

EUCLASS ALLIANCE

Studying EU Citizenship Education in VET Settings

WP2.1 National Desk Research Report

Greece

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
 2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH
 - 2.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS
 - 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESK RESEARCH
 - 2.3 ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL EU CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN VET SETTINGS
 3. RESULTS
 4. CONCLUSIONS
 5. APPENDICES
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1. INTRODUCTION

This report examines the integration of EU Citizenship Education within Greece's Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, focusing on key aspects that shape its implementation. The study explores how Greece aligns with European educational priorities while addressing national challenges in fostering active citizenship among vocational learners.

Key areas of analysis include:

- **Policy and Curriculum Frameworks:** Analyzing national and EU policies, including Greece's education strategy and the influence of European directives on embedding citizenship education in vocational curricula.
- **Teaching Approaches and Materials:** Examining how educators incorporate EU values, democratic principles, and civic responsibilities into vocational subjects, as well as the availability of structured learning resources tailored to VET students.
- **Educator Training and Support:** Investigating the extent to which vocational teachers receive training in EU Citizenship topics, both in initial teacher education and professional development programs, and assessing the practical impact of such training.

- **Challenges and Structural Barriers:** Identifying obstacles such as limited curriculum space, lack of specialized instructional materials, uneven regional implementation, and varying institutional priorities that hinder the effective promotion of EU Citizenship Education in VET.

By shedding light on national practices, this report aims to highlight effective strategies, pinpoint areas for improvement, and propose actionable recommendations to enhance the role of EU Citizenship Education in Greece's VET sector. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of how vocational learners can be better equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for active European citizenship.

2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

In Greece, national education policies emphasize the importance of EU Citizenship Education within Vocational Education and Training (VET) settings. The Greek education system aligns with the **Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018)** by promoting active citizenship, democratic values, and social inclusion. Civic education is integrated into VET curricula primarily through subjects related to social studies, European identity, and employability skills. Additionally, Greece participates in EU initiatives such as **Erasmus+**, which enhances mobility opportunities for VET students and fosters European cooperation and intercultural learning. However, challenges remain in fully embedding EU Citizenship Education within VET programs due to curriculum constraints and varying institutional priorities.

Gaps and Barriers in Policies

Despite the existing frameworks, several challenges persist in integrating EU Citizenship Education within Greece's VET curricula. A key issue is that **VET programs primarily focus on technical and vocational skills**, leaving limited space for civic education. As a result, the inclusion of EU Citizenship topics remains inconsistent across institutions.

Additionally, **regional disparities and varying institutional priorities** create inconsistencies in how EU Citizenship Education is emphasized within VET programs. While some schools integrate these topics through extracurricular activities or European projects, others lack structured implementation.

Another significant challenge is the **limited availability of specialized teaching materials** tailored to VET students. Most existing resources are designed for general education settings, making it difficult for VET educators to effectively incorporate EU Citizenship topics in a way that is relevant to vocational learners. Furthermore, **teacher training on EU Citizenship Education remains sporadic**, leaving many educators without the necessary tools or confidence to teach these subjects effectively.

Addressing these barriers requires a more structured approach, including clearer curriculum guidelines, better resource allocation, and enhanced professional development opportunities for VET educators.

Teaching Methodologies and Resources

In Greece, **EU Citizenship Education is often integrated through project-based learning, digital tools, and extracurricular initiatives** rather than as a distinct subject within VET curricula. Programs like **Erasmus+ and eTwinning** provide VET students with opportunities to collaborate with European peers, fostering intercultural exchange and a deeper understanding of EU values.

However, **the lack of standardized teaching materials tailored to VET students** leads to inconsistent implementation across institutions. Educators often rely on **general education resources**, which may not align with the practical nature of vocational training. Additionally, **work-based learning programs, such as apprenticeships (μαθητεία), focus primarily on technical skills and workplace integration**, with minimal emphasis on EU Citizenship Education. As a result, many VET students have limited formal exposure to civic and European identity topics within their training. To strengthen EU Citizenship Education in VET, there is a need for **customized teaching resources, clearer curriculum guidelines, and professional development for educators** to integrate these topics more effectively into vocational training.

Challenges Faced by VET Educators and Available Support Mechanisms

Greek VET educators face several challenges in integrating **EU Citizenship Education** into their teaching, including:

- **Lack of specialized training** on incorporating EU Citizenship topics into vocational subjects. Many educators are unfamiliar with effective methods to embed these themes in practical, skills-based learning.
- **Overloaded curricula**, which prioritize technical and professional competencies, leaving minimal space for civic education.
- **Limited engagement from industry partners**, as employers and businesses tend to focus on job-specific skills rather than broader citizenship and European values.
- **Regional disparities and varying institutional priorities**, leading to inconsistencies in how EU Citizenship Education is implemented across different vocational schools.

Available Support Mechanisms

Support mechanisms exist but are **often underutilized** due to structural and participation-related challenges. The **Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports** offers professional development programs, and EU-funded initiatives such as **Erasmus+ and eTwinning** provide training opportunities for educators.

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However, these programs are often voluntary and **not systematically integrated** into VET teacher training, resulting in **irregular participation and limited long-term impact**.

To strengthen EU Citizenship Education in VET, there is a need for **mandatory teacher training, accessible digital resources, and greater collaboration with industry and civil society** to bridge the gap between technical education and civic engagement.

Insights from National Studies and Reports

Research from institutions such as **CEDEFOP and the Greek Institute of Educational Policy (IEP)** highlights that **Greek VET students often have a limited understanding of EU institutions, rights, and responsibilities**. While students express interest in **mobility programs** such as **Erasmus+**, studies suggest that they lack in-depth knowledge of European civic structures and active citizenship opportunities.

Some best practices have emerged particularly through **EU-funded projects and collaborations with local vocational institutions**. For instance, **entrepreneurship and sustainability courses in selected VET schools** have begun incorporating EU Citizenship themes, linking democratic participation with economic and social development. However, these initiatives remain fragmented and are not systematically implemented across the country.

Teacher Training and Curriculum Flexibility

Initial teacher education in Greece includes some elements of civic education, but these are not specifically designed for **VET teachers**. In-service training opportunities exist through regional educational directorates and EU-funded initiatives, yet many programs lack a VET-specific focus, making it difficult for teachers to effectively integrate EU Citizenship topics into practical training. Curriculum **flexibility** is also limited, as VET institutions must follow **national** curriculum guidelines set by the **Ministry of Education**. While some vocational schools participating in pilot projects have introduced cross-curricular approaches, most face structural constraints that restrict the integration of EU Citizenship Education.

Recommendations

To enhance EU Citizenship Education in Greek VET, it is crucial to:

- Develop VET-specific civic education materials aligned with practical training.
- Expand structured teacher training programs with a focus on EU Citizenship themes.
- Introduce greater curriculum flexibility to allow the integration of EU values into technical subjects.

- Strengthen cooperation between VET institutions, industry, and civil society to ensure that EU Citizenship Education is relevant to vocational students' future careers.
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2.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is based on desk and qualitative research, analyzing national and EU policy documents, academic reports, and educational resources related to EU Citizenship Education in Greece's VET sector. The research reviews official publications from the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, as well as reports from EU institutions, CEDEFOP, and Greek educational bodies. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with VET teachers provide insights into practical implementation, institutional challenges, and best practices for integrating EU Citizenship topics into vocational training.

Sources consulted

- National curricula for VET programs and related policy frameworks
- Reports on EU Citizenship Education in Greece, including studies from CEDEFOP and Greek research institutions
- Educator training programs and professional development initiatives relevant to VET teachers
- Official documents from the Greek government and EU institutions, including directives, recommendations, and strategic reports

This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of both policy-level frameworks and educational practices in the Greek VET field.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESK RESEARCH

Greece integrates EU Citizenship Education within the broader framework of civic education, mainly through subjects such as Social Studies, European and International Affairs, and transversal competences in VET curricula. While **no dedicated EU Citizenship subject exists** within vocational education, elements of democratic participation, human rights, and European values are included in select courses, particularly those linked to entrepreneurship, sustainability, and professional ethics.

Resources



Various teaching materials are available through the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, as well as EU-funded initiatives such as Erasmus+, eTwinning, and CEDEFOP resources. Digital learning platforms, including the National Digital School and European Commission educational repositories, offer supplementary content. However, specialized VET-specific resources remain scarce, making it difficult for educators to integrate EU Citizenship topics into vocational subjects effectively.

2.3 ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL EU CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN VET SETTINGS

Curriculum Integration

EU Citizenship topics are incorporated into general education subjects such as Social Studies, Professional Ethics, and European & International Affairs, but they do not exist as a standalone module within VET curricula. Integration is often indirect, with elements of civic responsibility, democratic participation, and European values appearing in cross-curricular themes, particularly in entrepreneurship and sustainability-related courses.

Teacher Training

Few professional development programs focus exclusively on EU Citizenship Education for VET educators. Training is often general in scope, and civic education components are not adapted to the needs of vocational learners, making it difficult for teachers to contextualize EU topics within practical, skills-based training.

Implementation Challenges

- Lack of structured teaching resources specifically designed for VET contexts, leading to fragmented and inconsistent delivery of EU-related content.
- Minimal institutional support, as EU Citizenship Education is often treated as a secondary priority compared to technical and vocational skills.
- Limited assessment mechanisms, making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of EU Citizenship Education in vocational programs.

Programs for Educators

Existing opportunities include:



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- Erasmus+ training courses, which offer VET educators mobility and professional development opportunities related to European identity and civic engagement.
- National civic education initiatives, which incorporate EU-related topics into teacher training sessions but are not specifically designed for VET instructors.
- European platforms such as eTwinning and EPAL, which provide access to teaching materials and best practices, though engagement from Greek VET educators remains limited.

Conclusion

To strengthen the impact of EU Citizenship Education in Greek VET settings, there is a need for:

- **Targeted professional development programs** focused on citizenship education within vocational training.
- **Specialized teaching materials** that connect EU topics with vocational and professional skills.
- Greater **institutional emphasis** on integrating EU values into both classroom instruction and work-based learning experiences.

3. RESULTS

The national research phase highlights both progress and ongoing challenges in the integration of EU Citizenship Education in Greek VET settings. While there is increasing awareness of its importance, its implementation remains fragmented and inconsistent. Some vocational schools incorporate EU values through interdisciplinary approaches, linking civic education with sustainability, entrepreneurship, and digital skills. However, in most cases, EU citizenship topics are treated as supplementary rather than core components of the curriculum.

Teacher training remains a critical gap, as most professional development programs do not provide specifically to VET teachers. Although initiatives such as **Erasmus+** offer valuable exposure to European perspectives, participation is uneven, leaving many educators without the necessary tools to integrate citizenship themes effectively. Additionally, the lack of standardized teaching resources limits the ability of schools to deliver structured EU citizenship content, resulting in varying levels of student engagement. A key challenge is the **perception** of EU citizenship as an abstract concept with little or no relevance to vocational training. Without concrete links to workplace skills and career development, students often have difficulty in seeing its practical benefits. Furthermore, disparities in institutional support and funding contribute to uneven implementation, with some schools able to access European projects while others lack the infrastructure to participate.

Despite these challenges, positive developments are emerging through digital learning tools and experiential teaching methods that make EU citizenship more accessible to vocational students. Increased collaboration between VET institutions, businesses, and NGOs is also helping to bridge the gap between technical education and civic engagement. However, without a more structured national strategy and greater investment in educator training, the integration of EU Citizenship Education in Greek VET will remain limited in scope and impact.

3.3 Summary of National Interviews

The five interviews conducted with VET teachers revealed shared challenges in implementing EU Citizenship Education within vocational education. Teachers consistently highlighted the **lack of structured curriculum guidelines**, making it difficult to incorporate citizenship topics into technical subjects. Many also reported the **lack of training**, leaving them without the necessary pedagogical and methodological tools to effectively teach EU-related content. Teachers noted that **work-based learning programs rarely incorporate civic education**, reinforcing the idea that EU values and rights are secondary to technical skills. Additionally, disparities in **institutional support and funding** further contribute to inconsistent implementation, with some VET schools benefiting from EU-funded projects while others lack access to necessary resources.

3.4 Best Practices Identified

Three best practices identified from the national research are the following:

Erasmus+ Programs in Greece

Erasmus+ is the European Union's program supporting education, training, youth, and sport across Europe. In Greece, numerous **VET institutions** participate in Erasmus+ projects that focus on EU Citizenship Education. These programs facilitate student and staff exchanges, collaborative projects, and the development of innovative teaching materials that incorporate EU citizenship themes. By engaging in Erasmus+ initiatives, Greek VET students gain immediate experience of European integration, improving their understanding of EU institutions and their roles as European citizens.

Active Citizen Actions Program

Launched by the Greek Ministry of Education, the 'Active Citizen Actions' program is set to start in the 2024/25 school year, targeting students from pre-primary to upper secondary levels, including those in VET institutions. This initiative focuses on engaging students with contemporary social issues, promoting active citizenship, and fostering a deeper understanding of democratic values within the European context.

Info Days for Erasmus+ Opportunities



Info Days are organized to provide detailed insights into Erasmus+ programs, application procedures, and project management. In the VET context, these sessions are crucial for informing teachers and students about available **mobility** opportunities, partnerships, and funding.

4. CONCLUSIONS

While Greece has policy frameworks and participates in EU initiatives supporting EU Citizenship Education in VET settings, its implementation remains inconsistent and fragmented. The lack of structured curricula, limited teacher training, and regional disparities hinder its integration into vocational education. Addressing these gaps requires systemic reforms, including enhanced professional development for VET educators, the creation of specialized teaching resources, and greater collaboration with industry and EU institutions to ensure that students gain both professional skills and a solid understanding of EU Citizenship. A stronger alignment between national and regional policies would also enhance the role of citizenship education within Greek VET programs.

Current State

EU Citizenship Education in **Greek VET settings is largely absent**, with its inclusion **depending entirely on individual teachers** rather than being embedded in a standardized curriculum.

Areas for Improvement

To effectively integrate EU Citizenship Education into VET, Greece must prioritize:

- The development of structured curricula that align EU themes with vocational training.
- Expanding teacher training to equip educators with pedagogical strategies for EU citizenship topics.
- The use of digital tools and interactive methods to engage students in EU-related matters.

Key Recommendations

1. Introduce dedicated modules on EU Citizenship within VET programs, ensuring consistent national implementation.
2. Develop teacher training programs that focus on EU themes, democratic participation, and civic responsibility.
3. Strengthen partnerships with EU institutions and stakeholders to enhance educational initiatives in VET.
4. Increase awareness and accessibility of existing EU-funded resources and projects, enabling more VET schools to participate in mobility programs, simulations, and collaborative EU projects.

By implementing these recommendations, Greece could in the long run, bridge the gap between technical education and active citizenship, preparing VET students not only for the labour market but also for their role as engaged European citizens.

5. Appendices

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