



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

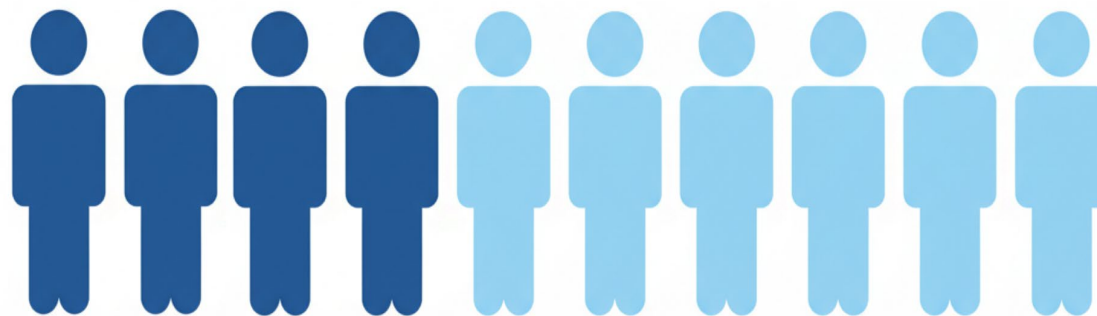
Citizenship competence(s)
Citizenship education
Initial vocational education and training

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:

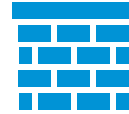
structural factors related to IVET curricula/structure and student socioeconomic background (less exposure to civic learning in school and family) and selection effect (concentration of students with lower socioeconomic background in IVET, peer group effects); potentially also low expectations, differing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



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training



Citizenship education in initial vocational education and training

Initial findings from Cedefop study 2025-27

Thank you!