



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



# Citizenship education in initial vocational education and training

Initial findings from Cedefop study 2025-27

# *Union of Skills*

- solid foundations in education and training, including citizenship skills
- innovative teaching of citizenship skills in cooperation with businesses

# *Action plan on basic skills*

- citizenship becomes the fifth basic skill for all

# *Herning declaration*

- fostering an appropriate level of basic and transversal skills in IVET, including citizenship

Citizenship competence(s)

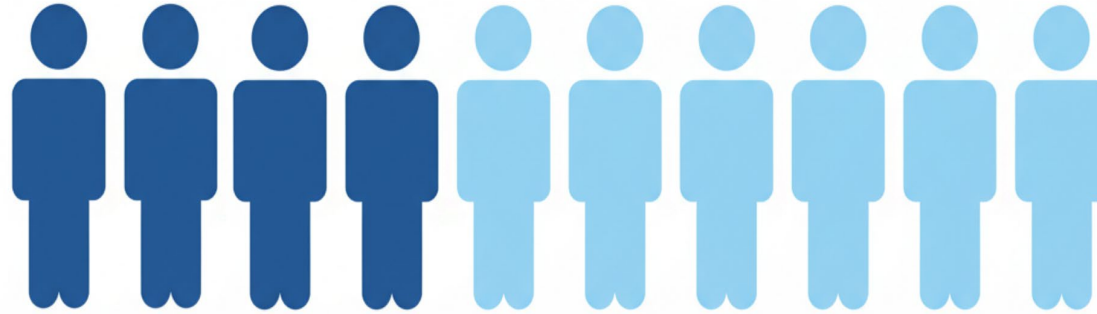
Citizenship education

Initial vocational education and training

# Why citizenship education in IVET matters?

**SCALE**

**43%**  
AGE  
15-19



**BALANCE**

TRANSVERSAL



OCCUPATIONAL

**EQUITY**



BUILDING MOMENTUM

UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

# Literature on citizenship education in IVET – limited and based on a few country data

TOTAL: **115**  
88% peer-reviewed publications

- Sweden **21**
- Netherlands **20**
- International (*more than three countries*) **15**
- Finland **14**
- Germany **13**
- UK **8**
- Belgium **5**
- Denmark **4**

- Academic and grey literature from the past decade, mainly in English, less in national languages
- Diversity of VET contexts by country and concepts by study
- Mostly qualitative studies with student and teacher surveys and interviews as main data sources
- Around 1/3 applied quantitative research methods analysing student data and focusing on political or civic self-efficacy, civic participation or civic knowledge

# Dimensions of citizenship competence in IVET and insights from the literature

## Knowledge and application of democratic principles and political literacy

Curricula focus on rules & compliance  
Limited critical engagement opportunities  
Textbooks often avoid controversial issues

## Critical thinking and media literacy

Fewer critical thinking activities in class compared to GE  
Practice-oriented approaches help learn to address disinformation

responsible participation in democratic society and civic learning

## Political and civic self-efficacy and civic engagement

Learner voting intentions lower compared to GE  
More non-institutional civic practices such as volunteering, activism, community engagement  
Narrow understanding of 'civic participation'

## EU history and common values

Limited or uneven inclusion of EU topics  
Supranational concepts challenge learners but also teachers and trainers  
Learners more open to diversity than teachers (\*limited evidence)

# Further insights

- **Mode of delivery:** general subjects (e.g. civics, social studies), but also cross-curricular themes, and separate compulsory/optional modules
- **Work-based learning:** lack of research on company-based/apprenticeship, and overall, in work-based learning. Potential of democratic learning in workplaces is recognised, but it is not clear what kind of structures or practices exist to promote democratic participation or critical reflection in workplaces

## Further insights (2)

- **Lower levels of civic knowledge, political participation/voting intentions and trust** on societal institutions among VET students / adults with VET background
- **Lower civic and political self-efficacy**, and less participation in democratic processes at school (e.g. student councils) or in the community when compared to peers in academic/general education tracks
- **Mixed results for broader forms of civic participation**, such as engaging with global or social movements, or non-institutional forms such as legal demonstrations or illegal activism

### Reasons:

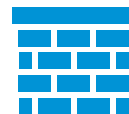
structural factors related to IVET curricula/structure and student socioeconomic background (less exposure to civic learning in school and family) and selection effect (concentration of students with lower socioeconomic background in IVET, peer group effects); potentially also low expectations, differing learning cultures

# Enablers and barriers in IVET (summary)



- Experiential and practical learning\*
- Diverse learner backgrounds → pluralistic perspectives
- Flexible curricula\*
- Positive ('grown-up') teacher-student relationships
- Learner real interest in civic/social issues
- Workplace demand for citizenship competence\*

\*limited evidence



- Limited curricular time and focus on citizenship
- Stereotypes of VET learners as uninterested in learning civics
- Insufficient training and support for teachers
- Financial and organisational constraints / large class sizes → limited participatory methods
- Central examination requirements
- Collaboration between teachers/trainers
- Socio-economic inequalities

# RESEARCH GAP

- Overall, limited evidence
- Longitudinal and comparative studies
- Work-based learning, including in-company training
- Extracurricular activity
- Teacher and trainer preparedness
- Assessment and monitoring
- Current focus is on barriers, less on enablers

# CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN VET

# Advisory group on citizenship education in IVET



- 25+ representatives from the EU, national policymakers, international organisations, the research community, social partners, and civil society.
- A guiding force, enhancing the study's quality, relevance, and potential impact in supporting citizenship competences within VET systems across Europe.



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Thank you!



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