Implementation of citizenship education actions

2021/2008(INI) - 23/03/2022 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the own-initiative report by Domènec RUIZ DEVESA (S&D, ES) on the implementation of citizenship education actions.

The EU has a primary responsibility to foster EU citizenship education as a way to ensure deeper knowledge among its citizens of the European project as a union of democratic states, thus guaranteeing its citizens the right to fully participate in political life and decision-making at EU level. However, insufficient knowledge of or ignorance about the EU and poor understanding of its functioning and added value may contribute to the perception of a democratic deficit and may lead to mistrust, civic disengagement and Euroscepticism in Member States.

Existing EU programmes such as Erasmus+ or the European Solidarity Corps still have significant **untapped potential** for improving the implementation of citizenship education with a more strategic approach to the formal, non-formal and informal learning components of the programmes, and with better coordination of resources. The Commission and the Member States should do more to improve and **increase the information flow** about the European Union and specific rights and obligations.

There is also a lack of proximity to and understanding of the Union’s democratic processes and mechanisms of participation among citizens, especially young people. A renewed European momentum for citizenship education can be a way of encouraging young people to take part in elections, limiting the allure of extremist and populist discourses, thereby also strengthening social cohesion.

The state of citizenship education in the EU

Members insisted on the need for a pedagogical renewal and the adoption of a theoretical and practical approach to citizenship education in the Union. They are concerned about the limited focus on the European and global aspects of citizenship in national curricula. The report noted that only half of the students studying in the EU report having opportunities to learn about Europe in school. Moreover, it highlighted that the lack of solid research on how to teach and assess citizenship education in an effective manner, and the lack of appropriate pedagogical instruments to this end, hinder the effective teaching of citizenship education.

EU policies in the field of citizenship education

Members noted that EU programmes make a **limited contribution** to advancing certain dimensions of citizenship education, mainly because of a lack of explicit direct support, limited resources and uneven geographical coverage. They regretted that so far, EU-funded projects in this area have not had a widespread long-term impact.

The report concluded that EU programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, the European Solidarity Corps, the Rights and Values programme or Creative Europe, among others, have contributed, mostly indirectly, to the active provision of citizenship education. However, they have not been able to yield any systematic, lasting impact.

Recommendations for a renewed European citizenship education

The report made the following recommendations:

Member States should:

- support, review and update their education systems - and all forms of EU-related curricula content at all levels of education and learning, including vocational education and training - with a view to strengthening the EU dimension;

- enhance and broaden initial and ongoing, professional and lifelong development opportunities for teachers, educators, families and the wider educational community, and to provide them with appropriate support and resources to teach citizenship education, developed in close collaboration with all relevant actors at EU and national level;

- establish and develop national volunteering schemes.

As for the Commission, Members called on it to:

- dedicate a call for proposals to an **Erasmus+ Teacher Academy** dedicated to citizenship education for teachers, trainers and learners from both the formal and non-formal sector, including the vocational education and training (VET) sector;

- develop a common **citizenship education competence framework** for teachers and students for the Key Competence 'citizenship', including multilingual and intercultural competences of educators;

- assess the introduction of a new specific strand in the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme to foster **citizenship education**, with **dedicated budgetary allocations**, and to increase the actions and activities aimed at citizenship education under Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe with dedicated calls;

- approve the **pilot projects** proposed by Parliament, which are designed to strengthen citizenship education;

- consider the possibility of supporting the creation, in every municipality in the Member States, of a **monument to the European Union** to provide citizens with a visual symbol of European integration.

Other recommendations include:

- encouraging high-quality training, within working hours, on EU topics for teachers;

- the creation **Euro Teacher label** award as well as the creation of European badges for schools and universities actively promoting citizenship education;

- developing common and participatory educational research, in particular EU-wide comparable testing in the area of citizenship education, including EU citizenship, with a well-defined mandate and objectives within the remit of EU competences;

- developing **European civic mobility** in the framework of the European Solidarity Corps addressed to young people with a view to contributing to genuine European civic engagement and services;

- the inclusion in the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the educational programmes financed with EU funds of specific targets related to citizenship education.