

Declaration

2020 –
A watershed moment for
citizenship education in Europe

Executive Summary

Key recommendations

2020 is a **watershed moment** for Citizenship Education in Europe. The pandemic has forced our societies to ask questions about the future of learning, of work and of civic participation. It has worsened pre existing inequalities and injustices, and highlighted the potential fragilities and unsustainable aspects of our way of life. At the same time, 2020 has reminded us of the importance of mutual care and solidarity, between individuals, between countries and between continents, and of transnational thinking and action.

- To reinforce a vibrant and resilient democracy in a complex and interconnected world there is an **urgent need for a new prioritisation of high quality citizenship education for all in Europe, with local, national and transnational dimensions.**
- The **European Union** should make citizenship education a priority of the **Next Generation EU** policy agenda, the **Green Deal**, the multiannual financial framework and a core part of the **European Education Area**. The programs and funding of the Union should prioritise citizenship education for all ages through lifelong learning, and for everyone in Europe.
- The **governments of Europe should** mainstream citizenship education for all learners, and ensure all teachers are trained to create democratic learning environments which provide learners with opportunities for debating controversial topics and becoming active citizens, both online and offline. This would ensure that all residents benefit from quality citizenship education. The **governments of Europe** should actively promote the **implementation of the Council of Europe Charter for Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and the Reference Framework Competences for Democratic Culture**, supporting quality citizenship education in the entire field of education.
- **Cities and regions** should look to provide **physical public spaces** for informal citizenship education and active citizenship to take place.
- **Educational practitioners** should be prepared to challenge conditions and practices which prevent a democratic learning environment, and engage with local communities to ensure citizenship education is relevant and provides opportunities for activity and volunteering.
- A **rich diversity of civil society organisations** across Europe is required for non-formal citizenship education to be possible. Civil society organisations require an enabling environment and financial support as essential actors for a democratic and free continent.

Citizenship education ought to be at the top of political priorities, not only in order to deal better with a risky world, but fundamentally because the citizenship education a society delivers to itself is an image of the world and society it wants to create.

Declaration

2020 –
**A watershed moment for
citizenship education in Europe**

Full text

Citizenship education ought to be at the top of political priorities

The Covid-19 pandemic has led many people across the world to ask searching questions about their own lives, their responsibilities to others, and about what is most valuable. It has temporarily shut down places of learning, or work and of civic participation, and may permanently change the way these institutions function in the future. It has deeply worsened many inequalities and injustices already present. As our societies go through these changes, they rely on the democratic commitment and civic competences of citizens to understand, learn, deal with uncertainty and adapt behaviours to protect each other. For all these reasons, the pandemic ought to mark a watershed moment for citizenship education in Europe understood in its broadest sense: as the fostering of the capacities and dispositions of the population to participate in democracy.

Citizenship education ought to be at the top of political priorities, not only in order to deal better with a risky world, but fundamentally because the citizenship education a society delivers to itself is an image of the world and society it wants to create.

The re-launch of the European Union cannot only be economic, it must also be democratic

Despite over a decade of political declarations about the importance of citizenship education, there are significant policy and implementation gaps across the continent. These gaps include the scope of citizenship education, the quality of its delivery across the territory, the practical experience of democracy that it offers, and the opportunities for lifelong learning across all ages and backgrounds. In each of these areas Europe has simply not made enough progress. If citizenship education

is not urgently prioritised now, in the context of an historic recession, a changing geopolitical situation and environmental crisis, there is the danger that the capacity of many European citizens to participate in democracy is seriously weakened. Such a situation would impair the overall political capacity of our societies. **While citizenship education certainly cannot solve all of society's injustices and challenges, none of these problems can be dealt with in a sustainable way without citizenship education.**

For the European Union, the pandemic has potentially led to a historic shift: the July 2020 European Council agreement to create a recovery fund and mutualised borrowing further advances a common system of European economic governance. In order for these changes to be successful, common values must be fostered, anti-corruption and fundamental rights guaranteed, and **European democracy reinforced. European citizenship education is a necessary accompaniment of greater economic integration. The re-launch of the European Union cannot only be economic, it must also be democratic.** Nearly 30 years after the Maastricht treaty which created the European Union, the euro and European citizenship, European citizenship education is a necessary component of the success for the future of Europe.

Capacities and competencies for diverse and global societies

More generally, at every level of governance going into the third decade of the millennium, people and democracies are required to work ever more closely together to address challenges which cross borders, learning from one another, supporting each other and caring for a common planet. **In diverse societies, the capacities required to participate in democracy inside each country mirror those required to understand and participate in regional and global societies. Transnational thinking and action are crucial citizenship competences.**

Despite much innovation by practitioners, citizenship education in Europe in general has not kept pace with the speed of change of our global societies: **now it is urgent for countries inside and outside the EU to empower their citizens to secure and advance democracy through investing in citizenship education.** Europe has a **global responsibility** and should show leadership and international solidarity in promoting the importance of democratic citizenship education across borders.

Over a decade of good intentions for mainstreaming citizenship education

From the founding of the contemporary European political community after the Second World War, and even more explicitly following the end of the cold war after 1989/91, the intrinsic necessity of education for democratic citizenship has been acknowledged by academics, teachers and political decision-makers alike. It is implicitly recognised at a global level in the UN convention on the rights of the child from 1989 (Article 29 1d), and more recently global citizenship education is a crucial component of the UN sustainable development goals.¹

The **Council of Europe** has often led on promoting the importance of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education for substantive and not merely formal democracy most recently through the publication of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture², in 2018. The **European Union** and its member states have been participants and collaborators in this work. The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE)³ sets a landmark in the recognition of the role education and training, both formal and non-formal, play in this. The Charter defines ‘Education for Democratic Citizenship’ in the following way, which can be taken as consensual amongst all European countries, and recommends that the governments provide every person in their territory the opportunity of such education:

“Education for democratic citizenship” means education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law.

Inside the European Union, the last five years have seen a multiplication of political declarations and recommendations asserting the importance of citizenship education. The ‘Paris Declaration’ of the European education ministers, adopted in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Denmark and France in May 2015⁴, the *European Parliament resolution* of the 13th December 2016, the Commission Communication of the 17th November 2017, the *European Council conclusions* of the 14th December 2017 and the *Council of the European Union recommendations* of the 22nd May 2018⁵ all assert the importance of education to secure the values and fundamental rights of the European Union, and assert the relevance of European, national, regional and local levels of government in achieving this. The Council of the European Union has established active citizenship as a pillar of the *European Education Area*⁶ to be achieved in 2025, and defined citizenship as an EU key competence for lifelong learning in the following way :

Citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.⁷

European Citizenship Education is a public good

Despite these many good intentions, a decade after the adoption of the Council of Europe Charter on EDC/HRE, the most recent studies and surveys of the Council of Europe, European Commission, IEA and universities all reveal significant implementation gaps when it comes to citizenship education in all European countries.⁸

Public opinion is also well aware of this lack of many of the ingredients of quality citizenship education: Eurobarometer surveys consistently show that people do not feel well informed about the EU, do not feel they have a good understanding of how it works, think that schools should teach more about the rights and responsibilities of European citizens, and would be more likely to vote if they were involved more in EU decision-making.

Increasing the information available about the European Union and other forms of communication campaigns are radically insufficient responses to this deficit, which also exists outside of the EU: European and global citizenship requires people of all ages to have the capacities and dispositions to be active citizens and understand the multiple levels of governance that impact their lives. This means they must not only be well-informed but able to understand and critique the information they receive, and to act with others to shape the present and future of the democratic community at different levels.

Almost thirty years after the introduction of European Citizenship, **European citizenship education at all ages and for all parts of the population must now become a public good as the precondition for creating a vibrant and resilient democratic Europe. Doing so would set a new global standard for citizenship education.**

Time to take action

Recommendations to prioritise and reinforce European citizenship education

Now is the time for every organisation and institution involved in education to make a priority of citizenship education.

Governments have a particular responsibility to establish the conditions and resources with which good quality citizenship education is possible for everyone.

The **European Commission** should make citizenship education a priority of the **Next Generation EU** policy agenda, the **EU's multiannual financial framework**, the **Green Deal** and the **EU Digital Strategy**. The current Commission President von der Leyen has committed herself in her political priorities to 'empower people through education and skills' and bring 'a new push for European democracy', as well as to following up on the recommendations of the Council of the European Union, the Parliament and the Paris declaration.

The **European Commission** should

- **promote the full implementation and use of the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture as standards for the development and evaluation of educational curricula by national authorities.**
- **develop pilot projects and educational materials specifically on the European dimension of citizenship education** as part of the agenda to achieve the European Education Area by 2025. This regards not only the history of the European Union and its values, but also its contemporary political divisions and dynamics, its contested aspects, and the dispositions and capacities of citizens and residents to participate in European democracy and influence its agenda, decisions and implementation.

- establish within the scope of the developing European Education Area an EU centre of excellence on citizenship education. This should not be a new bureaucratic institution, but a hub and network for sharing best practices in citizenship education and for the development of the European dimension of citizenship education. Such a centre might involve universities, civil society organisations and local and national civic education organisations. It could start its work with initiatives to develop citizenship education in early education and for students in vocational training.
- prioritise the development of the **active citizenship competence** as part of the Commission's work on **Lifelong Learning**
- **evaluate the quality and extent of European citizenship education as part of the triennial European citizenship report**, acknowledging that European citizenship without adequate European citizenship education is incomplete.
- use the **Conference on the Future of Europe** as an exercise in citizenship education, empowering practitioners to involve citizens in a meaningful way in the Conference as a step towards a new approach to European democracy, and resulting in recommendations for developing European citizenship education following the Conference.
- **support civil society organisations and informal groups** of citizens at local, regional, national and transnational scales to promote citizenship education throughout Europe, reinforcing the many good and innovative initiatives already happening, using the funding streams at its disposal to ensure the sustainability of a diverse, rich and enabling civil society environment which is a precondition for non-formal citizenship education.
- promote the **development of youth work, informal and nonformal education** which addresses political issues, economic, social and global justice issues, both amongst youth organisations, youth movements and other civil society organisations, trade unions and political parties
- ensure that the **Erasmus+ program promotes citizenship education in its widest sense** for all ages and not only for those with further education qualifications

The **European Parliament** has an important role in European citizenship education as the host of political debate and deliberation amongst the representatives of the citizens, and as the funder and regulator of European Political Parties, which have a role in forming European political awareness as expressed in the treaties.

The European Parliament

- should ensure that the European Political Parties themselves respect the fundamental values and rights of the European Union, including respect for the rule of law, and that their communications and public activities promote a critical and informed public debate around European political issues.
- furthermore the Parliament should monitor and promote the inclusion of global and European citizenship education competencies across EU policy.

European national governments have the main responsibility for education in their countries.

They should

- ensure the **implementation of Council of Europe Charter on EDC/HR and of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture**, notably ensuring that all residents, including those recently arrived in the country, benefit from quality citizenship education
- **mainstream European citizenship education** for all learners, including those recently arrived, notably during compulsory education and starting at the earliest ages
- develop curricula which take up the **role of citizenship education in addressing global risks**, including climate change and ecological risk, but also health risks, and risks to peace and security, following up on commitment to Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals
- integrate the dimension of **digital citizenship** into school curricula, fostering the skills, knowledge and awareness of rights and responsibilities necessary to act as a digital citizen, as well as ensuring equal access for all learners to the technology necessary to participate
- act as the guarantor of a **pluralistic, free and critical education**, comprising the dimensions of citizenship education, human rights education, intercultural education, gender diversity, antiracism and media literacy, whilst protecting societies against those who agitate against universal human rights and democracy.
- promote a **holistic understanding of citizenship education** as it relates to all other aspects of education, formal and informal, including not only social sciences but mathematics and sciences
- encourage and **provide opportunities for all teachers** to develop a democratic professional ethos and the competencies needed to create democratic learning environments that empower students to become owners of their own learning, agents in their own lives and the school community and active democratic citizens
- ensure **pre-service teacher education for all teachers** encompasses an element of citizenship education, familiarising student teachers with, among others inclusive pedagogy, cooperative teaching methodologies and principles of active student participation, and ensure **in-service opportunities** to all teachers to improve these skills
- develop robust **criteria for monitoring and evaluation** of their programs for citizenship education
- work together to **learn from best practices of other countries** and develop common approaches

Cities, regions and local authorities across Europe are closest to the citizens and residents. They can notably work to provide **public spaces** for civic education to take place. These can include public squares and spaces, houses of democracy for civil society and associations, and repurposing disused buildings for civic uses. Local government should empower and support a rich associative, cultural, sporting, political and civic life for residents to give opportunities to exercise citizenship in multiple ways.

Educational practitioners and civil society have essential roles in delivering citizenship education.

- **School leaders and educational practitioners** should foster the teaching and learning contexts in which students' opposing views on various issues are welcomed, dialogue and authentic participation are encouraged. They should engage with local communities in order to make issues relevant for students of different ages, and provide opportunities for active citizenship also outside of school. They should especially foster the development of critical thinking closely connected to citizenship competence.
- **School leaders** should encourage the teacher staff to engage collaborative forms of professional development related to citizenship education, through approaches such as interdisciplinary projects, peer evaluation, action research and projects, preparing them to engage in meaningful citizenship conversations with their students.
- **Educational practitioners** should be prepared to identify, challenge and change conditions and practices in their educational environment that hinder the development of a democratic whole school ethos, and be prepared to experiment with methodologies related to promoting democratic culture on a daily basis.
- **Civil society organisations** should be aware that citizenship education is an implicit aspect of all their activities even when it is not the main focus, they should consciously develop this dimension of their work and reflect on possibilities for working in partnership internationally.

Conclusion

Citizenship education is a crucial investment a whole society makes in its future, providing everyone with the capacities to equally participate in shaping a better, more sustainable and more just world.

As such everyone in society has an important role to play, in addition to those whose primary profession is education: whether as workers and managers, as parents and friends, as consumers and as producers, as journalists and as online citizens, or in other ways, in each of our various roles we should reflect on the civic values, capacities and dispositions we are encouraging amongst others through our actions and words.

Ensuring democratic and equal citizenship is a deep and longstanding commitment of our societies, and in our changing and challenging times we have the strongest collective interest in maximizing the opportunities, resources and quality of citizenship education available to all.

26th October 2020

Supported by

NECE Partners

Ondrej Horak, *director, Civic Education Centre, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague*

Alicja Pacewicz, *Senior Advisor, Center for Citizenship Education, Warsaw*

Nico Meisch, *President, Foundation Zentrum fir politesch Bildung, Luxembourg*

NECE Advisory Board

Niccolò Milanese, *European Alternatives, Paris*

Boris Jokic, *The Institute for Social Research (IDIZ), Zagreb*

Michalis Kakos, *Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University*

Claudia Lenz, *Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Oslo*

Jan-Werner Müller, *Princeton University; Fellow Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin*

Verena Ringler, *European Commons, Innsbruck*

Sarah de Lange, *University of Amsterdam*

Caroline Hornstein-Tomic, *Foundation Wissen am Werk, Znanje na djelu, Zagreb*

Louisa Slavkova, *political scientist, Bulgaria*

Karolina Wigura, *Kultura Liberalna, Warsaw*

Nelly Corbel, *Global Civic Consulting, Paris*

Markus Lux, *Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart*

Supporting networks, think tanks and organizations

NACE (*see statement*)

EENCE (*see statement*)

CENESA (*see statement*)

DARE (*Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe*)

Lifelong Learning Platform – European Civil Society for Education

Das Progressive Zentrum

ECIT FOUNDATION (*European Citizens' Rights, Involvement and Trust*)

European Alternatives

VALUES UNITE

Les Têtes de l'Art (*Marseille*)

ACJM (*L'Atelier des Jeunes Citoyens et Citoyennes de la Méditerranée*) (*Marseille*)

European Solidarity Center, *Gdansk*

School with Class Foundation, *Warsaw*

Alliance4Europe, *Warsaw*

The Bronislaw Geremek Foundation, *Warsaw*

Information Society Development Foundation, *Warsaw*

Polish Robert Schuman Foundation, *Warsaw*

Supporting Citizens and experts

Alberto Alemanno, *HEC Paris Business School*

Hermann Josef Abs, *University Duisburg-Essen*

Monika Oberle, *University Göttingen*

Yasmine Ouirhane, *Young European Citizen of the year 2019*

Kalypso Nikolaidis, *Oxford University*

Ulrike Guerot, *Founder of the European Democracy Lab, Danube University Krems*

Tatjana Meijvogel-Volk, *ProDemos – House for Democracy and the Rule of Law, The Hague*

Andrea Szukala, *University of Münster*



Statement from the Civic Education Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (CENESA) on the NECE declaration on citizenship education

19th October 2020

CENESA was founded in November 2017 during the Entebbe Civic Education (CE) Forum after a growing recognition that consistent connectivity between Eastern and Southern Africa was lacking and yet CE practitioners were addressing the same challenges. There was thus a need for a platform that enables civic education and youth empowerment organizations across the sub-continent connect, collaborate and cooperate with each other.

CENESA's **Vision** is a region with a well-informed, empowered, active and responsible citizenry based on the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and good governance.

Through its **Mission**, CENESA works towards providing a regional civic education platform for mutual support, knowledge sharing, capacity building, advocacy and regional cooperation to individuals, Civil Society, private sector, state and other stakeholders.

As a partner of the Networking European Citizenship Education (NECE), the Civic Education Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (CENESA) would like to congratulate her sister NECE for releasing this timely Declaration titled: *2020: A watershed moment for citizenship education in Europe*. So timely and bold is the Declaration for it is released at a time when the world is grappling with finding solutions in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Declaration is a strong call to Action! It positions Citizenship Education at the centre as one of those solutions! NECE reiterates that, **'Citizenship education ought to be at the top of political priorities, not only in order to deal better with a risky world, but fundamentally because the citizenship education a society delivers to itself is an image of the world and society it wants to create.'**

In the declaration, NECE makes this call to action a collective responsibility urging stakeholders to move from theory to practice while bridging the gaps between policy and implementation. The Declaration calls on the European Union, the Governments of Europe, Educational practitioners and civic society organisations alike to embrace citizenship education in its broad sense in order to provide solutions to emerging challenges in Europe.

As a sister organisation of NECE, we are proud of NECE for this brilliant statement. Congratulations our friends! Thank you also for letting us into this space to make our voices heard!

In Africa like in the rest of the world, African political leaders have had their hands full: rising COVID 19 infections, fragile health systems, increasing food insecurity and in some areas growing social unrest. And as government revenues dry up amid

continent's sharpest economic contraction in decades, the resources available to address these challenges are dwindling. Recent analysis indicates that some African Governments are cutting education budgets in response to the pandemic.

Less obvious to many all over the world, is the fact that the pandemic (and the responses to it) have also constituted serious harm to the enjoyment of the rights to development and democracy, and to freedom from discrimination and gender-based violence. Even more troubling is the fact that these dangers and impacts have tended to be exacerbated in the Global South, and in relation to the poor and the racially marginalized everywhere.

This pandemic has also highlighted the intensity in our time of our interconnectedness as human beings and societies, including the sheer depth of our mutual vulnerability, one to the other whether in Africa or Europe or the Americas or in Asia.

In due regard, CENESA emphasises the absolute necessity of expressing and ramping up the practice of **international solidarity and cooperation** among State and non-state actors alike towards civic education if the enjoyment of human rights across the world is to be optimized in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important that States and non-state actors in Europe are encouraged to begin to take **international solidarity** much more seriously in the struggle to optimally realize all human rights around the world through supporting citizenship education in Africa particularly with the multitude of infrastructural needs to deliver citizenship education.

International Solidarity within this context consists of **preventive solidarity**- collective actions to ensure the fulfillment of human rights by supporting civic education during COVID-19, **reactive solidarity** – collective actions to respond to diverse impacts of the pandemic through civic education and **international cooperation**- By providing international assistance to countries in less privileged positions to support civic education given the de-prioritisation of education in Africa.

Lastly, within this framework, CENESA urges states across Europe to adopt the *'draft UN Declaration on Human Rights and International Solidarity.'*

If the world after this pandemic is to begin to look anything close to the vision of a life with dignity embodied in the progressive human rights texts that have been proposed and agreed for decades now, the world must be called to remain outward looking, lifting up the most vulnerable of our time.

Civic Education Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (CENESA)
Email: cenesa2017@gmail.com

Hosted by
Foundation For Human Rights Initiative (FHRI)
P.O. Box 11027 Kampala Uganda
Plot 1853 Block 15 Lulume Road, Nsambya
Tel: 256-414-510263/510498/510276/393-266025
Email: fhri@dmil.ug
Web: www.fhri.or.ug



NACE wholeheartedly supports the NECE declaration

21th October 2020

NACE (Network of Arab Civic Education) was established in 2016 after four years of preparatory work. The establishment of NACE was inspired by NECE in Europe, and helped by NECE in many ways. The goals of NACE is to:

- provide overview of stakeholders, approaches, practices and requirements of CE in the Arab region
- develop a knowledge hub for CE in the Arab Region
- gather, document and disseminate best practices of CE stakeholders
- collect and distribute research, literature and methodologies related to CE
- bridge the knowledge gap between academics and practice in CE
- connect and link academic and practitioner stakeholders
- inspire exchange of knowledge and practice among stakeholders
- provide capacity development
- advocate policy development and renewal in the field of CE in the region
- stimulate research and cooperation between academics and practitioners related to CE in the Arab Region and across the Mediterranean.

With the NECE declaration on citizenship education of 2020 we are inspired again. When NECE declares that, “Citizenship education ought to be at the top of political priorities, not only in order to deal better with a risky world, but fundamentally because the citizenship education a society delivers to itself is an image of the world and society it wants to create” we couldn’t agree more. The strong call on the European Union and the European governments to prioritise civic education as an essential component of strong democratic states is urgent if we are to deal with major challenges such as Covid19, climate change, inequity, youth unemployment and the pressures on human rights and human dignity that we experience in these times. We echo this call in relation to the governments in our own region, where some of the details and needs might differ, but the overarching need to reemphasise and spread civic education remains a top priority. In fact as many countries in the region strive for a new understanding of identity in the midst of conflicts powered by religious and political differences even within the same country, and in the midst of regional and global ideologies and challenges, it is more essential than ever to spread the principles and values of proper civic education and citizenship at various levels – local, national, regional, and global.

We value our mutually respectful cooperation with NECE. Our value based co-operation across the Mediterranean is extremely important for our hope for a better future - and we know that this is a reciprocated feeling. We are in the first phase of the development of cooperation with CENESA (Civic Education Network for East and Southern Africa) and EENCE (Eastern European Network for Citizenship Education) and strongly believe that cooperation between the four networks is of great importance - we are all connected and need to deal with our common challenges. The exchange of professionals in CE beyond the European borders is essential to address the global dimension of CE. Therefore, we aspire to support this exchange, which could be done within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy. With the Sustainable Development Goals from 2015 the United Nations and all the governments of the World committed themselves to fulfil the ambitious agenda by 2030. This is now threatened by recent developments, not least the impact of Covid19. This calls for more Civic Education and not least for the kind of cooperation that our four networks can provide. To support this the NECE declaration could be even stronger in calling for international solidarity and for the European Union to support civic education in the neighbourhood areas. Citizenship Education ought to be at the top of political priorities in Europe as well as in the Arab Region - to our mutual benefit.

The Executive Board of NACE

Networking
Arab
Civic
Education



الشبكة
العربية
للتعليم
المدني

www.nacecommunity.org



Statement from Eastern European Network for Citizenship Education (EENCE) on the NECE declaration on citizenship education

21th October 2020

EENCE brings together Experts and Organizations working in the field of Civic Education in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Russia. The Network was established in 2015 as a focus group within NECE. The idea was to promote the exchange of Civic Education experience between state and non-governmental professionals from the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia, as well as to endorse networking with EU countries both within the focus group and with other Networks (NECE, NACE, CENESA and etc.).

The Mission of the Network is to have a tangible contribution to the sustainable development of the civil society in the Eastern Partnership region and Russia through widening the Citizenship Education sphere and developing the capacity of the institutions and experts in the field.

As a partner of the Networking European Citizenship Education (NECE) EENCE supports the idea and provisions of the Declaration **2020: A watershed moment for citizenship education in Europe**. This Declaration is a call to action. It is a guide by a powerful signal to the international community to intensify all efforts related to Citizenship Education through the collective commitment of all stakeholders. We are grateful for the opportunity to take part in this.

We reaffirm that only human-centered development and participatory societies will ensure sustainable and equitable development. Without a conscious and effective participation of civil society in all spheres of life, humanity will not survive and will not cope with the challenges of the future. That is why the “European Union should make Citizenship Education a priority of the Next Generation EU policy agenda, the Green Deal, the multiannual financial framework and a core part of the European Education Area”.

The programs and funding of the European Union should prioritise Citizenship Education equally and for all age groups through lifelong learning principles. Citizenship Education is not only a human right, but also it is one of the keys that opens up many opportunities in the 21st century. It is a powerful concept that promotes environmentally sustainable development, democracy, justice, gender equality, scientific, social and economic development, as well as peace-building in the framework of which dialogue and a culture of peace, based on justice, replace violent conflict. Citizenship Education can definitely help to shape the individuals and make everyday life meaningful via building effective networks within formal and informal areas. The adoption of the Declaration serves as an action plan to achieve this goal and mobilizes the support of all partners, especially in the civic education areas, to prioritize and help strengthen the international coordination and cooperation.

**Eastern European Network
for Citizenship Education (EENCE)**

Email: infoeence@gmail.com
Web: <https://eence.eu/>

Notes and references

- ¹ Target 4.7 ‘By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.’
- ² www.coe.int/rfcdc
- ³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/charter-on-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-education>
- ⁴ The 2015 Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education recognised the need for building ‘social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship.’

https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf
- ⁵ The Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning stresses the importance of developing competences as a means of ‘harnessing the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as means to experience European identity in all its diversity.’ The Recommendation suggests that EU member states should foster ‘the development of citizenship competences with the aim of strengthening the awareness of common values.’

https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en
- ⁶ The Council Resolution on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems (2019) acknowledges that:
“Europe is facing an era in which globalisation, technological progress, sustainability challenges, persistent social inclusion challenges, political instability and demographic change are having a profound impact on European societies and citizens. These common challenges require common reflection and coordinated actions from the Member States. The role of education and training in promoting citizenship and democracy, personal development, social inclusion, equal opportunities and empowerment, and in fostering wellbeing and supporting cohesive societies, are priorities for future cooperation in this area. The two main societal roles of education and training – their contribution to competitiveness, innovation and employability and their contribution to active citizenship, social inclusion, cohesion and personal development – are closely intertwined and fully complementary in today’s societies”

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9f1d16d1-09d1-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-HTML/source-113947200>
- ⁷ European Council Recommendation 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning
- ⁸ The 2017 Council of Europe Report on the State of Citizenship and human rights education in Europe Learning to Live Together found that inconsistencies between policy and implementation were reported by 66% of government respondents compared with 20% in 2012, and over a third stated that there are scarce if any references to education for democratic citizenship in laws, policies, strategic objectives, in vocational training and higher education. In two thirds of countries no criteria had been developed to evaluate effectiveness of programs in the area of education for democratic citizenship. A 2017 Eurydice survey on Citizenship Education at School in Europe shows that nearly half of the countries still have no policies on including citizenship education in initial teacher training. The 2012 Eurydice report on Citizenship Education in Europe highlighted that although many countries made reference in their regulations and recommendations on national curricula to a participatory school culture propitious to learning citizenship capacities, very few countries had specific initiatives or programs to promote the development of such school cultures. A 2017 Monitoring report from Eurostat on the EU’s progress towards meeting the sustainable development goals highlighted in particular that the EU was failing to reach its targets in adult education, including in active citizenship.

Imprint

Draft by a NECE Working Group (July–October 2020)

Niccolò Milanese, *European Alternatives/NECE Advisory Board, Paris*

Claudia Lenz, *Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society/NECE Advisory Board, Oslo*

Boris Jokic, *The Institute for Social Research (IDIZ), Zagreb*

Michalis Kakos, *Beckett University Leeds/NECE Advisory Board*

Alicja Pacewicz, *Center for Citizenship Education/NECE Coordination (Warsaw)*

Christoph Müller- Hofstede, *Federal Agency for Civic Education/NECE Coordination (Bonn/Berlin)*

Contact:

mueller-hofstede@bpb.de

www.nece.eu