



Citizenship Education

in the New Polish Core Curriculum

S sieć
C organizacji
S społecznych
dla edukacji



The rationale behind and objectives of Citizenship Education

Citizenship Education prepares a young person to be an active citizen who cares about the common good. It teaches one how to be a critical observer of reality, attentive to one's own needs and problems, but also perceiving them in the diverse and complex communities that we all co-create. It prepares one to draw conclusions and participate in discussions about public affairs, teaches cooperation and gives courage to act on a small and large scale.

The basis of Citizenship Education should be an **authentic experience of influencing reality**, thanks to which students will build a sense of self-worth and agency. Citizenship Education allows us to get to know ourselves in relation to others in the context of public life. It supports the discovery and understanding of social phenomena and processes in local, regional, national, European and global communities.

Well-conducted Citizenship Education develops knowledge of the **principles of functioning of a democratic state and civil society**. It allows one to understand the sources of these principles and the consequences of their application or violation in everyday life. In this way, it motivates one to take an interest in public affairs, reduces the risk of polarization and increases the level of participation and cooperation. It is the foundation for strengthening civic and political culture.

We therefore propose that this educational area be covered at **all stages of education - from kindergarten and early school education to graduation**. "Social Studies" a subject which has existed for 35 years, and "Citizenship Education" as a new subject in secondary school curricula can, and even should be, an integral part of this area of education. However, a key element of a holistic understanding of Citizenship Education is to **include the principles of democracy, participation and cooperation in the daily life of the school**, in communication and relationships with students and their parents, as well as in the functioning of the student government in individual classes and the entire school.



General Objectives

1. Interest in public affairs, critical reception of information and independent assessment of phenomena, their causes and the actions of participants in public life.
2. Identifying problems at school, local, national, European and global levels, understanding their causes and the ability to seek solutions.
3. Communicating on public matters, formulating one's own opinions and considering the views of other people.
4. Civic 4Cs: cooperating with others, sharing work and roles while respecting the adopted principles
5. Engaging and acting effectively for the common good, including the natural environment and people in need of support.
6. Deepening one's knowledge of public life processes and planning one's own development and learning in this area.
7. Understanding the perspectives and considering the needs of other participants in public life.

The general objectives of Citizenship Education should be directly linked to universal, that is transversal, competences, as it should in all subjects and fields of study. This material uses the proposed set of universal competencies developed by SOS for Education, subject, of course, to alignment with the final results of the work of the Educational Research Institute on the profile of a graduate of a Polish school.

The list of seven competences was included in the document "Proposals and recommendations for a graduate profile, universal competences, and a model for the new core curriculum."

- **C1: INDEPENDENT THINKING (including critical thinking)**
- **C2: PROBLEM SOLVING (including creativity)**
- **C3: COMMUNICATION (including message creation)**
- **C4: COLLABORATION (including leadership)**
- **C5: ENGAGEMENT AND AGENCY (collective and individual)**
- **C6: LEARNING AND SELF-MANAGEMENT (personal development)**
- **C7: EMPATHY AND CARE (including acting for the good of others)**

 <https://sosdlaedukacji.pl/profil-i-podstawa/>



Sections and key issues

S1

Me in my immediate environment:

Humans as social beings, close communities, that is family, school, neighbourhood, municipality, region

S2

Me in a diverse society:

Society, nation, multiculturalism

S3

Me and my rights and freedoms:

Children's rights, student rights, labour rights, institutions protecting rights and freedoms

S4

Me and the media:

Types and the role of the media, the right to public information, disinformation

S5

Me - a citizen of Poland:

Democracy, rule of law, local government, authorities in Poland, political parties, civil society

S6

Me - a citizen of Europe and the world:

European values, principles and areas of EU activities, causes and effects of integration, rights of EU citizens and their protection, current challenges and the future of the EU and the international community, interdependencies between the global South and the North



Examples of specific requirements and their corresponding transversal competences

S1: Me in my immediate environment: humans as social beings, close communities, that is family, school, neighbourhood, municipality, region

Preschool education. The child:

- takes care of shared space (e.g. classroom, toy corner) [competences: 6: learning and self-management, K7: empathy and care];
- is able to express expectations towards other children [competences: C3: communication, C7: empathy and care].

1st stage of education (primary school, grades I-III). The learner:

- knows what a class contract (set of rules) is [competence: C3: communication];
- co-creates a class contract [competences: C3: communication, C4: cooperation].

2nd stage of education (primary school, grades IV-VIII). The learner:

- diagnoses problems and needs in the immediate area (on the playground, in the neighbourhood, in the municipality) [competences: C2: problem solving, C5: engagement and agency];
- implements proposed actions to solve the problem/meet the need [competences: C4: cooperation, C5: engagement and agency].

3rd stage of education (secondary school). The learner:

- participates in meetings of the municipal council (or meetings with its members), asks questions or takes notes [competences: C3: communication, K5: engagement and agency];
- prepares (independently or as part of a team) a petition to the school and/or local authorities on an issue that is important to them and other students – e.g. launching a school civic budget or additional sports activities [competences: C4: cooperation, C5: engagement and agency].

S2: Me in a diverse society: society, nation, multiculturalism

1st stage of education (primary school, grades I-III). The learner:

- is able to indicate how people around them differ [competencies: C1: independent thinking, C7: empathy and care].

2nd stage of education, (primary school, grades IV-VIII). The learner:

- initiates and leads intergenerational dialogue (e.g. conversation with grandparents about their childhood, events from the recent history of Poland) [competence: C3: communication, C7: empathy and care];
- recognizes similarities and differences in the experiences of different generations [competence: C1: independent thinking, C7: empathy and care].

3rd stage of education, (secondary school). The learner:

- compares the situation of teenagers from urban and rural environments and assesses the actions of the authorities intended to equalise opportunities [competences: C1: independent thinking, C2: problem solving];
- recognises manifestations of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia and knows how to oppose them [competences: C1: independent thinking, C5: engagement and agency].

S3: Me and my rights and freedoms: children's rights, student rights, labour rights, institutions protecting rights and freedoms

2nd stage of education, (primary school, grades IV-VIII). The learner:

- knows who to turn to when experiencing or witnessing violence [competence: C3: communicating];
- reports instances of student rights not being observed [competence: C2: solving problems].

3rd stage of education, (secondary school). The learner:

- analyses the provisions of the school statute and proposes possible changes [competencies: C1: independent thinking, C3: communication, C4: cooperation];
- considers whether the constitution guarantees citizens the right to a clean environment [competencies: C1: independent thinking, C2: problem solving].

S4: Me and the media: types and the role of the media, the right to public information, disinformation

2nd stage of education (primary school, grades IV-VIII). The learner:

- prepares a social media post about a selected social problem (e.g. taking on the role of an activist, politician, official, raising the issue

- of protecting students' rights, climate change) [competences: C1: independent thinking, C3: communication, C5: engagement and agency];
- recognizes the opportunities and threats related to communication on social media [competences: C1: independent thinking, C3: communication];
- is able to distinguish between opinion and fact in a quote from a news program [competence: C1: independent thinking].

3rd stage of education, (secondary school). The learner:

- is able to recognise cases of disinformation [competence: C1: independent thinking];
- explains the importance of the media and the right to information to the development of democratic rule of law [competences: C1: independent thinking, C3: communicating].

S5: Me – a citizen of Poland: democracy, rule of law, local government, authorities in Poland, political parties, civil society

2nd stage of education, (primary school, grades IV-VIII). The learner:

- explains what problems the ministry they selected is currently working on solving [competencies: C1: independent thinking, C3: communicating];
- participates in democratic decision-making in the classroom or school [competencies: C2: problem solving, C4: cooperating, C5: engagement and agency].

3rd stage of education, (secondary school). The learner:

- prepares and delivers a short speech with a proposal of how to solve a problem which interests them to the relevant parliamentary committee [competences: C2: problem solving, C3: communication];
- analyses the process of social consultations on a selected act using the Government Legislation Centre website [competences: C1: independent thinking, C2: problem solving].

S6: Me – a citizen of Europe and the world: European values, principles and areas of EU activities, causes and effects of integration, rights of EU citizens and their protection, current challenges and the future of the EU and the international community, interdependencies between the global South and the North

1st stage of education, (primary school, grades I-III). The learner:

- talks about customs in a selected European country [competences: C1: independent thinking, C3: communicating]
- checks which countries selected products (e.g. food, electronics) come from [competences: C1: independent thinking, C2: problem solving].

2nd stage of education (primary school, grades IV-VIII). The learner:

- prepares an information campaign on the benefits of being a member of the EU [competences: C4: cooperation, C5: engagement and agency, C7: empathy and care];
- is aware of the existing interdependencies between the Global North and the Global South [competences: C1: independent thinking, C2: problem-solving].

3rd stage of education, (secondary school). The learner:

- participates in a class or school debate on the EU's actions on a selected issue (migration policy, Green Deal, etc.) [competences: C1: independent thinking, C3: communication];
- creates a graphic or multimedia material showing the requirements for obtaining EU citizenship and the rights resulting from being an EU citizen [competences: C3: communication, C4: cooperation];
- takes actions intended to improve the working conditions of residents of the Global South [competences: C5: engagement and agency, C7: empathy and care].



Examples of cross-curricular connections

Key Issue in Section 1, 2nd stage of education: The learner: diagnoses problems and needs in their immediate vicinity (on the playground, in the neighbourhood, in the municipality) [universal competences: C1: independent thinking and C2: problem-solving]:

- lessons with the class teacher: students conduct a discussion on the needs of young people in their municipality; they plan survey research;
- mathematics: students tally the collected survey results, convert them into percentages, make comparisons, create charts or graphs;
- computer science: students present the compiled results in the form of graphs or charts in a spreadsheet, prepare a multimedia presentation;
- Polish: students write an article on the needs of young people in the municipality and research they conducted;
- English language: students prepare a short note in English on the results of their research work



Recommended methods of work

The correct choice of methods and forms of work supports the development of civic and universal competences. Citizenship Education, considered holistically, happens through experience – teachers should not only convey information, but above all, create opportunities for in-depth reflection about oneself and society in each lesson. In order to effectively develop interest in public affairs, Citizenship Education must be based on real problems and challenges affecting young people in their local environment, region, country, Europe and the world. Such an approach does not leave young people on their own with difficult, abstract topics (such as threats to democracy, climate change, migration, human rights, etc.), but allows them to understand the issues and take real actions to meet these challenges.

Citizenship Education should be based on methods that enable young people to solve real problems or respond to specific needs. Methods such as: educational projects (shorter and longer term), class or school debates and discussions, mini social campaigns (or participation in campaigns run by credible public or non-governmental institutions), designing solutions (e.g. in the design thinking model), case studies, analysis of data and visual materials. The dominant form of work should be work in groups and as a class or in inter-class teams.

Such experiences enable the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and practical skills of using that knowledge in real actions taken for the benefit

of the school, local or national community as well as the world. In this way these experiences strengthen the sense of agency and responsibility young people have for the common good.

Example of a student project based on recognizing learners as the real authors of the action plan:

▶ <https://etnograficzna.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NaszeMiejsceM.pdf>

As we postulated in the Education Roadmap, actions must be taken to make every educational institution a “school of everyday democracy”. Here are some of the proposals of SOS for Education from that document:

- start Citizenship Education earlier, adapting the content to age; provide more hours of subject education throughout the entire educational cycle, including the same number of hours in vocational schools as in secondary schools at the basic level;
- review and modify the detailed requirements to make them more practical: exercising civic rights, understanding one’s responsibilities, participating in public debate and decision-making processes, understanding and applying democratic principles and procedures (from the school level through local and national to the European level) etc.: from the first grade of primary school, in line with children’s social and

- cognitive development;
- introduce methods that shape practical civic skills (see below), and also introduce conversations/debates on important and current topics of public life into the curricula and subject teaching; include activities that develop skills connected to dialogue, understood as a way of communicating and resolving disputes, where we focus on understanding the other side, not only on convincing others that we are right;
- popularize work methods that develop civic skills in all classes: discussions, debates, team projects, case studies, trial simulations, school class elections, etc.; collect and popularize proven and innovative materials and good practices – cooperation of social organizations with the Centre for Education Development (ORE), teacher training institutions and other social organizations;
- include time in the teachers' workloads and students' lesson plans for implementing school and local civic projects;
- place greater emphasis on Citizenship Education in the field – including study visits and trips to state, EU and local government institutions (the Sejm, Senate, the Presidential Palace, the Chancellery of the Council of Ministers, ministries, courts and tribunals, state control and human rights protection institutions, the EC and EP representation in Poland, the headquarters and meetings of local government authorities, diplomatic outposts and representations of international organisations; to be considered: trips and visits financed through subsidies;
- develop reliable and practical legal education, also in cooperation with professional associations including lawyers, judges and legal counsellors, and others;
- appreciate the social and civic activities of students and pupils (e.g. include information about activity on the report card); award school and local government awards and scholarships; organize festivals and competitions to promote active young people and teachers who support them;
- strengthen the competences of the student government and the influence of students on school life: introduce mechanisms for co-deciding, not just consulting, decisions concerning the everyday life of the school; in secondary schools, expand the scope of matters on which the student government not only advises, but also participates in decision-making.




Remarks on Assessment


Assessment should not only verify, but most of all support universal competences, especially in developing independent thinking, recognizing and solving problems, cooperation, engagement in public affairs and learning and self-management.

We recommend introducing formative assessment, including self-assessment and peer assessment. It is important that when providing feedback on the work and progress of a learner, the mistakes made by them are treated as an opportunity for development. Thus, assessment should support learners in shaping an attitude focused on development (growth mindset: I haven't learned it yet, but I know what and how to improve) and not on constancy (fixed mindset: this assessment confirms that I am not cut out for this). It is important that learners receive not only assessment (feedback) regarding their achievements in acquiring theoretical knowledge, but above all the ability to apply it in practice in public life.


Examples:

 <https://koss.ceo.org.pl/dla-nauczycieli/uczyc-inaczzej/dobre-praktyki/ocenie-na-lekcjach-koss>

Success Criteria for Self-Assessment:

 https://civispolonus.org.pl/media/publication_block/uczymy-sie-razem-dla-pokoju-scenariusze-lekcji.pdf

SOS for Education Additional material (2022)

 <https://sosdlaedukacji.pl/en/edukacja-obywatelska-na-lekcjach-na-co-dzien/>

Authors

S sieć
OS organizacji
S społecznych
dla edukacji

Piotr Sienkiewicz, Fundacja Civis Polonus,
<https://civispolonus.org.pl/>

Alicja Pacewicz, SOS dla Edukacji, Centrum Edukacji
Obywatelskiej i Fundacja Szkoła z Klasą
<https://sosdlaedukacji.pl/>

Anna Binka, Stowarzyszenie „Pracownia Etnograficzna”
im. Witolda Dynowskiego,
<https://etnograficzna.pl/>

Michał Cieśla, Fundacja Szkoła w Chmurze,
<https://szkolawchmurze.org/>

Jan Korczyński, Fundacja Varia Posnania,
<https://variaposnania.pl/>

Monika Wasilonek, Program PROJEKTOR,
<https://www.projektor.org.pl/>

Realization of the release:
Michał Szymanderski-Pastryk Marketing Agency
Typesetting: Emilia Kassner