



## Citizenship Education Facing Nationalism and Populism in Europe

Strategies - Competencies – Practices

# Conference Paper

Avril Keating

National Foundation for Educational Research (Cambridge)

Sofia, Bulgaria, November 6-8, 2008

[www.nece.eu](http://www.nece.eu)

### Paper Title

Responding to nationalism and supra-nationalism: curriculum policy and practice in European states

### Author

Dr Avril Keating, Senior Research Officer, National Foundation for Educational Research, United Kingdom

**Contact:** [a.keating@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:a.keating@nfer.ac.uk)

### Abstract

*...the development of citizenship is also a project of nation-building in which the creation of the national citizen is the primary project of the nation-state.*

(Turner, 2006: 225)

Education has been deeply-embedded in the nation-building projects taking place in Western states since the rise of the modern nation-state in the 18th and 19th centuries. Seeking to fashion 'disciplined workers', 'loyal recruits' and a cohesive, governable community, the emergent nation-states granted schools and curricula a central role in achieving these goals (Green 1997: 134). For example, in order to create a sense of 'nation' and loyalty, school curricula tended to focus on national institutions, history, and culture, and to ignore or to denigrate 'Other' outside cultures and communities (Soysal, 2002). Formal education thus became the main forum for the inculcation of future generations into citizenship of the nation-state. Indeed, even in nation-states where curricular control is a sub-state power, citizenship education has sought to instil nation-state allegiances as well as sub-state affiliations (Engel and Ortloff, 2009).

However the emergence or re-emergence of sub- and supra-national institutions has meant that citizenship education curricula are now supposed to embrace local, regional, and global citizenships as well as national citizenship (Stromquist, 2008). As citizenship education has been so closely bound up with national legitimacy and state-building projects, any reform of this nature requires a transformation not only of the content of citizenship education national curricula, but also to the traditional purpose and assumptions of citizenship education. This paper therefore examines whether European member states have undertaken any reforms to their citizenship education curricula in order to respond to the emergence of, and challenges of, European citizenship. This analysis will provide some insight into the ways in which citizenship education curricula are changing, and the implications for nations and nationalism.

To address this question, this paper first considers the impact of impact of European citizenship on the official citizenship education curricula of member states. This analysis draws on the findings of a comparative, cross-national study of 6 member states (namely, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Slovakia, and Spain). This analysis highlights that the advent of European citizenship has had an impact on member state curricula, and that the citizenship education programmes in nation-states have incorporated a 'European dimension' and educate for European citizenship. However, it was also clear that the concept of European citizenship has been reframed by each member state in order to reflect their own national context, citizenship traditions, and current political needs. I argue that this has two significant implications. First, it means that European citizenship is defined and understood in different ways across Europe; there is thus no consensus on what European citizenship can or should mean for the citizens of Europe. Second, it also suggests that citizenship education continues to be nation-centric and thus, in some notable cases, still tied to an ethno-cultural model of citizenship education that is problematic.

This paper also considers 'curriculum as practice' and in particular the impact of education for European citizenship on young citizens' attitudes towards, trust in, and knowledge of European integration. This section draws on the case of England, which introduced a statutory provision for citizenship education in 2002. The associated curriculum guidance encourages schools to educate about Europe, and the UK's relationship with the EU and the rest of Europe. However, evidence from the longitudinal survey of citizenship education in England suggests that there has been little change in young citizens' understanding of, and relationship with, Europe. These findings raise important questions about the role of curricula in transforming citizenship practice among young people, not only in England, but across Europe.