CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES RELATED TO PROMOTING CITIZENSHIP AND VALUES OF FREEDOM, TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION THROUGH EDUCATION

RESEARCH REPORT

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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The CONVINCE (COmmoN Values INClusive Education) project (2018-2020) aims at providing teachers and other education personnel, education employers, school leaders, and the whole school community with tools and methods to better deal with citizenship education and universal values, both in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. A combination of activities - awareness raising (leaflet and poster), research, advocacy (joint statements) and training (workshops and MOOC) is developed for this purpose.

This document presents the executive summary of the research conducted in 2018 in the framework of the CONVINCE project. An advisory group, coordinated by ETUCE (the European Trade Union Committee for Education), EFEE (the European Federation of Education Employers) and ESHA (the European School Heads Association), oversees the project.
All members of the three organisations were invited to share their views in an online questionnaire, as well as the challenges they are facing and examples of good practices on six topics:

1. Citizenship education and democratic-school culture.

2. Teaching in diverse learning contexts for intercultural dialogue.

3. Teaching controversial and sensitive issues.

4. Digital citizenship and E-safety.

5. School-leadership and 'the whole school approach'.

6. Inclusive education as a tool to prevent radicalisation and extremism.

91 professional organisations represented by 107 respondents coming from 46 regions/countries in Europe responded to the online survey. This resulted in a wealth of data which will contribute to enrich the discussion on the teaching of EU shared values and citizenship, with a focus on secondary education, both within the curricula of education institutions (formal learning) and in extra-curricular activities (non-formal learning).

The research report consists of a main part presenting an overview of the six topics. In the annexes of the report, more detailed research findings are put forward in tables, and a compendium gathers the good examples/practices/policies organised by country.

Common values are currently embedded in several ways in education settings in the regions and countries represented amongst the survey participants: in value-oriented subjects (like human rights education), in related subjects (such as history or philosophy) or transversally embedded across the curriculum. Different approaches may co-exist in some countries. Approaches may also vary according to regional specificities, different organising authorities, the level of education, between individual schools or even between teachers.

The research confirms that the various components of the education system (e.g. the school policy, the curriculum, partnerships) interlink and truly function as a 'system': the constituent parts interrelate and change in one part leads to change in the other parts. This calls for a '**whole school approach'** to bring necessary sustainable and systemic changes in educational settings to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The whole school approach is based on the greater autonomy coupled with supportive accountability mechanisms, enabling schools to identify the best solution to cater for specific needs of the school community, distributed leadership, school evaluation processes allowing improvement and the involvement of a wide range of local stakeholders, including parents/carers. The research shows that parts and pieces of the whole school approach are implemented across countries, but further attention and support are needed, amongst others **supportive policy frameworks.**

The **conclusions** of the research presented in this report are at the same time **recommendations**. These recommendations include the practices presented by respondents to handle the challenges identified. The practices are a mixture of 'emerging', 'promising' and 'good' practices. They provide teachers, educators and the educational institutions community with examples of tools and methods to better deal with citizenship related issues both in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities.

FINDINGS

Citizenship education aims at fostering the harmonious co-existence and the mutually beneficial development of individuals and the communities they are part of. It supports students in becoming informed, active and responsible citizens who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and for their communities (based on EURYDICE study of 2017 on Citizenship Education at School in Europe). Inclusive education is based on the understanding that education is a human right and that "*every learner matters and matters equally*" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 12)[1]. Inclusive education and citizenship education are inextricably connected through their concerns for human rights and social justice. Clearly, schools have a key role to play in civic participation, amongst others by creating a democratic school culture. A democratic school culture includes meaningful participation of teachers and learners in school decision-making processes and in school evaluation and improvement processes.

To effectively foster inclusive education, including citizenship education and fostering universal values, the following points need to be carefully examined:

- **Supporting policy frameworks** should exist, delineating the responsibilities of schools leadership and staff on key issues such as digital citizenship and safety, who is in charge of communicating with parents/carers and other stakeholders to ensure trust and respect.

Inclusion and equity are viewed as the core principles that guide educational policies and plans. Some countries developed top-level **strategies or frameworks on citizenship education** (e.g. the National Strategy for Citizenship Education, launched in 2017 in Portugal and the Citizenship Education Decrees in the French Speaking Community in Belgium, as of September 2016 for primary education and as of September 2017 for secondary education) or action plans (e.g. inter-institutional action plan for civic and national education in Lithuania (2016-2020), the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland-UK, since 2010 and action plans in Norway against antisemitism (2016-2020), against hate speech (since 2016) and against radicalisation and extremism (since 2014)). These policy frameworks need to be accompanied by adequate financial resources to allow meaningful implementation.

- These **supportive policy frameworks need to be accompanied by adequate resources** (time, staff, financial, technical) in order to be effective and need to encompass all levels. Support is necessary from education employers to school leaders, teachers and other education personnel. **Full commitment of all stakeholders**, including education employers, school leaders, and teachers, in taking up responsibilities is necessary in order to face the challenges identified.

- In reply to the demand for cooperation between various stakeholders and shared governance, **supportive policy frameworks for democratic citizenship and inclusion in education** need to be developed on the basis of **a meaningful and effective social dialogue and collective bargaining at European, national and local level**. In this context, the involvement of teachers, academics and other education personnel, in all education-related issues at policy and practice level seems to be crucial.

- To **narrow down implementation gaps**, evidence-based policy making is suggested, with **robust assessment systems** in the areas of citizenship and inclusive education recommended as a possible strategy. Suitable assessment systems would identify the most effective practices to address the complex issue of implementation. These assessment systems would need to encompass different levels, i.e. from the student to the school level. The analysis shows that student assessment in the domain of citizenship education is not systematically organised by the responsible authority across the countries covered. Where official guidelines on assessment in the classroom applying to citizenship education exist, these are in most cases a general framework for the whole assessment process, irrespective of the subject. Yet, in some countries, assessment guidelines specific to citizenship education are provided.

- **Support to teachers** in the delivery of citizenship education, to handle diversity, controversial and sensitive issues in the classroom as well as digital citizenship should be available. **Based on the survey, it is clear that all respondents value training and professional development and view support to teachers and other education personnel as crucial for them to be able to perform in a diverse educational setting**.

Moreover, establishing meaningful communication between teachers and students is essential to the teaching and learning process. However, this is often a challenge in a classroom with students from different geographical and cultural backgrounds. In various countries, educational authorities developed or supported **online guidance to address citizenship education in schools.** This ranges from an education portal gathering

all information and news about education, including citizenship education (e.g. Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Latvia, Turkey), to dedicated web portals on citizenship education (e.g. Estonia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands).

Furthermore, respondents explain that the **material, outputs and results of initiatives that could support teachers are not always publicly available or shared** (lack of communication and dissemination).

Supporting teachers in dealing with difficult situations in the classroom through professional training is assessed as crucial (95% of the respondents agree). To be effective, it needs to be combined with (1) an appropriate policy framework stipulating responsibility of senior management and staff on key issues like behaviour, discipline, communication with parents/carers and external organisations and (2) opportunities for teachers to express their concerns, receive support from peers, and exchange on good practices. **Initial and continuous professional development of teachers** to better deal with controversial and sensitive issues, to create a positive and safe climate in and beyond the classroom, to raise awareness about diversity and to teach critical thinking are key, but still not sufficiently part of teacher training.

A 'call for support to teachers and school leaders' runs through the research as a common thread and revolves around the '**how to'** question, e.g. how to teach critical thinking, how to create a safe learning environment in the classroom, etc. Education employers play a key role in enhancing the professional profile of teachers, trainers and school leaders by supporting their participation in continuous professional development and providing a wide offer of high quality, relevant and free of charge opportunities of initial and continous professional development.

- **A stronger involvement and networking of teachers and other education personnel, school leaders, parents and learners within the school life** ('whole-school approach') supporting more democratic learning environments to allow learners to experience democracy and mutual respect ('democratic school culture') is considered by respondents as an effective approach in promoting inclusive education. At the same time, the majority of the respondents (77%) feel that training/counselling to improve cooperation between schools and parents/carers from various (cultural) backgrounds would be useful. Furthermore, working closely with parents/carers on issues relating to individual students' well-being is considered an effective strategy to support the more vulnerable students (75% of respondents). Some respondents report that the process of engaging parents/carers and the community is only starting, but that it is a crucial development.

  While academics widely agree that **implementation of citizenship education is likely to be more successful if a whole school approach is embraced**, there is a need for additional research to fully evidence the positive outcomes (Van Driel et al., 2016)[2].

- A **democratic school culture** values diversity, allows space for debate on controversial issues and relies on the **active participation of students and teachers.** Some examples were reported in the survey of the meaningful participation of students and teachers in school-related processes (e.g. the Student Voice Erasmus+ project[3], the Democratic Schools[4] in the Netherlands). In many countries, children's participation is instituted within schools through formal mechanisms, such as school councils, communities and

cooperatives (ECORYS, 2015)[5].

Training to empower teachers to manage differences and diversity in classrooms is considered by respondents to the CONVINCE survey as an effective way to value diversity. Establishing clear policies and programmes to address and prevent discrimination and exclusion, and **student-centred and participatory learning approaches** are also pointed out as effective. To prepare discussions on controversial issues in the classroom, anticipating challenges and opportunities for discussions (e.g. by reviewing information and research material beforehand), or talking to colleagues and to members of the local community about how to approach the specific subject are considered the most suitable approaches, according to the respondents.

Various teaching styles are identified to guide discussions on controversial issues. Mainly the '**balanced approach'** whereby the teacher presents students with a wide range of alternative views on an issue (86% of the respondents), and an approach where the teacher him/herself decides the method depending on the educational context are considered most effective (67% of the respondents). Since controversial issues are highly contextual, there is no guarantee that a strategy which works in one setting will necessarily work in another. Respondents emphasise the importance of the educational setting and circumstances in which the discussion takes place to determine the approach.

- **School leaders** play a key role in creating an enabling learning environment. Various studies provide sound evidence that improving school leadership policy and practice can improve school outcomes (amongst others OECD, 2008[6]). Committed leadership is a key element of the whole school approach, and a challenge at the same time. Therefore, the school leadership should be supported with adequate resources, including professional development. Distributive leadership needs to be accompanied by the development of leadership capacity of the school staff.

- **Curriculum content and pedagogical approaches**: in a genuinely supportive learning environment, every student feels valued, included, and empowered. Building consistency in teaching democratic citizenship requires a concrete focus on setting appropriate objectives for learning, developing differentiated and inclusive materials and adopting a wider range of pedagogical approaches, which need to be innovative but at the same time relevant to all pupils while responding effectively to their individualised needs. To build consistency in teaching citizenship education, respondents indicate that team teaching (45%), and joint planning (45%) as well as peer observation (43%) and 'stage partners' (40% of the respondents) are used. The latter is a set up where a new teacher is supported by a more experienced colleague.

- Knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become an active citizen are not only taught in the classroom and therefore, relevant policy frameworks should link curricular and **extra-curricular activities**. The most popular extra-curricular activities are excursions or cultural trips, art or sport related activities and student councils. A specific challenge formulated is the organisation of these extra-curricular activities, which often depends on the personal engagement of school leaders and teachers. When workloads of teachers are already an issue (see e.g. IBF (2013))[7], extra-curricular activities add to this workload. Yet, extra-curricular activities have benefits for the socio-emotional development of children as well as for their school achievements (Metsäpelto and Pulkkinen, 2015)[8] although groups of

students are not all equal in their access to extra-curricular activities, participation can in turn contribute to reinforcing social inequalities in school achievement (Coulangeon, 2018)[9].

- **Developing critical thinking and understanding** are viewed as essential for children and young people to thrive in a digital world and are considered to be key in relation to citizenship education and digital citizenship. Critical thinking and understanding involve accessing, analysing and synthesizing information, and can be taught, practised and mastered (P21, 2007[10]; Redecker et al., 2011[11]). Critical thinking also draws on other skills such as communication, media literacy and the ability to examine, analyse, interpret and evaluate evidence. Studies suggest that many secondary and university students lack the necessary competencies to navigate and select relevant sources from the overabundance of available information (Windham, cited in McLoughlin and Lee, 2008[12]). Essential digital literacy and critical thinking skills are required to locate quality sources and assess them for objectivity, reliability and currency (Katz and Macklin, cited in McLoughlin and Lee, 2008) (Scott, 2015)[13]. Yet, critical thinking does not feature very prominently in educational curricula across educational levels in schools in Europe (EURYDICE, 2017, p51)[14].

- **Digital citizenship**: supporting children and young people to participate safely, effectively, critically and responsibly in a world with social media and digital technologies has emerged as a priority for educators all over the world. The notion of digital citizenship currently encompasses a range of competences that harness the benefits and opportunities the online world affords while building resilience to potential harms. The Digital Citizenship Education Project[15] (Council of Europe) is only one initiative aiming at empowering children through the acquisition of competences for learning and active participation in a digital society. **E-safety** or the safe and responsible use of technologies, is viewed as a major challenge by respondents of the survey. "*Children are learning to navigate the world*"[16] is a phrase explaining the digital challenge and summarises the vulnerability of children: they have easy access to various internet sources and they are themselves easy accessible through internet. In their enthusiasm and trusting nature, they might lack caution and the ability to discern when they may be at risk. Different initiatives have been taken at European and international levels to approach digital citizenship and e-safety, e.g. the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children, launched by the European Commission in 2012, providing a set of complementary measures (funding, coordination) such as the Safer Internet Centers[17] to raise awareness and foster digital literacy among minors, parents/carers and teachers, and the Safer Internet Days[18]. The recently published Digital citizenship education handbook - Being a Child in the Age of Technology[19] (Council of Europe, 2019) offers information, tools and good practices to support the development of competences and critical understanding necessary to confront the challenges posed by the digital technologies and Internet. Also, the respondents of the survey point to various initiatives that have been developed in different countries/regions.

The various options proposed to the respondents as possible approaches for fostering the ability to reflect and think critically to confront (mis)information on the Internet are considered very effective/effective by a majority of respondents, i.e. discussions in the classroom on the use of ICT, sharing the process of problem solving by presenting and reacting to misinformation found in the (social) media as well as developing classes using

ICT and social media in which students can ask and answer real life questions in an open discussion.

Support for teachers is needed in relation to the use of ICT. Based on the OECD TALIS results of 2013, the second and third most important professional development needs teachers report are related to teaching with information and communication technology (ICT) skills (19% of teachers) and to using new technologies in the workplace (18% of teachers), two items closely related to each other[20]. This challenge is also about an inadequate initial teacher training on the use of ICT in teaching and on addressing ICT risks.

- **Extremism and the underlying forces of radicalisation** are among the most pervasive challenges of our time. Young people in particular are vulnerable to the messages of extremist organisations. One way of conceptualizing the factors that may lead to extremism is the idea of 'push' and 'pull' influences: push factors may include processes like inequality, discrimination, marginalization, while pull factors by contrast might nurture the appeal of extremism, e.g. extremist groups may provide services or employment; groups may attract new members with a promise of hope and a sense of purpose and belonging (UNESCO, 2017)[21].

  Respondents to the survey recommend a mixture of curricular and extra-curricular activities to prevent radicalisation and extremism amongst students, e.g. joint work of student from diverse backgrounds in the classroom, promotion of local youth, sport or cultural organisations, visiting exhibitions and discuss relevant societal issues, as well as inviting recognised figures from different communities to talk about their work in the classroom.

The CONVINCE research shows that initiatives exist and can help teachers, school leaders and the educational community as a whole to better deal with citizenship related issues, human rights and fundamental values both in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. These initiatives provide tools and methods which vary from 'projects' (emerging and promising practices) to legal frameworks for inclusive education and promoting citizenship.

Complementary research would be valuable to further analyse the good examples and practices in their local context and to further analysis transfer potential of the most promising good examples/practices.

Endnotes

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16 http://www.besafe-online.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Internet-Safety-V-Imp.pdf

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18 https://www.saferinternetday.org/

19 https://rm.coe.int/168093586f

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