

**Education for democratic citizenship in Europe :
Concepts and challenges for action**

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I INTRODUCTION

The NECE conference is part of the current movement for citizenship education across Europe

- European and international institutions put citizenship education on their agenda
- Several studies on citizenship education have been recently published (Council of Europe, EU Dutch Presidency, Eurydice)

In this context, the objective of the presentation is to

- TO PROVIDE AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW
- TO PRESENT AND DISCUSS
 - concepts, motivation and issues of EDC, so as to provide common reference points
 - challenges for action, so as to provide some suggestions for future developments

The presentation is structured around three theses :

- Concepts and practices of citizenship education in Europe are characterised by both common concerns and diversity
- A shared approach to citizenship education is emerging in Europe : EDC
- Diverse action is necessary to turn national and European political objectives and discourse into effective reality

II Concepts and practices of citizenship education in Europe are characterised by both common concerns and diversity

1. In their political statements, in the framework of the Council of Europe and the European Union, governments express similar concerns, which justify their interest in citizenship education. These concerns are related to the “crisis of legitimacy of democracy” and to challenges and threats to democratic societies and the transmission of democratic values.
2. citizenship education in Europe is typified by diversity in concepts and practices :
 - the concept of citizenship is “polysemic and contested”
 - citizenship learning is contextual and tailor-made
 - Educational policies for citizenship and the organisation of citizenship learning in the formal curriculum are different across Europe

III A shared approach is emerging across Europe : education for democratic citizenship (EDC)

- “In the late ‘90s, although approaches varied, most European countries adopted education for democratic citizenship as the common reference point for all learning democracy processes.” (Council of Europe All European Study on EDC policies, 2003)
- EDC is a comprehensive and inclusive approach combining and integrating several components :
 - Multifaceted concept of citizenship
 - Aim of educational policies
 - Learning objectives
 - Learning methods
 - Learning environment
 - Educational governance

IV Challenges and action for effective EDC

In spite of the declarations and explicit policies at national and European level, EDC is not yet an effective reality across Europe. Five main challenges call for a diversity of measures and areas to improve EDC in schools and within the broader lifelong learning context.

- EDC concepts and understanding
- EDC status in schools
- Effective EDC in schools : the compliance gap : implementation measures
- Lifelong learning for democratic citizenship
- Research and advocacy

V Conclusion : A case for networking and European co-operation

- Learning, joining forces and lobbying
- Accountability
- Critical mass for effectiveness and impact