** (SPE). At the fifth level, it includes a chapter on 'Me and my neighbour' and another on 'Me and my village/town'. Ministry of Education [guidance](#) envisages 25 hours and a further 5 hours for related activities per year. At the sixth level, the course addresses 'State and democracy' and 'Greece and Europe', where topics covered include the setting up of the EU, the EU institutions, Member States competences, the interaction between Greece and the EU, EU citizenship, and human rights. The Ministry of Education [instruction](#) envisages 26 hours per year and further optional hours for activities related to citizenship.

SPE continues at the lower [secondary](#) level (ages 12-15). The 2023 [Ministry of Education decision](#) envisages [3 hours weekly](#) at the **third grade** (last year of lower secondary school). The curriculum was piloted in all schools during the 2022-2023 school year.

SPE aims to support the **development of citizens** by stressing the significance of their **self-development as members of any social group**. Students participate in experiential activities to define themselves in their social dimension. SPE aims to provide them with tools to develop their imagination, critical thinking and logical analysis, to overcome prejudices and think beyond facts or ideologies, in order to ultimately cultivate self-awareness and self-control, and to become active citizens.

The thematic units of the SPE course are organised around three axes at secondary level.

The three axes of social and political education		
The individual as a member of a social group	The individual as a citizen	The individual and the wider world
a) Delimitation of the student as a member of a series of social groups b) The social role resulting from participation in the group (self-identification of the student against the roles he/she has and highlighting tensions caused by conflicting social roles). The set of roles as 'social identity'. c) Communication (listen – talk – understand). Communication of information (tangible benefit – my 'authority' increases) and communication of meanings (co-formation of personality). d) Prejudices (main side effect of socialisation) – stereotypes. Conflict/conflict resolution.	a) Political institutions: municipalities, regions, central government that together constitute the state. b) Political identities: citizen rights, obligations, duties (within the framework of each group and institution). c) Laws (written and mandatory – the state). Democracy: 'The state of the laws'. d) Power (the ability of an individual or group to influence their social or physical environment). The four forms of 'power': political, economic, ideological, military. Understand how these powers and our participation in them affect our lives.	a) European Union – European dimension of individual rights. Agreements and tensions between European citizens and between EU countries. b) Global processes of fragmentation of old communities and creation of new ones. - Migration – everywhere and next to me (as a global issue). - Natural environment – scientific knowledge and local situation/action.

The three axes of social and political education

	e) Democracy: the state, citizens and political diversity: understanding values differently, different priorities, and different benefits.	
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The non-compulsory **upper secondary** level (ages 16-18) covering grades A, B, and C (where SPE is not mandatory) aims to deepen previous knowledge. According to the 2013 [law](#), it includes '... the preparation of young people for **European civil society**; the respect for human rights, diversity and cultural diversity in a multicultural society; the strengthening of the values of freedom, **democracy, collegiality and solidarity** and the formation of an **active citizen consciousness**'. According to the 2023 [Ministry of Education decision](#), the course is organised in such a way as to further develop students' understanding of the institutions, the organisation of society and of the state, and the processes through which individuals form and express their political attitudes in modern society. As in previous educational levels, the ultimate goal is to foster empathy, rationality and critical thinking, so that students become active democratic citizens in local, national, European and global affairs. The course stresses the principles of integrity, transparency and accountability; its ultimate goal is to foster development of personal moral values. The thematic fields are decision-making, the integration of the individual into society, civil society, policy, state, and society, state organisation and legal order, sustainability as a model of economic development and social organisation, migration and refugee issues, and social problems. **A specific module covers the EU, its institutions and EU policies**, and the Greek society and economy in the context of the EU. The course lasts [16 hours with 8 additional hours for activities](#) (see table below).

Teachers receive guidelines on teaching, in line with the current curricula and teacher manuals accompanying each subject. The cross-thematic approach to knowledge is emphasised through '**skills workshops**'. These are organised around thematic units focused on the development of skills, the acquisition of competences and the formation of attitudes enhancing active citizenship.

School year	Courses on the EU in the education curriculum
Primary 6th year of primary school (last year) History course	Classes cover Greece's accession to the EU around 4 thematic chapters (of 2 hours each): history of the EU , history of Greece's accession to the EU , transition from drachma to the euro and symbols of the EU
Lower secondary (mandatory) 3rd year of secondary school Social and political education course Three hours weekly	There is a specific chapter on the establishment and development of the EU (2 hours in total). Its objectives are: a) to understand the historical context (political, economic, social) in which the idea of the EU arose and was implemented, but also to follow its stages of development; b) to learn about elements of European culture; c) To cultivate feelings of respect for and solidarity with the people in the EU, acknowledging their diversity.
4th year of upper secondary school (= first year at lyceum) Political education course 35 hours of political education in total; of these, 16 hours are dedicated to the EU	Chapter 5 – The state and the political community – covers the European Union (16 hours in total). It aims among others, to enable pupils: - to explain the relationship between the Greek state and the EU; - to participate in the affairs of their municipality in their capacity of local citizens and in EU matters in their capacity of EU citizens; - to understand concepts such as 'deepening' and 'enlargement' of the EU, the accession criteria, the EU values, EU citizenship, the rights of EU citizens, EU policies and EU civil protection.

School year	Courses on the EU in the education curriculum
6th year of secondary school (3rd year of lyceum) History course (One hour/week)	Chapter F on the post-war world includes eight modules, one of which addresses two specific modules related to the EU: - the path towards EU integration: realities and prospects; - the post-regime period in Greece and the country's integration into United Europe; The Ministry of Education instructions envisage that these modules should be studied in detail. ⁶ Students are <u>expected</u> to acquire an adequate level of social and political literacy, become familiar with the organisation and functioning of the democratic system of government and, finally, learn to respect the principles of law, human dignity, freedom and equality, social justice and social solidarity.

In Greece, other school activities related to the EU are the [Ambassador Schools programme](#) in collaboration with the European Parliament since 2016; the Erasmus+ initiative [Teachers4Europe](#) (a network of teachers who serve as ambassadors, familiarising students with EU activities and initiatives).

Regarding **training resources for teachers**, Europe Direct ELIAMEP Attica provides [online materials](#) related to the EU. Primary and secondary school teachers can find supporting materials about the EU, culture-related opportunities and activities for their students, and learn about the educational policies of other Member States. This includes a link to the European Commission [website](#) where students can find games and sources of information on the EU. Every month, new materials and relevant information are uploaded to the webpage and its social media platform, as well as to a private Facebook group only accessible to teachers. The [Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence](#) has organised a cycle of training seminars for secondary education teachers, as well as more generally for those who wish to work in this area or in teacher training (Jean Monnet activities, action: Jean Monnet projects, Erasmus+).

Conclusion

Citizenship education has become part of educational policies and curricula in the Member States. Member States are increasingly aware that citizenship education and its European dimension have a role to play in strengthening European identity. There is no single model for fostering citizenship education, but there are numerous inspiring examples of best practice. NGOs and civil society sometimes offer alternatives or complement formal citizenship education with their own initiatives. Citizenship education can be delivered in flexible formats and it can be spread across subjects or taught as a separate subject from an early age onwards.

EU programmes offer additional alternatives aimed at fostering a common identity. Further research, monitoring and evaluation remain essential when it comes to promoting and designing tailor-made actions and tools that can contribute to a meaningful citizenship education. The Commission has stressed that the main indicator regarding citizenship education is expected to be based on results from the [International Civic and Citizenship Education Study \(ICCS\)](#), carried out twice so far by the [International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement \(IEA\)](#). It measures, inter alia, young people's knowledge, conceptual understanding and competences in civic and citizenship education. New results will be published in the upcoming [International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022](#), followed by a report and supporting documents in 2024.

ENDNOTES

¹ [Eurydice](#) is a European Commission-funded education information network in Europe. It consists of a coordinating European unit and a series of national units of Member States but also countries participating in Erasmus+. Eurydice's task is to explain how European education systems are organised and how they work. They publish descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, and indicators and statistics in the area of education.

² Primary and lower secondary education are organised as a single-structure system.

³ The measured success of this initiative led to its expansion to 11 other municipalities, including the third and fourth largest ones in Croatia. For more information, see [Citizenship and lifelong learning monitor 2019 – Croatia](#).

⁴ This conclusion is based on findings of the Croatian Institute for Social Research that periodically examines students' political literacy and values in their final secondary school year.

⁵ Traditionally, there were three types of secondary schools: the gymnasium, which prepared students for the university, the Realschule, which offered students general academic education, and the Hauptschule, which prepared students for work or further vocational education in Germany's dual vocational training system.

⁶ Guidelines for the teaching of Greek, history, Latin and philosophy in general day and evening high schools for the 2020-2021 school year – ref. Ministry of Education documents 124891/Δ2/21-09-2020 and 125101/Δ2/21-09-2020.

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