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Developing
Democratic Competence
through ICT

A Handbook for Language Teachers

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Foreword

This Handbook is the result of the joint endeavour of a team of researchers from the University of Craiova, the University of Iceland and Bifröst University, undertaken within the project *A Comparative and Transferable Approach to Education for Democratic Citizenship* (ACTA), with a view to designing educational resources for the development and assessment of competences related to education for democratic citizenship (EDC).

The Handbook provides guidelines and tools for EDC to native language teachers in primary education (6-10 year-olds) and foreign language teachers in primary and secondary education (6-18 year-olds). It is structured in three chapters: *Education for Democratic Citizenship* – including an overview of the interplay between democracy, education and citizenship; *Language Teaching and Education for Democratic Citizenship* – describing the state of the art in language teaching, the use of ICT in language teaching and the integration of democracy-related issues; and *A Toolkit for EDC through ICT* – proposing a model for the development and assessment of competences related to education for democratic citizenship. Furthermore, it integrates the results of research undertaken so far in the project and is meant to be an innovative educational resource that advocated for the use of ICT, ubiquitous in modern education.

We express our genuine hope that the Handbook will be of use for 21st century teachers, who are eager to develop their students' transversal skills and to help grow responsible citizens for tomorrow.

The editors

1. Education for Democratic Citizenship

1.1 The General Framework of Education for Democratic Citizenship

This chapter provides an introduction on the general framework of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and the competences related to EDC.

In the first section, it discusses the concepts of democracy, education and citizenship and provides a description of the Icelandic and Romanian educational frameworks – legislative provisions, institutional strategies and policies – as well as the



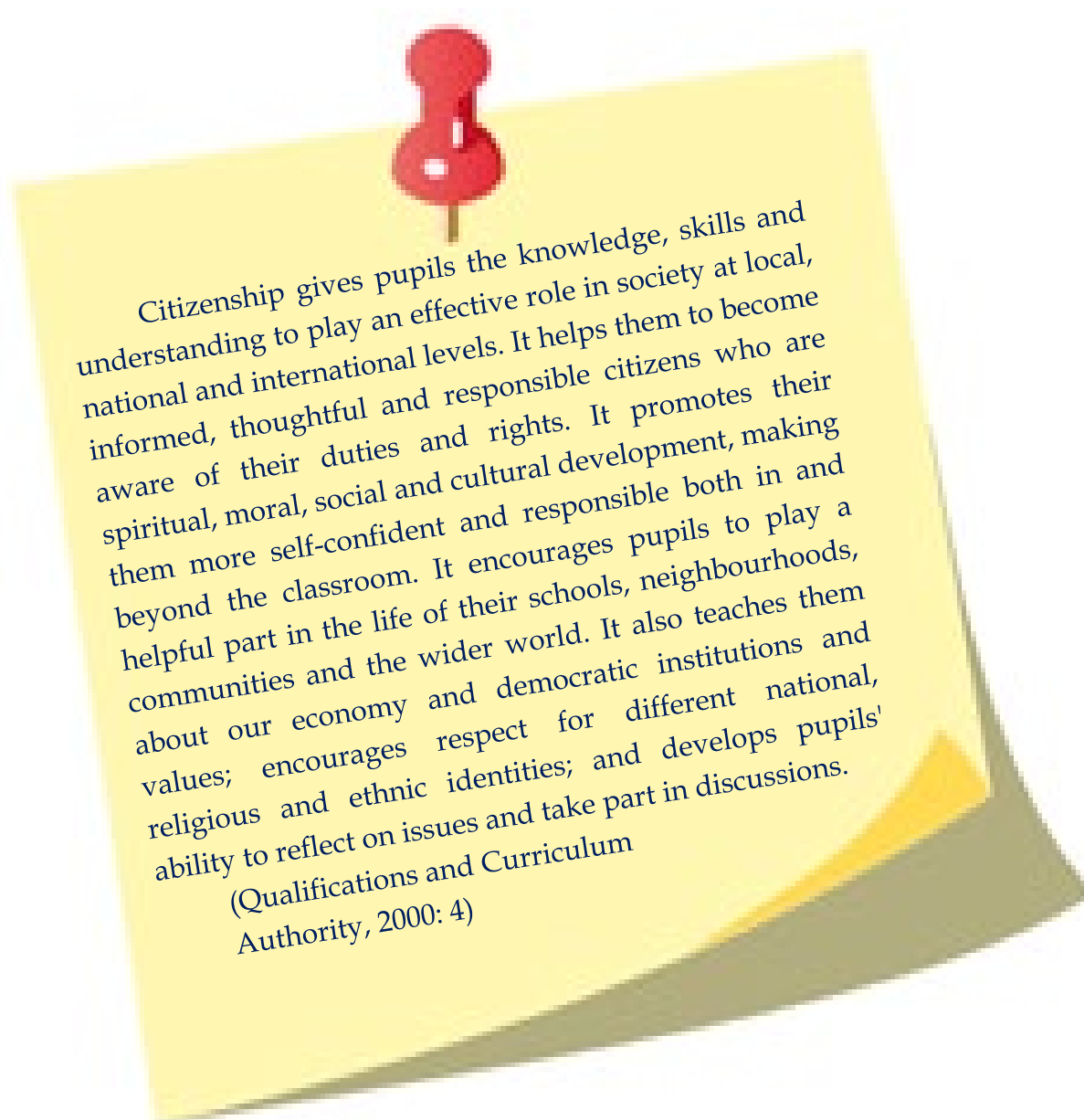
regional and local practices regarding the presence of EDC competences in the educational process.¹

¹ This description of the EDC general framework and its implementation in the

Democracy, education and citizenship

Democracy, in its most basic understanding, is a form of government, which guarantees basic civil rights, fair and free elections, and independent courts of law, to which can be added freedom of speech, a free press, low or no corruption and a thriving civil society. Although the concept of democracy has been in use since the establishment of the Ancient Greek democratic regime, democracy in education is a relatively recent phenomenon and has been a salient topic for just about a century.

Icelandic and Romanian educational contexts was drawn up in the ACTA project and is excerpted from Reșceanu, A., Tran, A-D. K., Magnússon, M.Á.S. (2020). "A Comparative Study on Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) Competences in the Icelandic and Romanian Context". In *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, Volume 7, Issue 1, pp. 144-165. Available at: <https://sserr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SSERR_2019_7_1.pdf>.



One of the initial modern texts on the subject was written by an important figure in Western education, John Dewey (Democracy and Education, published in 1916), who argued that in order for a society to be preserved, the young have to be initiated into its workings through education. This is exactly what the national strategies, the

educational policies and the school curricula have focused on in the recent context of globalized, unified and solidary societies. Their most important aim is to find out ways on how to educate for democracy, more specifically on how to educate citizens such that they find it in their interest to participate in elections, in public debates and

discussions and in the meantime respect the right of others to express their opinions in a non-violent, non-threatening manner.

Although the perception in today's world is that democracy is under threat, there are signs "that democratic participation is on the rise" ("Democracy Index 2018", 2019). This is mainly due to the recent educational policies that strive to understand how democratic ideas and functions can be communicated to the young generation through the educational systems.

A report published in 2017 on citizenship education in Europe by the European Commission mentions that the relationship between citizenship education and democracy is bidirectional. So while a well-functioning democracy may depend on citizenship education to endow students and thus citizens with the necessary competences to think and act democratically, the relationship also goes the other way round. Citizenship education tends to flourish when it operates within the framework of a democracy (European Commission, 2017).

The fundamental values of democracy, such as freedom of choice, equity and justice, and even democracy itself should not

be referred to or interpreted merely as abstract concepts, but as processes based on practice. To ensure the participation of its citizens, a country needs to cultivate these values through education (Zulu, 2001). Thus, school is seen as an educational venue that models the fundamental values in practice. More specifically, school education represents a prerequisite for creating a political culture beneficial for democracy, since it could contribute to the development of certain attitudes, values and competences that foster the development of civic awareness and political participation.

Moreover, a substantial role in educating the students to embrace democracy is played by the teachers' attitudes and values towards the society and the political situation. In the classroom, teachers should transcend the compulsory (more restricted) curriculum and make references and connections to much larger domains. This kind of interaction determines the social involvement and the civic behaviour of their students in the community or society they belong to (Blazar&Kraft, 2016).

Therefore, all stakeholders involved in the educational

process, be them teachers, administrators or other staff members, are responsible for providing the young generation with skills, tools, opportunities and safe spaces to implement what they have learned about EDC.



Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC)

The importance that the education decision makers attached to the development of competences related to Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) is reflected in the place allocated to EDC within the school curriculum across the European countries. Throughout its formulation and development phases, the EDC curriculum has also been influenced by prevailing education policies and developments in teaching and learning. One such influential strategy was the setting up, in 1997, of the Council of Europe's

EDC project, with the aim to find out which values and skills individuals require in order to become participating citizens, how they can acquire these skills and how they can learn to pass them on to others (Audigier, 2000). Another major influence was the European Recommendation of 2006 (Council of Europe, 2006), which included social and civic competences as part of the key competences each citizen should have for building the European knowledge society.

In the above-mentioned report on citizenship education in Europe (European Commission, 2017b), it is stated that:

The detailed objectives and content of citizenship education vary across Europe, but the main aim of the subject area is generally to ensure that young people become active citizens capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live. (European Commission, 2017b: 13).

Moreover, citizenship education is commonly understood to involve


[...] not only teaching and learning of relevant topics in the classroom, but also the practical experiences gained through

activities in school and wider society that are designed to prepare students for their role as citizens (European Commission, 2017b: 11).

Although EDC is part of national curricula in all European countries and all educational systems emphasise the importance of citizenship education and the acquisition of social and civic competences, the ways in which these systems

have chosen to implement the subject area at school level differs from one country to another.

According to the European Commission's 2017 report, EDC is delivered in schools through three main approaches: as a stand-alone subject, as part of another subject or learning area, or as a cross-curricular dimension (European Commission, 2017b:13).



Education for democratic citizenship is a participative process developed in various contexts which, inter alia, equips men and women to play an active part in public life and to shape in a responsible way their own destiny and that of their society; aims to instil a culture of human rights; prepares people to live in a multicultural society and to deal with difference knowledgeably, sensibly, tolerantly and morally; strengthens social cohesion, mutual understanding and solidarity resources.
(Council of Europe, 1999)

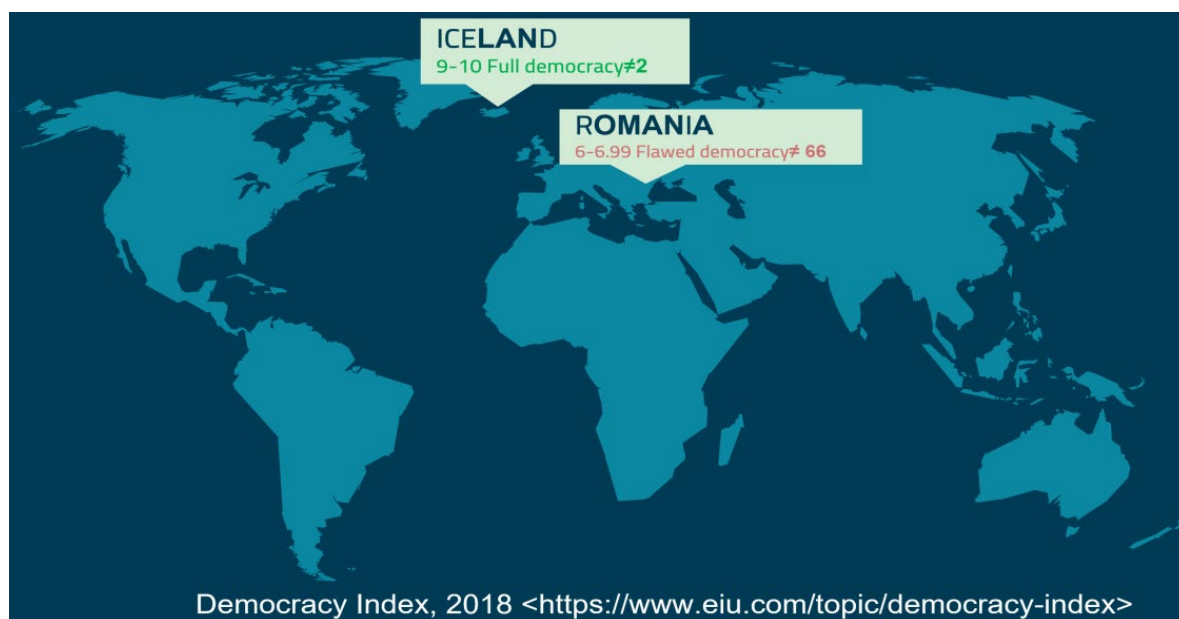


Figure 1. The positions of Iceland and Romania in the Democracy Index, 2018

Iceland and Romania: two different democratic contexts, one common European framework for EDC

In order to better understand the relation between contextual democracies, educational policies and their actual implementation in the educational processes, this section exemplifies how EDC policies are applied in two European countries with a different democratic background. On the one hand, Iceland, a Nordic country, which ranked 2 in the category of “full democracy” according to the EU Democracy Index 2018 (2019)², and on the

other hand, Romania, a country with a more recent and a more fragile democracy, which falls in the category of “flawed democracies”, together with all Eastern European EU member states.

of government; political participation; and political culture. Full democracies are those countries in which not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but which also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy, while flawed democracies have free and fair elections, but also significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy. (“Democracy Index 2018”, 2019).

² The Democracy Index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning

This ranking directly reflects the social and political context of both countries, showcasing the sharp contrast between the Icelandic democratic stability with its “full democracy” features (government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed; the existence of free and fair elections; the protection of minority rights; respect for basic human rights, and equality before the law, due process and political pluralism) and the Romanian “flawed democracy”, characterised by political unrest, difficulties in safeguarding the rule of law, corruption, and a preference for “strongmen who bypass political institutions” (“Democracy Index 2018”, 2019).

Despite the differences, there is one common solution: to educate the young generations, in other words, to communicate democratic values, ideas and functions in such a way as “to reinforce societies which value them and place an importance on upholding them” (Audigier, 2000: 7). As previously mentioned, all European countries acknowledge the importance of citizenship education and provide the formal background for implementing it in the educational process. This means that the starting point is

the same: common European guidelines for developing EDC competences, but the path of implementing them is differentiated by the country-specific context.

To exemplify, we compare the legislative provisions, institutional strategies and policies – as well as the regional and local practices – regarding the presence of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) competences in two educational systems: the Icelandic and the Romanian.

Firstly, in **Iceland**, the main objective of education at all school levels, as stated in the National Curriculum Guide, is to provide their citizens with an education that encourages their active participation within the school walls, and outside in the society. As such, democracy and human rights are included in one of the six fundamental pillars of competencies that are in practice at all grades, starting at preschool, going on to compulsory school, then continuing in upper secondary school, as a cross-curricular theme (cf. the Icelandic National Curriculum, 2014), presented in Table 1.

Iceland

Cross-curricular theme	Six fundamental pillars: 'Democracy and human rights', 'equality', 'creativity', 'education for sustainable development', 'literacy in the broadest sense', and 'health and welfare'	4-7, 8-10
	Two fundamental pillars: Democracy and human rights are fundamental pillars	11-14 (general and IVET ⁽²⁹⁾)
Integrated into other compulsory subjects	Social studies	4-7, 8-10
Curriculum approaches	Themes/Subjects/Learning areas	Grades

Table 1. Approaches to citizenship education according to the Icelandic national curricula for primary, general secondary education and school-based IVET (grades), in 2016/17

(Source: European Commission (2017b). *Citizenship education at school in Europe – 2017. Annexes: National Information and websites*)

The National Curriculum clearly defined and stated the process of implementation for these six competencies, which are to be evident in all school activities and in the content of school subjects and fields of study across all three school levels. This curriculum is based on the Preschool Act, No. 90, 12 June 2008, the Compulsory School Act, No. 91, 12 June 2008, and the Upper Secondary School Act, No. 92, 12 June 2008. The reference for these acts are, to name a few, the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. 10/2008, and other policies of international institutions of which Iceland is a member such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe policy on democracy and human rights, and UNESCO policy on general education of sustainability development. The

pedagogical practices for democracy and human rights is based on critical thinking, reflection, scientific attitude and democratic values. Their learning process should be facilitated and modelled by the working methods of tolerance and equality, democratic cooperation and responsibility (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014).

Moreover, the Icelandic National Curriculum (2014) stipulates the role and responsibilities of teachers and also the criteria for teacher education. Therefore, institutions engaged in teacher education are responsible for providing teachers with competency in incorporating the six fundamental pillars in their teaching and developmental work (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014). For example, at the University of

Iceland, many courses offered at the four faculties of the School of Education are aimed at enriching students' knowledge and understanding related to human rights and democracy in education, multicultural education, student diversities, critical pedagogy, inclusive education, critical thinking, parent-teacher cooperation, language proficiency etc. For instance, the focus of the course *Inclusive education and the irregular school and society*³ is on learners with disabilities and gives students a basic understanding of student diversity in classrooms providing them with tools to work with learners with special needs and their families in mainstream schools and society. Another example is *Multicultural society and schools: Ideology and research*⁴, which focuses on

theories, ideology and research on issues related to refugees, immigrants and their children and addresses attitudes, prejudice and governmental actions that infringes on issues of human rights, equality, democracy and social justice in connection to this population. One final example is *Critical thinking and philosophical dialogue*⁵, aimed at drawing connections between the national curriculum of Iceland and the discussion about independent, critical thinking along with the purpose, creativity, tolerance, self-knowledge and preparation for life in a democratic society.

Overall, the Icelandic educational system is fundamentally based on the philosophical concepts of equality, human rights and democracy since it is in the law that the higher education institutions have the responsibility to prepare students for responsible participation in Iceland as a democratic society (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2015)

In **Romania**, EDC was initially seen as a means of

³ The course description is available at: <<https://ugla.hi.is/kennsluskra/index.php?tab=nam&chapter=namskeid&id=70822320196>>. It introduces future educators to the history of (special) education, theories and perspectives from disability studies, stigma and othering, democracy and social justice.

⁴ This course helps students to acquire understanding about the development of multicultural societies from a historical and international perspectives, migration, the position of minority groups and refugees. Its content description is available at: <<https://ugla.hi.is/kennsluskra/index.ph>

[p?tab=nam&chapter=namskeid&id=61002220186&kennsluar=2018](https://ugla.hi.is/kennsluskra/index.php?tab=nam&chapter=namskeid&id=61002220186&kennsluar=2018)>

⁵ Course content available at: <<https://ugla.hi.is/kennsluskra/index.php?tab=nam&chapter=namskeid&id=70038220200>>

addressing the unstable political situation and the apparent lack of civic responsibility, and its inclusion in the curriculum represented a crucial step in instilling virtues in children for the purpose of ensuring civic cohesion and a healthy national political culture. In 1997, when the Council of Europe set up the Education for Democratic Citizenship project, Romania has changed the curriculum, introduced Civic education at secondary level and adjusted all the curricula for social sciences taught at pre-university level. Later on, in February 1999, the Romanian Ministry of Education issued a policy and development programme⁶ on Education for Personal Values and Democratic Citizenship, which emphasized key themes regarding the individual responsibility and understanding the political processes, as well as the need for an effective programme of in-service training in order to achieve implementation. One year later, in 2010, the Romanian Ministry of National Education

updated the curriculum again and introduced Education for Democracy at high-school level, as an optional discipline, with a 1h time slot allocated per week.

However, despite all these initiatives related to EDC, the rather fragile educational system was faced at first with a lack of classroom teaching materials; teachers with little or no understanding of democracy; teachers with little or no training in appropriate pedagogical techniques; teachers ill-equipped to teach about self-government; educational administrators with no professional training and little understanding of the implications of democracy for the operation of schools. Another drawback was also the substantial and lengthy task of training the teachers in Education for Democratic Citizenship.

At present, EDC is part of the Romanian subject-based formal curriculum, either as a compulsory separate subject at primary and lower secondary levels (Civic education), or as integrated in various separate optional subjects at each level of formal training (European education and Education for society at primary level, Intercultural education at lower secondary level) as illustrated in

⁶ More details on the content, implementation guidelines and prospective outcomes comprised in this document are available in: Ministerul Educatiei Nationale (1999), *Valori si mijloace ale educatiei de astăzi*. Bucuresti: MEN.

Table 2. For example, at the upper secondary level, it is integrated in other compulsory subjects at social sciences specializations (sociology, philosophy, history), and available as a separate optional subject (citizenship education, media competence, human rights, intercultural education, education for democracy, EU Institutions, international humanitarian law), based on curricula elaborated by the Ministry of Education.⁷

It is commonly agreed that teachers play a substantial role in educating the young to embrace democracy, in the sense that they facilitate the development of EDC competences, and assess students in EDC. Thus, many initiatives related to an effective

implementation of citizenship education in Romania have been aimed at providing adequate training and support to teachers in the form of seminars, workshops, specialization short-term courses, informative meetings a.o.

According to a 2018 survey that evaluates how democratic values and attitudes are cultivated and understood in Romanian schools (Bădescu et al. 2018), the Romanian teachers acknowledge the contribution of the school in educating students to be good citizens, but only if there is already a strong foundation provided by the family, which has the duty to transmit important values that prepare the children to become better citizens. The same study concludes that Romanian teachers consider themselves prepared to develop education for democracy and active citizenship in their subjects, with more than 80% of the teachers of foreign languages declaring that they are prepared to incorporate democratic competences in their courses. Such attitudes could help EDC become a cross-curricular objective to be delivered by all teachers (an approach already in use in many European countries, such as Iceland).

⁷ Curriculum for sociology, approved by Order of the Education and Research Minister 3252/16.02.2006; Curriculum for philosophy, approved by Order of the Education and Research Minister 5959/22.12.2006; Curriculum for social studies approved by Order of the Education and Research Minister 5959/22.12.2006; Curriculum for citizenship education, (Grade 3: 2004; Grade 4: 2005; grades 7-8: 2009) [Online] Available at: <<http://www.ise.ro/Departamente/Curriculum/Programescolare.aspx>>; Curricula for social and humanistic subjects at high-school level, [Online] Available at: <http://www.ise.ro/Departamente/Curriculum/Programescolare.aspx>> Invățământ Liceal>Ariacurriculară:Om și societate> Cultura civica_clasele a VII-a - a VIII-a.pdf.

Curriculum approaches	Themes/Subjects/Learning areas	Grades
Romania (21)		
Cross-curricular theme	Embedded in the general objectives	10-12 (IVET)
Integrated into other compulsory subjects	Personal development	1-3
	Philosophy	13 (general)
Integrated into other optional subjects	Philosophy for children	4-5
	Humanitarian international law, education for intellectual property rights, education for development	10-13 (general)
	Sociology	12 (general)
Compulsory separate subject (22)	Civic education	4-5
	Civic culture	8-9
Optional separate subject	Education for society	1-3
	European education	4-5
	Civic culture, moral-civic education	6
	Civic culture, education for children's rights	7
	Intercultural education	6-9
	Civic education, competence in mass media, education for democracy, human rights, intercultural education, European Union institutions	10-13 (general)
	Social studies, children's rights/child protection services	13 (general)

Table 2. Approaches to citizenship education according to the Romanian national curricula for primary, general secondary education and school-based IVET, in 2016/17

(Source: European Commission (2017b). *Citizenship education at school in Europe – 2017. Annexes: National Information and websites*)

In fact, the most recent proposal for the revision of the Romanian educational system entitled *România educată. Viziune și strategie 2018-2030 (Educated Romania. Vision and strategy 2018-2030)*⁸ is based on three

pillars and twelve desiderata, the first of which is education for active citizenship (the educational system should train active citizens). This project also discusses the necessity to develop EDC competences at both pre-university and university levels. So far, at university level, EDC competences were only mentioned in institutional strategic documents (university

⁸ "Educated Romania" is the national project initiated by President of Romania, encouraging the layering of the society by value, developing a culture of success based on performance, hard work, talent, honesty and integrity. It emphasizes the importance that Romanian education and research gain a solid and predictable foundation for its path towards an educated country. More details about the

strategy is available at: <http://www.romaniaeducata.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Viziune-si-strategie-Romania-Educata.pdf>

charts), or in the syllabi of specialized courses, but not as a cross-curricular objective.

EDC in informal education

What Iceland and Romania also have in common is the need to complement the common European guidelines and objectives included in the formal curriculum with informal learning. Students learn about democratic citizenship by taking part at informal activities related to citizenship education outside school and promoting projects between schools and the local community.

In both countries, there are many **national programmes and initiatives** supporting citizenship education through extra-curricular activities and participation in school governance at all level of education.

In Romania, starting with the 2011/12 school year, all schools provide a week's after-school activities devoted to citizenship education in partnership with the local community. The programme is called '**Other Kind of School' (Școala altfel)**⁹ and is

⁹ The implementation guide of "Școala altfel" national programme is available at:
<https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Ghid_program_„Școala%20altfel”.pdf>

coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth. It supports a specific programme of extracurricular activities for each school and includes citizenship activities. Another example is the **National Strategy of Community Action**¹⁰, which is an extra-curricular educational programme that promotes social cohesion by connecting high schools with link organisations that work with children who have specific needs, such as schools, supported housing programmes, day centres or hospitals.

In Iceland, since the new **Youth Act** entered into force in 2007, municipal authorities are required to promote the establishment of youth councils, whose role is, among other things, to advise municipal authorities on the affairs of young people in the community concerned.

These programmes and initiatives aim to build young people's understanding of diverse social groups and their specific needs, "broadening the life experiences of young people whose life experience is significantly different" (European Commission, 2017b: 93-94).

¹⁰ More information available at: <<http://snac.edu.ro/download/SNAC-Explanatory-Note.pdf>>

Thus, students are given the opportunity to experience values and principles of the democratic process in action. It is a stated fact that the concept of education for democratic citizenship is an integral part of the action: they both stand in a dependent relationship to one another.

In conclusion, EDC is implemented in both educational systems on the whole, but its efficiency is dependent on the uneven nature of the country-specific democratic background.

The intent to weld together experiences, viewpoints and reflections that are lived and expressed in two different cultural and social settings, Iceland and Romania, proved quite challenging. That is why the concepts presented in this section were seen in relation firstly with the Council of Europe's reports and other publications, and secondly with the strategies, educational policies and study programmes related to EDC in each country.

1.2 The Competences Leading to Education for Democratic Citizenship

Education for Democratic citizenship plays a key role in endowing the young generation with tools and critical understanding of the societies they belong to and in creating a democratic culture, with active and responsible individuals.

The stringent need, now more than ever before, to secure peace, tolerance and understanding within the highly digitalized, complex and multicultural societies, determined the Council of Europe to propose the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (2018 a,b,c). Its three

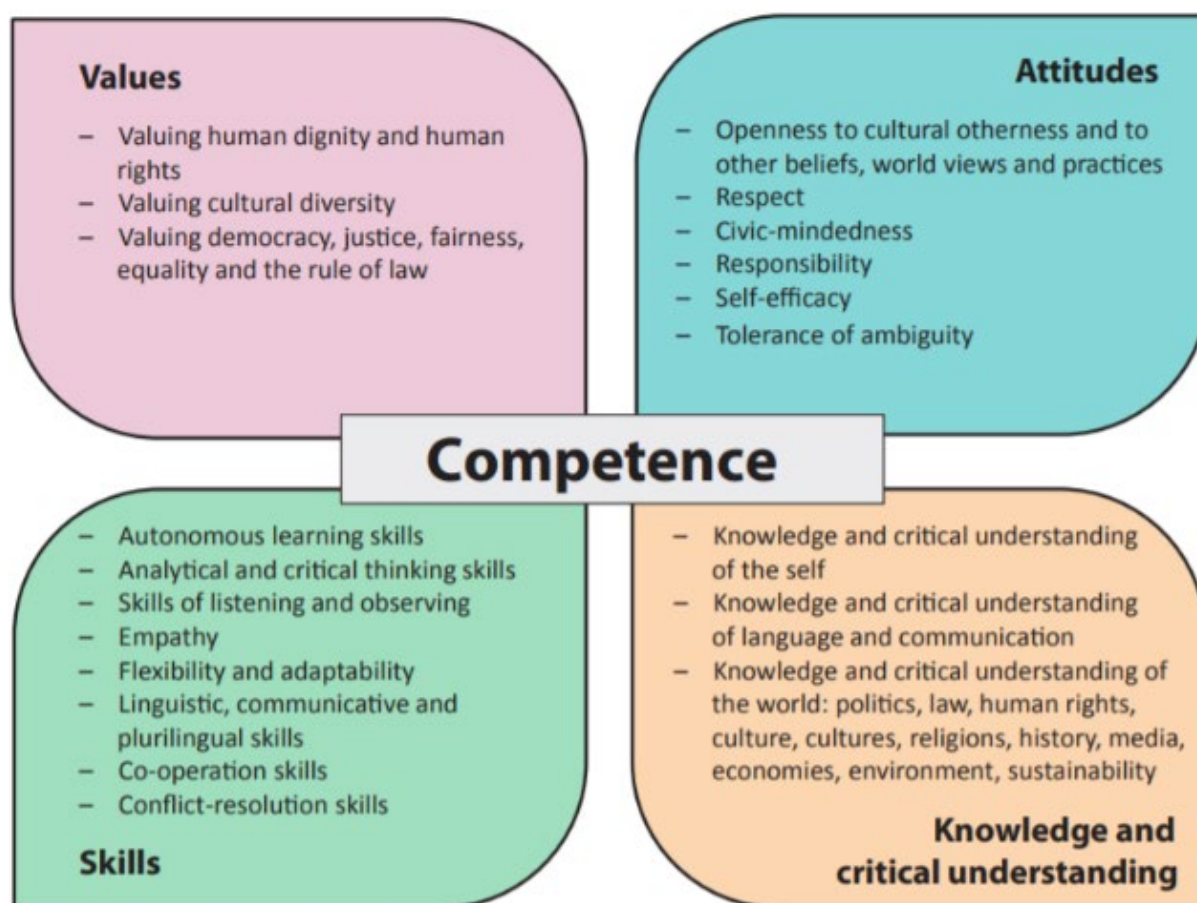
volumes are founded on the values of the Council of Europe (human rights, democracy and the rule of law) and are aimed at defining relevant competences leading to EDC that should complement knowledge, attitudes and values in building the future generation of citizens living in a dynamic and continuously changing environment.

As a document of reference, the Framework is not "a prescribed or recommended European curriculum" (2018a: 20), but rather a comprehensive resource to be used and adapted by teachers, learners, examiners,

teacher trainers and other stakeholders in “designing and developing curricula, pedagogies and assessments suitable for different contexts and education systems” (2018a: 20).

In the first volume, the Framework proposes “a comprehensive conceptual model of the competences that individuals require in order to

interculturally competent citizens” (2018a: 37). The 20 competences included in the model are divided into four areas – Values, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and critical understanding – and accompanied by information about the background to the model, how it was developed and how it is intended to be used (Fig. 2).



function as democratically and

Figure 2. The 20 competences included in the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture
(Source: Council of Europe 2018a)

Defining Indicators and Descriptors¹¹

Sharing the opinions of Le Boterf (1994, 2000), Chenu (2005), Coulet (2011), and Trincherro (2012) on a situational approach of the notion of competence, we consider that competences – both individual and collective – represent people's abilities to mobilize and combine resources in a specific manner, depending on the situations they deal with. A proper characterization of such competences requires a distinction between **indicators** – which are *general and applicable to categories of situations* – and **descriptors**, which are *specific to a precise situation*. Being able to act competently in a situation implies having resources and combining them in a relevant and effective manner.

A competence indicator describes the scheme that helps construct a dynamic combination of resources in analogical (but not identical) situations. Thus, for

instance, one of the indicators of the area of competence related to critical thinking is “the student recognizes the explicit and implicit meanings of a message, the underlying viewpoints and moral and cultural values”. This indicator applies to diverse problem-based tests. In order to design an educational path identifying the competence levels, the possession of such competence should be measured against precise problem-based tests. The combinations of resources used in the context of a problem-based test represent the achieved performance: they are only the observable part of the used competences, yet they are potentially measurable. Therefore, when characterizing competences, one cannot simply state the general indicators of the envisaged competences, but *descriptors* should be detailed, so as to relate the achieved performance to a problem-based test-specific measurement scale. Hence, *a descriptor is an indicator associated to the specific content of the problem-based test: it reports an observation under the form of a statement, using a verb of action.*

¹¹ This theoretical presentation of competences (definition, indicators, descriptors) was drawn up in the Erasmus+ KA2 strategic partnership for school education *Acteurs du Territoire pour une Éducation à la Citoyenneté Mondiale* (ACTECIM), project number 2015-1-FR01-KA201-015405, implemented during 01/09/2015-31/08/2018 and is excerpted from Tilea, Morin, Duță (2019: 122-124).

The RIZA Model. A Follow-up of Resource Mobilization in a Given Situation

Developing a competence in a given situation means to approach not only the resources (personal, social and/or methodological knowledge, competences and capacities), but especially the conditions that help

subjects effectively mobilize their resources against a problem-based test, so as to propose effective answers, with full responsibility and autonomy.

Four elements can be defined to characterize the possibility to act effectively in a situation and, hence, the “depth” of the subject’s competence.

Element	Description	Examples
Resources (R)	The subject’s knowledge, competences, capacities and attitudes, that s/he may use in a problem-based test.	Knowing Pythagoras’ theorem Knowing to calculate the length of the hypotenuse when one has the length of catheti. Being able to persist in searching for a solution to a problem even after an initial failure or for a kind of problem the person has never met before.
Interpretation structures (I)	How the subject “reads”, interprets, assigns meaning to the proposed problem-based tests.	Being able to identify that the proposed problem needs to use Pythagoras’ theorem. Being able to identify, in the provided data, the ones that are useful to solve the problem and the missing data.
Action structures (Z)	How the subject acts to solve the proposed problem-based test.	Being able to apply Pythagoras’ theorem in the proposed situation, to calculate the required unknown variables. Being able to estimate missing data (the height of a balcony and the height of the platform of the fire engine) based on previous knowledge.

Self-regulation structures (A)	How the subject reflects on his/her own interpretations and actions, so as to identify strengths and weaknesses and change them, if applicable.	Being able to identify, independently or with the teacher's help, errors and inconsistencies in his/her reasoning. Being able to subsequently reflect on one's own interpretations and actions, so as to propose improvements.
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Table 3. The R-I-Z-A (Resources-Interpretation-Action-Self-regulation) competence assessment model

- The first element refers to the quantity and quality of held and mobilized resources, in terms of personal, social and/or methodological knowledge, competences and capacities, as well as to their adequacy to the concerned problem-based test.

- The second element refers to the explicit or implicit models guiding the subject's interpretation of the issue and the choice of the used strategies. A correct view of the situation allows the subject to choose action strategies that are adapted to the situation and, hence, effective. They will be referred to as *interpretation structures*.

- The third element deals with the concrete operational strategies used to reach the envisaged goals in the presence

of a given problem-based test. They are called *action structures*.

- The fourth element consists of the subject's capacity to measure by himself/herself whether the adopted strategies are really the best, and change them, as the case may be. They are *self-regulation structures*.

These four elements form the R-I-Z-A model: Resources (*Risorse*), Interpretation (*Interpretazione*), Action (*aZione*), Self-Regulation (*Autoregolazione*), summarized in table 3.

In the next pages, we provide the competence description sheets for two relevant competences that lead to EDC: critical thinking and active citizenship.

Critical Thinking Competence Description Sheet

General description

- Critical thinking is defined as being “an umbrella term that may be applied to many different forms of learning acquisition or to a wide variety of thought processes” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2016). More specifically, as a cognitive activity, critical thinking is associated with the use of a wide range of mental faculties that enable the individuals to learn and to think critically, analytically and in an evaluative way. By means of mental processes such as observation, classification, selection and assessment, an individual is able to select and assimilate reliable information on the world, and to develop aware and justified positions (Trinchero, 2012).
- Many authors consider that critical thinking is, above all, an approach that helps making decisions based on knowledge from reliable sources, with no influence from prejudices or preconceived ideas. Thus, in the view of Jiménez-Aleixandre and Puig (2010), critical thinking includes two articulated elements: on the one hand, rationality, that leads to a quest for tangible proofs by challenging already established facts and, on the other hand, the construction of an independent opinion, based on challenging the viewpoint of the social group the individual belongs to. Critical thinking results from both argumentation and social empowerment. It generally requires investing physical resources (to find the best information sources), as well as mental resources (to analyse, evaluate, synthesize them and produce consistent and demonstrable ideas).

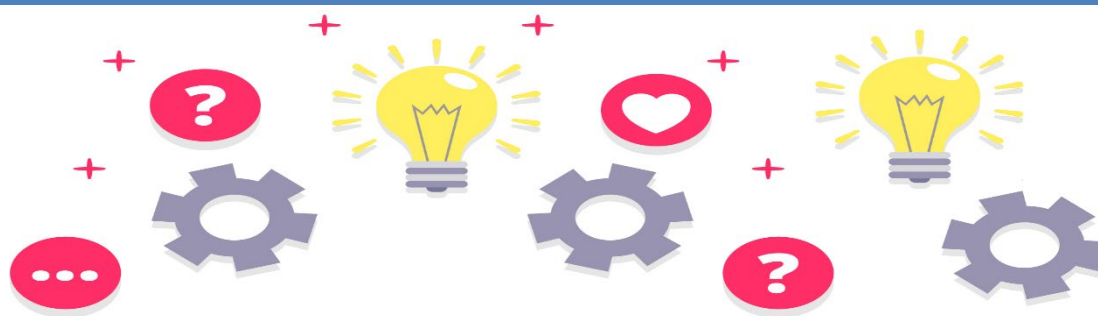


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Critical thinking in EDC

- Nowadays, in a society in which the technological progress and the new media are changing the way we interact with each other and perceive information and knowledge, the ability to think critically has become more important than ever before. This has led to a change in paradigm of the whole educational process in which the learners are placed in the centre of the learning processes and are actively responsible for their own learning. In order to ensure a quality education, educational institutions and educators also envisage the development of appropriate skills and competences that would lead to new ways of acting and thinking.
- In its most basic expression, critical thinking occurs “when students are analysing, evaluating, interpreting, or synthesizing information and applying creative thought to form an argument, solve a problem, or reach a conclusion” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2016). It is generally defined as “a large and complex cluster of inter-related skills” that are required “to evaluate and make judgements about materials of any kind” (Council of Europe, 2018a:47).
- According to the recently published *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, education for democratic citizenship “is explicitly linked to the ideals of democracy and reflects the principles of human rights” (Council of Europe, 2018a: 15). In the particular case of education for democratic citizenship (EDC), learning is not just a cognitive process, but a process which requires the student to engage with the whole person: intellect, emotions and experiences (Council of Europe, 2018a: 15). In this context, teachers should strive to cultivate and develop the students’ critical, creative and empathetic thinking, which are necessary for their active participation in democratic processes and for training them to become responsible citizens. Critical thinking skills in EDC include abilities to make evaluations and judgements about the validity, accuracy, reliability, acceptability of materials, to generate and elaborate alternative options, to weigh up the pros and cons of available options, to draw results and evaluate processes, to construct arguments and, last but not least, to take action.

Critical thinking indicators in EDC

The student:

- identifies the particularities of the authors' thinking system, as it results from their linguistic or visual productions
- identifies the meaning of a message and grasps the viewpoint of its author, as well as the moral, cultural and democratic implications
- is able to formulate his/her own viewpoint on the topic at stake
- is able to justify his/her own viewpoint based on previous knowledge and additional information from other sources
- is able to reflect upon, evaluate and adjust his/her own arguments

The teacher:

- organizes support activities in order to get the students acquainted with the topic of the problem-based test and facilitates an interdisciplinary approach
- helps the students to select reliable and relevant information reflecting diverse viewpoints on the topic
- provides the students with all the information they need in order to formulate their own opinions in a clear, consistent and structured manner
- supports the students to discover and analyse the explicit and implicit meaning of a text
- is able to guide the students in their self-reflective process

Active Citizenship Competence Description Sheet

General description

- Metaphorically defined by the President of the European Economic and Social Committee as “the glue that keeps society together” (EESC 2012: 5), active citizenship refers to people getting involved in their communities and to a sense of civic engagement and democratic participation. Citizens can make their voice heard and be the driving force for cultural change, which can then impact the country’s democratic strength, considering that “[a] culture of passivity and apathy – an obedient and docile citizenry – is not consistent with democracy” (EIUL, 2019: 48).
- International institutions recognize the importance of active citizenship for social development and cohesion, establishing a wide range of tools to foster it, such as the *European Passport to Active Citizenship* (EPTAC, <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/european-passport-active-citizenship-eptac>), which links individual citizens and civil society organizations to the EU decision-making process.

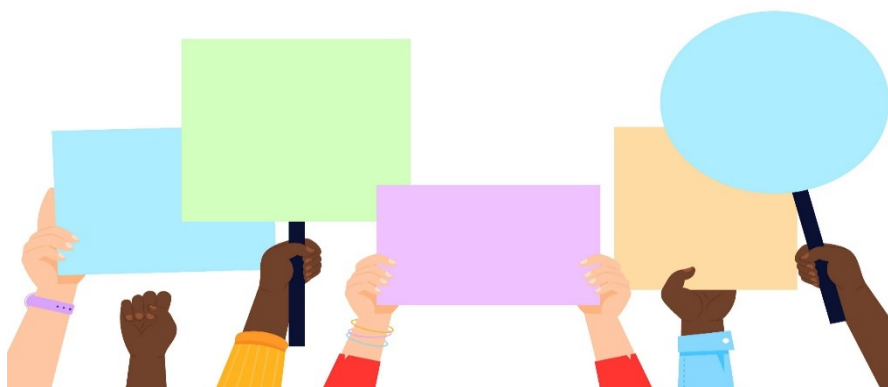


Image designed by Freepik

Active citizenship in EDC

- In a global context marked by the need to uphold democracy and human rights, education for democratic citizenship (EDC) has increasingly emerged as a prerequisite for shaping active and responsible citizens for the decades to come. Passive involvement is not enough in a world where democracy is constantly facing new challenges. Active citizenship implies a strong commitment to democratic values such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, human rights, etc., and is, hence, an inextricable component of EDC, because one cannot have democracy without civic engagement or the other way around.
- Attitudes associated to active citizenship might seldom be acquired at home or in the wider community, but it is the responsibility of the educational system to properly foster and advance them. Teachers should nurture and encourage young people to become aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, to commit themselves to democratic values and to get involved in their society. Learners should be provided with opportunities to find out about democratic issues such as intolerance, discrimination, racism or extremism, but not only, and to express their views and proposals on those topics.
- Menthe (2012: 73-78) points out that the teaching and learning of democratic citizenship is based on two complementary pillars: democratic processes and practices, such as democratic decision making within a school or in other fields of the educational process, and democratic values and attitudes, such as human rights, participation, empowerment and integration. Furthermore, as shown in the *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* (2010: 8-9), learning in education for democratic citizenship is a lifelong process and it does not stop once the students have left school. Therefore, while the mission of educational professionals can be undertaken by means of concrete, individual activities, a longer-term horizon of action should be envisaged. What teachers should do is to equip students with the competences they need in order to be active citizens in the long run and contribute to civic and democratic development.

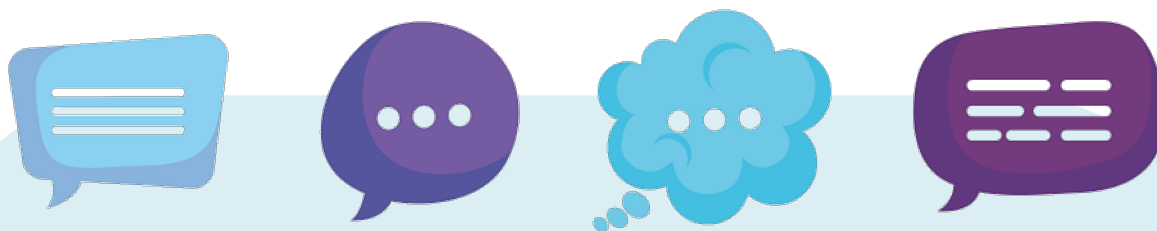
Active citizenship indicators in EDC

The student:

- is able to identify stringent democratic issues at various levels (global, national, local)
- outlines challenges and difficult aspects, identifies guidelines, values and various types of involvement
- is able to identify, select and interpret reliable and relevant information on the previously identified issues
- formulates a clear and structured opinion based on his/her personal experience and knowledge, as well as the specificities of his/her learning territory
- is able to build up, present and explain a proposal for concrete actions
- has the ability to adjust the proposal according to the feedback of his/her peers
- has the capacity to follow up the implementation of the proposed actions and to assess the concrete outcomes
- has a sense of empathy that allows him/her to relate and

The teacher:

- masters project-based pedagogy techniques
- is aware of the role of problem-based tests in modern education
- holds the means to build problem-based tests focused on education for democratic citizenship
- has the ability to identify the tools to make the students aware of the importance of empathetic and efficient communication with the other members of the society they live in
- organizes activities aimed at fostering democratic values among students



TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can teachers blend formal and informal teaching/learning activities related to EDC? Do you think that the Romanian programme 'Other Kind of School' (*Școala altfel*) could ensure qualitative informal education and develop transversal competences efficiently?
2. Reflect on the concept of education for democratic citizenship as an integral part of active engagement (considering that reflecting gives meaning to acting, and vice-versa) and propose examples of educational activities that promote EDC in school environment (e.g. debates, project-based assignments, EDC fairs, student competitions etc.).

2. Language Teaching and Education for Democratic Citizenship

Language education is recognized as a “most important site of learning for democratic citizenship” (Starkey, 2002: 20) and is seen in conjunction with issues such as citizenship education, human rights and diversity in major policy papers (Council of Europe, 1998 & 1999; Legendre, 1998; Starkey, 2002). In a world where the quality of communication depends on respect, tolerance and acceptance of basic standards of human rights such as equality, language education today may be conceived of as being “at the intersection of the major political issues of our time” (Kramsch, 2004).

Language learning is emphasized in the UNESCO education position paper as a means to open up access to other value systems and ways of interpreting the world, encouraging intercultural understanding and helping reduce xenophobia (UNESCO, 2003: 17) and it has been argued that the construction of a peaceful, democratic and multicultural

Europe requires plurilingual citizens (Starkey, 2002: 29).

Since language is one of the most prominent social and cultural markers of identity and the international community, in its essence, is multilingual, the linguistic capacities of human beings are described as a unifying feature that distinguishes humans from other species and brings along an automatic entitlement to human rights (Starkey, 2002: 9). Moreover, language learning acts as a major catalyst for the educational opportunities of citizens, and it is a common saying that, the more languages one speaks and writes, the better resourced that person is. The engagement of the learners’ curiosity, the confrontation of alternative perspectives and the approach of real-life issues are likely to foster both the teachers’ and the learners’ motivation. Eventually, when both teachers and learners have a common commitment to developing language skills and simultaneously developing the skills of citizenship, progress is bound to happen.

Topics related to education for democratic citizenship are included in the formal curriculum as compulsory school subjects in more and more countries. However, considering the non-core status of these subjects, their impact is limited. Language education, on the other hand, is allotted substantial curriculum time, as well as a significant flexibility in terms of content. Language teaching includes literature, cultural awareness, media studies and debates on topical issues. From this point of view, language teachers and professionals who prepare materials for language learning can act as pioneers of education for democratic citizenship, often inspired, as Starkey (2002: 20) points out, by their participation in European projects and meetings.

In terms of content, language teaching and learning is a complex and long-term process whereby learners come into contact with teachers and peer learners and get acquainted with not only linguistic, but also cultural issues. Hence, foreign language learning is, by definition, an intercultural experience, fundamental for communication across cultural boundaries. Indeed, learning a

foreign language means "equipping oneself with intellectual tools for confronting the real and the unknown, as well as personal enrichment through a knowledge of other cultures and other views of the world" (Legendre, 1998). Karen Risager has proposed the concept of "languaculture" to suggest the existence of a "close connection, an interdependence, a complex relationship between language and culture" (2007: 163).

Additionally, the 1998 Council of Europe Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on Linguistic Diversity encouraged the "use of foreign languages in the teaching of non-linguistic subjects" (Council of Europe, 1998), which resulted in a major advent of the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) /CLIC (Content and Language Integrated Classrooms) movement. This approach promotes formalised attempts to simultaneously acquire language competence and curricular skills, values and knowledge traditionally viewed as separate disciplines. It derives from the view that form can be learnt while the user's attention is on content and takes advantage of the extra time that can be gained for

language learning if time for other disciplines is appropriated and joint curricular outcomes are achieved (Krashen, 1985).

In terms of the envisaged competences, the skills developed in language classes are directly transferable to citizenship education and most of the competences and skills included in the Council of Europe's statement on Education for Democratic Citizenship can be developed through the study of languages. Indeed, many of them are listed or implied in the *Common European Framework of Reference for languages* (CEFR), a policy paper proposed by the Council of Europe in 2001 as a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. The skills and know-how (*savoir faire*) in CEFR include social skills and intercultural skills, the existential competence (*savoir-être*) includes attitudes such as degree of openness to other cultures and willingness to relativise one's own cultural viewpoint, while the pragmatic competences (particularly discourse competence) includes debate and discussion. Specific subheadings are allocated in CEFR to

intercultural awareness and the ability to learn, which are considered indispensable for successful language learning, and competences such as critical thinking or coherence and cohesion are embedded in the description of proficiency levels (e.g. written production – reports and essays – level C2: “Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles or essays which present a case, or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works”).

2.1 ICT in Language Teaching

ICT is an acronym that stands for Information Communications Technology. Generally speaking, ICT covers any product, technology or application involving the use of information in a digital form (Paletta & Dias Vieira Junior, 2008). Such uses evolve on an almost daily basis, which is why ICT is highly dynamic and subject to constant change.

Digital technologies are an inseparable part of today's learning process and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digital transition. However, while telework and distance learning have become a reality for millions

of people in the EU, the limitations of the current digital preparedness were often also revealed. The pandemic has enhanced the already existing digital skills gap and new inequalities have been emerging as many people lack the required level of digital skills or their workplaces or schools lag behind in digitalisation (European Commission, 2020).



In the context of global exchanges and interactions, the role of ICT is irrefutable in the 21st century. The use of ICT has become essential in both formal and non-formal teaching and learning. Given the increasing popularity of the Internet and computer technologies among young people and in society as a whole, the integration of ICT into

the educational process is a stringent necessity. The value of ICT in education has long been emphasized by prominent international organizations such as UNESCO and Teachers Without Borders. The introduction of ICT empowers both teachers and students, through its diversity of uses – as a teaching tool, as a communication tool, for independent research work, etc. – which increases the effectiveness of classroom work (Meshkova et al., 2017: 4603).

ICT is likely to improve the quality of teaching and learning in general, and the World Wide Web is especially valuable in foreign language classes, expanding the classroom context, providing access to current, up-to-date materials from the country or countries of the target language, offering learners and teachers a plethora of materials in different modes, bringing the foreign culture and language to life and making it more tangible (UNESCO, 2004: 6). Additionally, where the existing resources cannot cover all the training needs of learners (e.g. no native speakers available for foreign language speaking classes), ICT can provide successful backup.

Table 4 includes a synthetic presentation of the ICT tools and

applications used in foreign language teaching registered by Pădurean (2009) and Akhtar (2016).

Resource		Uses
Computer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to store, prepare and collect data to develop listening and speaking skills to administer tests in distance learning programmes
	Overhead projector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to display information to a large number of people simultaneously
	Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to relay information to students in rural areas to develop listening and speaking skills
	Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to develop listening and speaking skills to learn situational language in distance learning programmes
Internet	Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to learn and practise situational language to share information
	Online language training facilities	e-books, e-libraries, online training, e-tutoring, e-journals, etc.
	Online language courses	free-of-charge or payment-based: MOOC, Future Learn, NPTEL, etc.
	Hypermedia / multimedia resources	texts, graphics, sound, animation, videos, etc.

Table 4. The Uses of ICT Resources in Foreign Language Teaching

2.2 Problem-Based Learning in Language Teaching

Problem-based learning (PBL), an experiential learning strategy, has long been recognized as a useful tool for the development of a wide range of skills in various academic fields (Major & Palmer,

2001; Wharton & Parry, 2003). Historically, it emerged from a number of medical schools starting with the 1950s, with a view to preparing students for the real world and problems they would have to solve as physicians (Allen et al., 2011: 21; Othman, Shah, 2013: 125).

Problem-based learning is a learner-centred educational method in which complex real-world problems are used to foster student learning of concepts and principles as opposed to direct presentation of facts and concepts. Besides course content, PBL can promote the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, learning to learn, team work and communication skills (Duch et al, 2001). Major and Palmer have characterized PBL as an educational approach in which complex problems function as the context and the stimulus for learning:

In PBL classes, students work in teams to solve one or more complex and compelling “real world” problems. They develop skills in collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing resources as they first define and then propose a solution to a multifaceted problem (Major & Palmer, 2001: 5).

In a typical PBL setting, learning is triggered by a problem which needs to be solved. Thus, problem-based learning engages students in active intellectual inquiry, through the experience of solving problems, and allows them to learn both content and

thinking strategies from real-life situations.

Additionally, students engage in peer learning through small-group discussions and consolidate their learning through reflective writing, which also favours longer-term knowledge retention. According to researchers Yew and Goh, effective learning takes place when students “both construct *and* co-construct ideas through social interactions and self-directed learning” (2016: 76)

The underpinning philosophy of PBL is that learning can be considered a “constructive, self-directed, collaborative and contextual” activity (Dolmans et al, 2005: 732). To this purpose, teachers must be able to design meaningful PBL settings, considering a wide range of factors such as the issue at stake, the envisaged objectives, the developed skills or the target audience. A schematic presentation of the basic stages and activities covered in the creation of a PBL problem is shown in Figure 3.

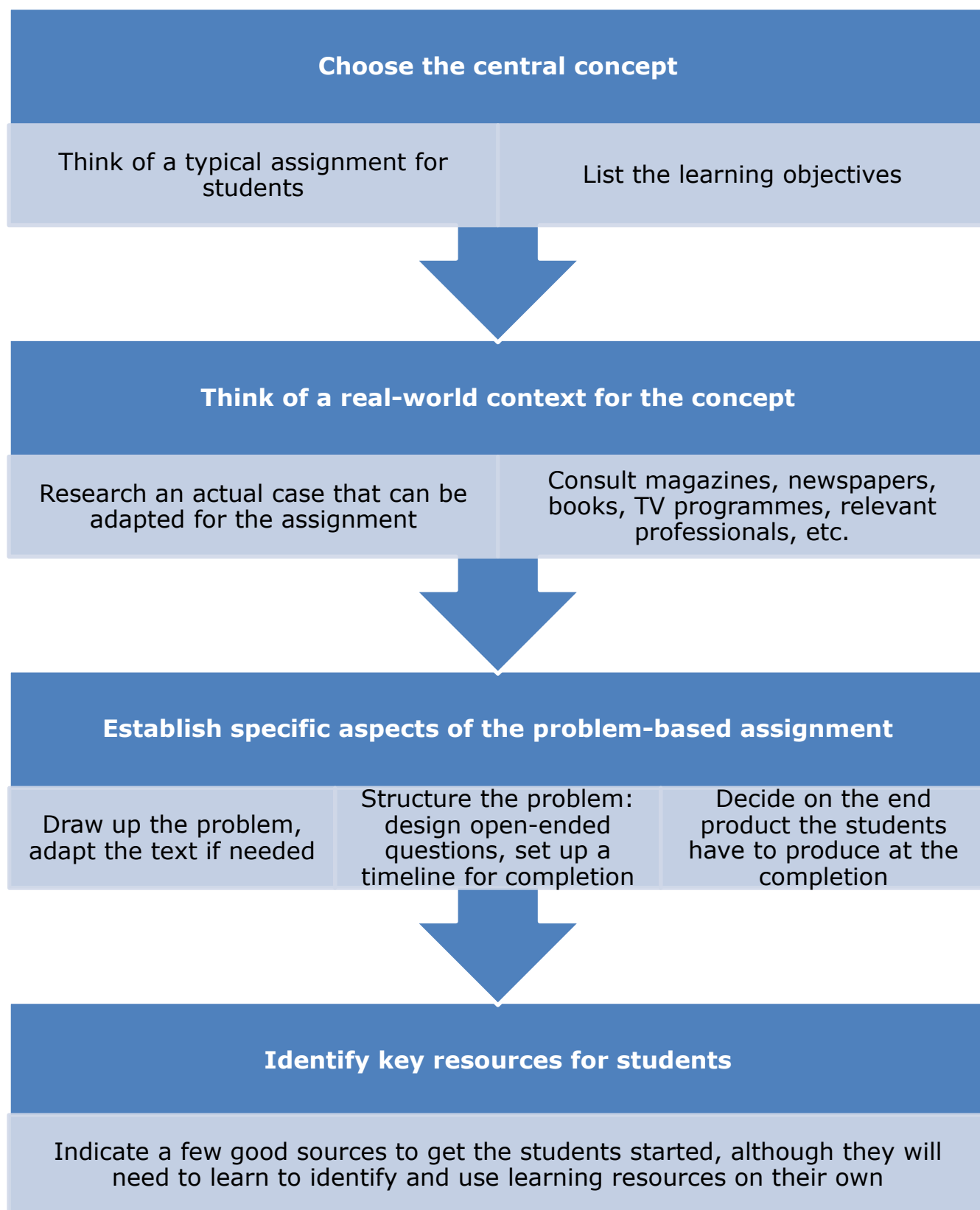
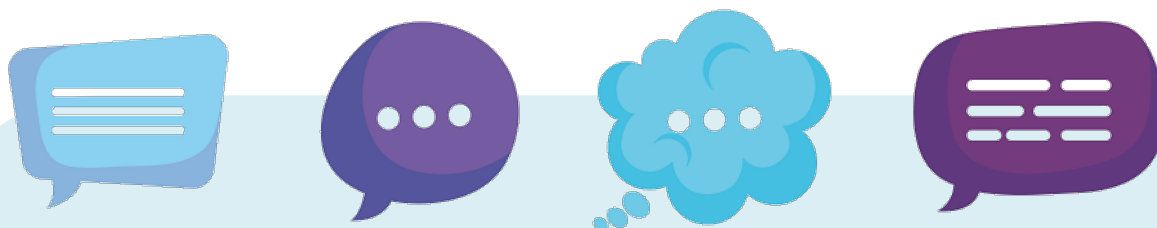


Figure 3. The basic stages of creating a PBL problem (adapted after Duch et al., 2001)

According to Neville & Britt (2007), a traditional lecture-based classroom uses problems as an evaluation measure. In a PBL classroom, on the other hand, problems are used as the tools to develop problem-solving schemata and students become engaged in learning how-to-learn while they also learn language and content (Mathews-Aydinli, 2007). Several studies have shown that the positive impact of PBL seems to be on the generic skills and language skills, particularly on speaking. For instance, a study conducted by Azman and Shin (2012) proved that the greatest impact was on the students' confidence in using the language, which is significant

especially in language production – in speaking, presentation and communication skills. Role-play is also successfully used to apply PBL in language classes, eliciting positive responses from the learners, as shown by Chin Leong (2009).

Furthermore, besides enhancing the students' language proficiency, PBL also promotes various non-linguistic skills such as leadership skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills (Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006). PBL also gives room for flexibility, as the tasks can be adjusted to meet different objectives and to accommodate individual learning needs.



TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Reflect on an activity you have undertaken with your students in language classes, where you have used ICT. Has the use of ICT contributed to the effectiveness of classroom work? Justify your answer.
2. What were the most prominent opportunities and challenges you have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, in terms of integrating technology in your language classes?
3. Give an example of a complex real-life situation that can be incorporated in your class. Reflect upon the tasks you could create in order to develop the critical thinking of your students.

3. A Toolkit for EDC through ICT

3.1 An Assessment Model for EDC-related Competences

While skills such as communication in a foreign language or digital literacy may well be taught and assessed by means of conventional methods, competences such as critical thinking, active citizenship and cultural awareness – generically referred to as transversal skills – can only be stimulated and developed through specific techniques. As Tilea (2015: 14) points out, more often than not, such techniques demand a high degree of creativity and innovation from the teacher or trainer and, of course, the challenges are much more complex than with traditional teaching.

Transversal competences call for new ways of learning, teaching and assessment, which go beyond conventional subject boundaries, and educational decision makers have become acutely aware of this reality. A thematic report of the European Commission analysing the assessment of key competences through national testing at the EU level shows that skills like mother tongue

knowledge, mathematics, science and foreign languages are widely present in national tests, while social and civic competences and sense of initiative and entrepreneurship are barely there or, most frequently, completely absent (European Commission 2012: 28).

Given its extensive use of self-reflection and its potential to engage learners, problem-based learning is a most suitable technique for the assessment of EDC-related competences. Additionally, in an age where everything is only one click away, the use of ICT is highly beneficial. Thus, in the following, we present a problem-based test designed starting from an online resource, and the associated descriptors, which list four levels of competence for critical thinking and active citizenship. This approach has a significant degree of adaptability and can be used in a variety of contexts, depending on the EDC-related competences that the teacher/trainer wants to assess and on the learners' linguistic and cognitive capacities.



"Global Warming" Problem-based Test

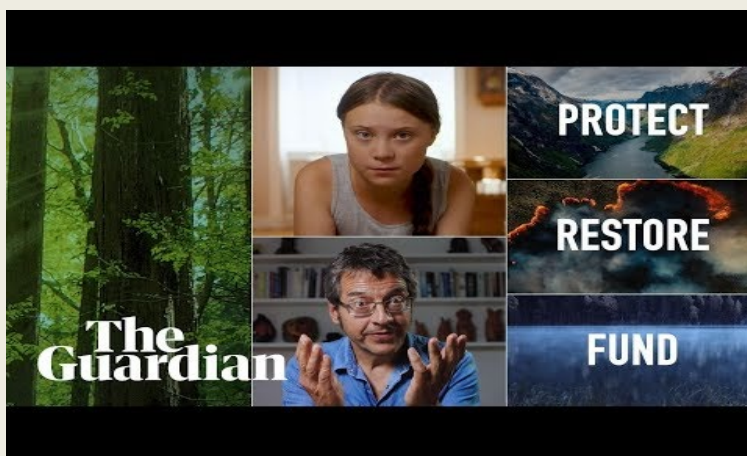
Your university is currently involved in an international project on education for democratic citizenship. We kindly ask you to solve the following problem-based test, which will provide information on competences associated with this type of education. It should take approx. 90 minutes. Thank you!

University
Specialisation

The Guardian, 'Nature can repair our broken climate', say Greta Thunberg and George Monbiot, 19 September 2019

Please watch the video and answer the questions below (do not write more than 100 words for each answer).

1. In your opinion, to what purpose was this video created? Justify your answer.
2. Greta Thunberg says children should give up their education to protest for their future. Do you agree with her? Motivate your answer referring to your own educational system and your own experience.
3. What are, in your opinion, the most stringent environmental issues that affect your own country nowadays? Explain your choices.
4. Have you ever undertaken any actions for environmental protection? If so, briefly describe them (2 sentences per action).
5. Do you think environmental issues can be solved without international cooperation? Justify your answer.
6. Based on the video you have just watched, the image on the side, as well as previous knowledge and personal experience on the topic, answer the following questions:
 - a. Whose actions are the most effective to fight climate change – Greta's or Boyan's? Motivate your answer.
 - b. Do you think media is important in the fight against climate change? Motivate your answer and provide examples to support your opinion.



Source of the image:

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Critical Thinking An Assessment Model

This assessment model is based on questions 1, 2 and 6 of the problem-based test.

Interpretation structures

The student:	Levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the purpose to which the video was created, with the teacher's guidance - identifies Greta's general point of view on actions against climate change - identifies Greta Thunberg's and Boyan Slat's actions and chooses between them, only if helped by the teacher - identifies the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages, only if helped by the teacher 	Level D (non-autonomous)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the topic of the video instead of its purpose - identifies Greta's point of view on the children's involvement in protests for their future - identifies Greta Thunberg's and Boyan Slat's actions and chooses between them - identifies the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages and in transforming her into a climate icon 	Level C (weak)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the purpose to which the video was created - identifies Greta's point of view on the children's involvement in protests for their future and her opinion that such protests are more important than attending formal education - identifies the complementarity of Greta Thunberg's and Boyan Slat's actions and chooses between them - identifies and explains the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages and in transforming her into a climate icon, supporting the explanation with concrete data (number of YouTube views, Google hits) 	Level B (intermediate)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies the purpose to which the video was created, distinguishing between topic and purpose - identifies Greta's point of view on the children's involvement in protests for their future and her opinion that such protests are more important than attending formal education, as well as their implications - identifies the complementarity of Greta Thunberg's and Boyan Slat's actions and chooses between them, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses - identifies and explains the role of media in conveying Greta Thunberg's messages and in transforming her into a climate icon, supporting the explanation with concrete data (number of YouTube views, Google hits), distinguishing between traditional and new media 	Level A (advanced)
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Action structures

The student:	Levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to structure his/her discourse only if assisted by the teacher - expresses his/her own point of view without integrating additional information from other sources - is able to motivate his/her answer, only if helped by the teacher. - chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions without motivating his/her answer - formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change, only if helped by the teacher 	Level D (non-autonomous)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uses logical connectors, but fails to clearly organize his/her discourse - expresses his/her own point of view integrating additional information from other sources - is able to motivate his/her answer referring to his/her own educational system and his/her own experience without providing any concrete examples - chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions and draws up a comparative analysis 	Level C (weak)

- clearly formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change

- uses proper logical connectors to express some of his/her own opinions

- expresses his/her own point of view integrating relevant additional information from other sources

- is able to support his/her answer with 1 concrete example from his/her own educational system and his/her own experience

Level B
(intermediate)

- chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions and draws up a comparative critical analysis

- clearly formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change, providing general examples

- uses proper logical connectors to express all his/her own opinions

- expresses his/her own point of view integrating relevant additional information from other sources, approached from a critical and a comparative perspective

- is able to support his/her answer with 2 concrete examples from his/her own educational system and his/her own experience

Level A
(advanced)

- chooses between Greta's or Boyan's actions and draws up an accurate and complete comparative critical analysis

- clearly formulates his/her viewpoint regarding the role of media in the fight against climate change, providing concrete, real-life examples

Active Citizenship An Assessment Model

This evaluation model is based on questions 3, 4, 5 of the problem-based test.

Interpretation structures

The student:	Levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies a stringent environmental issue that affects his/her own country nowadays, only if helped by the teacher - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues, only if helped by the teacher - is able to select his/her environmental actions, only if helped by the teacher - understands how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level only if helped by the teacher 	Level D (non-autonomous)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies a stringent environmental issue that affects his/her own country nowadays - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues based on reliable information - is able to select his/her environmental actions - provides one example of how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level 	Level C (weak)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies 2 stringent environmental issues that affect his/her own country nowadays - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues based on reliable information and communication with the peers - is able to select his/her environmental actions and to reflect upon them - is able to think globally, by providing 2 examples of how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level 	Level B (intermediate)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifies at least 3 stringent environmental issues that affect his/her own country nowadays - distinguishes between local and national environmental issues based on reliable information and communication with the peers; is aware of the fact that environmental actions can only be organized in a society that supports democratic values such as freedom of association and freedom of speech - is able to select his/her environmental actions, to reflect upon them and to put forward the role of personal involvement in preventing pollution - is able to think globally, by providing at least 3 examples of how environmental actions are connected on a local, national and international level 	Level A (advanced)
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Action structures

The student:	Levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - states an environmental action s/he has undertaken - lists his/her personal actions, without explaining them - presents his/her personal actions without including elements that show their potential environmental impact 	Level D (non-autonomous)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to present and explain a concrete environmental action s/he has undertaken - explains his/her personal actions in a clear and well-structured sentence - includes, when presenting his/her personal actions, an element that show their potential environmental impact 	Level C (weak)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to present and explain 2 concrete environmental actions s/he has undertaken - explains his/her personal actions in 2 clear and well-structured sentences - includes, when presenting his/her personal actions, 2 elements that show their potential environmental impact 	Level B (intermediate)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is able to present and explain 2 concrete 	Level A

environmental actions s/he has undertaken, (advanced)
emphasizing the importance of community-level
cooperation

- explains his/her personal actions in at least 2 clear
and well-structured sentences, offering all the relevant
details
- includes, when presenting his/her personal actions, 2
elements that show their potential environmental
impact; refers to the importance of follow-up actions

3.2 Examples of Problem-Based Tests



"Educational Divide" Problem-based Test



Please watch the video and answer the questions below (5-10 lines for each answer).

- 1.** In your opinion, to what purpose was this video created? Justify your answer.
- 2.** Do you think that social background has an impact on students' training? Motivate your answer.
- 3.** Do you think the absence of high-quality school infrastructure can be made up for by well-trained dedicated teachers? Motivate your answer.
- 4.** Which of the two students in the video would you identify yourself with? Why?
- 5.** Do you think that the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged schools worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic? Motivate your answer.
- 6.** List 3 actions that would be efficient, in your opinion, to mitigate educational inequality.



"Gender Equality" Problem-based Test

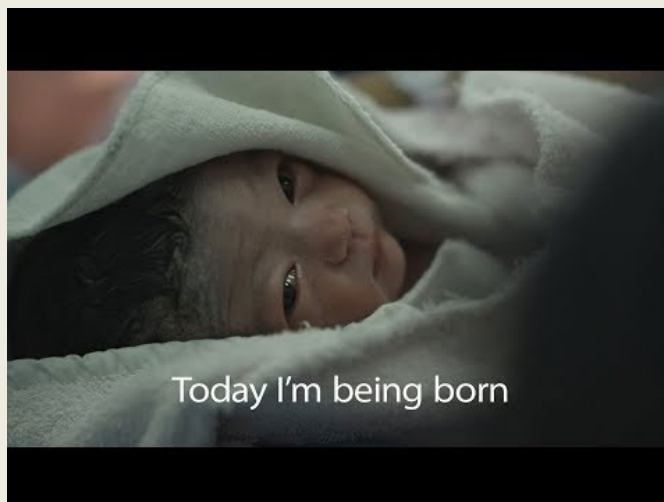


Please watch the video and answer the questions below (5-10 lines for each answer).

1. Before watching this video, were you aware that, on average, men are paid more than women for the same work?
2. Have you ever experienced gender-based differences in school or in your personal life? Please describe.
3. Could you propose some concrete actions that could alleviate the feeling of gender inequality?
4. What is your opinion on gender equality in your country as compared to other European countries nowadays? Support your answer with information and data from online sources and mention those sources.
5. Write a short comment on the following article, as if posted online:
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/andrewkaczynski/donald-trump-thinks-men-who-change-diapers-are-acting-like-t>



"European Citizenship and Voting" Problem-based Test



Please watch the video and answer the questions below (5-10 lines for each answer).

1. Do you identify as a citizen of your country, a European citizen or both? Motivate your answer.
2. If you were 18 years old, would you vote in the elections? Why?
3. Have you ever voted for anything in school (e.g. expressing your approval/disapproval of something, choosing a class representative, deciding on a school-related matter)? How did it make you feel?
4. Imagine that you have to extend this video with one minute. Please describe the content you would add, in a short paragraph.
5. Discuss the European Union's motto, "United in diversity", starting from your personal experience.
6. List three concrete actions you would take in order to act as a European citizen.
7. When making a decision, how important is it for you to take into account the impact it may have on those around you? Give three examples from your own experience that support your answer.

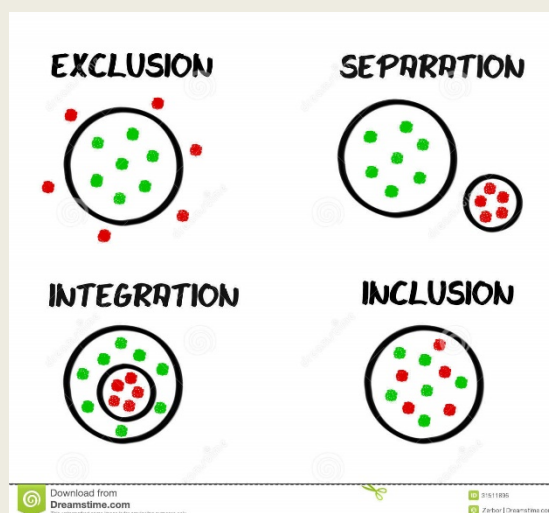


"Inclusion" Problem-based Test



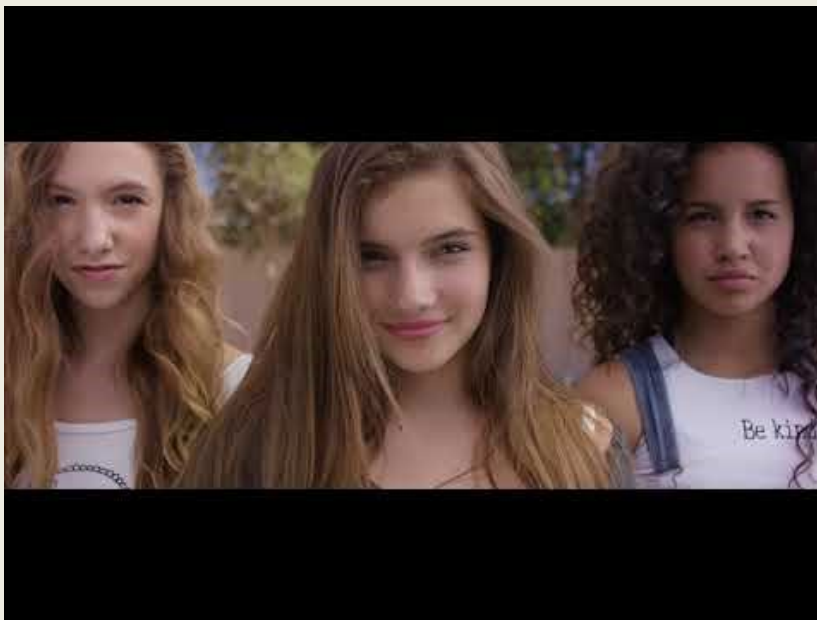
Please watch the video and answer the questions below (5-10 lines for each answer).

1. Do you think that public institutions in your city ensure proper inclusion for everyone? Motivate your answer.
2. Have you ever interacted with schoolmates with special educational needs? Give an example of a difficulty that may be encountered, explain it and describe a way to overcome it.
3. What do you think about the status of ethnic minorities in your country? Is it one of exclusion, separation, integration or inclusion? Use the image on the right side as guidance in justifying the answer.
4. Considering the video you have just watched and the image on the right side of the paper, imagine a situation in school where some students are excluded or separated from others. Would you take any action? How?



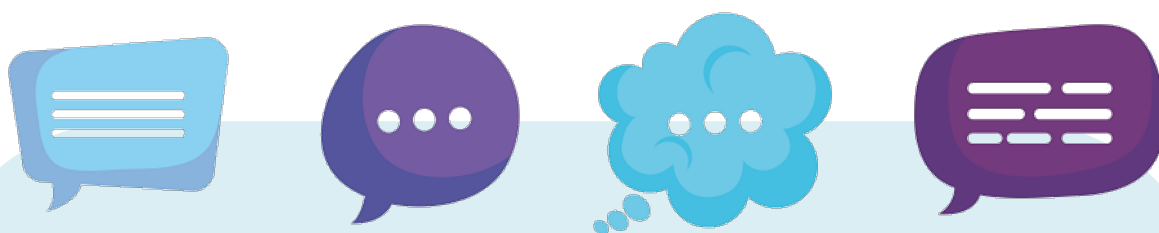


"Bullying" Problem-based Test



Please watch the video and answer the questions below (5-10 lines for each answer).

1. Have you witnessed a bullying episode? Do you feel protected at school? Can school do something to stop bullying? Justify your answer.
2. Give two examples of positive peer reactions in case someone is being bullied.
3. Find three adjectives that would describe the state of mind of a bullied peer. Explain your choices.
4. Most commonly, bullying happens in the classroom. Mention three other places in which you think it may occur and compare their impact.
5. How do the adults in your institution react if they see bullying? Give three examples of positive attitude.
6. Why do you think bullying happens? Give three examples of factors that can lead to bullying. Explain them.



TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Propose a problem-based test of your own, focusing on the following steps:

- decide on a major issue of today's world, related to education for democratic citizenship, that you want to approach;
- find a meaningful online video that you think would effectively elicit the students' responses and thoughts;
- design relevant questions for the approached issue, so as to trigger the students' reflections, capitalizing on both the proposed video and the students' previous experience;
- think of the answers the students may provide and structure them across the four levels (advanced, intermediate, weak and non-autonomous), so as to obtain an assessment grid.

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