

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

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**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 the vocational education and training (VET) sector in the Netherlands, focusing specifically on how educational institutions implement European guidelines in their curricula. Citizenship education is an essential component of MBO students' training, as it prepares them for an active role in society, both nationally and within the broader European context. This research focuses on policy frameworks, teaching methods, and challenges involved in integrating EU citizenship into Dutch MBO education.

In addition to policy frameworks and guidelines, this report explores how teachers implement citizenship education in practice. Teachers play a crucial role in conveying democratic values and social responsibility to students. The study also addresses the support available for teachers and their perspectives on integrating EU citizenship into their curricula. Furthermore, it examines how educational institutions like Firda not only prepare students for the labour market but also help them develop into engaged citizens who actively participate in society.

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**2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

**2.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This report is based on desk research and qualitative data from interviews with MBO teachers and policymakers. Various policy documents and academic studies have been consulted to provide a comprehensive overview of the current situation. The research includes both national

policy documents and European guidelines to analyse how Dutch MBO education aligns with broader European developments.

Interviews with teachers and policymakers provide valuable insights into practice. They discuss their experiences with citizenship education, the challenges they face in implementation, and the ways they integrate EU citizenship into their teaching methods. Additionally, attention is given to best practices and innovative educational initiatives that contribute to the improved implementation of citizenship education within MBO.

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## 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESK RESEARCH

In the Netherlands, citizenship education has been a mandatory part of the MBO curriculum for several years. The legal requirement to focus on democratic core values and social engagement has led many MBO institutions to actively shape this subject area. However, the approach varies by institution. Some schools offer separate citizenship lessons, while others integrate these themes into vocational subjects or extracurricular activities.

An example is Firda, an ROC in Friesland and Flevoland, which focuses on developing students into independent, engaged citizens. Firda follows a triple qualification approach, preparing students not only for the labour market and further studies but also for active participation in society. This is achieved through hands-on learning, encouraging students to reflect on their experiences and think critically about social issues.

Moreover, the European context plays an increasingly significant role in MBO education. In addition to national democratic values, students are made aware of their influence as European citizens. Topics such as voting rights in European elections and the EU's role in policymaking on sustainability, digitalization, and social inclusion are explicitly addressed. Students explore these themes and learn how the EU impacts their daily lives.

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

### Curriculum Integration

Dutch MBO institutions have developed various strategies to integrate EU citizenship into their educational approach. Firda views citizenship as an essential component of holistic education, combining theory with practice by actively involving students in social projects.

Students are encouraged to work in groups on projects related to societal challenges such as sustainability, social equality, and political engagement. Additionally, collaboration with international partners is promoted, for example, through participation in the Erasmus+ program. This allows students to gain experience abroad and develop an understanding of European cooperation and cultural differences.

Another interesting development is Leeuwarden's ambition to become the European Youth Capital in 2028. This initiative would give young people more influence over their environment and allow them to participate in European cooperation projects. This could serve as an additional incentive for MBO students in Friesland and Flevoland to feel more connected to the EU and engage in social and political developments at the European level.

## Teaching Methods and Resources

Teachers increasingly use interactive teaching methods to make EU citizenship more engaging for students. Project-based learning is one of the most commonly used approaches, allowing students to learn through practical experiences and real-life case studies.

Digital learning tools are also being implemented more frequently, such as simulations that challenge students to solve societal issues within a European context. This approach not only stimulates critical thinking but also makes the subject more tangible and relevant to students. International internships and exchanges are also used as tools to enhance EU citizenship education and raise students' awareness of the broader European community to which they belong.

## Teacher Training and Support

Interviews with teachers indicate that they generally support the integration of EU citizenship into education. However, they also face challenges regarding training and support. Many teachers report a lack of specific training on how to best integrate EU citizenship into vocational subjects.

Additionally, teachers express a need for more concrete learning materials and guidelines. Although online resources and European platforms are available, the information is not always presented in an accessible way. Collaboration between schools, businesses, and social organizations could help strengthen teacher support and improve the implementation of EU citizenship education within MBO.

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## 3. RESULTS

The research shows that the Netherlands has a strong foundation for integrating EU citizenship education, but there is room for improvement in several areas. While many MBO institutions have already developed initiatives to embed citizenship in their education, a structured and uniform approach is often lacking. Teachers require more support and training, and students express a desire for more practical teaching methods.

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## 4. CONCLUSIONS

To further strengthen EU citizenship education, the following recommendations are made:

- Develop more structured and accessible teaching materials to help teachers implement EU citizenship in their lessons.
- Increase training and professional development opportunities for teachers.
- Utilize international collaborations and initiatives such as European Youth Capital to engage students with European issues.

By following these recommendations, the Netherlands can enhance the impact of EU citizenship education in MBO and contribute to the development of engaged and informed European citizens.

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