

**EUCLASS ALLIANCE**  
***Studying EU Citizenship Education in VET Settings***  
**WP2.1 National Desk Research Report - ITALY**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

This report examines the implementation of EU Citizenship Education within Italy's Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. It analyzes national curricula, policies, teaching practices, educator training and the challenges of integrating EU Citizenship Education into VET settings.

To contextualize this integration, it is essential to first understand the structure and characteristics of the Italian VET system.

The Italian VET system is multifaceted, involving collaboration among national, regional and local stakeholders. It comprises two primary pathways:

a) state-managed upper secondary technical and vocational schools

and

b) regionally-managed vocational training programs (IeFP).

State-managed technical and vocational schools offer five-year programs culminating in diplomas (EQF level 4). Regionally-managed programs, on the other hand, include three-year courses leading to vocational qualifications (EQF level 3) and four-year programs for technician professional diplomas (EQF level 4). These programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of regional labor markets.

The Ministry of Education oversees state-managed programs, while the Ministry of Labour is responsible for regional vocational training frameworks.

In 2024, the Ministry of Education introduced the *Guidelines for the Teaching of Civic Education* (DM 183/2024), making civic education a mandatory component of the curriculum in state-managed upper secondary technical and vocational schools. However, the leFP (Education and Vocational Training) curriculum, which is regionally managed, does not mandate civic education as a compulsory subject. Instead, it offers considerable flexibility by focusing on specific competencies to be achieved as final outcomes. This structure provides ample opportunities to design tailored learning units, allocate instructional hours, and choose relevant topics, creating space for the integration of EU Citizenship Education within leFP programs.

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## 2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Understanding how EU Citizenship Education is integrated into Italy's VET system is crucial for fostering informed and active citizens. This section addresses national policies, curriculum integration, teaching methodologies and educator preparation related to EU Citizenship Education in VET.

### Research Questions

- What national policies/frameworks support the teaching of EU Citizenship in VET settings?
- What gaps or barriers exist in these policies?
- How do current teaching methodologies and resources affect the inclusion of EU Citizenship topics in VET curricula?
- What challenges do VET educators face in teaching EU Citizenship, and what support mechanisms are available?
- What insights can be drawn from national studies or practices on teaching EU Citizenship in VET schools?
- Is teacher training inclusive of EU Citizenship Education and how flexible are curricula in addressing these topics?

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### 2.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This desk research employed a structured methodology to gather insights and best practices. We began by interviewing teachers, coordinators and experts within ENAC and its VET centers who expressed interest in the topic.

Additionally, we reached out to other VET centers and associations that have successfully implemented good practices in teaching EU Citizenship, either through Erasmus funds or their own resources. To identify these organizations, we leveraged two prominent VET networks. At the national level, we used CONFAP, one of Italy's leading associations for VET institutions. At the European level, we relied on ENAC's membership in EfVET (European Forum of Vocational

Education and Training), a major European-wide professional association representing approximately 1,500 VET organizations. EfVET's Italian board includes nearly 30 organizations. This network-based approach enabled us to gather 9 best practices, interview 7 school staff members and engage with numerous stakeholders interested in the subject.

In parallel, we conducted a national desk research review, which included:

- Analyzing national curricula for Regional VET (IeFP);
- Reviewing national policy documents, such as the "Guidelines for the Teaching of Civic Education" (DM 183/2024);
- Consulting academic studies on citizenship competence in Italian VET;
- Exploring educational tools and resources.

This comprehensive methodology provided an understanding of the national context and informed our analysis of effective strategies for teaching EU Citizenship.

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## 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESK RESEARCH

### Policy Landscape:

In Italy, civic education became a compulsory cross-curricular subject at all education levels, including VET (only for state-managed upper secondary technical and vocational schools), starting from the 2020/2021 academic year, as mandated by Law 92/2019. The "Guidelines for the teaching of civic education" (DM 183/2024) outline three main areas:

1. **Italian Constitution:** Covers general principles, the organization of the State, symbols of Italian and EU institutions, and the meaning of legality.
2. **Economic Development and Sustainability:** Focuses on valuing work and entrepreneurship, environmental protection, health education, and respect for animals.
3. **Digital Citizenship:** Emphasizes responsible use of technologies and awareness of associated risks.

Civic education is allocated a minimum of 33 hours per year and is integrated into other curricular subjects without increasing the total teaching hours. Rather than being recognized as a standalone subject, it follows a cross-curricular approach, embedding citizenship education across various disciplines. ([For more information: Linee guida per l'insegnamento dell'educazione civica, DM 183/2024](#))

In contrast, regionally-managed vocational training programs (IeFP) do not mandate civic education as a standalone subject. Instead, these programs are structured around achieving specific competencies (based on a reform approved in 2019), offering significant flexibility in curriculum design. This approach empowers educators to develop tailored learning units,

allocate instructional hours, and select topics that align with their students' needs and regional labor market demands.

Among the competencies outlined in the new framework approved in 2019 are two important additions:

- Historical, social, and economic competence
- Citizenship competence

These competencies allow for the in-depth study and integration of EU Citizenship within the curriculum.

Despite this flexibility, the integration of EU Citizenship Education into leFP programs faces certain constraints. Notably, the total instructional hours allocated to non-technical subjects is limited, particularly after the second year of study. This reduction in available hours poses challenges for teachers in the humanities and related fields, limiting their ability to dedicate substantial time to civic education topics. Nonetheless, the competency-based structure of leFP programs still provides opportunities to incorporate elements of EU Citizenship Education creatively and efficiently, ensuring students gain essential knowledge and skills in this area within the existing time constraints.

### **Resources and Training:**

The Ministry of Education and Merit provides guidelines and resources for teaching civic education in state-managed upper secondary technical and vocational schools. However, there remains a lack of specific teaching materials and professional development programs tailored to VET educators focusing on EU Citizenship Education.

Regionally-managed programs, while based on a common framework established at the national level, are implemented through regional-level guidelines. These guidelines vary significantly across the 20 regions, leading to notable differences in how civic education is integrated depending on the region.

To address these gaps, national VET networks, such as CONFAP (of which ENAC is a member), have taken steps to support VET educators. One key initiative is the "Assi Culturali" project, which provides teachers and trainers of cultural subjects (e.g., Italian, History, Law, Economics) with dedicated learning units and teaching materials. These resources help educators incorporate EU-related topics into their curricula, such as the functioning of EU institutions and the history of European integration.

### **Challenges and Gaps:**

#### State-Managed Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Schools



In state-managed schools, there is a dual structure: on one hand, schools enjoy significant organizational autonomy under Law No. 59 of March 15, 1997 (the Bassanini Law), regulated further by Presidential Decree No. 275 of March 8, 1999 (Regulation of School Autonomy). On the other hand, civic education is mandatory, as established by the "Guidelines for the teaching of civic education" (DM 183/2024). This framework requires schools to cover topics such as the organization of the State, the symbols of Italian and EU institutions, and the meaning of legality. The autonomy granted to schools provides ample opportunity to address these topics in meaningful and innovative ways, both as part of the curriculum and through extracurricular activities. For example, EU civic education can be incorporated through standalone curricular hours or via laboratory-based activities. A notable example of this is the geopolitics laboratory at Canossa Campus, which showcases how such topics can be approached creatively to engage students (see Best Practices collection). Ultimately, the success of these efforts depends heavily on teachers' competencies and their ability to integrate these topics into the curriculum effectively.

### Regionally-Managed Programs

In regionally-managed programs, civic education is not mandated as a standalone subject. However, the competencies framework explicitly requires students to develop citizenship competencies, which include knowledge about EU institutions.

A key challenge in these programs is that cultural subjects (e.g., History, Law, Italian) carry less weight in terms of allocated hours compared to technical and vocational training. This limitation is particularly pronounced in the third and fourth years, where substantial time is devoted to work-based learning (WBL). As a result, the topic of EU civic education is often only briefly mentioned rather than fully explored, due to time constraints and competing priorities in the curriculum.

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## **2.3 ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL EU CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN VET SETTINGS**

The integration of EU Citizenship topics within VET curricula remains fragmented and inconsistent. While national guidelines mandate the teaching of civic education in State-Managed Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Schools, and it is officially included in the national competencies framework for Regionally-Managed Programs, the inclusion of specific EU Citizenship content varies significantly across programs and schools.

Most textbooks adopted by teachers cover fundamental topics such as an introduction to EU institutions or the history of the European Union. However, due to time constraints, the need to address a wide range of topics, and the greater emphasis placed on vocational subjects, it is often difficult—or uncommon—for educators to delve deeply into these areas.

Additionally, presenting EU Citizenship in an engaging and relatable manner is a challenge. Many students perceive the subject as distant or disconnected from their personal and professional lives, making it harder to stimulate their interest and active participation.

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### 3. RESULTS

#### Policy Landscape

Civic education has been a mandated component of state-managed technical and vocational schools since 2020, as stipulated by Law 92/2019. In contrast, regionally managed VET programs (leFP) integrate civic education into broader competencies. This approach provides flexibility for addressing EU Citizenship topics but results in varying degrees of integration and emphasis on EU-specific content across regions and different types of VET schools.

#### Resources and Tools

Although resources such as textbooks and online materials are utilized, there is a notable dependence on teacher-prepared content due to the absence of standardized teaching aids specifically designed for VET contexts. The inclusion of EU Citizenship topics is often driven by teachers' personal interest and engagement, highlighting a lack of systemic support for these areas.

#### Challenges

- Limited time within the curriculum restricts the ability to address EU topics in depth
- Students frequently view EU-related subjects as abstract and disconnected from their lives, making it challenging to sustain interest
- The scarcity of tailored teaching aids and materials further complicates the integration of EU topics into existing curricula
- Formal training opportunities for educators on EU Citizenship topics remain scarce. Most professional development occurs informally, through self-study or isolated initiatives such as Erasmus+ projects, leaving many teachers underprepared to address these themes effectively

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### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Since the 2020/2021 school year, civic education has been mandatory in Italian state-run technical and professional high schools, guided by Law 92/2019. In regionally managed VET programs, civic education is not a standalone subject but is integrated through specific skills development, such as historical, social, economic, and citizenship competencies. This flexible approach to EU citizenship education leads to regional variability. Topics on EU citizenship often remain introductory, such as the history and institutions of the EU, with limited in-depth exploration due to time constraints.

## Challenges and Areas for Improvement

- Lack of standardized teaching materials for VET programs, leading educators to rely on self-created resources
- Limited professional training for VET educators on EU citizenship topics, often informal in nature
- Insufficient time in the curriculum to cover EU topics deeply, as technical and professional subjects are prioritized
- Perception among students that EU topics are irrelevant to their lives and careers

## Recommendations for Improvement

- Develop standardized, engaging teaching materials tailored for VET students ensuring this topic is covered systematically rather than sporadically
- Provide specific professional training for VET educators on EU citizenship education
- Integrate EU topics across various subjects and activities to optimize teaching time. Strengthen cross-disciplinary projects that embed EU citizenship education seamlessly into the curriculum, ensuring a holistic approach without adding extra teaching hours or overburdening any single subject
- Use the flexibility of regional VET programs to design customized learning units on EU citizenship
- Provide structured professional development opportunities such as peer-learning groups for VET teachers to exchange best practices and learn from each other, access to ready-to-use teaching materials (lesson plans, EU official documents or platforms), online courses and webinars on engaging teaching methods and EU contents
- Promote extracurricular projects and hands-on activities to actively involve students
- Make EU topics more relatable through practical examples and case studies
- Establish networks of schools and institutions to share best practices
- Utilize Erasmus+ opportunities for projects on EU citizenship

In summary, while EU citizenship education in Italian VET programs faces challenges such as a lack of resources, training and student engagement, the system's flexibility offers potential for innovative and meaningful integration if these issues are addressed.

## 5. APPENDICES

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