

Draft common guidelines for Education for Democratic Citizenship¹

The draft common guidelines identify the core elements of education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and provide a comprehensive and integrated approach for policy and practice in this area.

Definition and objectives

Education for Democratic Citizenship:

- is based on the fundamental principles of human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law;
- refers in particular to rights and responsibilities, empowerment, participation and belonging, and respect for diversity;
- includes all age groups and sectors of society;
- aims to prepare young people and adults for active participation in democratic society, thus strengthening democratic culture;
- is instrumental in the fight against violence, xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and intolerance;
- contributes to social cohesion, social justice and the common good;
- strengthens civil society by helping to make its citizens informed and knowledgeable and endowing them with democratic skills;
- should be differentiated according to national, social, cultural, historical contexts.

Democratic citizenship

Education for democratic citizenship is based on a multifaceted and process-focused approach to citizenship which includes:

- a political dimension - participation in the decision-making process and exercise of political power;
- a legal dimension - being aware of and exercising citizens' rights and responsibilities;
- a cultural dimension - respect for all peoples, fundamental democratic values, both a shared and divergent history and heritage, and contributing to peaceful intercultural relations;
- a social and economic dimension - in particular, the fight against poverty and exclusion, considering new forms of work and community development, and how the economy can foster a democratic society;
- a European dimension - being aware of the unity and diversity of European culture, and learning to live in a European context;
- a global dimension - recognising and promoting global interdependence and solidarity.

Skills and competencies for democratic citizenship

Democratic citizenship skills and competencies:

- are part of social and life skills;
- give equal importance to knowledge and values, and attitudes and the capacity for action and participation in a democratic society;

¹ Adopted as an appendix to the Resolution on Results and conclusions of the completed projects in the 1997-2000 medium-term programme, at the 20th Session of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe, Cracow, Poland, 15-17 October 2000

- imply that citizens should learn to be free, autonomous and creative, to think critically, be aware of their rights and responsibilities, and be able to participate in teamwork, peaceful dialogue and negotiation;
- are constituent elements of educational strategies for democratic citizenship;
- need to be learned, maintained and renewed constantly, at all age levels.

Learning approaches for democratic citizenship

Education for democratic citizenship:

- is a lifelong learning process;
- is social learning, that is, learning for, in and about society, and learning to live together;
- implies the democratisation of learning by focusing on the learner and her or his autonomy and responsibility in the learning process, hence implying the reciprocity of teaching and learning;
- is achieved through multiple, interconnected, transversal learning approaches, for example through civic education, human rights education, intercultural education, education for peace and global understanding and media education;
- is based on experience and practice;
- requires an open curriculum which includes participative and interactive approaches based upon learning through experience, action and co-operation;
- takes place in a broad range of formal and non-formal education settings, which increasingly need to converge, such as the family, schools and universities, adult education, the workplace, enterprise, NGOs, local communities, the media, cultural and leisure initiatives;
- is reinforced by continual evaluation, in particular learners' self-assessment.

The democratic learning environment

Education for democratic citizenship:

- promotes and is promoted by a democratic learning environment in schools and universities and a whole-school approach, in terms of school ethos, learning and teaching methods and the participation of pupils, students, educational staff and parents in decision making and, as far as possible, in determining the formal and informal curriculum;
- requires that pupils and students be recognised as subjects of rights on the one hand, and as holders of rights on the other;
- involves complementary educational actors, such as teachers, parents, NGOs, local authorities, social partners, as well as leaders from the business community;
- is enhanced and sustained by a creative and supportive interaction between educational institutions and the community, implying co-operation between formal and non-formal learning
- requires the necessary legal and financial provisions for autonomous development at all levels.

Sites of citizenship

Sites of citizenship:

- are new or innovative forms of management of democratic life;
- are initiatives rooted in civil society, in schools, communities, youth and cultural

centres, NGOs;

- practice participative and representative democracy at local level, where citizens speak up, express their needs and interests and respond to different aspects of social life, such as exclusion and discrimination, as well as foster communication between different ethnic groups in a multicultural setting;
- provide learning opportunities, in formal and non-formal learning environments, in the context of lifelong learning;
- constitute a network for action research, linking theory and practice, training, exchange and twinning arrangements to strengthen mutual support;
- are enhanced by effective partnerships between EDC actors and support institutions.

Educational policies

Policies to strengthen education for democratic citizenship should:

- focus on both formal and non-formal education and enhance synergies and mutual support;
- consider the values and principles of education for democratic citizenship as an essential goal of the entire curriculum and as criteria for quality assurance of education systems;
- adopt a holistic approach to skills and competencies and apply learner-centred and participative methods to all areas related to school, teacher training, adult education curricula, and evaluation and assessment;
- include education for democratic citizenship as part of social learning in vocational education and training;
- encourage the recognition of skills, qualifications and training in education for democratic citizenship, which have been acquired in both formal and non-formal contexts;
- support the production of learning resources by authors from different sectors of society, which focus on learning processes and are accompanied by training in their use;
- draw-up legislation for education for democratic citizenship.

Support systems for education for democratic citizenship

Education for democratic citizenship should be further promoted by:

- establishing partnerships among the actors in education for democratic citizenship;
- placing value on democratic youth cultures and lifestyles and on young people's self expression and aspiration to be heard, and making this a basis for education for democratic citizenship;
- carrying out participatory basic and applied research and development in education for democratic citizenship, thus contributing to the monitoring of EDC initiatives and innovations and to EDC training and curriculum development;
- promoting information and communication technologies in education, paying particular attention to the selection and critical assessment of information, and to supporting access to and initiatives in ICT related to EDC;
- developing the awareness and the practice of corporate social responsibility;
- creating conditions in which business and the social partners may support education for democratic citizenship.