Implementation of citizenship education actions

2021/2008(INI) - 06/04/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 460 votes to 130, with 37 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of citizenship education actions.

The emergence of a dynamic European citizenship has been hindered by a knowledge and emotional gap, as well as by a lack of mechanisms enabling citizens' participation and dialogue. 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.

Moreover, 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.

Lastly, new systemic challenges with local, regional and global impacts, such as climate change, the digital shift, social and territorial gaps, or supranational political integration itself, require the corresponding adaptation of educational systems, including citizenship education.

The state of civic education in the EU

Deploring the lack of a common definition of civic education, Members stressed the need for **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 European and global aspects of citizenship in national curricula. The resolution notes that only half of students studying in the EU say they have had the opportunity to learn about Europe at school.

Expressing concern about the imbalances in terms of average civic knowledge across and within Member States, Parliament stressed that socio-political and global changes will require a considerable increase in the quality of civic education and the number of initiatives devoted to it. It also believes that the lack of reliable research on how to teach and evaluate civic education effectively, as well as the lack of appropriate pedagogical tools for this purpose, hinders the effective teaching of citizenship education.

EU policies in the field of citizenship education

Parliament deplored the fact that the political consensus at European level on the need to strengthen civic education and the teaching of common European values has not been translated into concrete objectives, targets, benchmarks and measures.

Members noted that EU programmes make a limited contribution to advancing certain dimensions of civic education, mainly due to a lack of explicit direct support, limited resources and uneven geographical coverage.

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 resolution 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:

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

- 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;

- 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;

- invest more in educational formats about the European Union in schools and universities;

- 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.

Parliament called for the development of a comprehensive **European strategy** on European citizenship and civic education and the creation of support platforms for the implementation of this strategy. It called for the development **of tangible and measurable objectives and benchmarks**

on citizenship education, including European citizenship education, in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European area and beyond 2021-2030.