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# DESIGNING CIVIC EDUCATION FOR DIVERSE SOCIETIES

## MODELS, TRADEOFFS, AND OUTCOMES

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Integration Futures Working Group



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By Per Mouritsen with Astrid Jaeger

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Integration Futures Working Group



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civic education is an age-old tool, dating back to the 19th century, that has more recently been repurposed for modern ends. In the past 15 years, governments across Europe have turned to such programmes to help reverse a perceived civic deficit and sense of declining community cohesion. In response to neighbourhood ethnic tensions and terrorist attacks in a number of major European cities, actors at both the European and the national level have taken steps to inculcate a sense of social responsibility and common values in young people with the aim of protecting them from alienation and radicalisation. Some commentators have even expressed hope that active citizenship and the building of skills such as media literacy and critical thinking could help insulate pupils from the forces of populism.

At its heart, civic education is designed to produce ‘good citizens’—though ideas about what constitutes such an individual vary from country to country. This concept often includes a blend of several different dimensions: values (from autonomy to social justice and, at times, economic self-sufficiency); virtues (from tolerance and impartiality to self-confidence); identity (whether ‘constitutional’ patriotism or pride in an explicitly ethnic or religious heritage); and cognitive skills and knowledge (e.g., understanding of how institutions work or ability to think critically). Since national and educational traditions understand these elements differently, civic curricula and teaching methods also vary widely in their design and emphasis. For instance, civic education in the French republican tradition is structured around the values of equality, autonomy, and secularism, while the Anglo-American tradition places greater emphasis on self-sufficiency and resilience.

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In its current incarnation, civic education is often seen as the potential solution to numerous societal challenges—from political apathy and youth unemployment to the need to orient newly arrived immigrant and refugee youth to their new society. But although these challenges may be shared by many societies across Europe, the initiatives designed to remedy them vary widely across countries, localities, and schools. Limited time and resources mean that governments must decide where their priorities lie. In doing so, it can be helpful to carefully consider several key tradeoffs:

- ***Imparting formal knowledge versus developing individual capabilities.*** While knowledge can be both useful and empowering (and may even protect people against the sway of populism or radicalisation), overly technical material or promotion of majority norms without open debate can be alienating for some students. Other programmes may instead choose to focus on fostering skills that will help individuals participate in the social and political life of the country.
- ***Demanding national loyalty versus empowering individual citizens.*** Democracy is designed to encourage open debate, but educators may struggle to balance the need for discussion with the responsibility to inculcate (national) values and dispositions. Encouraging students to question authority may mean governments must be willing to accept critical scrutiny of its core institutions and values as well.
- ***Fostering collective political virtues versus individual economic resilience.*** In some countries, such as Denmark and the United Kingdom, civic education has been designed to prepare citizens to succeed in global and highly competitive markets. Teachers in German schools, by contrast, have expressed concern that this approach encourages economic self-interest over social responsibility and other, more collective civic virtues.

- **Encouraging rational criticism versus respect for cultural identities.** Some of the core principles of Enlightenment rationalism upon which many civic education courses are built (e.g., logical reasoning and critical analysis) may conflict with a curriculum that emphasises a particular tradition or identity. Moreover, educators may struggle to find the balance between encouraging pupils to interrogate belief systems and practices without denigrating individual identities (especially those of minority students).

Recent evaluations of civic education have found it to help shape personal efficacy (i.e., an individual's belief in their ability to effect change), political participation, and tolerance. However, it remains difficult to determine what programme models or teaching methods work best (and how to define success), often because so much depends on each programme's underlying goals, how it is implemented, and the broader features of the school system. For example, while sheltered classrooms or religious schools may be able to nurture the civic capability of minority pupils in a setting where they feel secure and selfconfident in their identity, such segregation can cut students from disadvantaged or minority backgrounds off from 'bridging' social capital (social ties with people from different backgrounds), peer learning, or intergroup empathy. Moreover, citizenship education is unlikely to succeed in under-resourced and overcrowded schools—and may even focus attention on the wide gulf between rosy commitments made to justice and equality on paper and the lived experiences of underserved students. These contextual factors must be borne in mind when deciding on the following aspects of civic education programming:

- **Purpose.** Does civic education serve to impart information to children or to encourage pupils to develop their political skills and selfconfidence?
- **Pedagogy.** Is it more important to develop academic rigour through classroom discussion or to promote inclusion, for instance by encouraging pupils to engage with the community through internships and volunteerism or in the running the school?
- **Scope.** Is citizenship education primarily important as a way to teach children about local issues that will help them be active members of their communities, or should it be broader in orientation and cover national and international political institutions and issues?
- **Concentration.** Should the programme be organised as a separate subject or a set of guidelines that cut across a wider series of subjects—potentially broadening exposure to all pupils, but with less depth?

In light of increased immigration and a range of long-term social trends, civic education in Europe is being asked to perform a patchwork of shifting, and occasionally competing, functions. Though under pressure to effect swift change, policymakers should be mindful of this complexity, setting overarching goals that are realistic, concrete, and relatively broad, while leaving education experts and practitioners the needed leeway to flesh these out into effective programmes. Political selfconfidence, interethnic and general trust, ability and motivation to participate, and other key skills and knowledge are the lifeblood of all modern societies, though each may take its own path to sharing these strengths with students and future citizens.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Political interest in civic education has intensified in Western Europe since the 1990s. The revival of this old subject—which stretches back to the 19th century and draws from sociology, anthropology, political theory, political science, and the pedagogical sciences—reflects the rise of a set of modern challenges. These include falling political engagement among young people; the integration of young immigrants, refugees, and migrant-background children; and the need to foster a new generation of resilient, flexible workers who can succeed in a global economy.

But while many countries have been motivated by these same shared challenges, they have addressed them in remarkably different ways. Education and citizenship are the heart of national sovereignty and identity. The design of civic education therefore reflects each country’s cultures, institutions, and traditions of ‘good citizenship’—and the goals, ambitions, and solutions that arise from them.

This report examines the diversity of national models that have emerged in Europe, focusing on Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. It begins by explaining the history and goals of such initiatives, and how different models fulfil different understandings of what it means to be a ‘good citizen’. The report then sets out the main tradeoffs and tensions between the goals and methods used in civic education, analyses the emerging evidence on the effects of such programmes, and discusses different national approaches to diversity in the classroom. It concludes with a series of questions and considerations for politicians and educators seeking to meet the challenges of schooling new citizens in liberal democracies.

## II. THE POLICY GOALS OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Modern civic education is not cut entirely from the same cloth. Though such programmes may share common 19th- and 20th-century ancestors, the ways different European countries are responding to the challenges of today reflect their diverse educational traditions and unique local social dynamics.

### A. *Historical background*

Stretching as far back as the French Revolution, countries have used schools to create, shape, and even control citizens. To 18th- and 19th-century philosophers and educators,<sup>1</sup> civic education was primarily *moral* education, designed to civilise lower-class children.<sup>2</sup> Political elites, on the other hand, saw schools as instruments of nation building that could induce the populace to fight for their country, work industriously, and lead good Christian lives. For instance, Germany (then Prussia) was one of the first countries in the world to introduce compulsory primary education in the late 18th century, with control of schooling centralised after the Napoleonic Wars. Likewise, the French republican school reforms followed the nation’s defeat by Prussia in the 1880s.

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*Civic education has also sought to develop the character traits and competences needed to participate ... in societies that are ethnically and religiously diverse.*

Civic education in these countries aimed to foster national and social integration, and—at least outside of France—to socialise young people into membership of a state religion. For example, U.S. ‘common schools’ functioned not least as cultural and religious institutions to further the assimilation of Catholic Irish immigrants. Since World War II, civic education has also sought to develop the character traits and competences

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1 Examples include Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, the Marquis de Condorcet, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in France; Joseph Priestley in Britain; and Benjamin Franklin, Noah Webster, and Benjamin Rush in the United States.

2 For more on this in Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, see Marisa Linton, *The Politics of Virtue in Republican France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Ove Korsgaard, *Kampen om Folket* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2004).

needed to participate in the democratic institutions of the country and, more recently, in societies that are ethnically and religiously diverse. While civics, *politische Bildung* (political education), and *enseignement moral et civique* (moral and civic education)<sup>3</sup> have been distinct elements of the postwar national curricula in the United States, Germany,<sup>4</sup> and France, such programmes were only introduced in the United Kingdom in 2002 following the influential 1998 Crick Report.<sup>5</sup>

In Denmark and Sweden, where social-democratic egalitarianism and ideals of child autonomy have long influenced the organisation and teaching methods of national schools, civic education is not an independent school subject, though Denmark has introduced it at the level of teacher training. However, in all of these countries, the topic is high on the political and education agenda, and proposed reforms and ongoing debates refract civic virtues and cultural norms through shifting societal contexts. In doing so, they continue to reflect distinct national traditions and, in some cases, overt nationalism.

## B. Models of civic education

Since the 1990s, Western countries have experienced a ‘civic turn’,<sup>6</sup> with heavy emphasis placed on the values and practices of citizenship. Policies in this vein emphasise obligations over rights, active participation over passivity, and overarching civic identities and solidarities over parochial ones. Active citizenship is seen as a kind of panacea for all sorts of social and political ills, such as political apathy, strains on welfare spending, crime, and social unrest. Although the civic turn can be seen most prominently in immigrant integration policies,<sup>7</sup> it is also evident in new and emerging areas such as the concept of local ‘co-production’ (in which citizens contribute to the design and delivery of public services) and in employment and welfare reforms aimed at ‘activating’ groups that do not participate in the labour market.

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Civic education evokes many different ideas about the purpose and broader sociopolitical role of schools, though all of them of liberal Enlightenment origin. These differences may reflect more fundamental disagreements about how and whether children should be ‘socialised’, and who should make decisions about the

3 In German *Länder*, different names are used for such programmes today, such as *Gemeinschaftskunde* (community studies) in Baden Württemberg, *Sozialkunde* (social studies) in Bavaria, *Politikwissenschaft* (political science) in Berlin, and *Politik* (politics) in Lower Saxony. The French term has varied slightly through history since the original *instruction morale et civique* (moral and civic instruction) was introduced in 1882.

4 In Germany, this continued a tradition already in existence in the interwar Weimar Republic.

5 The report got its name from the chairperson of the Advisory Group on Citizenship, the political scientist Sir Bernard Crick. See Advisory Group on Citizenship, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998).

6 Per Mouritsen, ‘Political Responses to Cultural Conflict: Reflections on the Ambiguities of the Civic Turn’ in *Constituting Communities: Political Solutions to Cultural Conflict*, eds. Per Mouritsen and Knud Erik Jørgensen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

7 See Christian Joppke, *The Role of the State in Cultural Integration: Trends, Challenges, and Ways Ahead* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2012), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/TCM-state-role-in-cultural-integration](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/TCM-state-role-in-cultural-integration).

form this socialisation takes. While national education frameworks rarely adhere to a rigid understanding of a single model, elements of the following approaches can be seen in countries across Europe:

- ***The traditional republican-liberal model.*** This approach views a free political community as the ultimate goal, considering it more important that children develop civic virtues that serve the collective good than individuality. It may also be necessary to constrain parents' ability to transmit particular cultural or religious traditions if they stand in the way of effective socialisation.<sup>8</sup>
- ***The neoliberal market model.*** Catering above all to the narrowly conceived self-interests of the child (e.g., their future employment prospects) and to the needs of markets, schools in this model may enjoy autonomy from state and local regulation. They compete in an education marketplace by selecting students, specialising, and targeting different consumers (i.e., parents). This model sees schools as playing the role of developing private individuals with marketable competences, such as innovation, entrepreneurship, and resilience.<sup>9</sup>
- ***The life-education model.*** Inspired by philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and Alexander von Humboldt, the life-education model promotes autonomy and self-awareness by nurturing the unique intellectual, moral, and aesthetic development of each child. Here, schools and teachers are entrusted to protect the child from pressures to conform, whether from states or from parents.<sup>10</sup>
- ***The Lockean or political-liberal model.*** Taking as its starting point the cultural and religious pluralism of contemporary society, this model views schools as there to serve families and communities by protecting them from the state. But they do not protect children from the normative pressures of their backgrounds, which means that private schools are allowed or even encouraged.<sup>11</sup>

Modern civic education, by its very nature, is associated with the republican model's ambition to create useful citizens. This (state) ambition may be in tension with Humboldtian individualism (the life-education model), as well as with the rights of parents to transmit their way of life to their children (the political-liberal model). Similarly, the republican model's conception of what constitutes a 'useful citizen' stands in competition with that of the neoliberal model. The following sections offer a brief sketch of how and why five European countries chose to introduce or revive civic education in recent decades, as well as the elements of these varied models that each has adopted.

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- 8 This model is most clearly seen in countries such as France and Italy. However, the idea that the state is entitled to shape citizens to promote its vision of the common good—and the virtues seen to support it—may take many different forms. Contemporary civic education is characterised by the promotion of other state-school-sponsored ideals of citizenship, besides French style republicanism; these are often more national or Christian communitarian; intercultural cosmopolitan; or liberal egalitarian. See Table 1 in this report.
- 9 The tension between free-market choice and state promotion of specific economically 'functional' competences and mentalities is characteristic of the manner in which neoliberalism correlates with stronger state governance of labour-market, social, and school policy. See Loïc Wacquant, 'Three Steps to a Historical Anthropology of Actually Existing Neoliberalism,' *Social Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (2012): 66–79. This model is arguably on the rise and can be seen in discussions about resilience learning in Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom.
- 10 This model, historically most influential in Denmark and Sweden, is ingrained in pedagogical philosophies worldwide. Although critical personal autonomy also informs democratic citizenship, this model can sometimes stand in some tension with the state-sponsored goals of civic education.
- 11 This model has historically been strongest in the United Kingdom, but elements of it are also common in Denmark and, to a lesser extent, Sweden. Most countries have some place for free or private schools.

## 1. United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, civic education was introduced in secondary schools following a pair of high profile reports on community participation and social cohesion.<sup>12</sup> The 1998 Crick Report stressed social and moral responsibility and community involvement, an emphasis that dovetailed neatly with the ‘third way’ communitarianism of Tony Blair’s *New Labour* platform, which stressed the role of civil society over welfare state expansion<sup>13</sup> and acknowledged concerns about lower election participation and issues of law and order. In its recommendations, the Crick Report took a relatively republican approach to addressing these challenges through the fostering of political knowledge and discussion of values.<sup>14</sup>

The 2001 Cante Report, by contrast, was drafted in response to racial riots in the north of England and tapped into concerns that members of ethnic minorities were living ‘parallel lives’ and the perceived lack of loyalty to British values and the state among such groups.

Following the 2005 terrorist attacks in London, in which three of four suicide bombers were UK-born sons of Pakistani immigrants, political interest in civic education, and its apparent shortcomings, was reignited. This led to the 2007 Ajegbo review of the citizenship curriculum and to the introduction of a new, and hitherto deliberately avoided, pillar focused on identity and diversity within the curriculum.<sup>15</sup> This inclusion drew considerable criticism, including because of its reliance on a vague, multicultural version of the disputed concept of ‘Britishness’.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the trend in the country towards exploring common identity as part of a discussion of citizenship also helps explain why civic education in the United Kingdom has recently become part of the government’s strategy to combat radicalisation and terrorist recruitment.

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Starting in 2007, the national secondary curriculum has included an ‘identity and cultural diversity’ strand that aims to promote understanding of ‘multiple identities of groups and communities’ along with ‘ability to engage with and explore the values we share as citizens.’<sup>17</sup> The controversy that this sparked has been less about the common-sense liberalism of these values (e.g., fairness and tolerance), which are hardly uniquely British; instead, critics have tended to object to the positive view of history they represent and to voice concerns that diversity within society may be silenced by the linking of civicism to ‘Britishness’.<sup>18</sup>

12 Ted Cante, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* (London: UK Home Office, 2001), <http://tedcante.co.uk/pdf/communitycohesion%20cantlereport.pdf>.

13 Diane Burton and Stephanie May, ‘Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools in England’, *Journal of the British Education Studies Association* 7, no. 1 (2015): 1–16.

14 For the publication known as the Crick Report, see Advisory Group on Citizenship, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*.

15 Keith Ajegbo, Dina Kiwan, and Seema Sharma, *The Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review* (London: HMSO, 2007); John J. Lindsley, ‘“Britishness?” A Discussion of Citizenship Education and the Ajegbo Report’, Medium, January 6, 2017, <https://medium.com/@JohnJLindsley/britishness-a-discussion-of-citizenship-education-and-the-ajegbo-report-47e5ab9dc112>; Peter Brett, ‘Identity and Diversity: Citizenship Education and Looking Forwards from the Ajegbo Report’ (unpublished report, 2008), [www.researchgate.net/publication/284724247\\_Identity\\_and\\_Diversity\\_Citizenship\\_Education\\_and\\_looking\\_forwards\\_from\\_the\\_Ajegbo\\_Report](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/284724247_Identity_and_Diversity_Citizenship_Education_and_looking_forwards_from_the_Ajegbo_Report).

16 Audrey Osler, ‘Citizenship Education and the Ajegbo Report: Re-Imagining a Cosmopolitan Nation’, *London Review of Education* 6, no. 1 (2008): 11–25.

17 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), *The National Curriculum* (London: QCA, 2007), 27–29.

18 Rhys Andrews and Andrew Mycock, ‘Dilemmas of Devolution: The “Politics of Britishness” and Citizenship Education’, *British Politics* 3 (2008): 139–55.

## 2. Denmark

In contrast to the United Kingdom, Denmark's interest in civic education was more explicitly linked to immigration concerns from the beginning, around 2005. Danish debates referred to what the Education Minister at the time, Bertel Haarder, called 'democratic blindness' among Muslim youth.<sup>19</sup> In part to counter the nationalist agenda of the right-wing Danish People's Party, Haarder and others emphasised the country's strong tradition of participatory democracy and holistic life education.<sup>20</sup> These traditions, which combine a civil-society and everyday version of the republican approach with a strong emphasis on the Humboldt-Mill development of individual autonomy, can be seen both in the school system and in the preamble of the public school law.<sup>21</sup>

Under the decentralised Danish system, which has only weak ministerial curriculum guidance, teachers have significant autonomy in how they implement civic education. In 2007, civic education was therefore introduced as part of a teacher-training module (rather than a separate school subject, though several subjects did receive revised target goals), combining citizenship topics with Christianity and ethics/philosophy instruction. This juxtaposition linked discussions of what it means to be a good citizen almost directly to issues of politics and religion, foregrounding controversies over (Danish) 'liberal values' and Islam.<sup>22</sup> The government also began to emphasise national values within a range of other subjects, including Danish language and literature, history, and Christianity, following on concerns that native-born children were at risk of losing a sense of cultural belonging and tradition.<sup>23</sup>

## 3. Sweden

While Swedish interest in civic education also resulted from increased migration, its approach was almost diametrically opposed to that of Denmark.<sup>24</sup> A 1992 report by the Swedish Curriculum Committee emphasised the importance of liberal norms and national solidarity in response to migration-related diversity and globalisation.<sup>25</sup> The Social Democrat administration that held office from 1994 to 2006 took a pluralistic, open approach to values, viewing them as both dynamic and negotiable.

19 Per Mouritsen and Tore Vincents Olsen, 'Liberalism and the Diminishing Space of Tolerance' in *Tolerance, Intolerance, and Respect: Hard to Accept*, eds. Jan Dobbernack and Tariq Modood (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Christian Fernández and Kristian Jensen, 'The Civic Integrationist Turn in Danish and Swedish School Politics', *Comparative Migration Studies* 5, no. 5 (2017): 1–20.

20 The Danish word *dannelse* was coined by poet-priest and national educationalist J.F.S. Grundtvig and has no clear English equivalent, but has fewer elitist connotations than the German *Bildung*. It signifies a well-rounded development of a free character and spirit of an individual within the community; it includes ethical, democratic, national, and, when used by conservatives, Christian elements. See John A. Hall, Ove Korsgaard, and Ove K. Pedersen, *Building the Nation: N.F.S. Grundtvig and Danish National Identity* (Montreal, Kingston, and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

21 Somewhat ironically, this school tradition—the product of social-democratic egalitarian and anti-authoritarian ideological currents from the 1970s—was criticised by Danish Liberal Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen for its 'loose' and allegedly unacademic nature, and specifically for what he called *rundkreds-pædagogik* (circle pedagogics), referring to the practice of students and teachers sharing opinions while sitting in a circle on the floor. See speech by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Prime Minister of Denmark, to the Danish parliament, 'Statsminister Anders Fogh Rasmussens tale ved Folketingets åbning tirsdag den 7. oktober 2003', Copenhagen, 7 October 2013, [www.stm.dk/p\\_7446.html](http://www.stm.dk/p_7446.html).

22 Mouritsen and Olsen, 'Liberalism and the Diminishing Space of Tolerance'.

23 Ibid. See also Fernández and Jensen, 'The Civic Integrationist Turn in Danish and Swedish School Politics'.

24 Comparing elements of civic-education curricula in Sweden and Denmark, Fernández and Jensen found that the Swedish programme had evolved in almost the opposite direction of Denmark's move towards national identity, Christian heritage, and emphasis on the fragile, culturally embedded nature of liberal values. See Fernández and Jensen, 'The Civic Integrationist Turn in Danish and Swedish School Politics'.

25 Christian Fernández, 'Liberaliseringen av svensk skolpolitik: en positionsbestämning', *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* 114, no. 2 (2012): 241–270.

In the education sphere, and particularly in classes on history, Christianity, and social sciences, this approach shone through in the introduction of concepts such as antidiscrimination, antiracism, intercultural dialogue, internationalism, human rights, and the rights of children.<sup>26</sup> The Swedish model of multiculturalism<sup>27</sup> emphasises social democratic principles such as equal rights and treatment for minorities and their cultural practices, so civic education became part of a post- or even antinationalist reaction.<sup>28</sup> This approach seeks to empower individuals to craft their own life plans, including choices about cultural beliefs and their expression, rather than to promote a government agenda of cultural cohesion.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. France

France has a long history of civic education. ‘Civic and moral instruction’ was introduced in the late 19th century to consolidate patriotic support in the democratic Third Republic. It was replaced, in 1976, by non-timetabled civic instruction<sup>30</sup> and then in 1996 by a more political standalone subject entitled *Éducation Civique, Juridique et Sociale* (civic, legal, and social education). The introduction of this new subject reflected widespread concern about antisocial behaviour and violence in school. These problems were framed as an attack on the unity of the nation by certain individuals and families (i.e., Muslims and right-wing extremists) who held unrepublican views. The theory behind this shift was that individuals could be integrated and social tensions could be eased by nurturing a democratic culture among children and youth that strongly affirmed the egalitarian and rationalist ideology of *laïcité* (institutional secularism).<sup>31</sup> The curricular content and organisation of civic education was highly centralised. It mixed comprehensive civic content (e.g., knowledge of the institutions of the republic, the legal system and political process, and the European Union) with a strong emphasis on republican values and tenets. The subject left little room for reflection on either cultural diversity or for participatory or project learning.

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In the wake of the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* massacre, perpetrated by two French-born brothers of Algerian descent who had become radicalised, a new subject (*L’enseignement moral et civique*, or moral and civic education) was introduced and now extends to primary school. While still highly centralised, academic, and couched in the spirit of *laïcité*, the new subject tones down what some commentators saw as the moralising—and poten-

26 Fernández and Jensen, ‘The Civic Integrationist Turn in Danish and Swedish School Politics’.

27 Karin Borevi, ‘Multiculturalism and Welfare State Integration: Swedish Model Path Dependency’, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 21, no. 6 (2014): 708–23.

28 Whereas Swedish schools, like other national school systems, had a distinct national-integrationist perspective in much of the 20th century, observers have noted that this has since shifted. This turn is due in part to official multiculturalist concern about racism and intolerance towards minorities as well as reactions to welfare-state paternalism that include an emphasis on freedom of (cultural) choice as well as skepticism of the use of civic education as a tool of the state, let alone fixed ideas about ‘Swedishness’. This coincides with a trend towards liberalisation and decentralisation of school administration, including the rise of a sector of private schools. See Fernández, ‘Liberaliseringen av svensk skolpolitik’. The Swedish system, including discussions about civic education, in this regard, take place on the background of a movement from a more statist republican perspective, towards the Humboldtian.

29 Ibid.

30 Laura Johnson and Paul Morris, ‘Critical Citizenship Education in England and France: A Comparative Analysis’, *Comparative Education* 48, no. 3 (2012): 283–301.

31 Ibid; Hugh Starkey, ‘Citizenship Education in France and Britain: Evolving Theories and Practices’, *The Curriculum Journal* 11, no. 1 (2000): 39–54; Isabelle Coté, Malena Rosén Sundström, and Anders Sannerstedt, ‘“The State of the Debate”: A Media Analysis of the Debates on Liberalization and Citizenship Education in France, Sweden, and England, 2001–2010’, *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice* 8, no. 2 (2013): 215–28.

tially alienating—characteristics of its predecessor.<sup>32</sup> For instance, the newer programme emphasises antidiscrimination and is organised according to a series of themes, such as sensitivity, critical thinking, and social responsibility. It also includes more student participation and classroom discussions.

## 5. Germany

German civic education also continues a long-standing tradition, in this case, one rooted in the Weimar Republic (1919–33). The current curriculum is heavily influenced by the liberal ideals of post-World War II reconstruction, and more recently by the challenges of unifying East and West Germany and of pushing back against right-wing populism. As in France, it emphasises civic knowledge of a number of historical and political issues, including the *Rechtstaat* (the liberal constitutional state) and constitutionalism, modern German history of anti-totalitarianism, European integration, and German Reunification, with a strong onus on the fragility of democracy. However, it is decidedly less driven by a focus on the ‘national’ than the French or Danish models, emphasising Western and European liberal values over conceptions of ‘Germanness’.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to France, it is much more firmly oriented towards critical dialogue about values and contemporary problems. It is also more participatory and requires out-of-school social and community service of different kinds.<sup>34</sup> The federal government issues only broad guidelines<sup>35</sup> resulting in substantial differences in how such programmes are implemented in the (more conservative) south and central regions, and the (more social democratic) north and Berlin.<sup>36</sup>

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*It is decidedly less driven by a focus on the ‘national’ than the French or Danish models, emphasising Western and European liberal values over conceptions of ‘Germanness’.*

With immigration on the rise over the past decade, Germany has seen renewed interest in civic education. All German regions, having come to acknowledge that immigrants were in fact there to stay,<sup>37</sup> agreed in 2016 to introduce an intercultural component into civic education programmes with the aim of raising awareness of other cultures and fostering students’ ability to resolve conflicts arising from ethnic and religious difference.<sup>38</sup>

32 Séverin Graveleau, ‘En quoi consiste le nouvel «enseignement moral et civique» mis en place cette rentrée?’, *Le Monde*, 31 August 2015, [www.lemonde.fr/education/article/2015/08/31/un-enseignement-moral-et-civique-du-cp-au-bac\\_4741212\\_1473685.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/education/article/2015/08/31/un-enseignement-moral-et-civique-du-cp-au-bac_4741212_1473685.html).

33 In the words of one commentator, “Germans in search of a political identity could fall back on pan-European ideals instead of tainted nationalism .... In some respects, this makes for an unusually broad conception of the political community; Germans are taught to think of nested local, regional, national, and European identities.” See Daniel Faas and Alex Street, ‘Schooling the New Generation of German Citizens: A Comparison of Citizenship Curricula in Berlin and Baden-Württemberg’, *Educational Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 469–79.

34 Alexander Wohnig, ‘Political Learning by Social Engagement? Chances and Risks for Citizenship Education’, *Citizenship, Social, and Economics Education* 15, No. 3 (2016): 244–61.

35 For example, through the well-funded activities and conferences of the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education), which was founded in 1952. See Geoffrey K. Roberts, ‘Political Education in Germany’, *Parliamentary Affairs* 55, no. 3 (2002): 556–58.

36 For some of the significant differences of emphasis, as well as communalities, see Faas and Street, ‘Schooling the New Generation of German Citizens’.

37 For more on the evolution of German views of immigration, see Friedrich Heckmann, *Understanding the Creation of Public Consensus: Migration and Integration in Germany, 2005 to 2015* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2016), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/understanding-creation-public-consensus-migration-and-integration-germany-2005-2015](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/understanding-creation-public-consensus-migration-and-integration-germany-2005-2015).

38 Faas and Street, ‘Schooling the New Generation of German Citizens’.

## 6. European Union and Council of Europe

At the regional level, the European Commission and the Council of Europe have both taken an interest in civic education, albeit for slightly different reasons. Violent terror attacks in a number of European cities raised widespread concerns in many European publics that liberal democratic values, such as freedom of speech, were not being successfully inculcated in pupils with migrant backgrounds and that social exclusion was creating fertile ground for radicalisation. Since the 2015 Paris Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance, and Nondiscrimination through Education, the Commission's actions in the realm of civic education have centred on promoting democratic values, social inclusion, critical thinking, media literacy, and intercultural dialogue as a means of tackling these challenges.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the Council of Europe has emphasised democracy and human-rights education as the ideal forums within which to address citizenship and values education.<sup>40</sup> Despite these differences, both strive to support a reinvigoration of active citizenship as a means of social and political development.<sup>41</sup> These institutions have been able to facilitate some degree of best-practice sharing through conferences, publications, online peer-learning platforms, and funding for transnational collaboration, but are constrained by their limited formal powers in this area. With citizenship policies firmly the domain of Member States, national models have thus remained considerably different, despite these efforts to promote common objectives and scale best practices.

### C. Goals of civic education

The variety of responses across Western Europe to broadly similar challenges is not an accident; it reflects a diversity of views about what elements make a good citizen and how to share those values with both newcomers and long-time residents.

Within the broad approaches outlined above, what schools emphasise when teaching civic education often depends on which of the following four aspects of citizenship is considered most salient:

- **Values.** These are the broad goals or aspirations of a society. Educational documents and policy papers often cite values in the form of abstract and universal normative concepts, such as equality of opportunity, individual autonomy, freedom of enterprise and economic self-sufficiency, human rights,

39 The Paris Declaration was adopted by European education ministers and the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport. Since then, the Commission has established a working group comprised of experts from Member States, civil-society organisations, and other social partners. The aim of this group is to compile an online compendium of good practices and develop a policy framework on promoting inclusion and fundamental values through education. See European Commission, 'Social Inclusion and Citizenship through Formal and Non-Formal Learning', accessed 17 October 2017, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/social-inclusion\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/social-inclusion_en).

40 Council of Europe, 'Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education', accessed 26 July 2017, [www.coe.int/en/web/edc/charter-on-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-education](http://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/charter-on-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-education).

41 The Commission traditionally, and controversially, has been concerned with *European* citizenship, including knowledge of EU institutions; EU identification; and the legal, participatory, and mobility aspects (e.g., education and employment) of Union citizenship. With its 2005 Eurydice programme, it has sought to monitor, evaluate, and promote more 'active' and 'responsible' conceptions of citizenship in Member State civic education, including in the form of programmes that foster political literacy, civic values, critical thinking, and active participation. For a comparative study of civic education, see European Commission, *Citizenship Education at School in Europe* (Brussels: Eurydice, 2017), [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/news/20171106-citizenship-education-school-europe-2017\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/news/20171106-citizenship-education-school-europe-2017_en). Beginning in the mid-1990s, the European Council, with its larger membership, has treated Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) as a tool for spreading its core values, aimed not least at the postcommunist states of Eastern Europe; it focuses on respect for human rights, interculturalism/tolerance, democratic empowerment, and 'responsible' citizenship in a general and civil-society sense. 2005 was the European Council's Year of Citizenship through Education. For an evaluation, see David Kerr and Joana Lopes, *Implementation and Outcomes of the '2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education' Learning and Living Democracy* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006), [www.partizipation.at/fileadmin/media\\_data/Downloads/Publikationen/implementation\\_outcomes\\_eyce2005.pdf](http://www.partizipation.at/fileadmin/media_data/Downloads/Publikationen/implementation_outcomes_eyce2005.pdf). See also Council of Europe, *All-European Study on Education for Democratic Citizenship Policies* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2004), <https://rm.coe.int/16802f7040>.

social justice, democracy, gender equality, and secularism. These are all ideologically contested<sup>42</sup> and are understood differently between national contexts.<sup>43</sup>

- **Virtues.** While clearly related to values, virtues are the dispositions and character traits, as well as the practical competences, civic-education programmes seek to foster in individual pupils. They describe the ways future citizens should conduct themselves in different social and political spheres to buttress broader social values. These virtues may include anything from tolerance, impartiality, and judgement to altruism, rationality, self-confidence, and resilience (see Box 1).

### **Box 1. The virtues of citizenship**

Among the virtues commonly emphasised in civic education programmes, most fall into the following categories:

1. The ability to recognise, tolerate, and empathise with cultural diversity.
2. The ability to be objective and practice impartiality, moderation, and dialogue.
3. Character-building dispositions such as moral rectitude, courage, and independent judgment.
4. Regard for others and selfless-service dispositions such as charity, solidarity, and readiness to sacrifice and volunteer.
5. Critical autonomy dispositions such as analytical rationality and a critical stance towards authorities, orthodoxy, or inherited tradition.
6. Political efficacy capacities such as selfconfidence and rhetorical skills.
7. Selfsufficiency dispositions such as resilience, entrepreneurship, flexibility, and the deferral of gratification.

- **Identity.** Civic education commonly includes conceptions of national identity, whether tied to traditional ideas of national heritage, history, and culture; more republican notions such as constitutional loyalty and civic solidarity; or indeed an inter- or multicultural pride in diversity. This programme element may centre on how people express their ethnic, religious, or subnational identity or on how to demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity to others' identities. It may also involve attempts to inculcate supranational attachments, such as a sense of European identity or cosmopolitanism. Finally, identity as an element of civic education may focus on supporting the personal development of individual pupils, on 'finding yourself', or on accepting yourself for who you are.
- **Civic knowledge.** These cognitive aspects are the skills and knowledge pupils will need to succeed in society. This may include knowledge of modern (political) history (especially taught in a critically reconstructive, national, or intercultural manner) or national and European history. It can also cover knowledge of political and administrative institutions, constitutional rights and duties, principles of government and political philosophy, familiarity with different social and ethnic groups, and human rights. In some countries, civic knowledge also includes basic information about how the society functions, such as how the health-care system works, how to claim social security benefits, or how to renew one's passport.

42 William E. Conolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

43 Kristian Jensen and Per Mouritsen, 'Nationalism in a Liberal Register: Beyond the "Paradox of Universalism" in Immigrant Integration Politics', *British Journal of Political Science* (online 2017, print volume forthcoming).

These four dimensions are emphasised in different ways in national guidelines and curricula for civic education, depending on the national contexts and the preferences of the politicians and educators who introduce them. They also occur in different clusters, depending on the model of citizenship that prevails in a country. Table 1 lays out which values, virtues, aspects of identity, and types of knowledge generally map onto the theories of who is a ‘good citizen’, as described above.<sup>44</sup>

**Table 1. What is ‘a good citizen’?**

Model	Values	Virtues	Identities	Knowledge
<b>Civic-republican citizen</b>	Equality Political autonomy (Secularism)	Political efficacy Public reason Participatory skills	Civic patriotism	Political history Participatory institutions
<b>Communitarian-national citizen</b>	Tradition/religion	Respect for authority Normative grounding Civil-society voluntarism	National belonging	National history and culture
<b>Intercultural citizen</b>	Cultural respect and recognition	Dialogue and empathy	Pride in diversity Group identity	Postcolonial history Heritage of different ethnic groups
<b>Cosmopolitan version</b>	<i>Global justice</i>	<i>International solidarity</i> <i>Hospitality</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan</i> <i>Postnational</i>	<i>Human rights</i> <i>International institutions</i>
<b>Classical liberal citizen (political/public actor)</b>	Individual freedom Civil-society pluralism Political neutrality	Tolerance Critical rationality Impartiality	Personal autonomy Mutual rights status	Constitutional rights Representative democracy
<b>Egalitarian version</b>	<i>Social justice</i>	<i>Social solidarity</i>	<i>Reciprocity</i>	<i>Welfare-state institutions</i>
<b>Economic neoliberal citizen (worker/entrepreneur)</b>	Efficiency/ productivity	Selfsufficiency Productive work Market resilience	Selfreliance	Scholastic/ marketable skills Personal economy

Needless to say, because countries often draw from these elements in varied and overlapping ways, no single model completely dominates any school system. For instance, while France adheres to a relatively pure example of the civic-republican ideal of citizenship, Denmark mixes the civic-republican conception with communitarian-national, liberal-egalitarian, and neoliberal elements. Similarly, Sweden replaces certain communitarian-national aspects with intercultural and cosmopolitan elements. The United Kingdom and many German *Länder* also promote intercultural (or multicultural) elements, though mixed with nationally distinct elements of classical liberalism (e.g., a strong emphasis on constitutionalism and human rights). Cosmopolitanism in both Germany and France is linked to a strong emphasis of Europeanness, which is less strong in Denmark and almost completely absent in the United Kingdom.

<sup>44</sup> These again correspond to a mushrooming literature in political philosophy, where proponents of liberalism, republicanism, multiculturalism—and many other ‘isms’ new and old—offer competing analyses of the moral sociology of citizenship and citizenship education. See Will Kymlicka, ‘Education for Citizenship’, in *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*, ed. Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

### III. DOES CIVIC EDUCATION FULFIL ITS GOALS?

Civic education has been vaunted in many political circles as a solution to a wide range of modern challenges, from lagging political participation and social cohesion to social isolation and radicalisation. In an age of unprecedented diversity and rapid social change, a lot is riding on the success of such programmes. Designing civic education in ways that will achieve real impact requires careful consideration of what its intended objectives are and what metrics and benchmarks of success are best suited to measuring progress. Doing so can help policymakers navigate the potential pitfalls and hidden tradeoffs that plague civic education initiatives.

#### *A. Tradeoffs of civic education*

In designing and implementing civic education, politicians and educators often encounter the following tradeoffs:

##### 1. Instilling formal knowledge versus supporting individual capabilities

Many countries are understandably keen to use civic education to impart country-specific knowledge to pupils, and especially to newly arrived immigrant children who may have had more limited exposure than their peers to certain national values, information about politics and society, and social norms. However, focusing on acquisition of specific knowledge may mean that civic education becomes overly technical (e.g., in teaching about political institutions and procedures) or alienating (e.g., in disseminating values without debate). Other programmes instead focus more heavily on fostering the skills individuals need to successfully participate in the social and political life of the country, such as critical thinking and empathy. Doing so must, however, come with some amount of contextual knowledge if pupils are to translate these skills into practice.

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*Focusing on acquisition of specific knowledge may mean that civic education becomes overly technical ... or alienating.*

Countries have adopted different approaches to manage this tradeoff. Germany emphasises practical learning outside school grounds more than France, for instance through internships with local humanitarian associations. And while Danish schools have historically placed substantial weight on fostering democratic participation and debate, they have recently moved somewhat towards a more knowledge-based approach. Finding a productive balance between the two can help meet key programme objectives, such as increasing political participation (see Box 2).

## Box 2. Youth political participation

Recent surveys have shown that political participation (defined as voting) is on the decline among youth and young adults. For instance, a survey of European youth reported that while 62 per cent voted in a political election at the local, regional, or national level in 2011, that number dropped to 56 per cent in 2013, with especially large decreases in Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. At the same time, concerns have been raised that some young people may not feel confident in their ability to engage actively with the political system. As politicians and publics turn to civic education to push back against this decline in youth voter turnout, it is worth noting that these numbers likely mask important complexity and shifts in how citizens participate politically—including some not limited to the young.

- **Political activation around salient issues.** Because youth are less likely to vote, politicians sometimes neglect their interests when crafting the policy agenda, creating a vicious cycle that further reduces political participation. In the United Kingdom, 18- to 24-year-olds have consistently had the lowest voter turnout since the 1970s, dropping as low as 37 per cent in 2005. Yet this does not necessarily reflect low political efficacy or engagement. Youth electoral participation jumped from 43 per cent in the 2015 general election to 60 per cent in the Brexit referendum a year later, suggesting that young voters are more likely to actively engage on issues they find important. This activation may also have lasting effects; a year after the referendum, and with exit negotiations dominating headlines, 64 per cent of young UK voters cast a ballot in the 2017 general election—the highest proportion in 25 years and in line with other age groups.
- **Dissatisfaction with politicians, not democracy.** The general decline of youth political participation, including both voting and membership in a political party or organisation, does not necessarily reflect distrust of representative democracy as an institution or a rejection of liberal-democratic values. It may instead reflect dissatisfaction with and alienation from politicians and the current political climate. Even in countries that have high levels of social trust, such as Denmark, trust in politicians has plunged—in Denmark, from 70 per cent in 2007 to 60 per cent in 2011 and just 28 per cent in 2015. Yet the relationship between political trust and political participation is nonlinear. For example, Swedish youth, among whom political trust has also sunk, have become more politically engaged, with voter turnout increasing from 70 per cent in 2002 to 81 per cent in 2014.
- **Political engagement 2.0.** Some scholars emphasise a shift, instead of a decline, in how youth engage politically, describing a turn away from ‘formal’ politics and towards more ad hoc project- and event-oriented participation. This trend has been partially facilitated by and includes a propensity towards online engagement, including through social media as a tool to coordinate both online activism and in-person activities, such as protests and meetings.

Civic education designed to prepare pupils to actively engage with modern political systems would thus do well to take these complex and intersecting dynamics into consideration.

*Sources:* European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 375: European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life* (Brussels: European Commission, 2013), [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/flash375\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/flash375_en.pdf); John Burn-Murdoch, ‘Youth Turnout at General Election Highest in 25 Years, Data Show’, *Financial Times*, 20 June 2017, [www.ft.com/content/6734cdde-550b-11e7-9fed-c19e2700005f](http://www.ft.com/content/6734cdde-550b-11e7-9fed-c19e2700005f); Matt Henn and Nick Foard, ‘Young People, Political Participation and Trust in Britain’ (paper presented at the Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties annual conference, University of Exeter, 9-11 September 2011); Klaus Ulrik Mortensen, ‘Historisk få danskere stoler på politikerne’, *Altinget*, 8 June 2015, [www.altinget.dk/artikel/historisk-faa-danskere-stoler-paa-politikerne](http://www.altinget.dk/artikel/historisk-faa-danskere-stoler-paa-politikerne); Ellen Quintellier, ‘Differences in Participation between Young and Old People’, *Contemporary Politics* 13, no. 2 (2007): 165–80; Ungdomsbarometern, ‘Unga saknar förtroende för partipolitiken’ (press release, 20 April 2017), [www.ungdomsbarometern.se/unga-saknar-fortroende-for-partipolitiken/](http://www.ungdomsbarometern.se/unga-saknar-fortroende-for-partipolitiken/).

## 2. Developing national loyalty versus empowering individuals

Learning to critique political and social authorities is a key value in liberal societies, but many educators may feel—explicitly or implicitly—that criticism should not go so far as to challenge fundamental national values. A key goal of civic education in many countries is to affirm ‘core values’ and loyalty towards democratic institutions, particularly among newcomers who may be suspected of indifference or even hostility. However, it is often unclear exactly where the line should be drawn between open discourse and unhealthy criticism. For instance, if a teacher is encouraging an open dialogue about values, is it ever legitimate to censor students’ views? If civic education is overly paternalistic and rigid in how it presents national or universal values, it can become counterproductive or alienating, especially for newcomer and minority pupils who may feel sidelined by majority values that do not mesh with those of their family or community. For those who have experienced intolerance or overt racism, an overly rosy portrayal of national values such as tolerance and equality without a frank discussion of complex social realities may also feel disingenuous.<sup>45</sup>

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Democratic engagement also involves debating the meaning, application, and contradictions of abstract values such as autonomy, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. Policymakers who want to use civic education to empower individuals to question authority must accept some unintended side effects, such as individual pupils using these vehicles to harshly criticise the country or its values, testing the boundaries of tolerance towards illiberal ideas within liberal democratic societies.

Countries may have a different threshold for what they are willing to tolerate. Although certain societies may hold certain values most dear—equal opportunity, rights to difference, and postnational solidarity in Sweden, compared to constitutional and national loyalty in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom—the tension between cultivating a sense of collective loyalty and empowering students to engage in open, critical debate is experienced in nearly every classroom.

## 3. Fostering common political virtues versus individual economic resilience

In all of the focus countries, but particularly in Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom, traditional civic education has come to compete with the development of more individual characteristics such as personal resilience, flexibility, selfsufficiency, and capacity for innovation. The primary rationale behind the latter approach is to enable students to compete in increasingly globalised labour markets. However, some critics complain this turn reduces citizenship education to a pursuit of self-interested goals. For instance, in Denmark, critics of a recent secondary school reform argue that a range of new competences (e.g., innovation and digital skills) should not be considered part of the citizenship curriculum.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, in Germany, critics from within the education sector have expressed concerns that shaping character-building around economic or employment considerations may crowd out or

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45 Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan and Meghan Benton, *In Search of Common Values amid Large-Scale Immigrant Integration Pressures* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2017), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/search-common-values-amid-large-scale-immigrant-integration-pressures](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/search-common-values-amid-large-scale-immigrant-integration-pressures).

46 For example, the Danish educationalist and professor of philosophy Peter Kemp. See Tina Rasmussen, ‘Gymnasiet skal opdrage gode samfundsborgere’, *Gymnasie-Skolen*, 23 May 2016, <http://gymnasieskolen.dk/gymnasiet-skal-opdrage-gode-samfundsborgere-0>.

even conflict with traditional civic motivations.<sup>47</sup> In theory, perseverance, stamina, and self-sufficiency could strengthen the resilience of active citizens in politics and civil society as well as in their personal lives. An emphasis on these traits may result in conflict, however, if civic education is perceived as encouraging them in furtherance of economic self-interest over social responsibility and other civic virtues.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4. Promoting critical secularism versus empathy and tolerance of difference

Possibly the deepest tension exists between promotion of Enlightenment secular rationalism (which emphasises reason, logic, and intellect) and curriculum content as well as classroom accommodation of (minority or majority) religious traditions and identities. In a nutshell: should pupils be encouraged to criticise what some of their classmates may consider sacred? Or should they be taught to empathise with and respect the sincerity of believers who practice other lifestyles, including in terms of gender relations and family structure? Diverse classrooms in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and northern Germany have tended to prioritise tolerance, downplaying conflict and even celebrating difference. But this may require educators and pupils (including both those who are devoutly religious or committed atheists) to suspend or soften their interrogation of beliefs and practices that conflict with their own. This tradeoff is made even more complicated when critical secularism is *de facto* biased in favour of the cultural beliefs or practices of the host society; such is the case in European societies where observance and acceptance of Christian holidays and symbols is seen as the norm, while other traditions are critically discussed and problematised.

#### 5. Cultivating national identity versus supranational or European values

Among programmes that seek to promote some type of collective identity, the question may become: which one(s)? Education to boost national identity can conflict with pedagogical practices that urge students to recognise group belonging and tolerate diversity. This is less likely to happen where national identity is presented as a collection of different and diverse cultural or subnational identities, as has historically been the case in the United Kingdom. But some countries have seen a backlash against teaching overly universalist values, let alone multiculturalist ones, in place of a national identity more closely aligned to majority traditions and values. In many such cases, the promotion of civicness has been associated with the advancement of social cohesion through a shared national identity—a relationship that may be tenuous at best. In a similar vein, conflict can exist between strong promotion of national identity and curricula that seek to foster European or other supranational forms of attachment. For instance, the 2000 reform of the Danish curriculum saw a shift towards more culture-laden subjects, such as Danish language and literature, national history, and Christianity, while more internationalist and critical elements of the previous curriculum became more subdued.

47 Such concerns have been voiced by, among others, the conservative Konrad Adenauer Foundation as well as the left-of-centre Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. See Alexy Buck and Brigitte Geissel, 'The Education Ideal of the Democratic Citizen in Germany Challenges and Changing Trends', *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice* 4, no. 3 (2009): 225–43.

48 Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

## B. *Measuring programme effects and effectiveness*

Research into the effect of civic education on pupils has picked up in recent decades and spans disciplines ranging from psychology and the educational sciences to political science. Early political-science research in the United States did not find much evidence of its potential to enhance either political participation or civic values, although it did have an impact on general support for democracy.<sup>49</sup> More recent studies of civic efficacy, electoral participation, political knowledge, and some norms suggest that civic education can work—to some extent. Yet civic engagement among the young remains disappointingly low or is falling in some countries,<sup>50</sup> leading one expert to conclude: ‘we know that civic education may be working, but clearly not nearly well enough.’<sup>51</sup>

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*More recent studies of civic efficacy, electoral participation, political knowledge, and some norms suggest that civic education can work—to some extent.*

Measuring the impact of different forms of civic education with the aim of identifying effective approaches and practices is challenging, especially given the different contexts in which it has been introduced and how it is (or isn’t) targeted to certain groups. It is difficult to monitor, in rigorous empirical studies, exactly what content is delivered to students and through which didactic means. The civic outcomes typically measured to gauge programme success include traditional political-science variables, such as internal and external political efficacy,<sup>52</sup> future voting, propensity to volunteer in the community, political-civic knowledge, and to a lesser extent political tolerance. More intangible indicators such as a strengthened sense of national identity, critical autonomy, and cultural empathy are rarely measured, despite being prominent among the rationale cited in support of such programmes.

The ideal approach to measuring such initiatives would be large-scale surveys with a randomised selection of pupils (or at least schools), combined, where possible, with registry data that enables researchers to control for other background variables (e.g., the economic situation of the area, regional differences in school funding, parental income levels, education, and immigration status) that could affect civic outcomes. Since education and knowledge more broadly are economic and cultural resources that play a role in personal efficacy, participation, and tolerance, it may also be impossible to disaggregate the effect of civic education over and above the impact of education more broadly.<sup>53</sup>

49 For discussion and references, see Allison M. Martens and Jason Gainous, ‘Civic Education and Democratic Capacity: How Do Teachers Teach and What Works?’, *Social Science Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (2013): 956–76.

50 David Kerr, Linda Sturman, Wolfram Schulz, and Bethan Burge, *ICCS 2009 European Report: Civic Knowledge, Attitudes, and Engagement among Lower-Secondary Students in 24 European Countries* (Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2010), [http://pub.iea.nl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/Electronic\\_versions/ICCS\\_2009\\_European\\_Report.pdf](http://pub.iea.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Electronic_versions/ICCS_2009_European_Report.pdf).

51 Martens and Gainous, ‘Civic Education and Democratic Capacity’.

52 In a nutshell, internal political efficacy describes whether pupils have the selfconfidence and belief in own abilities to participate, while external political efficacy is whether they think their participation could have an impact on politics. The latter aspect may of course depend on the degree to which politicians and the political system are in fact responsive to the public and on the degree of trust in such responsiveness.

53 David E. Campbell, ‘Civic Engagement and Education: An Empirical Test of the Sorting Model’, *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 4 (2009): 771–86.

A number of other key external factors can also shape the effect civic education has on pupils, including:

## 1. Characteristics of schools and pupils

The impact of civic education is conditioned, in part, by the socioeconomic and cultural background of students and the attributes of their schools,<sup>54</sup> which politicians may find it difficult or controversial to change. For example, in rundown, overcrowded schools with teachers who are either overwhelmed or unresponsive to student needs, civic education runs the risk of triggering a backlash—and particularly so if it draws attention to the distance between theoretical commitments to justice and equality and the lived experiences of students who may see their schooling as an institutional injustice.<sup>55</sup> School quality is often associated with neighbourhood socioeconomic conditions and, in some cases, school segregation. In addition, public-housing policies, the existence school-choice policies in some countries, and the availability of private schools may aggravate these dynamics, which in turn shape the resources and student population in both general and civic education classrooms.

## 2. Attitudes towards religious schools and *de facto* segregated schools

Throughout Europe the acceptance of—and in some countries, such as Denmark, positive recognition of—religious and cultural schools that cater to minority students has come under some fire, often where legislation has been used to fund an increasing number of Islamic schools. Similar controversy surrounds the existence of schools where all or close to all students have an immigrant background. There is in fact mixed evidence on the benefits and drawbacks of being educated in a school where all students share the same background.<sup>56</sup> Segregated schooling, at least in primary school, can give minority students a sense of security and decrease conflicts, which in some case may improve learning.<sup>57</sup> Psychologists and philosophers also stress the importance of an environment that promotes a stable sense of social norms to allow children to develop their own sense of morality and autonomy.<sup>58</sup> Yet lack of exposure to diverse groups may make it more difficult to practice intergroup empathy, tolerance, and dialogue—and, arguably, the capacity to detach from one’s own interests and beliefs to view things from another perspective. In other words, interacting with pupils from other backgrounds can foster a more overarching sense of justice and common good, based on bridging trust and solidarity. By contrast, socially segregated schools afford fewer opportunities for peer learning, and resource disparities between such schools and districts are often felt most acutely by already underserved student groups.

54 Kendra Bischoff, ‘The Civic Effects of Schools: Theory and Empirics’, *Theory and Research in Education* 14, no. 1 (2016): 91–106.

55 Jon Tonge, Andrew Mycock, and Bob Jeffery, ‘Does Citizenship Education Make Young People Better-Engaged Citizens?’, *Political Studies* 60, no. 3 (2012): 578–602.

56 Segregation is not often an overt approach on the part of policymakers, educators, parents, or children, but often evolves slowly over time as a result of how school catchment areas and residential segregation intersect. Schools in which minority students make up the majority may actually be highly diverse, but appear ‘segregated’ from a majority-white perspective. However, in some cases, within-school segregation has been an explicit choice. In Denmark, for instance, a secondary-school principal argued that they had no choice but to channel the remaining white students into one class, to avoid more ‘white flight’. See Nicollne Larsen and Rasmus G. Svaneborg, ‘Hvordan løser man problemet med ghetto-gymnasier?’, *Information*, 8 September 2016, [www.information.dk/indland/2016/09/hvordan-loeser-problemet-ghetto-gymnasier](http://www.information.dk/indland/2016/09/hvordan-loeser-problemet-ghetto-gymnasier).

57 Evidence from faith schools in Denmark is relatively positive, although possibly vulnerable to methodological problems of self-selection. See Anette Haaber Ihle, *Magt, Medborgerskab og Muslimske Friskoler i Danmark: Traditioner, idealer og politikker* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2007).

58 William A. Galston, ‘Two Concepts of Liberalism’, *Ethics* 105, no. 3 (1991): 516–34; Kymlicka, ‘Education for Citizenship’.

### 3. Accommodation of diverse cultural and religious identities in the classroom

Evidence suggests that encouraging pupils to represent their identity and heritage, as in U.S. schools, can encourage intercultural skills such as empathy and tolerance,<sup>59</sup> and, if intergroup interactions are positive, of trust.<sup>60</sup> Where minority pupils instead feel torn between their private and public lives, they may experience alienation. As seen in the protracted French headscarf debate, which dates back to 1989 and is still raging today, republican citizenship education risks being undermined by a sense of bias and injustice—or even civic withdrawal—within minority communities, in this case among French Muslims.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, an excessive emphasis on diversity may paradoxically make children both less secure in their sense of self and, under certain circumstances, stereotyped and ‘stuck’ in their identity. And if pupils are taught to regard all aspects of cultural and religious identities without question, it may hinder students’ capacity for objectivity and impartiality, stifling the ‘critique of culture’ that educators in countries such as France and Denmark cherish.<sup>62</sup>

#### C. What is known about the effects

Recent evaluations of civic education have been more positive than those conducted in the 1960s and 1970s. However, this may reflect the broader shift in many European education systems towards ‘open-classroom’ and participatory (or at least less authoritarian and traditional) teaching methods. A robust body of literature describes the benefits of open-classroom teaching, which has been shown to boost individual efficacy, knowledge, and democratic behaviour—both in civic education and schooling generally. Students, such research suggests, learn better and become more selfconfident and trusting in situations where the teacher’s natural authority is coupled with an open, safe environment that lends itself to dialogue and questioning.<sup>63</sup>

Within the extensive and growing body of research on the effects of civic education,<sup>64</sup> a series of recent studies merit particular attention. Case studies from the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as crossnational comparisons, have identified a significant, if not always huge, effect of such programmes on key civic indica-

59 Bischoff, ‘The Civic Effects of Schools’.

60 Ruth Dassonville, Ellen Quintelier, Marc Hooghe, and Ellen Claes, ‘The Relation between Civic Education and Political Attitudes and Behavior: A Two-Year Panel Study among Belgian Late Adolescents’, *Applied Developmental Science* 16, no. 3 (2012): 140–50.

61 Cécile Laborde, ‘Female Autonomy, Education, and the Hijab’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 9, no. 3 (2006): 351–77.

62 The Swedish approach of tolerance and accommodation of difference in the classroom is an interesting middle position between the U.S. (celebrating difference) and French (excluding difference) examples. It emphasises robust antidiscrimination protection for each pupil, which promotes tolerance toward all but without active celebration of group identities, as in the U.S. model. It thus aims to avoid assimilatory pressure and to encourage individual choice. However, its emphasis on individualised identities may lead to weaker national civic integration. A large Danish-Swedish comparative project, directed by the author, aims to unpack some of the mechanisms of different school environments in terms of how schools incorporate immigrants. The project is still at an early stage, with the first results expected later in 2018. For more on the project, see University of Aarhus, ‘When Do Children of Immigrants Thrive?’, accessed 21 December 2017, <http://ps.au.dk/forskning/forskningscentre-og-enheder/research-unit-on-citizenship-and-integration-at-aarhus-university-ruca/projects/when-do-children-of-immigrants-thrive/>.

63 Campbell, ‘Civic Engagement and Education’; Martens and Gainous, ‘Civic Education and Democratic Capacity’; Judith Torney-Purta and Jo-Ann Amadeo, ‘A Cross-National Analysis of Political and Civic Involvement among Adolescents’, *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (2003): 269–74; Dassonville, Quintelier, Hooghe, and Claes. ‘The Relation between Civic Education and Political Attitudes and Behavior’.

64 For a useful review and metaanalysis of the literature, which is cautiously optimistic, see Ellen Geboers, Femke Geijsel, Wilfried Admiraal, and Geer ten Dam, ‘Review of the Effects of Citizenship Education’, *Educational Research Review* 9 no. 2 (2013): 158–73.

tors. For instance, a comprehensive UK study designed a ‘natural experiment’ around the introduction of civic education in England, but not in Scotland and Wales. It coupled institutional data with self-reporting by adolescents as part of a survey and controlled for key variables (such as resources and social capital). The study found that civic education influenced students’ participation, knowledge, and efficacy, but not their ‘morality’ (subscription to norms of civic conduct) or political values, both factors that are less easy to influence in the classroom in isolation from external socialisation.<sup>65</sup> These results were further supported by another British study that found significant effects on understanding of local and national political issues and the likelihood of voting.<sup>66</sup>

In the United States, longitudinal studies have found civic education to have a lasting impact on political participation.<sup>67</sup> And similar studies have confirmed these results using comparative data covering different European countries and time periods.<sup>68</sup> Importantly, several studies also document compensating or equalising effects, meaning that the greatest impacts of civic education were seen among the least advantaged students.<sup>69</sup>

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*Service learning is not necessarily connected to the acquisition of political-participation or democratic skills, let alone impartiality and critical engagement.*

At a more detailed level, certain styles of teaching and content types have also shown particular promise. A study that used the large CivEd 1999 dataset, which included data on pupils’ civic knowledge and civic engagement from 28 countries (most in Europe), found that certain classroom environments (specifically participatory and open classrooms) and the inclusion of civic knowledge in the curriculum positively affected pupils’ political tolerance.<sup>70</sup>

Some countries, such as Germany, have also shown a strong preference for designing programmes that give pupils practical experience, either through in-school activities or, more often, out-of-school ‘service learning’ that encourages them to engage with the community. Some U.S. literature confirms the positive effects of such activities on social and personal responsibility, empathy, and moral development, which may be seen as stepping stones to civic-political participation and efficacy.<sup>71</sup> The same literature, however, points out that service learning is not necessarily connected to the acquisition of political participation or democratic skills, let alone impartiality and critical engagement.<sup>72</sup> Most community service programmes are prearranged either

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65 Paul Whiteley, ‘Does Citizenship Education Work? Evidence from a Decade of Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools in England’, *Parliamentary Affairs* 67, no. 3 (2014): 513–35. See also Avril Keating et al., *Citizenship Education in England 2001-2010: Young People’s Practices and Prospects for the Future: The Eighth and Final Report from the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS)* (London: UK Department for Education, 2010). [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/181797/DFE-RR059.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181797/DFE-RR059.pdf)

66 Tonge, Mycock, and Jeffery, ‘Does Citizenship Education Make Young People Better-Engaged Citizens?’

67 Richard G. Niemi and Jane Junn, *Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

68 Torney-Purta and Amadeo, ‘A Cross-National Analysis of Political and Civic Involvement among Adolescents’; Anja Neundorf, Richard G. Niemi, and Kaat Smets, ‘The Compensation Effect of Civic Education on Political Engagement: How Civics Classes Make Up for Missing Parental Socialization’, *Political Behavior* (March 2016), <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/32871/>.

69 Evidence from the U.S. and Belgian contexts can be found in Neundorf, Niemi, and Smets, ‘The Compensation Effect of Civic Education on Political Engagement’.

70 Saskia De Groof, Mark Elchardus, Eva Franck, and Dimokritos Kavadis, ‘The Influence of Civic Knowledge versus Democratic School Experiences on Ethnic Tolerance of Adolescents: A Multilevel Analysis’ (unpublished paper presented at the 3rd IEA International Research Conference, Taipei, 18-20 September 2008).

71 For a study of community-service learning, see James Youniss and Miranda Yates, *Community Service and Social Responsibility in Youth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See also Paul Allan Beck and M. Kent Jennings, ‘Pathways to Participation’, *American Political Science Review* 76, no. 1 (1982): 94–108.

72 Heinz Reinders and James Youniss, ‘School-Based Required Community Service and Civic Development in Adolescents’, *Applied Developmental Science* 10, no. 1 (2006): 2–12; Torney-Purta and Amadeo, ‘A Cross-National Analysis of Political and Civic Involvement among Adolescents’.

through charities or personal contacts and do not tend to interrogate broader social justice issues.<sup>73</sup> It may also have the long-term unintended consequence of normalising and increasing a society's dependence on civil society to plug gaps in the services and protections traditionally provided to vulnerable groups by the welfare state, potentially allowing policymakers to justify further budget cuts in these areas.<sup>74</sup>

## IV. QUESTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

While the general benefits of civic education are increasingly well established, policymakers, schools, and educators should nonetheless assess critically the tradeoffs of specific models, content, and teaching methods as they decide what will work best in their classrooms. In addition to the highly politicised nature of civic education, which may broadly influence decisions, institutional and practical factors may also constrain how such programmes are implemented. Such factors may include the existing structure of teacher training and recruitment processes, academic and educational traditions, and local policy and budgetary priorities.

Policymakers who wish to introduce or revise the form or content of civic education may find it useful to consider the following:

- ***Whether to focus on academic/theoretical knowledge or practical skills.*** Traditional instruction seeks to impart knowledge, while active-learning approaches (such as role playing, guest visits, and letter writing) rely on far more project-oriented teaching. While the latter has been linked to greater improvements in student political engagement and internal efficacy (selfconfidence), it is also less efficient in transmitting civic knowledge because it takes time away from formal content instruction and makes it difficult to monitor academic progress.<sup>75</sup> Depending on context, educators may have to make difficult decisions about whether to focus on making their students more selfconfident and motivated to be citizens or making sure they have the requisite knowledge to make informed decisions.
- ***Whether to focus on classroom discussion or expand to real-life activities.*** In-school practice of civic education may include debating school rules, resolving conflicts in the classroom, or participating in school governance, from providing voluntary homework help to peers to assisting with the cleaning of school facilities. Denmark has traditionally prided itself on incorporating civic participation into the everyday life of its schools. These approaches are thought to improve students' political efficacy, though pupils may not all participate to the same extent. Out-of-school practice includes volunteering and internships and taking part in or helping organise community festivals. This on-the-ground approach may be more inclusive of children with a variety of academic abilities and interests and may strengthen a sense social responsibility and abstract skills (e.g., selfconfidence), but it is also more difficult to monitor and target, let alone standardise and measure, and is less directly tied to traditional civic or political capabilities.
- ***Whether to focus on local, national, or international issues and political institutions.*** The scope of civic education programmes can vary considerably, from a focus on local and everyday concerns, such as crime, bullying, and local racism, or it can orient itself towards national political institutions or international issues, such as human rights, climate change, and sustainable development. France and the United Kingdom are at opposing ends of this spectrum, with France emphasising national politics and institutions while the United Kingdom focuses on local community issues, with an

<sup>73</sup> For a comprehensive, qualitative study of such programmes in Germany, see Wohnig, 'Political Learning by Social Engagement?'

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 247–48.

<sup>75</sup> For one of the few studies that seeks to differentiate between the effects of different didactical approaches, see Martens and Gainous, 'Civic Education and Democratic Capacity'.

emphasis on volunteering, group relations, and civil conduct.<sup>76</sup> The approach governments choose may depend on whether they wish to emphasise personal conduct and responsibility or political citizenship and democratic literacy. A local focus may be more engaging for many students and can make broader social issues more vivid. However, unless they are properly contextualised, it could also detract attention from them, reducing civic education to responsibility and good behaviour, rather than critical democratic civic learning. Focusing on international issues, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>77</sup> can allow students to connect local, national, and international issues and identify common priorities across cultures.

- *Whether to organise civic education as a separate subject or as themes that cut across subjects.* Programmes may be a timetabled, year-round subject with a relatively fixed and comprehensive curriculum (as in France), or they may be designed according to local discretion as a series of thematic events and modules over the school year. There is some evidence that continuous and comprehensive civic education yields the best results by ensuring all students have exposure to this content.<sup>78</sup> However, this model may be less engaging. A more ad-hoc, thematic, and module-oriented design allows for in-depth treatment of select topical issues, but may be less effective at evenly cultivating understanding of the political and social landscape, and can also be more difficult to monitor.

## V. CONCLUSION

While evidence suggests that civic education is able to achieve some of its desired aims, such success depends on many different contextual variables. These include the school itself as well as broader developments in the political culture, levels of trust, and opportunity structure young people encounter in society at large. Particularly as civic education becomes more politicised, it is important that educators and politicians recognise the tensions that sit at the heart of this field and refrain from overzealously promoting a single model of citizenship in the belief that it could somehow encompass everything of value.

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*Particularly as civic education becomes more politicised, it is important that educators and politicians recognise the tensions that sit at the heart of this field.*

Teachers should be supported in making informed decisions about what aspects of their pupils' civic and political development to concentrate on and in setting concrete and realistic goals towards which to work. A participatory classroom that encourages discussion and freely shared opinion, but is guided by a teacher with the requisite command of content knowledge and skills to share it, should be a common starting point.

Politicians, though they may come under pressure from this or that segment of the public, should accept the need to be somewhat hands-off. The best strategy may be to lay out broad goals and guidelines while allowing schools and individual educators the flexibility to sort out what works best for their students and which issues are particularly pertinent in a local area. For instance, policymakers much provide a set of minimum learning outcomes for the development of desired character traits and competencies. They also have an important role to play in ensuring that civic education programmes receive sufficient resources to meet their goals—including time in the school calendar, funding, and appropriate staffing. Teachers should also receive

76 According to some observers, the original 'civic' impetus intended by proponents Bernard Crick and David Blunkett has over time taken a more 'civil', local direction. See Tonge, Mycock, and Jeffery, 'Does Citizenship Education Make Young People Better-Engaged Citizens?'

77 This approach has been used in Ørestad secondary school (Ørestad Gymnasium) in Denmark where almost one-third of students have a migrant background.

78 Keating et al., 'Citizenship Education in England 2001–2010'.

training based on up-to-date research on what works and have access to a breadth of didactic materials to use with their students.

Civic education in Europe, as with education agendas generally, has the tendency to become overloaded with numerous and constantly shifting, societal goals, some of which reflect passing controversies and concerns. Yet immigrant integration has emerged as a challenge in many European societies and is unlikely to disappear in the near future. As policymakers and educators sort through the rich web of historical, cultural, and pedagogical factors to design civic education programmes, it will be important to also consider the learning strengths, support needs, and lived experiences of pupils from diverse backgrounds. Political selfconfidence, interethnic and general trust, ability and propensity to participate, and basic knowledge of political systems are the lifeblood of all modern societies and should be carefully fostered in all students and future citizens.

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*Immigrant integration has emerged as a challenge in many European societies and is unlikely to disappear in the near future.*

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