

Key Findings

from the analysis on citizenship Education
with children aged 8 - 12

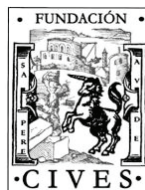
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Key findings

from the analysis on citizenship education for and with children aged 8-12

A theoretical desk research and a questionnaire based field research have been arranged throughout 2015 in 6 European countries: Spain, UK, France, Germany, Austria and Poland.

There have been conducted extensive expert interviews, talks with resource groups and online questionnaires, which have been evaluated and discussed with a group of national field experts in each country. The key findings allow to highlighting tendencies that arise from the national analysis.

The landscape of citizenship education with children aged 8-12 in Europe largely differs from country to country. Even within the countries there are several spheres where the topic becomes relevant. The approach from ENGAGE was to arrange field specific researches in each country. Having in mind that this approach can result in difficulties for compatibility and comparison, the strength is that this offers the potential to a) contextualize the results to the respective national framing and b) extract from it findings/needs that are linked to the national specifics but seem to be of an overarching character.

What?

Citizenship Education (CE) with the age group 8 -12 in Europe is in all countries on the agenda. There are three policy dimensions connected to the issue:

- CE learning in the context of the formal schools system (primary and sec I),
- CE learning as topic of children and youth participation
- Childrens Rights Convention and its enactment and application in all levels

From the national analyses it can be stated that unanimously all dimensions define working on democratic involvement of young people as key of their task.

Each sector very much focuses on its inherent discourses, which might lead to the conclusion that there is lack of overarching strategic policies or policy planning. The findings from the studies allow for this interpretation as - despite the fact that the organisations to conduct the ENGAGE studies are all NGO's – in most countries it appears that the focus of education limits the discourse largely to school environments.

There seems to be research broadly conducted in all fields and in all countries (CRC, Participation, Primary Schools). However overarching research that covers the topic in a holistic way and concentrates on the diverse educational fields and support mechanisms is rare.

Childrens Rights enactment for all educational fields seems to be a key horizon and motivation for all fields that are involved in CE with the age group 8-12. However not all fields argue coherently in this direction.

A profound and broad basis of methods and concepts exist in all countries and there is a variety of topics being worked on.

Targeting at citizenship education it is astonishing and worrying how intense the field of formal education is in the focus. This despite the fact that other policies such as youth work, non-formal education with young people are of the same importance and relevance when its about learning democracy with young people

Who?

Institutions: There is a variety of educational providers taking care on the issue arching from formal (school) to non- formal (educational NGO's) and further support mechanisms (youth work, community youth offices, youth organizations).

People: Citizenship education with children aged 8-12 affects the level of capacities of educational staff directly (teachers, trainers, pedagogues) and youth workers.

On a second level it affects the respective support structures in the systems (school leaders, headmasters, governing bodies of the educational institutions, colleagues, co-workers, children and youth work structures)

Children: Children themselves are pretty much shaping the agenda. Here the question is important, in how far the respective field estimates the children as co-producers, subjects and owners of the learning process or as target groups/object of an educational process. The question of co-production of the educational processes is key to the success of learning concepts.

Cooperation: The analysis allow for the conclusion that a co-operative approach involving different providers is the best way. However the different providers face certain barriers for cooperation, which are bigger from school towards the external field than the other way round.

School is very intense: As a matter of fact, it is a big system following its own logic and concentrates very much on in its inherent discourses. Other actors outside school unanimously mention co-operation as the key for schools to develop the capacities to create democratic learning environment, however school on a broad scale seems not to be ready and is stuck in its inherent debates.

How?

A profound and broad basis of methods and concepts exist in all countries. The crossroads for success is the question, in how far the respective educational institution/educator estimates the children as co-producers, subjects and owners of the learning process or target groups/object of an educational process. The quality of approaches claimed as functioning practice differs very much.

A broad variety of topics is been handled and covers all fields of CE in an overarching way.

The findings allow to state that there is a demand from the educators to have CE high on the agenda as there are complementary policy processes that have proven to work.

CE should not be reduced to a single school lesson topic. An approach to **develop democratic learning spaces** would also contribute to other COE and EU policies

- School development should aim at creating a learning environment that follows a comparative and resource centered learning approach, which supports children forming their own opinion and enables them to gain hands on experience in democratic interaction, instead of a deficit- oriented learning of competences.
- Developing learning places for young people esp. schools to democratic learning institutions and bodies seems to be the adequate way.

Educational persons need to be supported in developing capacities regards to new forms of evaluation and monitoring of learning processes that do not end up in assessing. Here competence development of teachers in their role as educators could largely benefit from experiences and standards non-formal education has developed.

Methods, attitudes of the educating person towards the issue and towards the children have a decisive importance. Activating and participating methods are on the agenda, but it should be clear that the CE learning effect is not the method but the ante-post-method behavior, commitment and interaction between children and educators.

When?

Findings from all countries indicate that the precondition for success is to accept that children are fully capable for CE. Such CE is in fact a continuing and lifelong process.

Regards schools, the analyses indicate that the transition phases where children change from primary level to secondary level are difficult. Sec I is the field in school where CE becomes often a single subject. Thus reducing vitally the experience from the more open environment in the primary level and destroying the potential CE settings prove in primary schools.

Where?

The **development of democratic learning places** is crucial for success. All over Europe, school remains the infrastructure which offers the biggest access, but at the same time faces the biggest steps to level-up, due to its inherent structures.

For **non-formal** educational infrastructures - if existing - the biggest challenge is to become a relevant player. Europe-wide the support of an infrastructural development of non-formal learning places with adequate socio-pedagogically trained CE staff is the gap policy needs to foster and concentrate on.

Why?

CE research, political sciences, also developmental psychological research sees children as fully capable for CE and as political subjects.

There is a proof of legions of successful projects on CE with children aged 8-12 in all educational fields and beyond. Due to their project nature the approaches remain of an „archipelago character“, lots of islands which are not adequately connected. There is a large potential for mainstreaming as the concepts prove to work.

The potential of citizenship education for the development of democratic and diverse societies is immense, as it supports the development of identity and thinking of the children, contributes to the development of empathy and supports cooperative competences of children. Thus it contributes to building democracy in societies on from the youngest age, and can enable to preventing from radicalization, alienation, social exclusion and similar challenges we face in Europe and beyond.

There is a lack of an interconnected policy planning, which results in neighbored but non-communicating policy programming related to CE with children. Education needs to be understood in a wide sense.