

Democratic Competences and Service-Learning

A Comparative Analysis for Austria, Germany,
Greece, Portugal and Romania



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SLEAD EUROPE



SLEAD EUROPE is an ambitious international educational initiative supported by Erasmus+, uniting EU partner countries including Germany, Austria, Portugal, Romania, and Greece. At its core, the project integrates Service-Learning as an innovative didactic approach of Democratic Education into formal school education, aiming to empower both schools and teachers. By fostering democracy skills such as teamwork, communication, participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving, SLEAD EUROPE prepares students to engage actively in democratic processes and take responsibility for their communities.

The project distinguishes itself through international collaboration, enabling cultural exchange and the acquisition of key competencies on a global scale. This intercultural experience enriches teaching, broadens horizons for both teachers and students, and enhances the educational landscape in the EU to address challenges in a globalized world.

SLEAD EUROPE not only empowers teachers and school leaders by integrating innovative methods like Service-Learning but also creates a dynamic learning environment that nurtures students' curiosity and interest. By promoting educational excellence, the project contributes to a sustainable improvement in the European education system.

More than just an educational initiative, SLEAD EUROPE serves as a beacon of inspiration for a modern, inclusive, and democratic educational landscape in Europe. Through Service-Learning, it lays the foundation for a generation of engaged citizens equipped not only with knowledge but also with the ability to actively shape their society.

Network



The mission of “Stiftung Lernen durch Engagement” (Foundation for Learning through Civic Engagement) is to develop and promote Service-Learning as a method so that young people, regardless of their backgrounds, can experience high-quality education while reaching their full individual potential and taking an active

part in democratic society. “Stiftung Lernen durch Engagement” has numerous cooperation partnerships with ministries of education and the continuous support of both public as well as private donors. At the core of the foundation is the “Network Learning through Civic Engagement”. Its members exchange ideas (e.g. at a yearly held national conference), reflect experiences and receive a variety of further qualifications. The aim is to continuously improve the quality of Service-Learning practice and to increase awareness of Service-Learning in education politics.



The University of Education Upper Austria (PHOOE) is one of the leading organizations in Austria for Teacher Education in the fields of Primary School Education, Lower Secondary School Education, Vocational Teacher Education and Continuing Education for Teachers and School Leaders. It offers scientific based and job-related educational programs for B.A.Ed. and M.A.Ed. Programs. In order to respond to challenges raised by an increasing diverse and multicultural society all over Europe, the

University of Education Upper Austria is involved in major organizational and curricular reforms as part of the initiative “New Teacher Preparation” in Austria with focus – according to governmental priorities – on promoting democracy and civic education in teacher education and school development. Additionally, the university strengthens its value-oriented profile by cooperating with actors such as NGOs/NPOs and by opening up to new target groups and the general public (science-to-public). Civil society project work in teaching is accompanied and evaluated by research. The university is in international exchange with other universities on third mission and civic engagement.



The Chair for Citizenship Education, Didactics of Social Studies/Politics and Society of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich at the Department of Political Science has the primary task of training prospective teachers in the first stage of teacher training. Our research focuses on Democracy Education, Service-Learning and (historical) Citizenship Education. Furthermore,

we research topics such as Holocaust Education (interactive testimonies of Holocaust survivors Lediz), Anti-Discrimination Education and Democratic School Development. In cooperation with Prof. Gloe and the foundation “Lernen durch Engagement/Service-Learning” (LdE), the competence model for Service-Learning in Germany was developed.



New Horizons Foundation Romania contributes, through education, to empowering youth to lead and produce positive social changes in Romania and across the world. We believe in a society

in which children and teenagers grow up in fertile soil, fulfill their potential and use it to develop the community and the world they live in. Our mission is to innovate and support models of experiential education, providing youth leaders, teachers and schools with the tools to help youth to become more involved, more responsible, and more courageous.

NUCLIO

NUCLIO is a non-profit association and an NGO for development that aims to promote innovation and development in education, embracing diversity, inclusion and engaging holistic education for all.

The work done by the team focuses on the empowerment of educators to integrate innovative practices that facilitate students' learning and acquisition of key skills. NUCLIO coordinates the Galileo Teacher Training Program (GTTP), a worldwide teacher training network, and is an official training center recognized by the Portuguese Ministry of Education.



DSA is a private school supported by the Federal Republic of Germany in terms of personnel and finances, committed to the teaching of the German and Greek languages and German and Greek educational values. The school curricula are based on the standards of the German federal states. Starting in preschool, Modern Greek is taught in addition to German. The DSA offers its graduates access to colleges, universities and apprenticeships through recognized German school

degrees. The DSA is a “Begegnungsschule” (a school that facilitates encounters) and thus sees itself as a meeting place in Athens for all: Greeks, Germans, Austrians, and Swiss, bicultural families and all those who have a special interest in the German and Greek language and culture. It is as common characteristic of German schools abroad that they not only teach German language and culture, but that they open themselves to the language and culture of the partner country by teaching students of German and other mother tongues together.



KMOP Education Hub acts as a space that offers access to a wide range of educational programs, resources and training, capitalizing on the knowledge that the organization has gained from its extensive work in the field. These educational programs involve both the enhancement of traditional skills and the learning of new ones so

that no individual is left behind. Our aim is to provide vocational training, continuous education, and lifelong learning, as well as educational consultancy and support in social policy and social economy-related subjects, including migration (education & inclusion), social responsibility, employability, human rights protection, ethics, sustainability, and bullying prevention and treatment. Besides non-formal education, we also aim to provide formal education programs and courses. For this purpose, KMOP has established collaborations with academic institutions and universities, to offer accredited certificates, diplomas, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

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Abstract

This study addresses the field of civic education, focusing on Service-Learning (S-L) practices in Germany, Greece, Romania, Portugal, and Austria. The research aims to explain the integration of S-L into formal education systems and highlight models and frameworks that promote the development of democratic competences. The research addresses the integration of S-L methods into educational policies and curricula, focusing on the optimal contexts and topics for effective implementation. Educators face several challenges when integrating S-L into formal education, and these obstacles are reviewed in the study. The intersection of civic education and S-L is analyzed, highlighting its role in promoting civic responsibility and community engagement. Furthermore, the study considers the transformative potential of S-L beyond Civic Education and recognizes its broader impact. The analysis makes the case for a framework that is adaptable, tailored to individual educational contexts, and examines different Service-Learning approaches. The research explores the identification of effective settings within formal education, considering school structures and the optimal topics for S-L initiatives. The research addresses challenges for educators and emphasizes empowerment, resilience, and adaptability in curriculum integration. The research involves desktop research conducted by all partners to collect and analyze literature and official publications related to the development of democratic competencies and SL in lower secondary school systems as country-specific studies. Cross-curricular integration and cross-country curriculum connections are highlighted to show the versatility of S-L and promote civic engagement and a deep understanding of democratic principles across Europe. This approach emphasizes the importance of service learning and contributes to the wider discourse on civic education and the promotion of a deeper understanding of democratic values in the context of S-L.

Keywords:

Service-Learning, Civic Education, democratic competences, models and frameworks, Europe, lower secondary school, comparative analysis

1. The crisis of democracy: Why it is necessary to actively promote democratic competences in schools

Democracy, as a system of governance founded on the principles of popular sovereignty and individual freedoms, is widely regarded as the cornerstone of a modern and just society. In the wake of the Cold War, some scholars, such as Francis Fukuyama (1992), even proclaimed liberal democracy as an evolutionary pinnacle of statehood:

“What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War [...] but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” (p. 4)

However, over three decades later, reality has shattered the illusion of a global convergence toward liberal democratic societies and peaceful international cooperation based on mutual interest. States like China and Russia, while still employing the label "democratic" in formal self-descriptions, openly challenge the principles of human rights and liberal democracy. Even functioning democracies face various challenges to their core principles, including erosion in public trust, the rise of populism and authoritarianism, and threats to civil liberties. In fact, some authors (e.g., Appadurai, 2017; Holmes & Krastev, 2020) have questioned the long-held belief in the "total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism" (Fukuyama 1989, p. 4).

The public trust in liberal democracy among young people is strongly related to socioeconomic status. In Germany, where secondary schooling is separated into different types of schools (for more information see Section 5.2.1), a study by Achour and Wagner (2019) showed that only 62 % of students in comprehensive schools consider democracy to be a good form of government in contrast to 92 % of students in schools with restricted access based on academic performance (Gymnasien). Another youth survey demonstrated a strong gap regarding political or civic participation between adolescents from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (23 %) and adolescents from more privileged backgrounds (47 %) (Shell Jugendstudie 2019).

Needlessly to say, functioning democracies depend on civil support, shared values, trust in public institutions, and participation. In order to be able to navigate and overcome the ambiguities and challenges present in democratic systems, individuals need democratic competencies and chances to reflect upon their own values and attitudes. Unfortunately, schools still invest little time to provide their students with possibilities to develop their skills and make meaningful democratic experiences (Achour/Wagner 2019).

Considering these findings, we argue that the active promotion of democratic competences has become more crucial than ever. Democratic systems, by their very

nature, rely on active and informed citizen participation, resilience against ideological threats, and mechanisms to safeguard social cohesion to fulfill the promise of *government of the people, by the people, for the people*. However, the skills required to promote and uphold democratic principles are not inherent, but rather depend on a continuous process of learning and intergenerational transmission.

The notion that societies should foster their citizens' ability to engage in political life dates back to ancient times (e.g., Burnet, 1967; Plato, 2012) and has recurred throughout history (Brooke & Frazer, 2013; Gloe & Oeftering, 2017). Today, many countries allocate resources to educate their citizens about national and international politics in schools and other educational institutions. However, the nature, structures, and goals of such education differ greatly between states. This is particularly evident in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, where education and indoctrination serve the sole purpose of self-legitimization and ideological survival, often without differentiation.

This highlights the crucial distinction and definition of education in relation to democratic competences. While all political systems seek to legitimize themselves, liberal democracies are characterized by their openness to criticism and change, granting citizens fundamental and inviolable rights. Therefore, although even democratic states aim to promote stability by fostering democratic knowledge and competences, they typically follow certain rules to prevent indoctrination and biased learning processes. These rules may include the imperative to equally present different perspectives in public debates, encourage criticism within their own political structures, and enable learners to form independent opinions.

Thus, in addition to the first distinction, the promotion of democratic competences can be further characterized by the absence of predetermined expectations. In other words, democratic competences serve as tools for learners to orient themselves and engage with the democratic system based on their individual goals, wishes, and opinions, unlike the predefined roles in authoritarian or totalitarian systems.

Lastly, democratic citizenship education can be characterized by the promotion of skills for civic engagement and active participation. Learners are encouraged to participate in democratic processes such as voting, joining political parties, and contributing to public debates. Moreover, democratic skills and competences form the foundation for effecting future change and making societal contributions.

Given the aforementioned challenges, we contend that the development and continuous promotion of democratic competences are integral to the functioning and stability of liberal democracies. Studies have demonstrated links between surges in populism and authoritarianism, on the one hand, and negative emotions such as confusion, powerlessness, and frustration, on the other hand (e.g., Harrison, 2019; Heinisch & Jansesberger, 2022; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). The issue of democracy

and civic education in schools not adequately responding to various challenges—such as not being prominent enough, lacking competence orientation, not being experience-oriented, and not engaging enough in controversy—can be attributed to several factors. In many education systems, there is a significant emphasis on core subjects like math, science, and languages. This often leads to civic education being given less priority in the curriculum. As a result, it may not receive sufficient time or resources to be effectively taught. Second, teachers may not feel adequately prepared or comfortable teaching democracy and Civic Education, especially on controversial issues. This lack of preparation can stem from their own educational background or a perceived lack of support from the school administration. When teachers are hesitant to engage in controversial discussions, students miss out on experiencing democratic discourse in a controlled, educational setting. Third, the focus on standardized testing in many educational systems can detract from subjects that are not directly tested, like Civic Education. Schools often prioritize subjects that are included in these assessments, which can lead to less emphasis on teaching democratic principles and practices. Fourth, Civic Education is often taught in a theoretical manner, without providing students with practical, real-world experiences. Engaging students in actual democratic processes, like mock elections or debates on current issues, can be logistically challenging and time-consuming, which might lead to a more lecture-based approach. And finally, in some societies, there is a cultural emphasis on conformity and respect for authority, which might discourage critical thinking and open discussion about controversial issues. This cultural backdrop can influence the way civic education is approached in schools.

To address these challenges, there is a need for systemic changes in how democracy and civic education are valued and integrated into the school curriculum (Fahrenwald 2023; Fahrenwald 2020). This includes teacher training, curriculum development, and a shift in educational priorities to emphasize the importance of civic competence and engagement. Therefore, we argue that action-oriented methods to promote the development of democratic competences in schools and educational institutions can offer valuable opportunities to foster positive experiences, rebuild confidence in democratic institutions, and empower individuals to engage politically.

It is important to note that the idea of democratic education and the cultivation of related competences is not new and has been proposed by authors like John Dewey (1916) for over a century. However, numerous questions remain regarding the nature of democratic competences, educational methods to promote their development, and avenues for convergence between different countries.

SLEAD EUROPE is an Erasmus+ - funded project aimed at enhancing the educational landscape across Europe with a focus on Service-Learning. One of its primary objectives is to integrate Service-Learning into formal school education in Austria, Germany, Greece, Portugal, and Romania. More specifically, it equips schools and teachers with

the tools to harness the power of Service-Learning in imparting democracy competences. This approach not only elevates the educational experience of students, but also fortifies democratic principles that are essential for active citizenship.

In addition to fostering a democratic ethos, SLEAD EUROPE aims to empower students by - through addressing their teachers - providing them with the necessary skills to actively participate and engage in society. By initiating cross-border Service-Learning projects, SLEAD EUROPE further gives teachers invaluable experiences of European education and, thus, serves as an example of meaningful transnational cooperation. This not only benefits individual schools but also contributes to the creation of a European community of practice among teachers.

The program also emphasizes the development of 21st-century skills, such as teamwork, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and reflection, both for teachers and students. These skills are considered key elements of Service-Learning and are critical for personal and professional development. Ultimately, by exploring innovative approaches like Service-Learning, SLEAD EUROPE aims to elevate the quality of teaching, thereby offering a more enriching and effective educational experience for all involved.

In view of these general goals, SLEAD EUROPE aims to build an academic basis for further research and teaching in this publication by providing country analyses for Austria, Germany, Greece, Portugal, and Romania. Our partners wrote the country analysis for their respective countries under the direction and authorship of Manuela Gamsjäger/ Claudia Fahrenwald (Austria), Sara Anjos (Portugal), Bianca Balea (Romania), Markus Gloe/ Ahmmad Haase/ Fabian Heindl (Germany), Anxhela Shkempi/ Ariadni Matraka (Greece).

First, we briefly introduce the educational approach of Service-Learning (Section 2). Subsequently, we further elaborate the importance of Service-Learning for the promotion of a democratic culture in schools (Section 3). In this context, the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture of the Council of Europe (RFCDC) is presented as a fundamental competence model and discussed based on its contribution to the practical fostering of democratic competences. Following this, the aims pursued by this country analysis, as well as the applied methodology, are outlined (Section 4). Next, we provide an overview of the framework conditions and structures in the five countries. Initially, we give a brief introduction to each country's education system with a focus on secondary education. Then, we discuss the significance and implementation of citizenship education, as outlined by each partner individually, in the respective countries (Section 5). In the sixth paragraph, the results of the country analyses are discussed, before deriving appropriate recommendations from them (Section 7). The

country analysis concludes with a summary and an outlook on SLEAD EUROPE's future work.

2. Service-Learning

Service-Learning is an educational approach that combines students' social and civic engagement with academic learning (Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform, 1993; Wade, 2000; Seifert/Zentner/Nagy, 2019). The concept, which combines the terms 'community service' and 'learning', originates from the United States and is already well-established there. Bringle and Hatcher (2009, 38) describe Service-Learning as: „a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an [self-]organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility.”

The idea of Service-Learning is based on an approach, in which students actively engage in social, charitable, intercultural, or community-related projects while simultaneously learning through reflective educational activities. Service-Learning is not only about gaining practical experiences, but also about understanding social contexts, fostering critical thinking, and personal development. Stagg argues that Service-Learning is generally a “curriculum-based form of community service” (Stagg, 2004, 1). This educational approach can be implemented in all types of schools, age groups, and various subjects.

Examples:

1. In foreign language classes, students deal with poetry and in social studies with the causes and effects of the war in the Ukraine. Together with a local aid organization they become involved with refugees and create a “Peace Path”, an exhibition along the town park with poems about peace from the Ukraine and other European countries.
2. In biology, students at a German school address environmental pollution. They see reducing plastic waste in their city as the most important problem. Together with the local conservation initiative, they start a campaign and call for the use of reusable coffee cups. But what is the situation like in other countries? Assisted by their teacher, they contact a school in Catalonia and encourage the students there to also start a conservation project. These students clean up the local beach and discover where the plastic waste comes from. In class, the Spanish and German students together investigate the major environmental problems in their countries and discuss their projects with each other. They plan to visit each other when the projects have been completed.
3. In philosophy, students deal with “appearance and reality” in art with photography, and they transfer this onto social media. They design an exhibition of photos that depicts the “apparent reality” of Instagram and make this accessible to the community in the

local town hall. On its digital channels, the school invites students, and teachers worldwide to participate.

4. 3rd graders in a primary school learn about fire and methods for extinguishing fire in their science class AND cooperate with the fire brigade to pass this knowledge on to kids in an asylum for refugees where the fire alarm had been activated several times by mistake.

5. In their German language class, 8th-graders deal with values and the analysis of hate comments on the internet AND compose a human rights song in appreciative language, which they distribute on YouTube and perform in public (scan QR-Code to USL Project).



As shown above, the integration of engagement and academic learning reflects two central goals pursued by Service-Learning:

- Transforming schools and learning culture: Students are involved, learning is action-oriented, conceptually rich, meaningful, and socially relevant. Kaumba (2023, 1137) points out that Service-Learning “bridges theory and practice through the use of coordinated and guided co-curricular activities”.
- Strengthening democracy and civil society: Students are introduced to civic engagement and participation and acquire social and democratic competences (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mauz & Zentner, 2022, p. 699 ff.).

Service-Learning is a form of experience education (Lisman, 1998). Experiences are not mere activities but subjectively meaningful challenges. John Dewey distinguishes between primary experiences and secondary experiences (Dewey 1938). Primary experience is the immediately lived quality, the interplay of activity and passivity in the given situation that constitutes our primary reality reference (Jörke, 2007, 88). In primary experience, subject and object are not separated. It is only when individuals confront a problem and attempt to solve it intelligently that subject and object are separated for analytical purposes (ibid., 89). The thought processes associated with an experience lead to educational and learning processes. Kaumba (2023, 1137) points out “Reflection in SL [Service-Learning] stimulates to integrate experience and observations with existing knowledge to examine theory and practice”.

However, the quality of educational implementation is crucial. Therefore, in the German Service-Learning six quality standards have been developed, serving as guiding principles for educational practice (Seifert/Zentner/Nagy, 2019, p. 14):

- Real need: Students' engagement addresses a genuine need in the neighborhood, community, or society. Their engagement involves tasks perceived as meaningful by all participants.

- Curricular integration: Service-Learning is part of the curriculum, and engagement is linked to educational content in schools.
- Reflection: Regular and consciously planned reflection of students' experiences takes place.
- Student participation: Students actively participate in all steps, namely the planning, preparation, and implementation of Service-Learning.
- Engagement in the community: Students' practical engagement takes place outside of the school and in collaboration with engagement partners.
- Recognition and completion: Students' engagement and achievements are acknowledged through feedback throughout the process and upon completion.

All six quality standards for Service-Learning encompass educational challenges that question existing norms, require reflection on one's own attitudes and roles as teachers and students, and demand new approaches from all participants, particularly regarding fostering democratic competence.

3. The significance of Service-Learning for a democratic culture

Whether from the perspective of citizenship (Zagrebina, 2019), academia (Haas, 2019), or politics (Gerring et al., 2022), there seems to be no generally accepted definition of democracy. The following explanations are based on the concept of participatory democracy in the style of John Dewey and Benjamin Barber (Barber 1995). Participatory democracy, also known as strong democracy, refers to a model of democracy where citizens have a direct and active role in decision-making processes, rather than just electing representatives to make decisions on their behalf, which is characteristic of representative democracy. In participatory democracy, individuals are encouraged to actively take part in public debates, deliberations, and decision-making processes, often through various mechanisms and platforms such as town hall meetings, referendums, citizen assemblies, public consultations, participatory budgeting, or technological innovations in the realm of digital democracy. This approach seeks to bridge the gap between citizens and governmental institutions, fostering a sense of collective ownership and responsibility over the decisions made. Proponents of participatory democracy argue that it leads to more informed, transparent, and accountable decisions, as well as a more engaged and empowered citizenry. On the other hand, critics might point out that it can be time-consuming, may not always result in consensus, and might be challenging to implement on a large scale (Schmalz-Bruns 1995; Chappell 2012, Schmidt 2019).

Democracy as just described requires informed citizens who possess the appropriate democratic competencies. For this reason, the Council of Europe developed the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) starting in 2017 (see Figure 1). The competencies outlined in this framework serve as guidelines for defining goals in both formal and non-formal educational settings (Council of Europe, 2018a).

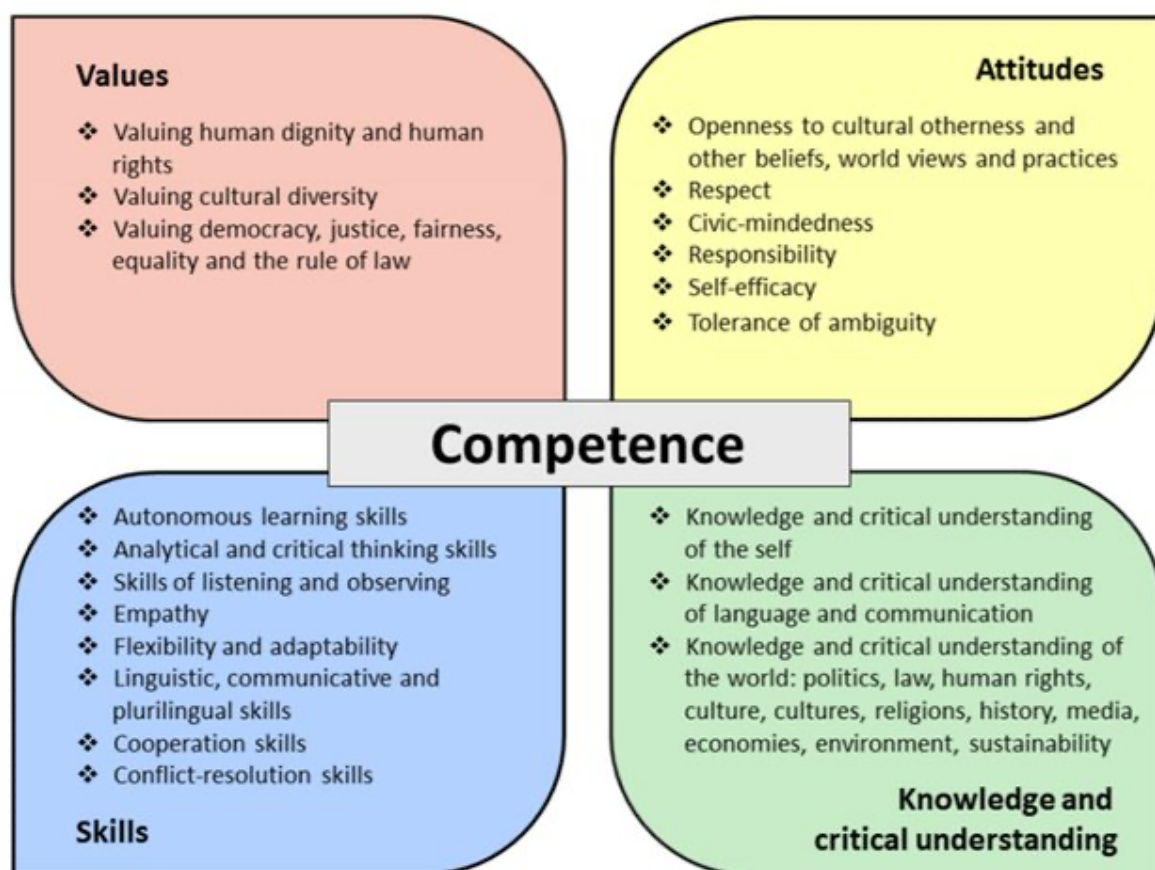


Figure 1: The butterfly model of the RFCDC (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 38)

The RFCDC illustrates that the acquisition of democratic competencies is not solely about knowledge but also involves the promotion of values, attitudes, skills, and critical understanding. These four central competences are then assigned 20 sub-competences (see Figure 1). In addition, the Council of Europe has formulated almost 500 descriptors that provide information on the extent to which the respective sub-competencies are developed (Council of Europe, 2018b). The focus is placed on democratic culture to emphasize that while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, these institutions and laws alone cannot guarantee democracy. It must be rooted in a democratic culture - characterized by democratic values, attitudes, and practices of the citizens. The framework thus follows John Dewey's three-part division of democracy into democracy as a form of governance, as a form of society, and as a way of life (Dewey 1993, Dewey 1996).

Besides democracy as a form of governance, which pertains to state actions and the organization of power and decision-making, democracy as a form of society aims at social diversity that we are all part of. We all simultaneously belong to different social subsystems or sectors of society, use them, live in and from them, without systematically

making ourselves aware of our participation and involvement (Himmelmann, 2001, p. 123). According to this view, democracy relies on the participation and mutual responsibility of citizens, as well as on collectively lived democratic values and experiences in actions and behavior. It must be lived daily and be made visible.

For teachers, it is often not immediately apparent whether and how Service-Learning contributes to fostering competences for a democratic culture, especially when students are engaged not directly in political projects but rather in areas linked to general social or ecological issues. Teachers' understanding of democracy is frequently shaped by their own experiences during their time in school, and they tend to view democracy education more as the transmission of knowledge about political and democratic institutions and decision-making processes (große Prues, 2018) rather than to have democratic experiences. The significance of making democratic experiences during the process of learning is still relatively less widespread.

To encourage the expansion of this understanding of democracy and to provide concrete support for educational practices in Service-Learning, a model was developed by Mauz and Gloe (2019) in collaboration with representatives from academia and practical fields. This model defines the acquisition of democratic competence in the context of Service-Learning, breaks it down into sub-competencies, and directly stimulates and supports it through practical materials. The model focuses on the following questions often raised by teachers and students:

- What exactly defines democratic competence?
- What sub-competencies constitute democratic competence?
- How exactly do we strengthen sub-competencies of democratic competence through Service-Learning?
- How can we observe the strengthening of democratic sub-competencies through Service-Learning?
- How should Service-Learning be designed to reach these goals?

For this purpose, eleven sub-competencies are defined within three areas: (1) Attitudes and Values, (2) Practical Skills, and (3) Knowledge and Critical Thinking. One of the underlying approaches is the concept of democracy as a way of life, upon which Service-Learning is also based. According to this concept, democracy is not merely understood as a form of governance or societal structure, but also as a way of coexistence and shared experience in which each individual shapes society through their everyday actions.

Correspondingly, the Council of Europe emphasizes that Service-Learning is an effective approach to positively influence the entire spectrum of children's and adolescents' democratic competence: "Service-Learning is more than community service. It implies providing a community service in the context of a structured set of steps, in which the

teacher plays an important role as organizer and facilitator, while keeping a strong learner-centered approach and empowering learners to make decisions and act on their own will in cooperation with peers” (Council of Europe, 2018, 37). The Council of Europe is convinced that Service-Learning can strengthen competences for a democratic culture: “Service-Learning is also an effective way to develop the full range of CDC (competences of democratic culture) because it gives learners opportunities to connect the knowledge and critical understanding and skills acquired in a classroom setting with meaningful action targeting a real world issue. Through this connection, not only knowledge, critical understanding and skills are consolidated and further developed, but processes are put in place which stimulate the development and critical awareness of attitudes and values.” (ibid.)

Empirical studies also demonstrate positive effects of Service-Learning in all three areas of democratic competence, such as:

- *Attitudes and Values: Acceptance of Others* (Toews & Cerny, 2006; Garcia & Harkins, 2014), *Democratic and Social Responsibility* (Billig/ Root & Jesse, 2005; Scales et al., 2000), *Democratic Awareness and Civic-Mindedness* (Geier & Hasager, 2020), *Social Justice* (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Wade, 2007),
- *Practical Skills: Political Participation and Willingness to Engage* (Kahne/ Crow & Lee, 2013; Morgan & Streb, 2001), *Empathy* (Everhart, 2016; Lundy, 2007; Wilson, 2011), *Self-efficacy* (Sanders, Van Oss, & McGeary, 2015; Toews & Cerny, 2006), *Communication Skills* (Conway/ Amel & Gerwien, 2009; McNatt, 2019; Tucker & McCarthy, 2001), *Social problem-solving skills* (Ohn/ Wade, 2009), *Social action skills* (Moore/ Sandholtz, 1999)
- *Knowledge and Critical Thinking: Knowledge of Democracy and Politics* (Bringle/ Clayton & Bringle, 2015; Engberg, 2013), *Deeper Understanding of Educational Content* (Conway et al., 2009; Yorio & Ye, 2012), *Critical Thinking and Reflection* (Astin et al., 2000; Campbell, 2018), *Community awareness* (Moore/ Sandholtz, 1999)

Moreover, new Service-Learning approaches, such as cross-border projects between schools have been explored (Mauz/Lorenzen 2021) and will need to be evaluated for their future potential.

4. Goals and Methodology

4.1 Goals

This Country Analysis was conducted as part of the Erasmus+ project "Service-Learning for Democracy in Europe: Supporting Teachers in Applying Democratic Competence Models" (SLEAD Europe). It pursued the following objectives:

- Understanding which models and frameworks for democratic competence are being used in each country,
- Understanding the current state of civic education in formal education, the identification of democratic competence models and frameworks currently used,
- Analyzing how Service-Learning is or can be linked to existing policies and educational curricula,
- Identifying in which school types, classes, subjects the introduction of Service-Learning for democracy would be most feasible and impactful,
- Identifying conditions teachers are facing when implementing Service-Learning approaches in formal education,
- Identifying challenges for introducing Service-Learning as part of civic education.

4.2 Methodology

To achieve these objectives, each project partner conducted desktop research, document analysis, as well as expert interviews in their respective countries.

In the first step, all partners conducted desk research and analyzed literature, ministerial publications, and other official and scholarly contributions in alignment with the aforementioned research objectives. The main objective of this desk research was to collect, organize, and evaluate information on a specific topic, issue, or research area. The aim was to identify reliable and relevant sources to obtain meaningful results. The desk research focused on the lower secondary school system.

Through a systematic analysis, we seek to identify the current state of civic education and the specific models and frameworks for democratic competencies that are currently being implemented. This research provides valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of current approaches and gives us guidance on potential areas for improvement.

In addition, we examined the connection between Service-Learning and existing policies and curricula. Understanding this connection allowed us to see how Service-Learning can be effectively integrated to promote the development of democratic competencies. This analysis will help identify potential synergies and gaps that need to be addressed for integration of Service-Learning in Europe.

To enable successful implementation, we also identified the types of schools, classes, and subjects that are best suited for implementing Service-Learning for democracy. By identifying the most appropriate settings, we can optimize the potential for positive outcomes and ensure meaningful and practical integration of Service-Learning approaches.

Moving forward, it is equally important to recognize the challenges teachers face in implementing Service-Learning approaches in formal education. Understanding these hurdles will help to develop appropriate support systems and training opportunities to strengthen teachers in their mission to effectively promote democratic competencies among students.

In addition, we need to identify and address the challenges associated with implementing Service-Learning as part of civic education. Potential barriers such as institutional resistance, resource constraints, or curricular limitations should be identified and addressed to promote smooth and successful implementation of Service-Learning.

After the desk research, each partner country conducted a more in-depth analysis of the data and responded with the help of a template that formulated questions related to the research objectives. These were used to continue the comparative summary analysis of the countries and integrated interviews that have been conducted with teachers, ministries, and other stakeholders in the educational landscape of each country that is involved in the project.

The data collection was carried out using guideline-supported interviews. A cooperative-dialogical approach was central to this, in order to gain access to the designed projects as well as to locate the research process itself within the social field of action. The focus was on a research process with the participants. Guideline-supported interviews are a suitable method of data collection for this purpose, as they highlight the 'inherent logic' (Proske, 2015, 28) of the different actors and projects and at the same time allow a mediation of structure and openness (Strübing, 2013, 92). The structure of the guidelines ensured that the focused research questions were addressed in the interviews, and its openness allowed for flexible responses to previously unconsidered but relevant subjective views of the respondents on fostering democratic competencies through Service-Learning.

The guide for the interviews was generated according to the structure of Helfferich Collecting-Checking-Sorting-Subsuming, i.e., possible questions and conversation starters were first collected, then critically reviewed using a criteria catalog, and subsequently sorted and subsumed (Helfferich, 2009, 182-186).

The data analysis followed the typical three-step process of open, axial, and selective coding for Grounded Theory (Breuer et al., 2019, 248-287).

In Austria, five interviews were conducted one interview with two experts for political education at the Ministry of Education, one interview with a school headmaster, one with a teacher of Service-Learning, one interview with a teacher educator, and one with a school development consultant. In Germany, 5 interviews were conducted with teachers (novices and experts), 2 interviews were conducted with school headmasters, one interview was conducted with an external school consultant for Service-Learning and one interview was conducted with an European educational administrator. In Greece four interviews were conducted in total: two interviews with educators of secondary education and two interviews with NGO professionals. All interviews were conducted online and in the Greek language and some quotes were translated into English and added in the country analysis. In Portugal, 3 interviews were conducted: 2 with citizenship and development teachers (one of whom is the subject coordinator at the school) and one with an academic who works regularly with the Council of Europe. In Romania one focus group with ten teachers was conducted and two interviews, one with a national educational expert involved in the curricula development and one with a university professor. All interviews were conducted in the respective national language. Selected quotes were translated into English for analysis. The statements of the interviewees underline the findings of this country analysis.

5. Framework and Structures in the five countries

5.1 Austria

5.1.1 The Educational System in Austria

In Austria the federal government is responsible for setting overall goals and standards, while the country's nine federal states individually organize and finance education. Formal education is mandatory for all children with permanent residence in Austria, beginning with primary school at age six and concluding after nine years of schooling at around age 15. Children usually start primary school (years 1 to 4) at age six, followed by lower secondary level (years 5 to 8). At the lower secondary level, there are different types of schools: middle school (Mittelschule), academic secondary school / lower cycle (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule (AHS) – Unterstufe), and Special needs school / upper cycle (Sonderschule).

Lower secondary education in Austria comprises four years of schooling, usually starting at age 10 or 11 and ending at age 14 or 15. The curriculum for lower secondary education in Austria is based on a set of core subjects mandatory for all students. These include German language and literature, mathematics, environmental and consumer education, history and social studies, and a foreign language (usually English). In addition to these core subjects, students can choose from various elective topics, such as art, music, sports, and economics. Therefore, from the third grade onwards, schools can have special focuses. Assessment and Certification Assessment in Austria's

lower secondary education is based on formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation occurs throughout the school year and involves continuous monitoring of student's progress and providing feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Summative evaluation occurs at the end of each semester and is based on written and oral exams, project work, and practical assignments. Therefore, lower secondary education in Austria provides a comprehensive education that prepares students for further education or vocational training. Students who pass the final exam receive a certificate of completion of lower secondary education.

Austria – 2022/2023

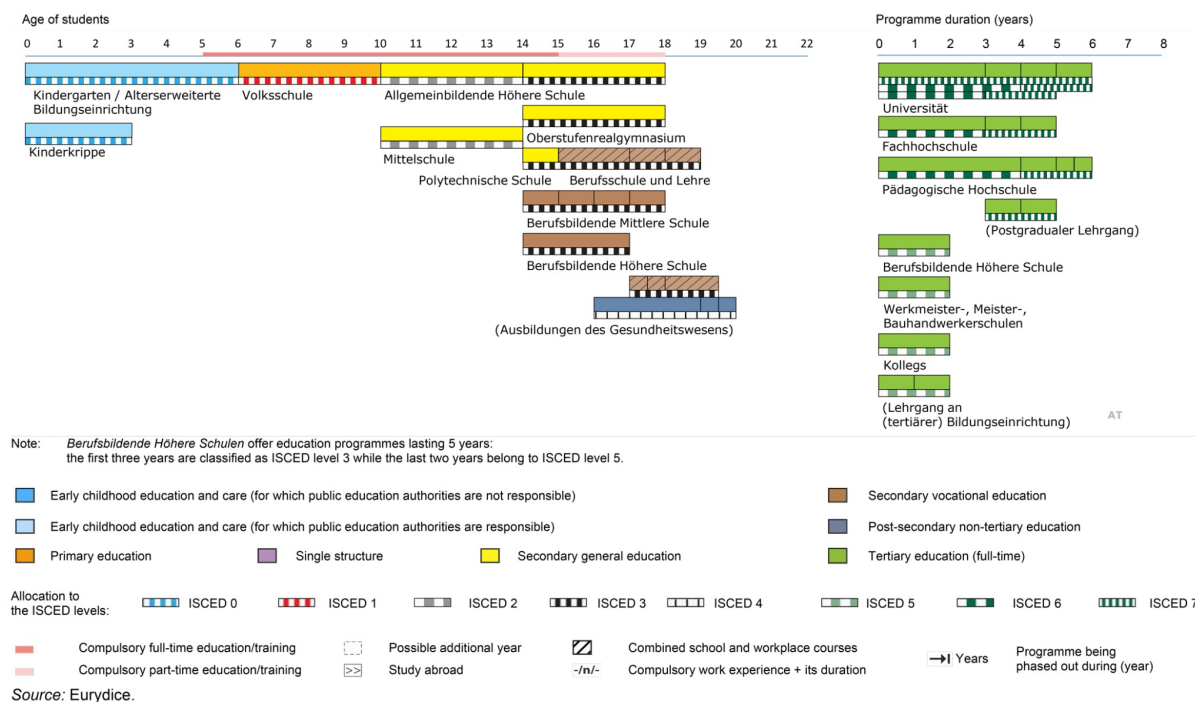


Figure 1: Austrian educational system (European Commission/Eurydice, 2023)

After completion of the lower secondary level, children can enter schools of upper secondary level, provided their grades are above a defined threshold (specific school grades):

- Pre-vocational school (Polytechnische Mittelschule) to complete the mandatory nine years. After that, vocational school prepares students for vocational training or apprenticeships.
- Four-year upper-level academic secondary school (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule (AHS) – Oberstufe (AHS)) as intermediate vocational education and training (years 9 to max. 12).

- iii) Five-year college of higher vocational education and training called Berufsbildende Höhere Schule (BHS; years 9 to 13, ISCE 3/5).

AHS and BHS qualify to enter Higher Education after passing the final exam. Hence, schools at the secondary and post-secondary / non-tertiary level can – depending on the selected school type – provide a well-founded or in-depth general education on the one hand and, on the other, prepare students at different levels for entry into working life. Nevertheless, this means that 14-year-olds must choose between a wide range of education and training pathways.

Lessons generally last 50 minutes, and the units may be extended or shortened for pedagogical or organizational reasons. Due to more project-based activities, cultural projects, sports, and other activities, "classic" lesson periods are supplemented by longer "blocks of instruction." Furthermore, individual subjects can be combined into "extended subjects" (fields of learning).

Regarding teaching methods and materials, teachers at compulsory secondary school and academic secondary school / lower cycle can make independent decisions on setting priorities regarding the organization and structure of the class contents that are to be taught in a school year of compulsory secondary school. However, methodological freedom is limited by specific criteria, such as the level of development and progress of individual students and the class as a whole, the structure of the subject matter, aspects of school organization, and practical requirements (appropriateness of method). Moreover, the school has many educational tasks which it can only deliver with an interdisciplinary approach. For school education, the relevant research findings must be considered in the planning and organizing of learning processes. Learning and work techniques must be conveyed and practiced in a situation-specific context. The methods used are teacher-input teaching, individual, partner, and group work, cross-curricular teaching, project-based training, and individual work. Individual forms of learning (e.g., doing their research) are especially promoted, also to prepare students for lifelong learning.

5.1.2 Citizenship Education in Austria

Historically, Citizenship Education ('Politische Bildung') had a rather marginal position in the Austrian educational system. Yet, academic disputes on the necessity, nature, and potential goals of Citizenship Education still took place and have always been closely linked to or embedded within the debates of the other German-speaking neighboring countries Germany and Switzerland (Feyerer, 2015). This led to certain similarities in national academic developments, such as the acceptance of the 'Beutelsbach Consensus' (see 5.2.2) as the guiding set of principles in 1976 by most scholars, which also shaped developments in Germany and, to a lesser extent, Switzerland since its introduction. Concerning views on the general nature of Citizenship Education, Austrian scholars mostly developed and favored approaches which combined different disciplines of social studies instead of a narrower focus on political science or novel conceptions of democratic education (Feyerer, 2015).

The legal foundation of citizenship education can be derived from the Federal Constitutional Law (§14 Bundesverfassungsgesetz), which defines that the fundamental values of all school-based education are democracy, humanity, solidarity, peace, justice, openness, and tolerance towards everyone regardless of race, social status, and financial status background. Young people are to be encouraged to be open-minded towards other people and other ideas and become able to

participate in cultural and economic life in Austria, Europe, and the world. In addition, the School Organization Act, which came into force in 1962, requires all Austrian schools to prepare students for "independent acquisition of knowledge," "independent acquisition of education", "independent formation of judgment", "social judgment", and "social understanding." Furthermore, students are to be educated to become "healthy" citizens who are "open to the political and ideological thinking of others" and "enabled to participate in the economic and cultural life of Austria, Europe, and the world" (§ 2, SchOG).

Beyond these general goals, the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) first released an official decree ('Grundsatzterlass') for the implementation of Citizenship Education in schools in 1978. However, in this decree Citizenship Education was not introduced as an independent subject, but only as a teaching principle to be respected in the context of other subjects. This led to a number of issues, since the decree did not assign clear responsibilities, lacked information on the exact nature of implementation, and prevented the development of formal training programs for teachers. Yet, the decree remained as the status quo for decades and was even renewed in its official version in 1994.

A major change impacting the status of Citizenship Education in schools was the lowering of the voting age from 18 to 16 in 2007. Concerns on the maturity of young voters caused many to advocate for stronger efforts in preparing students for their roles as citizens in a democratic society (Stornig, 2021). Therefore, a combined subject of History and Social Studies / Citizenship Education (Geschichte und Sozialkunde/Politische Bildung) was introduced in 2008 along with a competence model developed by a government-ordered commission of scientists (Kramer et al., 2008). This model defined key competences in four areas: 1) Expertise (Sachkompetenz), 2) Methods (Methodenkompetenz), Judgement (Urteilskompetenz), and 4) Action (Handlungskompetenz).

In addition, the BMBWF updated its initial decree in 2015 and introduced a systematic outline of Citizenship eEducation based upon a model of three pillars:

- 1) Implementation of Citizenship Education as an independent subject or as part of a combined subject,
- 2) Implementation of Citizenship Education as a guiding principle within schools and self-representation of student bodies,
- 3) Implementation of Citizenship Education as a teaching principle for all subjects.

The general goals include, among others, the safeguarding and development of democracy, the ability to detect and potentially change societal imbalances, or to develop an interest to actively participate in society. Learning processes and materials should relate to the reality of students, address currently relevant issues, represent the current state of scientific consensus, and include aspects of critical (digital) media coverage and usage.

On the level of practical implementation, citizenship education should enable students to develop the key competences outlined above. Moreover, it should offer the chance to make meaningful experiences, form and articulate independent opinions, practice critical self-

reflection, respect and acknowledge different positions, and critically evaluate the role of media. Moreover, the decree directly refers to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010) and other international references, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In addition, parallels to the competencies of the RFCDC model can be found, mainly on the level of values and attitudes but also on the level of skills and knowledge/critical understanding. However, the RFCDC is currently not officially integrated into national educational guidelines beyond the status of references despite growing interest and mentions from governmental platforms such as *polis* (<https://www.politik-lernen.at>) (Steininger, 2022).

Institutionally, aspects of citizenship education may be introduced on the primary level within the subject of general studies ('Sachunterricht'). However, the exact competences and objects remain vague and are usually at the discretion of individual schools ('Schulautonome Lehrplanbestimmungen'). As part of the reforms, Citizenship Education as an integrated subject with history (Geschichte und Politische Bildung) has further been introduced at the lower and upper secondary level. Between grades 6 to 12/13, students will have mandatory classes on a scale of 1 or 2 hours a week, depending on their respective school type and grade.

In summary, despite partaking in academic debates on the nature and goals of Citizenship Education, official implementation in formal education was deficitary for the largest part of Austrian history since WW2. However, reforms in recent history greatly improved this situation by making Citizenship Education an official, albeit combined subject instead of a mere teaching principle. A study in 2014 still revealed large deficits in implementation and competences reported by teachers (Larcher/ Zandonella, 2014). The future success of political efforts to provide clearer instructions and guidelines remains unclear as of now. Regarding the specific promotion of democratic competencies in a narrow sense, transnational developments such as the RFCDC are receiving attention by official representatives as well as non-formal stakeholders alike. However, they do not currently possess a legally binding nature and, therefore, rather serve as an inspiration or additional information for teachers and educators. Learning assessments remain largely traditional by strongly focusing on the oral or written examination of objective knowledge rather than the ongoing evaluation of developments in competences. At the same time, even teachers often report struggles in adapting to newer developments in citizenship education and competence-based teaching in general (Eder & Hofmann, 2012; Feyerer, 2015; Fahrwald, 2020). Currently a new initiative "Trust in Science and Democracy" was started in 2022 by the Ministry of Education (<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Aktuelles/NB--TrUSD22.html>). Changes in teacher education and training, such as the introduction of citizenship education courses in universities, may improve these issues in the future.

Since 2020 an emerging network of Service-Learning Schools is growing in Upper Austria, which tries to pilot new formats of citizenship education referring to international standards (<https://ph-ooe.at/demokratieinschule>). This project is supported by a new foundation in Vienna ('Sinnbildungsstiftung'), who can be seen as an innovative actor for promoting new forms of Citizenship Education in Austria as well.

5.2 Germany

5.2.1 The Educational System in Germany

Due to historical reasons and the federal government structure in Germany, the educational system is highly complex. Legislation regarding the structure and organization of formal education is under the authority of each individual state (Bundesland). Each of the 16 states has its own educational ministry responsible for the implementation of educational policies, the supervision of schools and universities, the examination of teacher trainees, and other matters. On a federal level, the educational ministers of all states may gather in a voluntary assembly (Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)) to discuss shared goals or directives across different states. However, since the KMK is not an official body of the federal government, all decisions or directives require individual implementation within each state. Given the federal design of Germany's educational system, the different school types or names may vary across each state. In addition, educational facilities may be run by public (state or town administration) or licensed private (religious institutions or other registered societies and organizations) providers. Yet, public institutions dominate the landscape with shares of over 90 % depending on the state (Kraul, 2014). Homeschooling is generally illegal in Germany and school attendance is mandatory until a minimum age depending on individual state legislation.

In correspondence to preschools in English-speaking countries, children may voluntarily attend *Kindergarten* prior to entering elementary school (Grundschule) and, thereby, the system of formal and mandatory education. This option is chosen by most parents, with almost over 90 % of all children between the ages of 3 and 6 attending public or private preschools in each state (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022).

Afterwards, children usually enter primary education through elementary schools between the age of 5 and 7 depending on the individual state of cognitive and emotional development, as well as parental choice. The duration of elementary schooling usually comprises grades 1 until 4 (except for the states of Berlin and Brandenburg, where students may attend elementary school until grade 6). The overarching goals of primary education are the development of basic learning and working abilities as well as fundamental skills and knowledge with a focus on the main subjects of mathematics, language, and general studies, thus, preparing students for further secondary education.

Upon completion of elementary school, students will enter mandatory secondary education through various options of school types depending on the respective federal state, as well as their previous academic performance and parental input. These usually vary in their duration, educational goals, and taught subjects. The most common types include:

- **Hauptschule / Mittelschule:** Grades 5 to 9 or 10, offering general education with a stronger focus on practical skills, preparing students for subsequent apprenticeships and vocational school (Berufsschule)
- **Realschule:** Grades 5 to 10, offering general education with more elements of academic studies, preparing students for subsequent apprenticeships and vocational schools or optional advanced vocational schools (Fachoberschule), which grant (limited) access to university studies upon completion.
- **Gymnasium:** Grades 5 to 12 or 13, offering general education with a strong emphasis on academic studies, preparing students for subsequent attendance of universities (Universität or Hochschule)

In addition, certain states may offer comprehensive schools (Gesamtschulen), which combine elements of the different school types outlined above. As indicated, vocational schools function as accompanying educational institutions during or after secondary school, commonly preparing students for specific jobs in a dual-system or offering university entrance qualification outside the normal pathway through Gymnasium. It is further important to note that most school types may offer different profiles or tracks based on specific interests and talents. These may include a stronger focus on foreign languages, natural and technical sciences, economics and social studies, sports, or arts, beyond mandatory subjects. In addition, schools for students with special educational needs (sonderpädagogische Bildungseinrichtungen) provide general education and preparation for vocational training while providing additional assistance for various disabilities.

Germany – 2022/2023

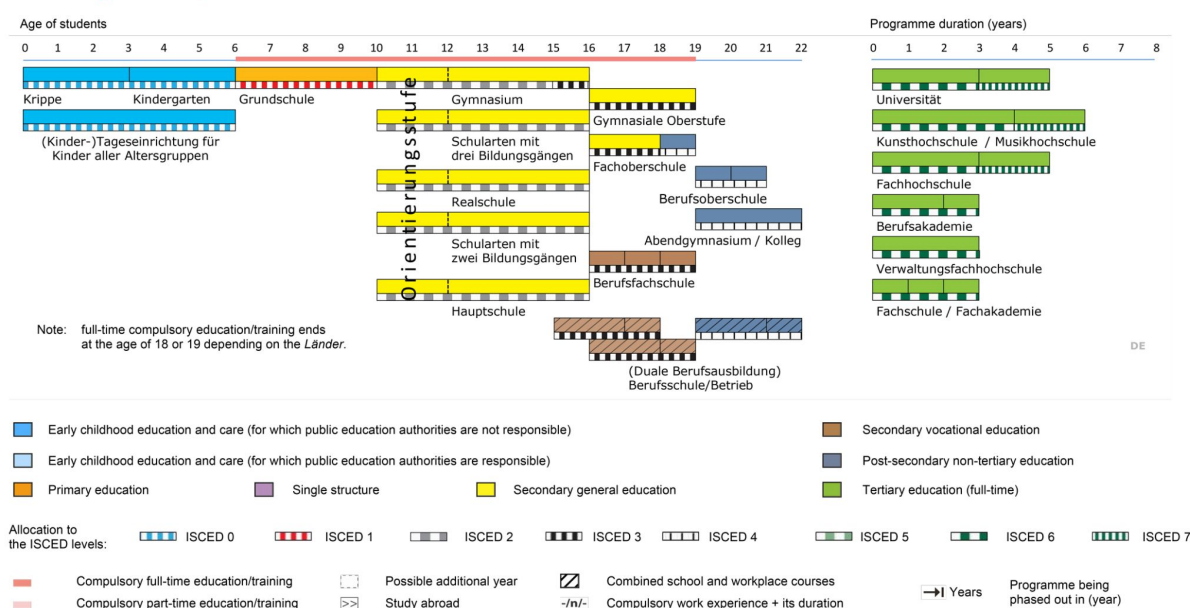


Figure 2: German educational system (European Commission/Eurydice, 2023)

In most federal states teachers in public schools are usually employed as state employees or civil servants (Beamte) for lifetime, granting certain privileges such as high requirements for job termination and special health and pension plans, as well as putting restrictions such as having no right to strike or being limited in their political engagement. Their recruitment commonly takes place through specific university studies (Lehramtsstudium), focusing on specific subjects and school types in addition to courses in general education and psychology with a subsequent training period (Referendariat) and state exam. Recruitment of teachers outside this system (Quereinsteiger) is mostly conducted on the basis of specific need for specific subjects or school types and often includes certain limits for candidates without state exams.

While curricula and schoolbooks for each school type, subject, and grade are usually implemented and licensed by the state ministry, schools and teachers nevertheless possess choices and a certain range of autonomy on how to interpret these sources and how to design and conduct their lessons (Altrichter, Rürup & Schuchart, 2016; Herzmann & König, 2015). However, the amount of self-perceived autonomy and desire for control varies, especially when compared to other European countries (Erss, Kalmus & Autio, 2016; Wermke & Paulsrud, 2019). Yet, the institutional circumstances generally provide the formal structure to implement Service-Learning in all school types, grades and subjects to foster democratic competencies, even if not mandated by curricula or textbooks.

In Germany, there are also various alternative schools and pedagogical approaches that differentiate themselves from the traditional school systems.

This includes private religious schools belonging to different faiths, such as Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Islamic schools. Some of these schools receive financial support from religious organizations.

Montessori schools are based on the educational principles of Maria Montessori and emphasize individual student development, self-determination, and hands-on learning methods.

Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner schools originate from Waldorf education, developed by Rudolf Steiner, emphasize holistic education, artistic expression, and the development of personality.

Apart from progressive educational approaches, there are 'Freie Alternativschulen', which function as independent schools in Germany and have developed their own pedagogical concepts. These schools can be founded by parents, teachers, and local

communities and often have a democratic approach in which students are involved in decision-making processes.

‘Jenaplan schools’ also exist and are based on the educational concept of Peter Petersen and emphasize social learning, teamwork, and alternating between collaborative and individual learning.

Inspired by the Sudbury Valley School in the USA, these forms of school are also being constituted in Germany. These schools follow the principle of student autonomy. The students decide what, how and when they want to learn. Democratic schools are also a special form of school, where students have a voice in all aspects of school life, including curriculum and rulemaking.

The state requirements for alternative schools in Germany can vary depending on the federal state and the type of school. As explained earlier, the education system in Germany is federally organized, which means that each state has its own education laws and regulations that set the framework for schools.

Alternative schools must be recognized by the respective education authorities of the federal state in order to receive state support and funding. Recognition usually depends on meeting certain educational standards and quality criteria.

Most states require alternative schools to create a curriculum that covers the basic educational goals and content set forth in state educational standards. However, in doing so, alternative schools often have the flexibility to adapt the curriculum to their educational principles. This makes it easier to integrate new teaching methods like Service-Learning projects. Accordingly, Service-Learning can be easily integrated into existing curricula and become an integral part of school development and culture.

As a rule, teachers at alternative schools must have the same qualifications as teachers at public schools. This means that they should have completed a state teacher education program. If a private school is recognized, all common state-recognized degrees of the federal state can also be acquired there. Alternative schools usually have to ensure that their students can take state exams to obtain school diplomas that are recognized by universities and employers.

Funding for alternative schools can vary by state. Some schools receive full state funding, while others receive partial or no state support. It is notable that, unlike public schools, private schools charge tuition to cover costs.

The representative survey "Das Deutsche Schulbarometer" (The German School Barometer) commissioned by the Robert Bosch Foundation asked teachers at general and vocational schools about various aspects of schools in June 2023. With regard to digitalization in schools, the teachers stated that internet connections at schools had improved significantly compared to the 2020 survey, but 50% of the teachers still see a great need for improvement in the technical equipment at schools. It is clear that schools

in a more disadvantaged environment, where more than half of the parents receive state transfer payments, are also disadvantaged in terms of digital infrastructure. But it is precisely these pupils who are less likely to have the necessary devices or internet connections at home for learning with digital tools. Therefore, 61% of teachers see a great need for improvement here. 40% of teachers at schools in difficult situations state that they themselves also have a need for improvement in the equipment with digital service devices (Robert Bosch Foundation, 2023).

5.2.2 Citizenship Education in German Schools

It's worth noting that approaches to citizenship education can vary significantly among the 16 federal states in Germany, as education is largely a matter for the states rather than the federal government. Nonetheless, there are common aims and guidelines that all states generally follow. The overarching goal of citizenship education in Germany is to promote civic virtues and active participation in democratic processes. It aims not only to improve knowledge but also to encourage attitudes and skills that are essential for the functioning of a democratic society. However, in Germany, different approaches are included in the international term "Citizenship Education":

- "Politische Bildung" (civic education) refers to processes, initiatives, or school subjects that aim to foster political maturity, guided by democratic core values such as human dignity, justice, equality, peace, solidarity, emancipation, and freedom with a strong focus on the individual development of each student. Civic education enhances the ability to assess political reality critically and reflectively in terms of the implementation of democratic principles. It develops skills for political participation and for shaping democratic processes. Unlike other forms of citizenship education, civic education is neither affirmative nor neutral (BMFSFJ, 2020, p. 527).
- "Demokratiepädagogik" refers to initiatives, concepts, programs and activities in practice and science that pursue the goal of promoting education for democracy primarily through experiencing democracy. Democracy is not innate but must be learned. For Demokratiepädagogik, democracy and children's rights as well as human rights are closely linked (Krappmann 2012). They can only be realized together. Regarding the competences to be acquired, the RFCDC (see section 3) has now become more popular in the field of Demokratiepädagogik.

Citizenship Education in Germany takes place at four different levels in schools: At the level of school culture, students must be given a chance for real participation and experience their own democratic self-efficacy. A democratic school culture is characterized by the active work of the student council, supported by the school administration, which is not limited to the organization of the annual school festival, but offers all students the opportunity to participate through working groups. For the student council to work actively, the class representative elections must be taken seriously and, if possible, direct student representative elections must be held at all schools. These elections must be used as a learning occasion for democratic participation processes. Unfortunately, the reality in schools today is often still quite different. Class representative elections are a chore and are conducted as quickly as possible and without much effort (Everding, 2018, 42). In addition to a democratic school culture, Citizenship Education should also be realized as a cross-curricular principle in the combination of subjects or in each individual subject. If citizenship education is to be realized as a cross-curricular principle, as already demanded by a resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in 1952, the subjects which per se have a greater connection to Citizenship Education should be considered first. These certainly include history, geography, and economics, but also German, ethics and religion as well as music and art. But Civic Education can also take place in all other subjects. Finally, conceptual interpretative knowledge should be acquired in citizenship education. In addition to conceptual interpretative knowledge, however, political judgment and the ability to act politically should also be promoted. When promoting political judgment, care should be taken to ensure that the three-step process of *visualization - analysis - judgment* is carried out as comprehensively as possible. Political action can be analytically differentiated into communicative political action (conversations, discussions, etc. about politics) and participative political action (use of conventional and unconventional participation opportunities).

There are different models of competences for Citizenship Education in Germany. In addition to the RFCDC of the Council of Europe (see section 3), various competence models are used primarily in the 16 curricula of the federal states. Since the PISA study in 2000, the change from input orientation to output orientation in the school sector has also been intensively discussed in German educational practice and science under the keyword "competence orientation". Whereas previously the focus was on the question of what knowledge should be acquired, now it is on the question of what competences the learners themselves should develop and continuously expand. In Civic Education, various competing models have been drafted over time (GPJE model (GPJE 2004), core competencies for the upper secondary level (Gymnasiale Oberstufe) (Behrmann/Grammes/Reinhardt/Hampe 2004), political competence model (Detjen et. al. 2012), competence model of the Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik (Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik 2017)). Prior to this academic debate, the individual federal states integrated their own competency models for citizenship education into the curricula. Political judgment is found in all curricula without exception as a competence to be

promoted, political action and social science methodological competence in almost all curricula.

Since the late 1970s, the 'Beutelsbach Consensus' has represented the general guidelines for democratic civic education. To understand it, a brief review of the history of German civic education after the Second World War is helpful (cf. for example Sander 2003). From 1945 onwards, a democratically oriented citizenship education developed in Germany, which had a common fixed point in its demarcation from citizenship education as a form of indoctrination, especially in the Third Reich. However, in the course of academisation (establishment of professorships, etc.) and the development of the first didactic concepts, ideological differences between more left-wing and more conservative approaches to civic education also became apparent, which became more pronounced above all in the course of the 1960s and 1970s. In order to sound out whether and to what extent an understanding on common basic requirements and principles of Citizenship Education could be found despite the different basic positions, the Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg invited to a conference in Beutelsbach in 1976. However, the principles summarized in the Beutelsbach Consensus were not 'decided' at the conference, but 'distilled' from the contributions and discussions of the event by Hans-Georg Wehling (Wehling 1977) for the conference documentation (on the history of the Beutelsbach Consensus, see Pohl/Will 2016; Widmaier/Zorn 2016).

The Beutelsbach Consensus comprises three principles: (1) prohibition of overpowering, (2) controversy, (3) student orientation. According to the prohibition of overpowering, it is not allowed to impose a certain view on students. Educators should enable them to form their own judgment. Therefore, in accordance with the principle of controversy, what is controversial in science and politics must also be presented controversially in the classroom. According to the student orientation, the students should be put in a position to analyze a political situation and their own interests, as well as to look for ways and means to influence the existing political situation in the sense of their interests. Especially the aspect of student orientation can be realized well with the method of Service-Learning.

Since the publication of the conference documentation, the Beutelsbach Consensus has been the subject of sometimes lively discussions (cf. Schiele & Schneider 1987; Schiele & Schneider 1996; most recently Widmaier & Zorn 2016). On the one hand, it was praised, and it was pointed out that consensus, if it did not already exist, would have to be invented (most recently following Schiele/Oberle 2016: 257); on the other hand, it was repeatedly criticized. One recurring point of criticism is that the flip side of the controversy requirement is a neutrality requirement that contributes to the depoliticization of Citizenship Education because real power and dominance relations are not sufficiently taken into account (cf. Hammermeister 2016). However, these are misinterpretations (Hoffmann 2016: 197; cf. also Salomon 2016: 286; Sander 2016: 297).

Accordingly, it does not follow from the controversial presentation of lesson content that the teacher is not allowed to have and show his or her own positions.

Service-Learning is rooted to some extent in the German education system, though it has yet to achieve full integration and comprehensive implementation. It is commonly seen as a valuable tool to prepare students in schools and university students for their role as active and responsible citizens. In primary and secondary education, Service-Learning is often applied as part of the regular curriculum – within one of the six quality standards (see paragraph 2) – or as an addition in interdisciplinary school projects. The method may be used in all subjects, but also in cross-disciplinary projects. The Foundation "Lernen durch Engagement" (Service-Learning) (<https://www.servicelearning.de>) initiated a network in 2006, which offers schools a platform to meet and exchange experiences regarding Service-Learning. In addition, partners from civil society and stakeholders from educational administration provide schools with professional advice and accompany them in the implementation process. Moreover, some also run Service-Learning competence centers in their respective regions, which are further supported by volunteer agencies, community foundations, non-profit associations, or school development consultants. Within the network, participants exchange experiences and materials, learn from each other, and drive the quality dissemination and further development of Service-Learning together. Until 2023, the Foundation "Lernen durch Engagement" has concluded official cooperation agreements with ministries of education of six federal states.

Furthermore, the school prize "Lernen durch Engagement" (Service-Learning) annually awards certain schools for excellent pedagogical work along the six quality standards (see paragraph 2).

Service-Learning as a method is also used at Universities of Applied Sciences and universities in Germany. Students combine academic learning with social engagement, thereby intertwining theory and practice. However, the method is still rather marginally anchored in teacher training. To support ongoing efforts in this context, a network has also been established in the sector of higher education. This network is called "Bildung durch Verantwortung e.V." (Education through Responsibility) (<https://netzwerk-bdv.de/>) regards itself as a platform for offering informed advice, consultation and exchange to promote new formats in the areas of teaching and learning, transfer, and research. These formats include, among others, Service-Learning, Community Based Research, Social Entrepreneurship Education, Campus-Community-Partnerships, real-world labs, and Education for Sustainable Development. These networks, both in the school and university sectors, are essential platforms for the exchange of experience-based knowledge in Germany.

Service-Learning has lately also influenced educational policy papers in the Federal Republic of Germany. On October 11, 2018, after intense discussions, two resolutions of

particular importance for Service-Learning were adopted by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK):

- a) „Demokratie als Ziel, Gegenstand und Praxis historisch-politischer Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule“ (Democracy as a goal, subject, and practice of historical-citizenship education in schools) (KMK 2018a)
- b) „Menschenrechtsbildung in der Schule“ (Human rights education in schools) (KMK 2018b)

The KMK, founded in 1948 as the "Permanent Conference," primarily serves as a "tool for self-coordination" between the different states, who each possess autonomy over their educational systems. The federal states, which have established themselves in a unique way as independent state entities in the design of education, science, art, and culture in the public sector, use this "Permanent Conference" to identify and politically operationalize elements of commonality in their work despite the differences in their political intentions and goals. As stated on the KMK's website, "For all measures whose effects go beyond state borders, they coordinate with the aim of creating or maintaining commonality and comparability." Since the KMK possesses no legal authority, recommendations and resolutions are the main tools with implementation up to the individual states. Nevertheless, the resolutions and agreements take effect as a political obligation and as a guideline for the actions of the individual states (Beutel/ Gloe 2021).

In the revised version of the first resolution, the theoretically substantive definition of the educational goal "Democracy" is commendable. Democracy is not just presented as a "form of rule" (KMK 2018a, p. 2) based on public votes, but rather in a way of governing that ensures active minority protection and plurality. The issues of migration and refugees are addressed and identified as sources and opportunities for cultural enrichment and diversity. Digitalization is also mentioned in the preamble, which represents the core of modernization by the KMK, as a societal driver with various challenges, underscoring the need for democratic education.

A second section is dedicated to objectives and principles. The resolution and the subject of democratic education are interpreted in terms of values with reference to the German Basic Law's catalog of fundamental rights and the Böckenförde theorem (KMK 2018a, p. 4). According to the latter, the democratic government cannot secure its existence and future existence from within itself but requires active support and upholding. This requires political and democratic education of all citizens.

The third section addresses measures. Among other things, the KMK directly recommends Service-Learning as one specific measure. The resolution devotes three pages to the aspects of implementation in schools, emphasizing the entire repertoire of current discussions on school quality development. Regrettably, the focus is mainly on goals and potential approaches, with little attention devoted to the necessary

prerequisites required such as time, staff, or funding. Yet, these aspects are among the most addressed by actual practitioners.

From the perspective of Service-Learning actors, the sections of particular importance in the KMK recommendation "Human rights education in schools" aim to enable students to experience self-efficacy in relation to human rights in schools. For example, the recommendation states: "They [the federal states] encourage schools to develop projects and structures to give students the opportunity to formulate and perceive their rights and to take responsibility for shaping school life" (KMK 2018b, p. 5).

Recommendations for the use of Service-Learning can also be found in manuals of different ministries of education, namely Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin-Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Rheinland-Pfalz, and Sachsen-Anhalt. For the most part, these manuals reference supplementary materials and support for the Foundation "Lernen durch Engagement" (Service-Learning). In other federal states, however, no direct mentions of Service-Learning or evidence for support for the method can be found.

5.3 Greece

5.3.1 The Educational System in Greece

In Greece, the constitutional principle of free education to all citizens at every level of the state is upheld, with the education system being centralized and governed by national laws, passed by the Parliament, and by legislative acts like ministerial decisions (European Commission, Eurydice, 2023). The overall responsibility for education, concerning the Greek Constitution, rests with the Ministry of National Education and Religion which is the central educational authority that formulates and oversees the national policy on education. It prepares the legislation concerning the educational area and is responsible for the implementation of the laws and the consequent administrative decisions. Its responsibility is to define, evaluate and create the conditions to meet the educational needs that characterize Greek society. The educational policy making includes the creation of the curriculum, allotment of teaching time, distribution of textbooks, placement of teachers and other school staff, as well as school funding (European Commission, Eurydice, 2023).

Greece – 2022/2023

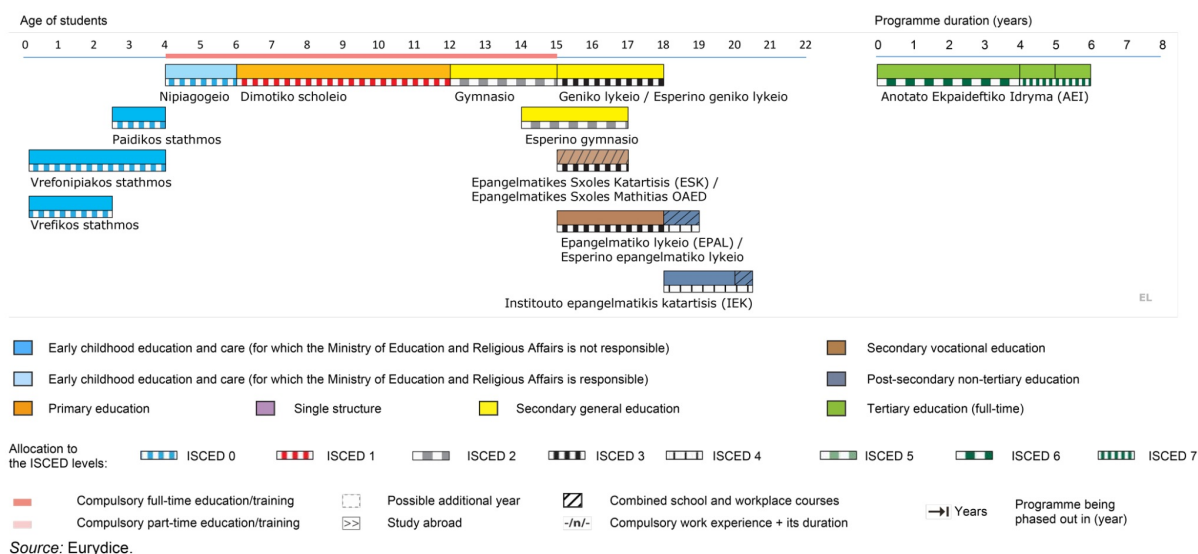


Figure 3: Greek educational system (European Commission/Eurydice, 2023)

Additionally, certain responsibilities and duties have been assigned to public organizations and other educational offices that report directly to the Ministry such as the Pedagogical Institute, the Organization of School Buildings, the Textbook Publishing Organization, the Educational Research Center, and the Teacher Training Organization (European Commission, 2022).

Primary and Secondary education is also administered by Regional Educational Authorities, Educational Offices, Educational Desks, and School Units.

Regional education authorities contribute to national educational policy making at the regional level. They coordinate and oversee the implementation of the educational policy for primary and secondary education around their region. There are thirteen (13) Regional Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education in Greece, each of them operating an active role in the Greek educational system. In detail, the regional authorities handle some procedural aspects, such as cancellations of courses due to exceptional circumstances, approval of school trips, the establishment of school committees, approval of twinning with schools abroad, management of their financial accounts, etc. (European Committee of the Regions, n.d.)

Every school unit in Greece is managed by the principal, the vice-principal, and the association of teachers. Firstly, the principal oversees the smooth operation of the school, the regulation of school life, the observance of laws, circulars, and official orders, as well as the implementation of the decisions of the teachers' association. The principal also participates in the evaluation of the work of the schoolteachers and cooperates with the school counselors. The vice-principal replaces the principal and their duties when they are absent. Lastly, the teachers' association, made up of all the teachers and chaired

by the school director, is a collective body for setting directions aiming at the best implementation of the educational policy and the best functioning of the school.

The Institute of Educational Policy (I.E.P.) is an executive scientific body that operates for the benefit of public interest and supports the Ministry of Education on issues regarding 'primary and secondary education, post-secondary education, the transition from secondary to higher education, teacher training, student dropout, and early school leaving' (European Commission, Eurydice, 2022). Any actions or decisions taken by the Ministry of Education departments or the other agencies under its supervision require cooperation with the I.E.P., as it provides continuous support on scientific and technical issues, relevant educational policy planning, and implementation.

To fulfill its purpose I.E.P. cooperates with the agencies of the Ministry of Education, the National Council of Education and Development of Human Resources, Higher Educational Institutes, and particularly with their educational departments, other research bodies, educational advisory councils, second-level teacher unions, institutions and organizations both in Greece and abroad, as well as with other Public or Private sector agencies which have a relevant mission.

I.E.P. is the only institution in Greece in charge of the creation and promotion of new curricula in primary and secondary education as well as of the adaptation of schoolteachers' in-service training and retraining according to the educational policy's criteria set by I.E.P. in coordination with the Ministry of Education (I.E.P., n.d.).

According to Greek law, education is mandatory for nine years, including 6 years of primary and 3 years of secondary education. After those nine years, students have the choice to continue their studies by attending three more years of non-mandatory secondary education in Lyceum. (Hatziefstratiou, 2005)

Primary education in Greece consists of preschools('nipiagogeio') and basic education/primary schools. 'Nipiagogeio' has become mandatory for all children of 4 years old since 2018/2019 (European Commission, Eurydice, 2022). Preschool education is represented by centers for infants ('vrefikoi stathmoi'), infants and children ('vrefonipiakoi stathmoi') and children ('paidikoi stathmoi'). These centers provide services for children ranging from 2 months old to the age at which compulsory education begins.

Primary school / Basic education is mandatory, addresses students 6-12 years of age and has a duration of 6 years. It is separated into six different classes which last one year each. Basic education aims at supporting the mental and physical development of students while rendering them capable of expanding their critical thinking, problem-solving, and developing their abilities in spoken and written language. Each class consists of a maximum of 25 students and one teacher is assigned to each class. (IV.Structure of the training system, n.d.)

Secondary education is composed of lower and higher secondary education. Lower secondary education which in Greece is called “Gymnasium” lasts for three years and is for students of 12 years of age. Higher secondary education is called Lyceum and is addressed to students 15-18 years old.

Participation in Gymnasium is compulsory for three years. There are three classes with a duration of one year each. Participation in Lyceum on the other hand is not mandatory, as students get to choose whether they want to continue their studies or not. It also lasts for three years and consists of three with a one-year duration each. There are 30 educational hours each week distributed into approximately 7 academic hours of lessons every day.

5.3.2 Democratic Citizenship Education in Greece

In Greece, the incorporation of democratic principles in schools is essential, considering the country's historical contribution in the development of democracy and democratic processes. However, despite the efforts made by some schools, the educational system of the country that is under the control of the government poses significant challenges in implementing democratic processes that enhance students' competencies in terms of active citizenship. Only a few public schools, and some private ones, manage to incorporate democratic principles into everyday school life, regardless of the state-controlled educational system. Democracy is mainly reflected in the curriculum related to citizenship education rather than in good practices of democracy implemented in classrooms (Papaoikonomou, A. 2022). To be more specific, the implementation of democratic citizenship education in Greece involves both independent subjects dedicated solely to the topic, as well as an integrated approach that incorporates democratic principles and values across other subjects in the curriculum.

In the school curriculum of primary and secondary education, citizenship and democratic education appear as specific compulsory subjects called 'Social and political education' in Grades 5 and 6 of primary school (Chadjipantelis, T., & Papaoikonomou, A. 2018), and 'Social and Civic Education' in the gymnasium. Both subjects aim to help young students understand the contemporary social and political reality as well as to encourage them to become active and engaged citizens. Moreover, since 2021 a new compulsory course is being taught in the lower secondary education, the "Skills Workshops". The "Skills Workshops" – divided into four thematic units: Environment, Well-being, Social awareness and responsibility, and Technology and creative thinking – focuses on the cultivation of general skills so that students are not just passive recipients of knowledge, but learn how to use their knowledge, how to discover new knowledge, how to set goals, how to cooperate and how to take initiative (Skills Workshop, I.E.P., 2021).

The democratic citizenship education is not only taught as a standalone subject as it is also integrated into other subjects, such as social studies, economics and history to ensure that the principles of democracy are taught and help students better understand how democracy is linked to various aspects of society.

The promotion of democratic competencies in Greek schools has been a persistent matter. Despite some endeavors to encourage good practices, there is still a significant need for improvement. Nevertheless, there are positive advancements that indicate a move towards more contemporary approaches that can effectively address the constantly evolving world's challenges. To begin with, the State has doubled the number of Model Schools and Experimental Schools which are considered contemporary hubs that promote creativity and democracy through good new practices. In this model new curricula and timetables, teaching tools, textbooks, teaching methods, and ways of operating the school unit are tested. They assist the demands of the educational system in research and educational needs and the dissemination of good educational practices (Newspaper of the Government of the Greek Republic, 2021).

Moreover, in every secondary school, student elections are held every year for the election of the student's council, which is convened for students to discuss and decide on common problems. In each class a council of five members ('pentameles') is elected which represents the class in the school community and manages internal issues that may arise. Furthermore, a body of fifteen members, the general council ('dhekapentameles'), is elected from the whole school which represents all students as a whole and makes decisions regarding important issues or organizes school events. This body, which is inextricably linked to the educational process, constitute the space for the development of student initiative within the school, a cell of democratic life, where students, through dialogue and participation, in a spirit of cooperation, practice the democratic process and their participation in the community, studying and proposing solutions to the problems that concern them.

The last few years, a new discussion has emerged in Greece in the last decade regarding Schools as Learning Organizations (SLO) that can effectively deal with the new challenges of our constantly changing world and provide higher-quality education. There is a constantly growing interest among scholars and researchers in SLO in Greece and an overview of some small-scale projects indicates that the concept is applicable in some regions (Papazoglou, A., Koutouzis, M. 2020).

Furthermore, the centers of non-formal education in Greece, have a mere but noticeable role in the educational process. ARSIS's -EDUs are some of Greece's Non-Formal Education centers that provide refugee students support and guidance to enter public schools. EDUs also function as remedial teaching centers for all students in cooperation with the faculty of the school (Arsis. n.d.).

Finally, more and more schools in Greece participate in exchange or training programs, mainly funded by the European Commission, and promote and develop democratic competencies and strengthen education and youth systems. Indicatively, according to the European Commission, in 2019, 1079 participants benefited from mobility in school education, 4339 in vocational education and training, whereas 1494 school staff also participated in such programs (European Commission, 2020).

The introduction of Service-Learning for democratic citizenship education in Greece should be approached as a progressive and steady process to ensure sustainable and meaningful results. It is important to acknowledge that the Greek educational system is relatively unfamiliar with non-formal education methods such as Service-Learning. Therefore, there is a need to develop an analysis and framework that concretizes the educational and behavioral outcomes and influences on students. This will provide a solid foundation for the implementation of Service-Learning initiatives and help address any potential challenges or complications that may arise.

In Greece, the structural architecture of the formal educational system does not allow the implementation of innovative and informal methods of learning mostly because of the strict curriculum and the reduced flexibility given to teachers and educators to implement new practices individually. If there is an educational framework that can experiment with Service-Learning and test its effects, that is the framework of Model and Experimental Schools. Model and Experimental Schools are educational units that take over the responsibility of piloting the implementation of new and innovative educational policies and thus contribute to the cultivation of student-based and effective new educational tools, methods, and practices, according to the Greek law 4610/2019. (Organization of General Lower Secondary Education – Eurydice, 2023). Experimental education has the advantage that it is not characterized by the strictness and the inflexibility of the formal curriculum. Experimental schools display some differences in contrast to traditional educational institutions in the way that they are meant to contribute to the transformation of the educational system by rendering it more efficient and innovative. By experimenting and practicing new educational methods, according to the effects on students, experimental schools evaluate the efficiency and adaptability of the aforementioned methods, in hopes that they will be afterwards channeled in the formal education system. The main areas of practice of model and experimental schools are research, training, and the exchange of good practices. In Greece, there are 19 model gymnasias and 18 model lyceia, while there are 16 experimental gymnasias and 9 experimental lyceia (Organization of General Lower Secondary Education – Eurydice, 2023).

When considering the appropriate educational level for the feasible introduction of Service-Learning in Greece, secondary education emerges as the most efficient option. Secondary education caters to students aged 15 to 18 and offers subjects that can readily incorporate Service-Learning activities. In particular, lower secondary education, known as Gymnasium, includes subjects like Geography and Social and Civic Education, which provide excellent opportunities for integrating Service-Learning initiatives. In addition to these subjects, there is a recent initiative called "Skills Workshops" that has been included in the educational framework by the Ministry of Education. The "Skills Workshops" are divided into four thematic units: Environment, Well-being, Social awareness and responsibility, and Technology and creative thinking (Skills Workshop, I.E.P., 2021). These workshops aim to enhance the cultivation of soft skills, life skills, and

technology and science skills among students. They seek to develop competences such as participation, creativity, action, and inclusiveness. Given the thematic focus of the Skills Workshops, Service-Learning activities can be effectively incorporated into lower secondary education, aligning with the topics addressed in the workshops.

When considering higher secondary education in Greece, certain subjects such as Civic Education, Mathematics, and Philosophy can serve as a foundation for integrating Service-Learning activities. These subjects provide an ideal platform for exploring civic responsibilities, ethical considerations, and societal issues, making them conducive to the incorporation of Service-Learning into the curriculum. By integrating Service-Learning activities into these subjects and the Skills Workshops, secondary education in Greece can offer students valuable opportunities to engage in community service, apply their knowledge in practical settings, develop essential skills, and foster a sense of active citizenship.

In conclusion, model and experimental schools can serve as a platform for experimenting with innovative practices like Service-Learning and the acquisition of democratic competences. These schools provide an ideal environment to test and refine such methods before they can be integrated into the formal and universal educational curriculum in Greece. It is worth noting that certain practices already exist in these schools that align with the principles and description of Service-Learning. However, they have not been officially recognized as such due to the general lack of awareness and understanding of Service-Learning in Greece. Moreover, the secondary education level in Greece is the most efficient option for introducing Service-Learning methods. In the secondary level there are some courses as well as the newly introduced program of Skills Workshops which could foster and support the implementation of Service-Learning activities.

5.4 Portugal

5.4.1 The Educational System in Portugal

The educational system in Portugal is organized into different levels. The foundation of the Education Act (1986) defines educational objectives, structures and modes of organization of Education in Portugal. The Ministry of Education (Ministério da Educação - ME) is the governmental department responsible for defining, coordinating, implementing and evaluating national policy regarding the education system (pre-school, basic, upper secondary and out-of-school education), as well as for articulating education policy with qualification and vocational training policies.

Portugal – 2022/2023

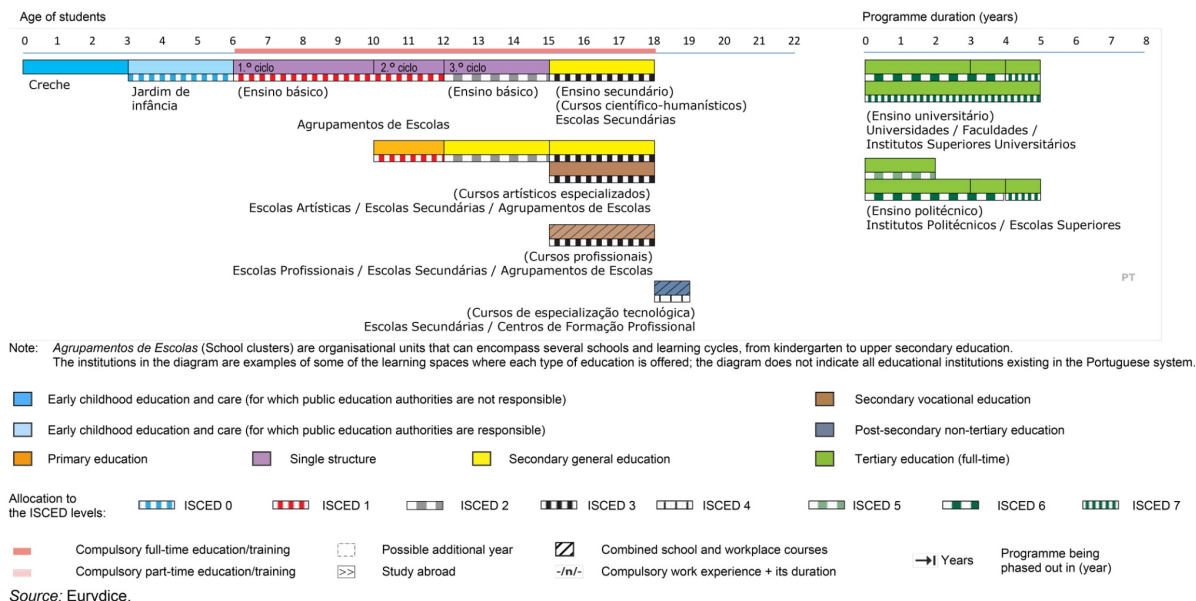


Figure 5: Portuguese educational system (European Commission/Eurydice, 2023)

The school network is organized into school clusters, which have their own administration and management bodies. They are made up of pre-school establishments, plus one or more teaching levels and cycles that share a common pedagogical project.

Compulsory education lasts 12 years, between the age of six and 18 or until the conclusion of upper secondary education. Public education is free and universal from the age of four, including the final years of pre-school. Lower secondary education in Portugal, known as "3º ciclo do Ensino Básico," is compulsory and typically spans three years, from grades 7 to 9. It follows the completion of 1º Cycle of Basic Education (grades 1 to 4) and 2º cycle (5 to 6) and precedes upper secondary education (grades 10 to 12).

The education system is comprehensive in structure involving long basic schooling with vocational choices at the beginning of upper secondary education (see image 1). In the first year of secondary education (aged 15 or over), students may choose: a) science-humanities courses; b) vocational courses; c) other education and training provision.

The curriculum of lower secondary education is designed to provide a broad and balanced education, emphasizing core subjects and introducing students to a wide range of disciplines. It includes Portuguese language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, foreign languages (usually English), physical education, arts, and technology.

Students in lower secondary education are assessed through continuous evaluation, which includes classroom tests, projects, presentations, and participation. Additionally, students may take national exams at the end of the 9th grade in Portuguese language and mathematics.

At the end of lower secondary education (3º ciclo do ensino básico), students are awarded a diploma of completion. To progress to upper secondary education, students must successfully complete lower secondary education and meet the requirements set by the education authorities.

Schools provide support services to cater to the diverse needs of students. These services may include special education support, counseling, and career guidance to help students make informed decisions about their educational and career paths.

Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, music, and clubs. These activities promote personal development, social skills, and provide opportunities for students to explore their interests and talents outside the classroom.

The use of technology in education is becoming increasingly prevalent in schools in Portugal. Every student attending a public school has access to a personal computer and internet connection provided by the state. Schools are incorporating digital tools and resources to enhance teaching and learning experiences, foster digital literacy, and prepare them for the digital age. National exams and national mid-term exams are held from this academic year (2022/2023) in electronic format.

Lower secondary schools in Portugal have a degree of autonomy in curriculum implementation, pedagogical approaches, and extracurricular activities. This autonomy allows schools to adapt to local needs and contexts while adhering to national educational goals and standards.

5.4.2 Democratic Citizenship Education in Portugal

Civic education in Portugal holds a significant place within the country's educational framework. Implemented in the school curriculum, democratic citizenship education is considered an important part of shaping young Portuguese citizens. The primary objective of this educational initiative is to instill active participation, critical thinking, and democratic values among students, fostering a society of informed and engaged individuals. Furthermore, it aims to promote critical thinking and the development of democratic values among students. There are specific areas and subjects in the curriculum that contribute to democratic citizenship education, namely Citizenship and Development, Civic Education and Philosophy, among others. These subjects provide opportunities for students to explore democratic values, human rights, social justice, and civic participation.

Through these subjects, students are provided with opportunities to explore democratic values, human rights, social justice, and civic participation, thereby enriching their understanding of the fundamental tenets of a democratic society based on different methods and activities.

Portugal's commitment to Civic Education is also reflected in its legal framework. The Portuguese Education Law of October 14, 1986, underscored civic education as a cornerstone of the national education system. This legislative foundation further demonstrates the country's dedication to nurturing responsible and informed citizens (Menezes et al., 1999: 486).

Civic education has been introduced into the curriculum over the years in different ways, culminating most recently in the subject of Citizenship and Development (CD), which is a compulsory subject in all nine years of education (up to the age of 15). In September 2017, Portugal implemented the National Strategy for Citizenship Education (Decree No. 6173/2016), which was published in the D.R., Series II.a, No. 90, on 10 May 2016. This strategy provides for the implementation of "Citizenship and Development" as a specific subject from 5th to 9th grade. In addition, this subject has been maintained as a cross-curricular area throughout the general education curriculum, in all grades, as outlined in the 2017 National Strategy. The strategy also defined specific learning objectives based on the 2017 European Commission (Eurydice) guidelines (Fioretti/ Cabral, 2023: 3).

For instance, in 1989, the Ministry of Education introduced a central educational reform to further strengthen Portugal's focus on civic education and outlined specific objectives for primary and secondary education: Interdisciplinary learning; a designated subject "personal and social development" (PSD) with one hour per week and as an alternative to "moral and religious education"; a set of extracurricular activities; an extracurricular area for project development ("school area"), which included 110 hours per year (Menezes et al., 1999: 486).

Microcultural history has since emerged as a key area of knowledge, responsible for fostering a deep understanding of and connection to the nation's roots. Additionally, the introduction of the aforementioned subject "personal and social development" (PSD) provided students with more options to explore essential life skills and ethical principles. This subject offered an alternative to "moral and religious education," recognizing the diverse beliefs and values within Portuguese society (ibid.: 487).

Furthermore, Civic Education was integrated into extracurricular activities, acknowledging the importance of practical, hands-on experiences in shaping responsible citizens. The creation of an extracurricular area for projects allocated dedicated time to strengthen school-community relations shows the initiative not only bolstered ties between educational institutions and their communities but also facilitated the practical application of knowledge, ensuring that classroom learning extended into real-world contexts (ibid.: 487).

In the realm of basic education, a specific national program for Civic Education was introduced for students in the 7th to 9th grades within the educational reform of 1989. This program aimed to provide comprehensive and targeted civic education, equipping young minds with the tools needed to navigate complex societal issues (ibid.: 487).

However, the implementation of Civic Education also introduced new challenges. Diverse social and literary groups held varying perspectives on the content and approach of personal and social development (PSE). While some emphasized the moral-ethical dimension, others advocated for a broader perspective that strongly encouraged critical reflection and informed decision-making. Despite these differences, the school system was recognized for its vital role in preparing the youth for active citizenship (Campos, 1991 in: Menezes, 1999: 487).

One additionally notable aspect of the Civic Education initiative was the introduction of citizenship education in the third cycle. This traditional program, however, lacked a unified national definition, leading to variations in its implementation across different regions. Despite these challenges, the overarching goal remained clear: to empower young Portuguese citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active and meaningful participation in the democratic processes that govern their society (ibid.: 491f.).

In summary, the place of the school as a space for promoting and exercising citizenship in Portugal has been the subject of intense discussion throughout its years of democracy, and its commitment to Civic Education has been evident over the years and throughout the different reforms implemented, covering various subjects, extracurricular activities and national programs (Menezes, I., 2003; 2007). By nurturing critical thinking, democratic values, and civic participation, Portugal's educational system plays an important role in shaping responsible and engaged citizens, ensuring a brighter and more informed future for the nation.

Therefore, in the Citizenship and Development (CD) component of the curriculum, teachers have the mission to prepare students for life, to be democratic, participative, and humanistic citizens, in a time of increasing social and cultural diversity, in order to promote tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as to suppress violent radicalism.

The stronger presence of citizenship in education configures, thus, the intention to ensure "a set of rights and duties that must be conveyed in the training of Portuguese children and young people so that in the future they will be adults with a civic conduct that favors equality in interpersonal relationships, the integration of the difference, respect for human rights and appreciation of values and concepts of national citizenship" (cf. Preamble of the Order No. 6173/2016, May 10).

The curriculum in Portugal emphasizes the development of ethical values, including respect, tolerance, equality, solidarity, and active citizenship. These values are incorporated into the teaching of various subjects, promoting a sense of responsibility,

empathy, and social awareness among students. Democratic citizenship education is not limited to a single subject but is integrated into various areas of the curriculum. It is promoted through cross-curricular themes and activities that cut across different subjects, encouraging students to connect knowledge and skills to real-life situations and societal issues. Teaching methods such as group discussions, debates, role-plays, and project-based learning are used to engage students and foster their understanding of democratic principles and practices.

For example, interviewees mentioned: the Food Bank - collaboration in food collection campaigns and voluntary work; organizing solidarity concerts; organizing solidarity fairs; “plogging” - jogging and picking up litter; Participatory Budgeting, etc.

Democratic citizenship education encourages students to engage with their local communities and participate in civic activities. Schools often collaborate with local organizations, inviting guest speakers, organizing community service projects, and facilitating interactions with community leaders to help students develop a sense of belonging and understanding of their roles as active citizens. Moreover, it emphasizes inclusivity and diversity, promoting respect for different cultures, beliefs, and perspectives. Democratic citizenship education aims to foster an understanding of the importance of inclusiveness, equality, and social cohesion in a democratic society.

The Ministry of Education provides guidelines and support to ensure the incorporation of democratic citizenship education in the curriculum and to promote its effective implementation, but schools vary in how they apply these guidelines.

The National Strategy on Education for Citizenship document (ENEC, 2017) is a reference document that integrates the Project of Autonomy and Curricular Flexibility, in convergence with the Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Education and the Essential Learning. These are the guiding models for democratic competences.

The Principles, the Areas of Competence and the Values defined in the Profile of students leaving compulsory Education (PA) converge to form the individual as a participatory citizen, starting the path of exercising citizenship throughout life. In turn, the Essential Apprenticeships list the knowledge, capacities, and attitudes to be developed by all the students, leading to the development of the competencies inscribed in the PA, within the framework of a process of promotion of curricular autonomy and flexibility.

Education constitutes a vital tool, aiming at the solid construction of students' humanistic education, so that they assume their citizenship guaranteeing the respect for basic democratic values and human rights, both at individual and social level.

National Strategy on Education for Citizenship document (ENEC) full document may be consulted here: <https://cidadania.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/pdfs/national-strategy-citizenship-education.pdf>

This document refers to several other international documents on citizenship, such as:

- From the European Union: Paris Declaration (Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination through Education of 17 March 2015) (http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf)
- Council of Europe: Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/ECidadania/Docs_referencia/edc_charter2_pt.pdf); Competences for Democratic Culture. Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/Source/competences/CDC_en.pdf)
- UN/UNESCO: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948) (United Nations (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948); Sustainable Development Goals, 2016-2030 (United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution A/ RES/70/1, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E); UNESCO – Global Citizenship Education. Preparing learners for the challenges of the twenty-first century (UNESCO (2014). Global citizenship education: Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century. Paris. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002277/227729E.pdf>)

Although the introduction of Service-Learning for democratic citizenship education can be most feasible and impactful in the secondary school, because students are more autonomous and mature, for students under the age of 15 years old this is also feasible.

Classes in the curriculum such as History, Geography, Citizenship and Development, and Portuguese Literature provide a suitable framework for discussing democratic principles, human rights, social justice, and civic participation, but not only these.

However, we must highlight the subject of Citizenship and Development in lower secondary education, since the areas/domains that are addressed are all related to democratic competences and should be worked on transversally in different subject areas.

A study carried out in Italy and Portugal by Fioretti & Cabral (2023) at lower secondary level shows a correlation between the leadership approach adopted by headteachers and the creation of a democratic learning environment. In particular, the leadership style of the headteacher emerges as a key factor that significantly influences the creation of an educational environment conducive to democratic learning. Consequently, it is imperative and a priority to actively involve school leaders in the design of service-learning projects. Furthermore, the training of school leaders in this methodology is crucial, especially in the context of the co-operative learning environments recommended in the curriculum. These learning environments are not only in line with

the objectives of the curriculum, but also promote the development of a democratic school culture.

Introducing Service-Learning during this time can help students develop important life skills, such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and empathy, which are highly valued in both academic and professional settings. It may also help them to give meaning to learning, contributing to their communities, and develop a sense of social responsibility.

5.5 Romania

5.5.1 The Educational System in Romania

The education system in Romania is regulated and supervised by the Ministry of Education, which sets the curricula, standards, and requirements for each level of education. It is structured into four main levels:

- Pre-school education - is optional and starts at the age 3-4, while the preschool grade is mandatory.
- Primary education - lasts for five years (including preparatory grade - clasa 0) and is mandatory for all children aged 6 to 10-11.
- Secondary education is divided into lower secondary education (gymnasium), which lasts for four years and upper secondary education (high school), which lasts for another four years. Secondary education is compulsory. High school students have the option to choose between academic (theoretical) and vocational education.
- Tertiary education is provided by universities and higher education institutions and is accessible to students who have completed upper secondary education.

In total, starting with 2020, the compulsory education cycle in Romania lasts for 14 years.

Romania – 2022/2023

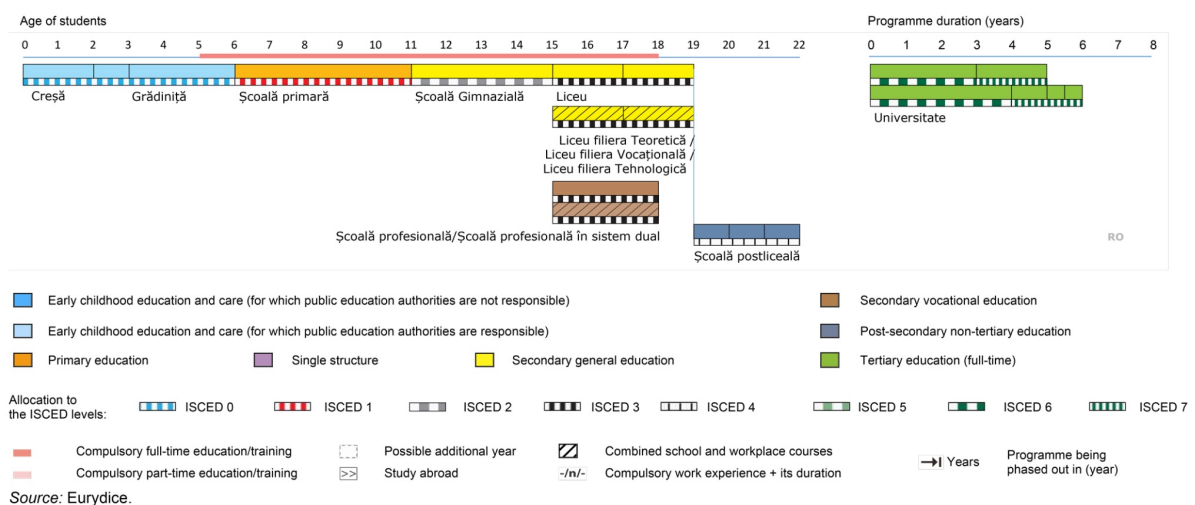


Figure 5: Romanian educational system (European Commission/Eurydice, 2023)

According to Eurydice, lower secondary education in Romania, known as "gimnaziu," follows the completion of primary education and typically spans four years. It is an essential stage in a student's educational journey, providing them with fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for their academic and personal development. The curriculum at the lower secondary level is designed to offer a broad and balanced education, combining both academic and practical components. It aims to foster the holistic growth of students, enabling them to acquire a solid foundation in various subject areas while nurturing their critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

The core subjects taught during lower secondary education include Romanian language and literature, mathematics, history, geography, natural sciences (biology, chemistry, and physics), foreign languages (usually English, but other options such as French or German may be available), and physical education. These subjects form the backbone of the curriculum, providing students with essential knowledge in various fields. In addition to the core subjects, students also have the opportunity to explore other areas of interest through optional courses. These optional courses can cover a wide range of subjects, such as arts, music, technology, computer science, social sciences, or economics, allowing students to pursue their passions and develop their talents.

The curriculum at the lower secondary level emphasizes the development of key competencies, such as communication skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, and teamwork. These competencies are integrated into the subject-specific learning objectives and are intended to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Lower secondary education in Romania is also characterized by the diverse range of extracurricular activities available to students. These activities, which can include sports, arts, clubs, competitions, and community service, complement the academic curriculum, and contribute to the holistic development of students. They foster teamwork, leadership skills, and a sense of social responsibility among students.

Teachers play a vital role in lower secondary education, guiding and supporting students in their learning journey. They are responsible for delivering the curriculum, implementing effective teaching strategies, and assessing students' progress. Qualified teachers with subject-specific expertise ensure the quality of education and create a conducive learning environment.

In 2013 a second major curricular reform was initiated. The reform aimed to integrate competency-based education, aligning with the eight fundamental competencies recommended by the European Commission, one of which was civic competence (Sava et al., 2022). Worth mentioning is the significant gap between rural and urban schools,

with rural schools lacking resources and well-trained teachers, reflected in children's educational achievements. Also, due to the low number of students enrolled, in some rural schools one teacher is responsible for multiple disciplines (e.g. History teacher will also teach Civic Education, or Religion teacher, will also teach Social Education) or will be involved in simultaneous teaching for different grades.

The Romanian education system still suffers from the disconnection between the curriculum, practices in classrooms, and students' overall performance (Sava et al., 2022), the traditional teaching strategies still dominate, to the detriment of modern ones (Colceru, 2013). One of the factors could be the lack of resources in continuous professional development and teachers' mentality. Badescu et al. (2017) revealed that the values of the teachers in the investigated sample are primarily focused on self-transcendence and conservation, with a lesser tendency towards openness to change and personal optimization. Teachers express the desire to establish and pursue goals that help and understand others, promoting tolerance and personal responsibility. They also adhere to social norms and rules and seek to preserve social and cultural customs and traditions. The authors argue that the predominance of these values can be explained, firstly, by the nature of the teaching profession, which involves a heightened attention to the needs and characteristics of others, such as students, parents, and fellow teachers. Secondly, the orientation towards conservation can be linked to the cultural specificity of Romania, characterized by a high level of respect for social and cultural traditions, as other studies showed.

In conclusion, Badescu et al. (2017) highlighted that currently the Romanian education system faces significant challenges, consistently ranking among the lowest in the EU in international assessments of education quality, with a downward trend in several important indicators, unlike other EU countries. These situations could be explained by several factors. Firstly, education policies in Romania pay little attention to evidence-based foundations, Romania being rarely included in international comparative research, while national reports on international study results are often missing. Romanian schools suffer from inadequate and insufficient funding, with income disparities in pre-university education being the highest in the European Union. When it comes to teacher training modules, teachers face inferior preparation compared to other European countries due to their predominantly theoretical nature, insufficient focus on working with vulnerable student groups, and low emphasis on developing student-centered teaching beliefs. Furthermore, teachers without a university degree or specialized training are still accepted in the system, in certain conditions. Additionally, when subjected to mandatory periodic evaluations, Romanian teachers do not receive the necessary feedback to improve their teaching practices, and the results of these evaluations are not systematically connected to their continuous training. Without substantial changes, argue the study, the lack of trust in the Romanian school system will further increase, contributing to its decline. Consequently, the educational system will become even less

attractive than it currently is for motivated and talented individuals aspiring to become teachers.

5.5.2 Democratic Citizenship Education in Romania

Over the past three decades of the post-communist era, the education system in Romania has incorporated various interpretations and directions of civic and social education (Sava et al., 2022). Democratic citizenship education is implemented through a combination of approaches, including cross-curricular tasks, an independent subject, and subject combinations. These various methods ensure that students receive a comprehensive understanding of democratic values, principles, and active citizenship (Fartusnica/ Iacobescu, 2022).

Firstly, democratic citizenship education is integrated into the curriculum as a cross-curricular task. This means that the principles of democratic citizenship are covered within different subjects across the curriculum, allowing students to explore and understand democratic values in diverse contexts. Topics related to democracy, human rights, social responsibility, and active citizenship are incorporated into subjects such as Romanian language and literature, history, social sciences, and even mathematics or natural sciences.

Secondly, democratic citizenship education is introduced as an independent subject. Civic education along with social education are part of the mandatory curriculum within the curricula area of “Man and society” that also includes other disciplines like History, Geography, Religion, or Personal development. Whereas the primary education curriculum includes civic education as a mandatory subject for 3rd and 4th grade students, starting with 2017, the lower secondary education curriculum includes social education for all 5th to 8th grade students, in addition to civic education, a mandatory subject for 7th and 8th grade students.

The curriculum includes topics such as human rights, democracy, civil society, active citizenship, and European citizenship. Social and civic competencies are also addressed by disciplines such as *European education* or *Education for society*, that are not included in the mandatory curriculum, but are part of the optional curriculum, so-called *Curriculum based on the school's decision* (‘Curriculum la decizia scolii’).

The latter is an educational offer proposed by the school individually in accordance with the learning needs and interests of its students, the specific circumstances of the school, and the needs of the local community. It consists of both optional subject combinations offered at the national, regional, and local levels, as well as optional subject combinations offered at the level of the educational unit (Angeluşiu et al., 2019). For primary grades, the amount of time allocated for these disciplines is one hour/week, while for lower secondary classes it is up to two hours.

Additionally, democratic citizenship education is integrated into subject combinations. The curriculum in Romania has undergone reforms to align with competency-based education. This includes the incorporation of key competencies, including civic competence, which is crucial for democratic citizenship. This approach allows students to develop civic competence while studying subjects such as language and literature, history, social sciences, or even mathematics and science.

Despite the ambitious curriculum, Colceru (2013) argues that there is a contradiction between the concept of good citizenship as outlined in the civic education curriculum and the attitudes exhibited by young people in the sociological studies he cites. Velicu (2022) demonstrates that Romanian youth, as interviewed in the study, believe that the school bears the greatest responsibility but is at the same time the least actually involved in shaping young people into active and engaged citizens. According to the participants, the Romanian school system fails to provide the necessary tools in terms of mindset and knowledge for practicing activism when they deem it necessary.

The education system in Romania does not explicitly follow the RFCDC model or any specific democracy competence model. However, the competency-based approach in Romania's education system emphasizes the development of skills, attitudes, and knowledge that contribute to democratic citizenship. While the specific implementation of democratic citizenship education in Romania may not align with the RFCDDC model, the underlying goals and principles are therefore still similar.

Although the Romanian curricula do not explicitly mention Service-Learning as a method, there is a focus on civic education and social education that involves activities or projects that encourage students to engage with their communities, contribute to social causes, and develop a sense of social responsibility. Therefore, schools and teachers have the flexibility to incorporate community Service-Learning activities and projects into their educational practices to complement the curriculum and promote civic engagement. Furthermore, as the curriculum is based on the desired competencies (general and specific), Service-Learning approaches could be easily integrated into classroom practice.

One of the most prominent examples of Service-Learning in the Romanian education system is the "Scoala Altfel" program, which translates to "A Different Kind of School" and the "Săptămâna verde" program, which translates to "The Green Week". These programs are part of the national curriculum, one week per school year, and are designed to encourage schools to create activities and experiences outside the schools that allow students to engage with their communities and develop social and civic competencies. Under these programs, schools can theoretically organize various Service-Learning projects, such as community service initiatives, environmental projects, cultural and historical research, or social entrepreneurship projects. These projects are meant to provide students with opportunities to develop a sense of civic responsibility, leadership skills, teamwork, and empathy. However, the way that this program is implemented in schools might be different from school to school with little current insight on potential

similarities and differences. Most of them tend to organize field trips outside of school, including museums, libraries, or other types of organizations, therefore, not necessarily reflecting actual Service-Learning approaches.

One of the most important formal trainings in Civic education that is grounded on Service-Learning is *Cetateanul*, *engl. the Project "Citizen"* (Institutul Intercultural Timișoara, see: <https://ghidprof.cetateanul.intercultural.ro/>). The project was aimed at providing comprehensive training for teachers in Romania focusing on enhancing their skills and competencies to deliver high-quality education that prepares students to become responsible and engaged citizens. It combines theoretical knowledge with practical applications to ensure teachers have a deep understanding of pedagogical techniques, curriculum development, and effective classroom management strategies. The *Cetateanul* project is rooted in the principles of active learning, critical thinking, and participatory education. Teachers are trained to create stimulating learning environments that encourage student engagement and foster a sense of curiosity and exploration. The project's curriculum covers various subject areas, including history, civics, ethics, and social sciences, which are crucial in developing students' understanding of democratic values, human rights, and civic responsibilities. The training modules also emphasize the integration of technology in education, enabling teachers to effectively use digital tools and platforms to enhance learning experiences. In addition to theoretical instruction, the project incorporates practical components such as workshops, seminars, and peer-to-peer learning activities. This allows teachers to exchange ideas, share best practices, and learn from one another's experiences. Starting with 2019, New Horizon Foundation Romania started promoting Service-Learning implementation into the classrooms based on the extracurricular implementation experience. They train online more than 200 new schools annually and over 350 teachers in implementing Service-Learning methodology cross curricular. Eighty Service-Learning projects have been implemented from kindergarten level to high school level until 2023. Because of the results, the request for being trained in Service Learning grew substantially in Romania in the last year and there is a clear and obvious need to train teachers in Service Learning.

In regards to non-formal education, in the last 18-20 years, New Horizon Foundation has trained more than 700 teachers all over the country in 5-6-day training in IMPACT methodology, which has Service-Learning and Experiential Learning embedded into the educational model. Annually, more than 200 Service-Learning projects have been implemented in schools at national level. So, in the last 20 years, more than 2000 Service-Learning projects have been implemented all over Romania just in the IMPACT Program (extracurricular program active in schools).

6 Results and Discussion

6.1 Framework Conditions and Structure

Apart from Germany, all other countries of this case study have centrally organized educational systems. This poses different requirements and challenges when it comes to political changes and official implementation of Service-Learning in teacher education and training, school curricula, or textbooks. Identifying relevant policymakers and public stakeholders is crucial in this context, but may require approaches and efforts, which differ from country to country.

Whereas centralized systems, such as Austria, Greece, Portugal, or Romania, are often characterized by relatively clear structures and processes (e.g., national educational ministries), federal systems such as Germany are rather complex, with authorities and standards differing between states ('Bundesländer'). Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that some decisions in the countries observed have been outsourced to lower political levels. For example, in Portugal there is school autonomy for lower secondary schools, in Greece there are 13 regional directorates for primary and secondary education and in Austria the regional authorities are responsible for the organization and financing of schools. Official implementation of Service-Learning in national and transnational settings therefore requires profound knowledge of structures, authorities, and processes to achieve long-term change and convince the right people of its necessity.

As visible in the case of Austria, even official policy changes may lead to further challenges in practice. The only recent formal implementation of citizenship education led to multiple issues when it comes to the introduction of Service-Learning. As outlined above, many schools and teachers still struggle with implementing the newfound curricula, guidelines, and concepts of competence-based teaching altogether. Adding new methods into this context may seem like another challenge to many stakeholders on the legislative as well as school level. A strong focus on objective, measurable output in the context of examination, reported time pressure with the existing curricula, and large diversity of different school types likely further impacts the motivation to implement Service-Learning apart from the initiative of individual teachers or schools. At the same time, the high prevalence of non-formal educational offers and stakeholders, the overall high quality of teacher education and schools, a certain amount of autonomy in the interpretation of curricula goals and content, and the possibility to co-evaluate student performance based on active contribution offer opportunities to implement Service-Learning in general. This shows that even certain challenges may offer new changes and function as a reminder to different stakeholders on the strengths of their respective education system.

Teachers from various countries have similarly described that the compulsion for grading or the focus on written exams poses a challenge to introducing Service-Learning. For

example, in Greece, grading is often based on a combination of tests, class participation, and homework completion rate. Towards the end of schooling, the attention tends to shift towards the preparation for and successful completion of final exams. In Portugal, there is also a heavy emphasis on written exams with little consideration for class participation or the like, although teachers theoretically have flexibility in their grading procedures. In Romania, like in Austria and Germany, teachers have opportunities to replace written tests with alternative methods for assessing specific competencies, which could for sure be provided in the form of a Service-Learning projects. But in practice the majority of examinations are written particularly in the compulsory subjects, as in Portugal.

It should be emphasized that there is a newly introduced form of grading. Teachers can decide for themselves when to grade pupils during the school year. The key to the grading system is based on the weekly lessons of the respective subject plus three further grades for the pupils.

In both Austria and Germany, while written grades are also stipulated and there is a focus on final exams towards the end of schooling, there are opportunities at all grade levels to replace written tests with what are called “alternative performances”, which could also be provided in the form of a Service-Learning project.

Europe is a linguistically diverse continent. But in all five countries, English is by now a foreign language usually taught to all students during secondary education, sometimes even starting at the primary level. A shared language is a sophisticated tool enabling human beings to engage in meaningful relationships with one another and relate to the world in general (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2023, p. 15). From this perspective, transnational efforts ranging from official guidelines and knowledge exchange to individual cooperations between schools are more accessible than ever, offering new possibilities to stakeholders. In addition, transnational and intercultural Service-Learning (Rauschert, 2023) present unique opportunities to teachers and students alike.

As described in the section on the Portuguese education system the use of technology in education is becoming increasingly prevalent in schools - certainly not only in Portugal, but in all education systems in Europe. Schools are incorporating digital tools and resources to enhance teaching and learning experiences, foster digital literacy, and prepare them for the digital age. Here, connections between digital transformation and democracy can be addressed within the framework of service-learning projects. This can be done either by focusing on opportunities such as improved citizen participation, increased transparency in government actions, and better education and awareness through access to information, or by considering challenges and risks such as disinformation, fake news, or manipulation, excessive collection and analysis of large data sets, or a digital divide in society. Additionally, the intersections between digital competencies and competencies for a democratic culture should be brought into focus.

“Teachers should be further trained in the use of digital tools in classrooms as the digital aspect is an integral aspect of student’s life and teachers do not make full use of it.” (NGO Professional from Greece)

6.2 Citizenship Education

While Service-Learning as a method offers new approaches and learning opportunities for many subjects, citizenship education and other related subjects are often most strongly associated with its implementation. However, results from the different countries show that the structure and implementation differ greatly, despite recent efforts for harmonization on a European Level, for example through the RFCDL.

Most importantly, academic research traditions on the goals and effects of citizenship education do not necessarily translate to practical implementation in schools. This becomes apparent in the cases of Germany and Austria. While both countries share strong historical links in the joint research on citizenship education, Austria did not introduce a designated subject until 2008. In comparison, it has been an official part of combined subjects in most German states since the 1950s.

Moreover, historical circumstances also do not seem to directly influence the modern-day state of implementation of citizenship education. This can be observed in the examples of Portugal and Romania, which are both younger democracies than Austria and Germany, but, yet seem to allocate high priority to citizenship education within their educational systems.

Lastly, a major challenge remains in the scattered understanding and implementation of citizenship education. This already becomes apparent in the abundance of terminology (e.g., civic education, citizenship education, political education, social studies) and different school subjects, which are often combined with other related fields such as history or economics. Furthermore, the content and views of these subjects tends to strongly differ between countries based on various factors such as national history, unique political circumstances, or political culture. The important role of teachers and, in some cases, school autonomy may even lead to significant differences between classes based on individual preferences, opinions, attitudes, or resources available. Nevertheless, there are also trends showing increased harmonization across different European countries, most notably a shift towards competence-based citizenship education aimed towards active democratic participation as well as a stronger emphasis on topics of trans- and international relevance.

6.3 Understanding of Service-Learning

It stands out that the use of the term Service-Learning varies greatly in the countries of this Country Analysis. This is certainly due to differences in national languages. For example, there is no directly suitable translation into English from similar concepts in

Greece and Portugal. The literal translation *Aprendizagem em Serviço* in Portugal refers to learning obtained through work placements or on-the-job training. Also, *Learning through Civic Engagement* or, even more common, *Citizenship and Development* are often used to describe this concept. However, more recently, in higher education settings we have found the word “Aprendizagem-serviço” (<https://www.eoslhe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Diretrizes-para-a-institucionalizacao.pdf>) albeit more strongly limited to a specific network within higher education.

A teacher of a secondary school in Porto mentioned the project “Academy Ubuntu” (<https://www.academialideresubuntu.org/en/>) that is being implemented at schools about serving the community, which she related with Service-Learning. She also mentioned the school's Citizenship Education Strategy and the different domains that they are working, that include: Human rights (civil and political, economic, social and cultural, and solidarity rights); Gender equality; Interculturality (cultural and religious diversity); Sustainable development; Environmental Education; Health (health promotion, public health, nutrition and physical activity). She stated that

"I don't think it's just about citizenship, but it's about education and the fact that we all feel we have some responsibility towards others. Although it's treated as a subject, I think it should be inherent in each of us." (Teacher from Portugal)

Also, in Greece the term of Service-Learning cannot be precisely translated into Greek as there is no corresponding term that fully captures its essence. Nevertheless, when interviewees were asked to explain the concept of Service-Learning, they provided their own interpretations. One of them described the method as the process of “Helping the world and learning from it”, as only through action can children better understand the importance of contribution. During Service-Learning activities, students acquire knowledge and democratic competencies in order to help vulnerable people in the local community or school. “They choose the actions they want to participate in, and we teachers only act as facilitators and mentors”. (Teacher from Greece). Another interviewee connected Service-Learning with the concept of volunteering and active citizenship, where individuals act for the common good.

New Horizons Foundation from Romania understands Service-Learning as a pedagogical approach that allows to create relevant learning contexts for learners as they become agents of positive change in their communities - both in formal (from kindergarten to university) and non-formal contexts (youth groups, informal groups, clubs, volunteering organizations, etc). Therefore, in Romania, Service-Learning does not only apply to classroom activities, but also to youth groups as extracurricular activities in schools, youth centers, libraries, or churches. Through Service-Learning, the educational institution or educational organization can link its learning opportunities (curricular or extracurricular) with practical applications in everyday life and become a strong partner in solving local or global problems. Service-Learning in Romania starts to get attention and teachers start to be interested in it. But it is still at the beginning of the process, the number of teachers trained in Service-Learning and using it in the classroom is very low.

A Service-Learning project in Romania is therefore, in comparison, traditionally at the intersection of two needs: the learner's need and community support. On the one hand learners develop a whole range of skills and competences, subject-specific skills, and knowledge, but at the same time they learn to be responsible and experience compassion and learn how to act so that the good that is being done can be achieved and what they wish for others is correctly put into practice. On the other hand, students identify a real need in their community and propose and implement a solution that is sustainable (i.e. has a positive impact on the community).

In Austria and Germany, the translation of Service-Learning, "Lernen durch Engagement" (LdE), became established in scientific research and educational practice. The translation emphasizes the combination of subject-based learning and students' social engagement. There is broad agreement regarding the six quality standards, serving as guiding principles for educational practice (Paragraph 2): real need, curricular integration, reflection, student participation, engagement in the community and recognition and completion. All six quality standards for Service-Learning encompass educational challenges that question existing norms, require reflection on one's own attitudes and roles as teachers and students, and demand new approaches from all participants, particularly regarding fostering democratic competence.

In summary, it becomes apparent that the term "Service-Learning" does not have direct translations in every language and the understanding of the concept and related approaches may vary between different countries and actors. Yet, the essence usually still revolves around a combination of learning with community service, contributing to learning goals, emphasizing real-world application, student engagement, and fostering a sense of responsibility towards one's community. Different variations across countries and actors also highlight the flexibility and adaptability of the Service-Learning concept, ultimately making it a globally applicable approach with localized interpretations and applications based on individual circumstances.

"I believe that in Austria there are quite a few schools that are engaged in the field of Service Learning without even realizing that it is Service Learning." (School Policy Maker from Austria).

6.4 Implementation of Service-Learning in policy papers

As mentioned before, the Council of Europe emphasizes that Service-Learning is an effective approach to positively influence the entire spectrum of children's and adolescents' democratic competence: "Service-Learning is more than community service. It implies providing a community service in the context of a structured set of steps, in which the teacher plays an important role as organizer and facilitator, while keeping a strong learner-centered approach and empowering learners to make decisions and act on their own will in cooperation with peers" (Council of Europe, 2018, 37). The Council of Europe is convinced that Service-Learning can strengthen competences for a democratic culture: "Service-Learning is also an effective way to

develop the full range of CDC (competences of democratic culture) because it gives learners opportunities to connect the knowledge and critical understanding and skills acquired in a classroom setting with meaningful action targeting a real world issue. Through this connection, not only knowledge, critical understanding and skills are consolidated and further developed, but processes are put in place which stimulate the development and critical awareness of attitudes and values.” (ibid.)

But only in Germany can service learning already be found in official policy papers documents. As stated in the resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs 'Democracy as a Goal, Subject, and Practice of Historical-Political Education and Upbringing in Schools' from October 2018, the willingness of students to take responsibility and to actively participate in school life should be demanded and promoted, exemplarily through the opening and maintenance of opportunities for active and serious participation of students in the sense of democratic participation and commitment to our democracy, for example through the method of Service-Learning can occur. In all other countries we couldn't find policy papers who mentioned Service-Learning.

6.5 Implementation of Service-Learning in curricula

In all five countries, Service-Learning is not yet an integral part of curricula. In all five countries, the ministries of education are responsible for designing and implementing policies related to education and have a crucial role in shaping the curriculum of schools.

In Greece, for example, the Ministry of National Education and Religion is the primary governing body that develops and supervises the national education policy in Greece. It is responsible for drafting legislation related to education and ensuring that the corresponding administrative decisions and laws are enforced. On the other hand, the Institute of Educational Policy (I.E.P.) closely cooperates with the Ministry of Education, including its education agencies, in order to provide support, relevant policy planning, and implementation on education-related issues. These actors have the power to introduce Service-Learning as a cross-curricular task, an independent subject or as a subject combination. Moreover, they can provide the necessary funding for teacher training and materials required for the implementation of Service-Learning activities. The Institute of Educational Policy could also provide scientific support by conducting research and evaluation reports to monitor the effectiveness of Service-Learning activities:

“Thus, learning about democracy, according to the new curriculum, is implemented as a cross-curricular theme and this will commence in the autumn in the first grade, where we do not have history yet [...] and what the individual schools will make of it remains to be seen.” (Teacher from Austria).

6.6 Implementation of Service-Learning in teacher education

In all countries observed Service-Learning is not institutionalized in teacher education. In contrast, both the literature research and the interviews with teachers and people from the education administration yielded the following unsurprising result for all countries. It is important that teachers become familiar with the concept and the basic principles of this pedagogical method during their education at university. In order to successfully implement Service-Learning in school, teachers should possess specific competences and qualifications. This could be achieved through coursework, workshops, and practical experiences that familiarize them with Service-Learning pedagogy, methods, and tools. In addition to theoretical knowledge that teachers need to acquire during their university education, there are also vital skills that they need to develop during these years. Communication skills and deep connection with the students, mindfulness, student psychology and student approach, democratic values, sense of self-improvement, initiative, cooperation, and team-working spirit are some of the skills that interviewees stated as important to be cultivated at university during teacher education:

“It is important that teachers undergo a high-quality education as they are shaping our future citizens. First and foremost, communication skills. Furthermore, cooperation and team working, democratic values and mindfulness are essential skills for the successful implementation of Service-Learning in schools” (Teacher from Greece)

“Service-Learning is something different from our standard educational system. Teachers should learn to act like mentors and not as strict teachers. Moreover, during their education, teachers should also acquire emergency management skills. Unfortunately, so far it is not mandatory for teachers to know CPR [Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation]. Such skills could be lifesaver” (NGO professional from Greece)

6.7 Implementation of Service-Learning in teacher training

Besides their university education, interviewees also indicated teacher training as an equally important process throughout their careers. This recognition stems from the understanding that teaching is a dynamic profession that requires continuous professional development and growth (Resch, K., & Schrittemser, I., 2021). While university education provides a foundation of theoretical knowledge and pedagogical strategies, it is often the case that the practical application of teaching strategies and the implementation of specific educational approaches, such as Service-Learning, require further training and professional development (Fahrenwald, C. & Müller, N., 2022). Moreover, the field of education is constantly evolving due to societal changes and advancements in technology. As teachers strive to meet the diverse needs of their students, they must continually adapt their teaching methods and approaches and make sure that they stay abreast of new developments, research findings, and innovative practices on Service-Learning. Ongoing teacher training provides educators with the tools, strategies, and knowledge necessary to address these evolving needs and challenges effectively.

“When it comes to the Greek case, most of the teachers lack vital skills as these are not learned in the universities. This is why it is important that there are specific training sessions for teachers as well as continuous communication and exchange of ideas, experiences and good practices among teachers but also among schools.” (Teacher from Greece)

Teachers are a very important actors in implementing Service-Learning for democratic citizenship education as they are the ones who will be responsible for teaching and guiding students. “Es läuft in Schulen viel über das Engagement von einzelnen Lehrpersonen, die sich halt engagieren“ (Teacher Trainer from Austria) Teachers can incorporate Service-Learning into their lesson plans and design projects that encourage students to participate in their local communities. They can provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to understand the democratic process and how they can contribute to society. However, teachers should be well trained in order to effectively implement Service-Learning activities and they should always bear in mind that their role is more that of a mentor rather than that of an educator. An external school consultant from Germany emphasized

“the importance of teachers understanding that they are citizens, democrats who are aware of their own rights and therefore should be allowed to explore corresponding freedoms within the school. [...] Training and further education must definitely build on these freedoms and this concept of freedom.” (External School Consultant from Germany)

6.8 Obstacles for implementation of Service-Learning

Based on literature research and interview data with teachers who implement Service-Learning activities in their schools, several issues emerged that hinder efforts for a stronger implementation of Service-Learning on national and European levels. These can be categorized as formal obstacles, student obstacles, teacher obstacles and cooperation partner obstacles.

Nearly in all five countries the teachers mentioned their extensive curricula and tight schedules as a significant challenge to the implementation of Service-Learning. Due to limited resources, teachers often lack the time necessary to devote to new and possibly time-consuming approaches, therefore making it more challenging to implement Service-Learning projects in schools:

“There is not enough time for teachers. I wish the curriculum was more flexible for greater adaptability and more extracurricular activities.” (Teacher from Greece)

“Sometimes I feel like being a Solomon - the pressure of the curriculum that needs to be fulfilled but also responding to the children's desires, which can take you away from the curriculum. And you have to strike a balance between the two. But most of the time, you have to make a decision: disappoint the children or not meet the curriculum requirements. It's hard to please both sides.” (Teacher from Romania)

“Teachers perceive themselves as not having agency in shaping things. They complain that they are stuck in rigid hierarchies, being moved from the top down, through evaluations, through specifically defined steps that they are required to take.” (External School Consultant for Service-Learning from Germany)

Many teachers also perceive a high pressure to prepare students for exams and to adhere to traditional grading systems. Consequently, teachers often feel discouraged to allocate efforts towards activities that do not serve the purpose expected by other colleagues, superiors, parents, or even students themselves. In addition, difficulties in adequately rewarding students for their efforts based on alternative assessment strategies may further intensify this obstacle.

To solve the issue of time constraints, many teachers advocated working with colleagues. However, they also mentioned in this context that it was difficult to find suitable topics as links to existing curricula.

With regard to students, teachers from Portugal, Romania and Germany criticized the experienced lack of engagement of their students due to the traditional learning culture. Students are often not used to independent ways of learning and autonomy in approaching their tasks and interests. This creates further difficulties to motivate learners to advocate and promote the needs of their local communities.

Many teachers from Germany and Romania feel isolated in their efforts to implement Service-Learning projects. They may be the only ones who actively engage in such initiatives, while their colleagues remain uninvolved or unaware of the potential benefits. The lack of collaboration and support at the school leadership level further exacerbates the challenge. Collaboration with colleagues can be challenging, especially in small schools with multiple shifts. Implementing school-wide Service-Learning projects may be difficult, but finding support among fellow teachers who are willing to assist in classroom-level Service-Learning initiatives is possible.

In Portugal and Romania, some teachers also noted a lack of support from actors and communities outside schools. They had difficulties in finding suitable actors to provide support for the implementation of their Service-Learning project.

After interviewing teachers from Greece who implement Service-Learning activities in their schools, several policy issues emerged that hinder their efforts. The first and most significant challenge is the lack of funds and financial support for such programs, which has led to teachers paying out of their own pockets.

“There is not enough money to implement all the activities we want, so we teachers have to pay with our own money. It has happened several times and fortunately many teachers and parents are willing to help.” (Teacher from Greece)

Another challenge is the slow and bureaucratic approval process by the Ministry of Education. Obtaining necessary approvals and permissions in Greece is time-consuming and discourages teachers from pursuing Service-Learning projects.

Moreover, one teacher from Greece stated that when dealing with sensitive issues such as minorities they might face opposition from some parents who do not want topics like

these to be addressed. Furthermore, the teacher also mentioned that when dealing with vulnerable target groups there might be some opposition even from their part;

“Another difficulty is that when we try to work with specific target groups, for example Roma, usually they are not very willing to cooperate with us. It is a shame because we try hard for them, and they do not realize the importance of such activities.” (Teacher from Greece)

The teachers from Romania underlined that they are often faced with parental resistance. Convincing parents to allow their children to participate in Service-Learning projects can be challenging. Parents often prioritize core academic subjects, exam preparation, and traditional extracurricular activities. It can be difficult to make them understand the importance of developing competencies and skills through Service-Learning, which have long-term benefits beyond exam success.

“It's difficult to convince parents that children need the competencies and skills developed through SL, which are important for life, sometimes even more important than passing an exam”. (Teacher from Romania)

An external school consultant for Service-Learning observed that integrating service-learning is a systematic task, which represents the main hurdle. While it might be possible to reach individuals, affecting the system is more challenging. In this context, only making service-learning more visible can help.

In regard to this aspect, in Austria was given the recommendation to connect the implementation of Service Learning with the school quality management system and to integrate it into the school development plan:

"A comprehensive school-wide approach would probably be the best, where it is integrated across disciplines or connecting various subjects. In my opinion, it could also be very effectively implemented through school quality management, by including it as a guideline in the school development plan, without being too specifically oriented towards certain subjects or classes. Therefore, I believe that it is easier to implement this through the channel of school development than through somehow tying it to the curricula." (Expert for Civic Education from Austria).

6.9 Potentials for further implementation of Service-Learning

It is always worth emphasizing that Service-Learning is suitable for any class or age group, ranging from kindergarten to high school or university level. Service-Learning can have a profound impact and is feasible across various disciplines. It does not necessarily have to be linked to specific disciplines. In this regard, we suggest that Service-Learning can be integrated into any subject. The main arguments for this belief are as follows:

- The values, skills, and knowledge such as valuing human dignity, justice, civic-mindedness, responsibility, critical thinking, flexibility, cooperation, conflict resolution, tolerance of ambiguity, etc. (based on the RFCD list of competencies) are transversal skills that can be applied to any type or topic of a Service-Learning project. Whether the Service-Learning project is connected to mathematics, arts, personal development, or native languages, all Service-Learning projects follow the same implementation steps: forming/preparing the class/learning group, community needs analysis, selecting the most relevant need/problem to address, planning the learning, building partnerships with the local community, implementing the project, reflection and evaluation of learning and service, and celebration.
- For students/participants, going through these Service-Learning project steps allows them to acquire, to a certain degree (based on age and class level), almost all the democratic competencies mentioned in the RFCD competence model framework. Implementing a Service-Learning project within a specific discipline, such as Geography, not only enables students to gain additional knowledge and skills related to specific learning objectives in Geography but also complements the democratic competencies they have already acquired by following the steps of a Service-Learning project.

In conclusion, the democratic competencies are embedded within any Service-Learning process or steps, regardless of the names of the disciplines addressed by teachers or students. In all five countries Service-Learning is understood as a transversal process, which can be implemented across any discipline. While implementing Service-Learning in a Civic Education class may provide more relevance to the discipline's learning objectives and enhance students' understanding of democratic competencies, this does not diminish the impact and feasibility of developing democratic competencies through Service-Learning in any other discipline. The process and steps make Service-Learning a highly suitable and efficient methodology for developing democratic competencies, while the topic may enhance students' knowledge about democracy, the skills and values are acquired through the project steps/processes, regardless of the community need or problem addressed and regardless of the discipline involved.

NGOs and civil society organizations play an important role in introducing Service-Learning for democratic citizenship education by providing support to schools and teachers. They can establish partnerships with educational institutions to provide important resources and expertise related to Service-Learning, such as organizing community projects or facilitating workshops for students and teachers. NGOs and civil society organizations can also advocate for the inclusion of Service-Learning in the curriculum and raise awareness about the importance of democratic citizenship education. They can act as a bridge between the community and schools and help foster greater community involvement in education to ensure that students are engaged in meaningful and impactful projects that contribute to the betterment of society. It seems that not all resources have been exhausted here. However, the bundling of NGOs and civil society organizations in networks to support Service-Learning seems indispensable.

7 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In the following, suggestions for the improvement or further implementation of Service-Learning in the different countries will be developed. These are divided into different spheres of actors and stakeholders.

In summary, the document analysis, interview data and self-reporting of the participating organizations show a different understanding of Service-Learning between countries and stakeholders. In addition, there is no uniformly accepted definition of Service-Learning and often a lack of extensive knowledge or previous experience with the concept. Addressing different actors further contributes to taking individual and local needs into account. However, we strongly recommend making the definition of Service-Learning as transparent as possible when addressing corporations, school or non-school partners, or the educational administrations to provide mutual understanding and set expectations.

7.1 Primary Service-Learning Agents

Organizations specifically dedicated to the promotion, dissemination, and further development of Service-Learning should, in addition to their existing work, actively address the obstacles identified in this Country Analysis. This especially relates to deficits outlined about teachers as well as developing corresponding solutions in close dialogue with practitioners. For instance, organizations could develop answers to the question of how a closer connection of Service-Learning projects to curricula could be ensured. In this context, the establishment of a Europe-wide database linking topics, competencies, and Service-Learning projects might be helpful.

So, SLEAD Europe could play a significant role in introducing the Service-Learning practice. First of all, the development of a comprehensive training material in cooperation with partners experienced in Service-Learning would benefit all the involved actors in better understanding the theoretical foundations of Service-Learning, the implementation strategies and the assessment methods. Moreover, incorporating tangible examples of how Service-Learning is implemented in other countries as well as case studies would provide educators with a better overview of Service-Learning and showcase the positive impact it can have on democratic citizenship education. Moreover, resources and guidelines for identifying community needs and establishing and maintaining synergies with community organizations could be provided in the training material to support educators on the implementation of Service-Learning activities. Last but not least, it is important that SLEAD Europe provides ongoing support for educators who undergo the training through educational opportunities and updated resources on the field.

Moreover, we recommend organizations to help develop strategies for addressing the issue of grading in connection with Service-Learning projects. The criticism of letter grades and numerical report cards has a longstanding tradition, which becomes even more apparent in procedural evaluation needs. New approaches show that there are alternatives and performance-based assessment is possible without traditional grading (e.g., oral and written feedback on personal learning development and achieved learning status). For example, the project Assess in Portugal may provide several useful insights about assessment without traditional grading (see: <https://assess.nuclio.org/about/>). Nevertheless, there are still strong forces of inertia for traditional grading in most education systems. Against this backdrop, in dialogue with

practitioners, new ways should be developed to allow for suitable evaluation of performance in Service-Learning activities.

Since some countries already have established Service-Learning networks at the national level in addition to the Europe-wide Service-Learning network of 2022, we further recommend consolidating these efforts and to explore similarities with other networks that promote democracy education (in Germany, for example, "Demokratisch handeln") or across countries (e.g., NECE). Lastly, stronger efforts are necessary to promote the planned Europe-wide Service-Learning Training for teachers via digital learning platforms or through other resources and activities of organizations.

7.2 Policymakers and Public Administration

Educational policy is a crucial, if not the most crucial asset to strengthen democracy and societal cohesion under the new conditions of a globally open and digitalized society (Grande 2019, 3). Therefore, especially in federal systems, cooperation between different ministries and governmental institutions in the educational sector is essential to improve current standards. Institutions at all levels should seek to actively establish Service-Learning as a recognized method within their respective educational system since it bridges classroom learning, educational policy, promotion of civic engagement and helps reduce origin-related disadvantages. Practical implementation can be achieved, for example, by setting up a nationwide or Europe-wide pilot program based on existing practices and active involvement of schools, civic partners and other stakeholders. Such pilot programs allow for specific aspects of Service-Learning to be tested and further developed with regards to advantages and obstacles in their respective local settings.

In addition, Service-Learning should be established as an integral part of the curricula of all types of schools. Policymakers and other public stakeholders should actively promote implementation by establishing national and local Competence Centers for Service-Learning.

Lastly, sustainable financial resources should be allocated to support schools in Service-Learning projects, specifically when it comes to cooperation with civic partners.

7.3 Teacher Education/Teacher Training

Teacher Education and Training still lacks formal instruction on how to implement competence-based teaching in the classroom. We therefore recommend stronger efforts to provide education on how to develop democratic competences (as outlined in the RFCDC) among children and adolescents with a focus on Service-Learning as a mandatory component across all disciplines (Paetsch & Resch 2023).

Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, "values and beliefs" as well as "motivational orientations and self-regulation" (Stürmer/Gröschner 2019, 335) are described as important competences of professional development for teachers. Especially the latter require targeted training since they require profound factual knowledge and didactic competencies.

In addition, contemporary democracy education through Service-Learning is linked to challenges and developments in actual political processes. This requires further and permanent training of relevant factual knowledge, but especially aspects of "motivational orientations and self-regulation" (Stürmer/Gröschner 2019, 334) to allow for successful self-efficacy experiences and

realistic expectations of future teachers. These circumstances provide the basis for a successful deconstruction of success factors with regard to competencies in democracy education and the implementation of Service-Learning projects.

Furthermore, we recommend for future teachers to conduct Service-Learning projects within parts of their education and training, since prior practical experience has been shown to be a decisive factor for successful teaching experiences later on by Schneider and Gerold (2018)

However, this can only be achieved if Service-Learning becomes a mandatory part of teacher education/training and corresponding modules and examination. In the previous chapters, we repeatedly emphasized that Service-Learning as a method is not limited to Civic or Citizenship Education, and that all subjects can contribute to the development of democratic competencies in a meaningful way.

Lastly, for the later phase of teacher training / professional development, the range of training courses on Service-Learning must be visibly expanded. This includes the establishment of firmly established offers for formal training in Service-Learning.

7.4 School Principals

In the interviews, teachers frequently addressed the important role of leadership when it comes to the new introduction and implementation of Service-Learning projects. School principals, therefore, should provide teachers with the necessary autonomy and support to conduct such projects. Stronger efforts are required to promote awareness that Service-Learning projects are not solely time- and resource-intensive undertakings, but that they show the potential to foster new motivation, energy, knowledge bases, and creative ideas among teachers and students alike, promoting a positive development of school performance and culture (Fahrenwald 2014). With adequate support for Service-Learning projects, teachers also are granted trust and responsibility, which many will eagerly embrace.

Another recommendation for school principals is to encourage the establishment of a Service-Learning Committee. Such joint institutions can play a pivotal role and act as critical support in the processes of development, reflection, and implementation of projects (Fahrenwald 2018). In addition, the school principal gains mobilizing power and can help to collectively unleash creative impact. They may take on a central role as moderators of the process, constantly setting impulses, collecting results, and shaping the subsequent steps. This is especially important given potential fears and conflicts within the teaching staff when it comes to conducting Service-Learning projects.

Since most schools are subject to frequent changes in staff, the most crucial task is the continuous communication of the process, decisions, and responsibilities with designated leadership. This requires a lot of effort and sustained commitment from a core group, at the same time potentially aiding the development of a "passion group" (Gasteiger/Gloe 2022) for Service-Learning at the school. Through this group, school leaders can ultimately engage and support teachers who are passionate about shaping democracy and education at their school through the implementation of Service-Learning projects.

7.5 Teachers

From numerous research findings, it is known that professional beliefs have a powerful influence on teachers' performance (see Reusser/Paul 2016; Wilde/Kunter 2016). However, in the training

of educational professionals, raising awareness and reflecting on one's own professional attitude is usually underemphasized. Openness to new ideas and the development of mental flexibility seem indispensable. However, it involves more than encountering subjective theories and discussing them with others. In addition, it is important to stress that initially developed attitudes are not necessarily permanent and may change over time. Thus, attitudes must continually be reassured and challenged through critical reflection.

The Council of Europe has exemplarily identified six elements of democratic attitude: 1. Openness to cultural diversity and to other religions, worldviews, and customs, 2. Respect, 3. Common good orientation, 4. Responsibility, 5. Confidence in one's own ability to act, 6. Tolerance for ambiguity" (Council of Europe, 2018, 32). Both the term "openness" and "respect" aim to develop an attitude that respects every person's uniqueness and individuality, forms the basis for understanding without prejudice, and allows showing consideration to others based on the fundamental value of human dignity. However, this also requires awareness of one's own existing prejudices and critically reflecting on them. "Openness" also implies tolerating contradictions or even being obstinate when necessary. Encountering others with "respect" requires the ability to distinguish between perception or observation and interpretation of events in addition to empathy. As "common good orientation," the Council of Europe, in its model of a democratic attitude, reflects the sense of belonging, solidarity, mindfulness for, and identification with one or more communities. This also includes the willingness to engage in and for a community, i.e., participation.

Besides this form of responsibility considered as "common good orientation," the Council of Europe also considers moral responsibility as part of a democratic attitude. This moral responsibility manifests itself as the ability to critically assess the consequences of one's actions and the readiness to take responsibility for the consequences of decisions made and actions taken, but also in the willingness to show civil courage when necessary. This would be supported by "confidence in one's own ability to act" or even in one's own self-efficacy. "Tolerance for ambiguity," also referred to as tolerance of ambiguity, helps to positively judge things, events, and situations perceived as uncertain and that can be interpreted in multiple ways, and to be willing to accept and even embrace a lack of clarity or simplicity (ibid., 39ff.). All six elements can be promoted in and through Service-Learning. Therefore, working on one's democratic attitude through reflection remains an ongoing task for teachers, which should be promoted through ongoing training possibilities and workshops.

7.6 Academia

Research on the impact of Service-Learning is still predominantly conducted in the USA, Australia, and Germany (Reinders 2016), usually primarily focusing on university students. Data on the effects of Service-Learning in European schools is notably scarce. Mainly, there are guidelines available for implementation. Relying on research findings from higher education and the US education system is problematic, as their applicability to European education systems is sometimes limited. Hence, we recommend strengthening research on Service-Learning, especially regarding its conditions and impact in Europe, through networks and organizations from practical fields actively involving universities in the research of their projects. Furthermore, additional funding resources for researchers and projects are necessary to allow for reliable data and applicable guidelines.

8 Conclusion

The country analyses have shown that there is still a long way to go in firmly establishing Service-Learning as a method within European democratic school culture and democracy-promoting teaching practice. In our view, three fundamental elements are currently missing: 1) Integration of SL into the curricula and local support for teachers, so that Service-Learning can be implemented comprehensively as a contribution to promoting democratic competences. 2) Additionally, there is a lack of sustainable initiatives for professionalization in the field of democratic educational competencies and support for Service-Learning at all levels of teacher education. 3) This fundamental task for a democratic society also requires sufficient research funding.

It is sufficiently demonstrated in educational development research that systematic pedagogical development tasks require not only the professional competence of teachers, but also necessary leeway, appropriate equipment with sufficient professional competence, and time to be able to design Service-Learning as a method for promoting competencies of a democratic culture.

Training strategies, the implementation of Service-Learning, and the establishment of a network with extracurricular cooperation partners in each individual school require time, coordination, and therefore also allocation and investment of discretionary hours for appropriate coordinating personnel.

In all phases of teacher training, Service-Learning and Citizenship Education must become a mandatory component for teachers of all subjects.

From a theoretical perspective for the professionalization of teachers' competences, values, and beliefs, as well as motivational orientations and self-regulation (Stürmer & Gröschner, 2019, p. 335) are described as elements of professional development. The latter require training, as the required factual knowledge and didactic skills cannot be taken for granted. The construction and reconstruction of the conditions for successful experiences and expectations of self-efficacy by teachers acting in democratic education is a central factor of possible training settings. The aim must be to enable teachers to acquire the relevant factual knowledge about Service-Learning and democracy competencies, but also to gain experiential knowledge. In teacher training studies, Citizenship Education and Service-Learning as a method must become an integral part of the module handbooks and examination regulations. It is repeatedly emphasized that all subjects can contribute to the development of democratic competencies using Service-Learning. Simply delegating this to (prospective) social studies teachers is not helpful.

Teachers also need to have time to regularly reflect on their democratic attitude. Because a once-developed democratic attitude as a prerequisite for professionalism is not permanent—attitudes are and remain variable and are significantly always influenced by social experiences. Johannes Herwig-Lempp (2019) emphasizes from a systemic perspective that attitude cannot be decided in principle, but only by each individual and also repeatedly anew (p. 294). Attitude must therefore be repeatedly achieved through constant reflection.

In addition, from our perspective, there is a need for explicit research funding with a focus on Citizenship Education and Service-Learning. There is a lack of empirical research on Service-Learning in Europe and on democratic school development.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the transfer between science and practice, but also between practice and science, is still expandable. Additionally, the platforms and networks on which an exchange on Service-Learning between science and practice takes place should be strengthened.

We derived conclusions from this study for the SLEAD EUROPE online training and the SLEAD summer school (grading, time issues, role of school leaders etc).

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Note:

AI-based language model technology has been used as a tool to check, correct, and improve the language of this Country Analysis. No arguments or references have been made up or added by the tool itself.