

ACT-DI-V



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Transnational report



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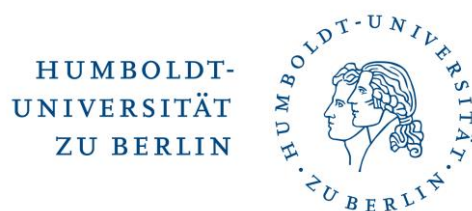
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Introduction to the report

Considering that all the deliverables of the ACT-DI-V project should meet the emerging needs of schools in partner countries and Europe, each partner reviewed their country's national literature about the state-of-the-art of active and responsible citizenship while gathering the target group's opinions through an online survey. The data collected from the national-based surveys were reviewed and analysed by each responsible partner. Then, a consolidated synthesis of the results followed, as a response, to compare the views of the target audience, finding common and different issues that have emerged. These synthesized results are presented in the current transnational/cumulative report. The aim of the transnational report is to provide an overview of active and responsible citizenship followed in the European Union and act as a foundation both for the first deliverable of the ACT-DI-V project – a Toolkit with resources on how the target groups can promote active and responsible practices in pre-primary, primary and secondary education - and consequently, all the deliverables.

The aim of the research was to investigate the challenges and barriers regarding the promotion of active and responsible citizenship. This way, specific recommendations emerged through an examination of the state-of-the-art. To achieve this, the partnership followed a mixed-methods approach. A mixed-methods research is beneficial to uncovering participants' reflections, opinions, and views through an evidence-based approach and a concrete image that might be limited if only one type of data was collected (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). First, a systematic review of the literature, in each partner's country, was implemented, so that partners can examine the current situation on a national level. Then, by identifying the categories that needed further investigation, the partnership constructed an online questionnaire that was delivered to national-based pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers, leaders, and policymakers and conducted focus groups with members of the target group. Through this, quantitative and qualitative data was collected by each partner country, to support the results collected from the review of the literature, to draw relevant conclusions. The target audience included teachers, support staff, school leaders, learning designers and educational technologists.

The report provides valuable insights into the different and common issues that all institutions have to overcome in terms of promoting active and responsible citizenship, as recorded through the mixed-method research. Therefore, the report consists of 2 chapters structured based on the research process as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Desk research.** The first section constitutes the pedagogical framework resulted from desk research on the state-of-the-art and the practices followed by schools in partner countries. The consortium followed a systematic review of the literature to collect data related to curriculum alignment, continuous evaluation, and monitoring, infrastructure needs and adaptations, teaching, learning, and assessment strategies, support measures for teachers, learners, and parents, privacy, well-being, and health issues. This resulted in a pedagogical framework as part of the final Toolkit.
- **Chapter 2: Evidence-based practices through online survey and focus group.** The second section includes the results from the online survey that consisted of questionnaires and focus groups, distributed, and conducted by each partner, respectively. On the one hand, the consortium distributed an online questionnaire to members of the target group, based on the thematic categories derived from the desk research. The total sample that filled in all the questionnaires was 216. On the other hand, the consortium held focus groups in their countries with a team of people that are the representatives of the target group, to record their experiences. In total, 25 individuals participated in the four focus groups that were carried out.

To ensure that the details of each partner can be easily contrasted with each other, the results of the online survey are presented separately based on the country from which they derive. The resources include recommendations and important remarks, emphasized in each case, along with specific action plans, studies, and policies followed. Below (Table 1) there is an overview of the number of people that participated in each part of the data collection.

Table 1 Number of individuals that participated per partner country

	Focus Groups	Questionnaire
Germany	8 participants	32 answers
Cyprus	8 participants	62 answers
Italy	7 participants	60 answers
Portugal	8 participants	62 answers
Overall	31 participants	216 answers

Executive summary

Today’s democratic societies need individuals civically literate, who can think critically and participate actively in communal activities. Education for active and responsible citizenship enables students to participate in democratic life through knowledge and activities provided in the school setting.

The data collected in the partner countries indicate that teachers understand the need to deepen active and responsible citizenship practices in schools. They also perceive themselves as active citizens, capable of developing their students’ participative abilities. However, the topic of active citizenship still has only a marginal place within teacher education and the school curricula and culture do not promote its implementation. Partner countries found that their education systems, centralized and primarily focused on subjects and exams, inhibit the development of a school culture that constantly produces communal activities. The conclusions of the 2017 Eurydice report (Coster & Sigalas, 2017) support these findings and highlight the need to introduce flexible timetables and curricula, and to implement the promotion of active and responsible citizenship in teachers’ and pre-service teachers’ training. In fact, it is expected that continuing professional learning in the area can boost teachers’ confidence about handling aspects of citizenship education (Pratas et al., 2017).

Chapter 1: Desk research on Active and Responsible Citizenship

1.1 Characteristics of active and responsible citizenship

UNIC

Cyprus follows a centralised educational system, which means that the Ministry of Education is responsible for all aspects of education, including the curriculum, materials, teacher employment and teacher professional development. Since a comprehensive reform of all levels

of education in August 2004, citizenship education has become part of all levels of education, multiple subjects, school culture and school organisation (Koutselini, 2008). Citizenship education is taught through the following subjects in Greek-Cypriot curricula: ‘Agogi tou Politi’ during primary school, ‘Koinoniki kai Politiki Agogi’ for lower secondary school, and ‘Politiki Agogi’ for upper secondary school’ (Philippou, 2009, p. 200). The content is closer to civics education, since ‘the curriculum focuses on pupils’ knowledge of the legal-political rights and responsibilities and of political institutions’ (Philippou, 2009, p. 200). In ‘lower secondary schools, Citizenship Education is taught as a separate and compulsory subject once a week (45 minutes) for one semester’ (Savvides & Pashiardis, 2016, p.507). The subject is not tested through end-of-year examinations.

Citizenship Education in Cyprus ‘focuses mainly on transmitting knowledge about legal and political rights and responsibilities as well as on the relevant function of state institutions and international organizations’ (Christou, 2013, p. 78). Also, ‘the fact that Cyprus remains a divided country with political implications and challenges for its sovereign status has resulted in focusing the citizenship curriculum towards the goal of legitimizing Greek-Cypriot political claims on the national issue’ (Christou, 2013, p. 78) and is often connected to religious education and claims because of the link of Cyprus’ national identity to religion (Zembylas & Loukaidis, 2016). Therefore, citizenship education in Cyprus is more traditional. Active citizenship is mostly expressed through actions in schools linked to environmental education (i.e. cleaning the coast line from rubbish, focusing on recycling).

UNL

In the National Strategy for Citizenship Education, the Portuguese Republic (2017) states that as part of the discipline called “Cidadania e Desenvolvimento” (Citizenship and Development), students should “carry out learning through the plural and responsible participation of everyone in building themselves as citizens as well as more just and inclusive societies, within the framework of democracy, respect for diversity and the defense of human rights” (p. 3).

Scholars working in the Portuguese context agree that citizenship nowadays must include active and responsible thinking components. For instance, Fonseca (2015) argues that active citizenship is a characteristic attitude of the ideal citizen of the XXI century, and it demands a making-it-happen mindset, instead of a passive one. As such, Fonseca (2015) considers critical thinking and diversified dialogue about the scientific development and the ethical questions it poses (within multicultural societies) to be among the most important competencies required. The Intercultural Citizenship Education Through Picturebooks in Early English Language Learning [ICEPELL] Consortium (2022) considered citizenship education as a necessary requirement for a democratic agent, contributing to a more inclusive and tolerant world. Caetano et al. (2016) argued that citizenship is the status of people with a voice, who can demand the realization of their rights, not of spectators who vote. Similarly, for Piedade et al. (2020), citizenship classes should promote discussions about controversial political issues, because only by thinking critically can students analyse the information they absorb through online networks and distinguish facts from opinions. Research by Linhares and Reis (2022) supports that participation in decisions with ecological impact must be seen as part of active citizenship; by acting, students become creators of knowledge and not just consumers. Reis

(2020) also stressed that youth activism can help students to think critically about scientific, technological and environmental problems, and to develop an active disposition about them.

CSC

Active and responsible citizenship is a key competence for lifelong learning and democratic participation in society. It involves engaging in various activities that contribute to the common good, such as voting, protesting, volunteering and campaigning. It also implies respecting the rights and opinions of others, even if they differ from one's own, and being aware of the political, social and economic context of one's actions.

In Italy, citizenship education was introduced as a compulsory subject in schools of all levels and grades with the law n. 92 of 2019, which defined its contents and methods of implementation. The aim of citizenship education is to form individuals who can participate actively and responsibly in the democratic life of society, at the local, national and European level. The main objectives of citizenship education are (UNESCO, 2014):

- Respect for human rights, dignity and diversity
- Knowledge of the Constitution and institutions
- Promotion of civil and intercultural coexistence
- Development of critical thinking and sense of belonging
- Prevention of bullying and violence
- Environmental education and sustainable development
- Digital and media education

Citizenship education is based on a holistic and integrated vision of the individual, which involves the cognitive, affective, social and ethical dimensions. It is a process that is realized through meaningful experiences, dialogue, comparison, cooperation, participation and involvement in the problems and needs of the community (Chistolini, 2019). It also fosters the development of key competences for lifelong learning, such as communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and digital literacy, and generally it is addressed not only to students but to all the members of the community (Immigration-Italy, 2023). Citizenship education is not only a school subject, but also a cross-curricular dimension that permeates the whole educational offer and the school climate. It is also a shared responsibility that involves teachers, students, families and other social actors in a participatory and democratic approach. Citizenship education is therefore a challenge and an opportunity for the personal and social growth of young people and for the improvement of the quality of democracy in Italy and in Europe (Chistolini, 2019). The theme of education for citizenship in Italy can be traced back not only to school education but to place in a broader context of active citizenship.

Some examples of social participation and citizenship actions in Italy are:

- Advocating for the reform of the citizenship law to facilitate the access to Italian citizenship for those who were born or raised in Italy, but are excluded from it due to their parents' nationality (Il Post, 2022).

- Implementing anti-discrimination legislation and equal treatment policies to protect the rights and dignity of migrants and their descendants, and to promote their integration in various domains such as education, employment, health and social services (FRA, 2017).

- Participating in self-organisation and empowerment initiatives that foster the involvement of migrants and their descendants in the local communities, such as associations, networks, cooperatives and cultural projects (Mantovan, 2009).

HU

In Germany, the term "citizenship" is often equated with the term "viewer". A politically productive metaphor was used by the political scientist W. Hennis as early as 1957, who used a soccer game as an example (Grammes & Torrau, 2021). The good viewers of the soccer game are representative for democratic citizens (ibid.). They spend time and energy, bring motivation, develop expertise, are emotionally involved, endure controversy, adopt perspectives, remain open to criticism, and represent as well as defend democratic values (ibid.). In the subject didactic discourse, a model is still discussed today that distinguishes four ideal types of citizenship: 1. informed, reflective, and judgmental bystanders, 2. interventionist citizens, 3. active citizens, and 4. non-interested citizens (ibid.). In particular, the active citizen wants to actively participate in social events, for example through civic engagement, and thus participate politically (ibid.). In addition to these ideal types of citizenship, three citizen roles are also distinguished (Ackermann & Müller, 2015): 1. citizenship, 2. citizenship of the Union, 3. citizenship of the world. Citizenship here refers to the role of the citizen as a voter (ibid.). Within sociological research, Active Citizens are distinguished from Activist Citizens. Here, active citizens are understood as citizens who move exclusively within existing structures and reproduce them (Grammes & Torrau, 2021). Citizenship represents more of a status and does not require activity (ibid.). Activist citizens, on the other hand, are understood as citizens who are active and continually reshape citizenship through "acts of citizenship" (Hauschild, 2016). Thus, citizens not only have rights and duties, but are actively involved in helping to shape society (ibid.).

1.2. Pedagogical challenges of teachers addressing active and responsible citizenship

UNIC

One significant challenge that teachers in Cyprus face is the lack of teacher training and professional development opportunities in citizenship education, something that has been highlighted in the questionnaire analysis and focus groups. A second challenge is the lack of teaching materials and resources for the teachers, especially on issues that are not linked with

civic education but focus on more open ideas related to active citizenship and democracy education. A third challenge is linked with the diverse cultural and linguistic background of the students, especially given the growing population of immigrants and refugees. The latter has been documented theoretically by Zembylas (2013) who discusses the challenges of a citizenship education in Cyprus given the emphasis on a divided country but at the same time trying to include all diverse populations.

UNL

Several pedagogical challenges are also addressed by the above-mentioned studies. Piedade et al. (2021) affirm that some teachers do not receive the necessary collaboration from their colleagues, when it comes to making it easier for students to participate in extracurricular discussions and events. Linhares and Reis (2018) highlighted that some future teachers struggle with selecting the public-target of their initiatives out of the classroom. They also find it hard to manage the different availabilities and schedules of the members of the working group and to keep everyone committed with the end goal.

Piedade et al. (2020, 2022) argued that the current evaluation system in the upper secondary school encourages students to memorize contents. The overextension of the curricula and the need to prepare students for the national exams are essential aspects of the Portuguese system. Piedade et al. (2020) also highlighted that some teachers are fearful of losing control of the classes' dynamics by promoting open debates, and some others say they have a hard time keeping the discussions on topic and conducting them to achieve conclusive results. As for vocational tracks, curricula are not designed to promote critical thinking.

Research by Linhares and Reis (2022) also mentions several problems related with the technical aspect of the promotion of debates. Some teachers think that their technological skills are not enough to promote active ecological citizenship via online tools, while others do not understand the relevance of these tools. A number of teachers also mention the lack of technical support to plan that type of classes. Fonseca (2015) argues that some teachers do not understand that they already teach topics relevant to promote active citizenship, and, as such, they need to be aware of what they already do to understand what they can do in the future. Fonseca (2015) also stresses that some teachers tend to be restricted to the contents specifically integrated in their syllabus, and often the need to master their subjects is overvalued and they forget the connections they can make with other areas.

Pedagogical challenges also relate to students themselves. For instance, Reis et al. (2018) and Reis (2014) mention that some students do not react well when encouraged to participate in collaborative activities. Some students expect the classroom to be centred on listening to the teacher; others show lack of commitment in less valued subjects. This may be related to the type of pedagogies to which they are usually exposed during their school years, in which content exposition prevails over more dialogue-based pedagogies.

CSC

Teachers play a crucial role in promoting active and responsible citizenship among their students, but they also face many pedagogical challenges in doing so. According to a study

carried out in Northern Italy during 2020 (Franch, 2020), some of the challenges Italian teachers met in addressing active and responsible citizenship are:

- Defining and understanding the concept of global citizenship education (GCE), which is a complex and ambiguous term that can have different meanings and interpretations depending on the context, the perspective and the purpose of education.
- Integrating GCE in the formal curriculum, which may not provide enough space, time and resources for addressing global issues and perspectives, and may be influenced by national or regional policies and priorities.
- Developing appropriate pedagogies and methods for GCE, which require a shift from a traditional, teacher-centred approach to a more participatory, learner-centred and action-oriented one, that fosters critical thinking, dialogue, collaboration and empowerment.
- Dealing with the diversity and complexity of the students; backgrounds, experiences, opinions and values, which may create conflicts or tensions in the classroom, and require sensitivity, respect and intercultural competence from the teacher.
- Engaging with their own professional development and learning communities, which may be limited or lacking in terms of opportunities, support and recognition for GCE.

In Italy, citizenship education is a compulsory subject in schools of all levels and grades since 2019 (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2019). The aim of citizenship education is to form individuals who can participate actively and responsibly in the democratic life of society, at the local, national and European level. However, there is still a need for more research and practice on how to implement GCE effectively and meaningfully in the Italian educational context (Franch, 2020).

HU

Different challenges emerge within the teaching of active and responsible citizenship. First of all, there is a lack of expertise among teachers (Albrecht & Huttel, 2020). Often, the subject "civic education", which deals with active and responsible citizenship, is taught by so-called lateral entrants or people from outside the subject (ibid.). Lateral entrants have enjoyed a reduced first education. Thus, they lack the knowledge to adequately teach the concept (ibid.). Teachers can only acquire this knowledge to a limited extent in further education and training courses, as there are hardly any corresponding offers (ibid.). For example, the extent of democracy education in schools in Germany is predominantly to be classified as moderate (Schneider & Gerold, 2018).

Another challenge is the wide range of uses of digital media (Kenner & Lange, 2020). Digital media create an expanded not only social but also political reality for students (ibid.). They have easier opportunities to engage politically, for example by signing online petitions or participating in digital civic assemblies (ibid.). This requires not only the technical-didactic knowledge of active citizenship and political education in general, but also appropriate media skills from the teachers. In particular, due to the ease with which opinions are expressed and listened to, it is essential that teachers also promote media skills among students so that they can recognize fake news or racist opinions (ibid.). The didactics of political learning within a digital space requires a differentiated examination of the possibilities, potentials and

opportunities as well as dangers and risks of digitization for educational and participation processes (ibid.).

The study "To Whom It Is Given: Civic Education" (Anchour & Wagner, 2020) was able to show that the level of education is decisive for whether students benefit from offers of civic education and democracy building. In particular, the school-leaving qualification of the parents seems to be a decisive factor as to whether students are politically engaged (ibid.). Furthermore, the amount of space and time devoted to civic education within the classroom is crucial. This varies greatly across the states (ibid.). The home environment and the increased thematization in the classroom strengthens the political interest of students, which in turn is considered by the majority as a prerequisite for political participation and maturity (Hahn-Laudenberg, 2017). In particular, if the home environment cannot provide one's own children with competencies that enable them to become active and responsible citizens, political education must be given more space in the school context. However, this requires a restructuring of existing framework curricula.

1.3. Practices used in schools to address active and responsible citizenship

UNIC

Research has reported that traditional teaching methods are being used in the teaching of Citizenship Education (Philippou, 2009). In the description of teaching methodology, the document recommends the following practices:

- 1) Experiential approaches for consolidating skills, attitudes, behaviors and values,
- 2) Constant connections between theory and practice,
- 3) Research-based activities, e.g. use of questionnaires or interview, data collection, case studies etc,
- 4) Group discussions and dialogic discussions
- 5) Creation of thematic folders with material that students are creating or collecting (e.g. literary texts, excerpts from the press, recorded narrations, questionnaires, pictures, films, students' individual assignments).
- 6) Project-based approaches, including the following stages: goal setting, setting framework for action, feedback, gathering material, project implementation, conclusions – announcements of results.

UNL

Piedade et al. (2020, 2021) affirm that some schools promote discussions about political and cultural issues, such as formal debates, in-class presentations and informal thinking activities. As for vocational tracks, the flexibility of the curricula allows for the realization of more open debates. However, these authors also recognize that by being left to the discretion of each teacher, the implementation of critical thinking activities may cause uneven practices.

Sá and Mesquita (2022) show some of the practices implemented by future teachers in their first pre-school teaching experiences. Among the methodologies used to promote global citizenship from a language learning perspective, there are the following:

- (1) watching a video of a tale being told by a Brazilian storyteller, followed by an identification of differences in Portuguese expression,
- (2) listening to a story that approaches anomalies in the seasons of the year, followed by an identification of those anomalies,
- (3) with the purpose of fostering reflection and starting from the observation of images, the promotion of conversations with students on the topics of how to treat the elderly and how to accept differences in friendship relations,
- (4) promoting a “brainstorming” meeting to find ways to help the planet and produce a poster with the conclusions.

In a similar vein, Leão (2022) describes the example of a teacher who implemented a combination of foreign language teaching and citizenship education in their classes. The results showed a development in critical understanding around issues related to the environment, sustainability, politics and human rights. The author also verified a rising awareness about cultural diversity and democratic values, as well as an increase in students’ cooperative competences. Lourenço and Simões (2021) also describe the method followed by an English teacher to promote global citizenship education in class. Only in four sessions, students analysed newspaper articles about global issues such as poverty, watched and discussed videos, made a speech of their own and discussed possible solutions to world problems through the making of flyers.

According to Vaz et al. (2022), the project “Nós, tu e o mundo” (We, you and the world) produced seven sessions with pre-primary school students, in Aveiro. The sessions consisted in various activities, from which we highlight the following:

- (1) collective and interactive games, demanding the representation of a story previously read or the use of the world map as a physical tool.
- (2) group dialogues with the purpose of reflecting about moral values and the main ideas of a story.
- (3) the construction of paper cards with the same word written in different languages.
- (4) the building of an original story that represents the main topics approached during the previous sessions.

Batista et al. (2022) describes a primary school teaching experience dedicated to the reading of *Le Petit Prince*. In each of ten sessions, an excerpt of the work was read and interactive activities followed. There took place initiatives such as the writing of letters, the drawing of pictures, open discussions, free interaction with invited students from other nationalities, field investigations to find and analyse biological diversity, visualization and recording of videos, and a study visit to Maritime Museum of Ílhavo.

Carvalho and Lourenço (2022) describe four teaching sessions held on a secondary school, with eleventh grade students, in the Secondary School of the North of Portugal. The initiative was mainly focused on the interpretation of sources (book chapters, videos, speeches, songs

and documentaries). In the last session, students were encouraged to make an original flyer about any social issue.

Specifically about the teaching of foreign languages (Melo-Pfeifer et al., 2022), students could be encouraged to find in their communities tracks of foreign languages and to discuss various issues related to that (for example, why are there more signs of some languages than others? What are the social consequences of a wider representation of some languages in the community?).

CSC

One of the most implemented practices is the Global Citizenship Education (GCE) initiative promoted by UNESCO and the European Commission, which aims to foster the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable learners to contribute to a more peaceful, tolerant and sustainable world. Some examples of GCE projects in Italy are (1) Global Schools, which supports teachers, professional development and curriculum innovation for GCE (Franch, 2020); (2) Global Action Schools, which involves students in awareness-raising and fundraising activities for global causes (Global Action Schools, n.d.); and the (3) Global Campus Network, which connects schools and universities around the world through online platforms and exchanges (Global Campus Network, n.d.).

Another one is to engage in civic education activities that promote democratic values, human rights, intercultural dialogue and social responsibility. Some examples of civic education initiatives in Italy are: (1) Parlamento degli Studenti; (Students' Parliament), which simulates the functioning of the national parliament and allows students to debate and propose laws on various topics (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, n.d); (2) Educazione alla Legalità (Education for Legality), which aims to prevent and contrast phenomena such as corruption, mafia, violence and bullying (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, n.d); and (3) Scuola di Pace; (School of Peace), which fosters a culture of peace and non-violence through workshops, games, testimonies and projects (Scuola di Pace, n.d.).

These practices aim to develop active and responsible citizenship competences among students, such as communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and digital literacy. They also aim to enhance students' sense of belonging, identity and agency, as well as their respect for diversity, human rights and the environment.

HU

First of all, it can be stated that a basic positive and open attitude of teachers towards different student opinions is important to promote the discussion about active and responsible citizenship (Ziemes & Abs, 2020). Teachers take on a role model function on which students can orient themselves, in the sense of learning from the model (ibid.). Teachers with the appropriate expertise should be interested in teaching the subject. For this purpose, the expansion of training opportunities should be promoted, which is currently very limited for the topic of active citizenship (Albrecht & Huttel, 2020). Furthermore, there should be a basic open classroom climate so that students dare to express dissenting opinions if necessary (Hahn-Laudenberg, 2019).

The use of metaphors, e.g., the citizen as a spectator of a professional soccer game (Hennis, 1974), allows for an open exchange with students (Grammes & Torrau, 2021). Metaphors can develop a reflexive quality if, for example, they open up the view of a European and cosmopolitan perspective from the perspective of German citizenship (ibid.). This is possible when the students' answers are tested for their generalizability, in the sense of "If all people would do it like that?" (ibid., 446). Thus, identity-forming characteristics of citizenship can be addressed and legal status is not the sole focus (ibid.).

1.4. Active educational programmes on active and responsible citizenship

UNIC

Based on our reading of the literature there are no formal programmes on active and responsible citizenship currently being implemented in Cyprus. There are multiple EU funded programmes, especially Erasmus+ (eg.) which engage students in activities relevant to active and responsible citizenship but all of them are initiatives that involve a small percentage of the student population and do not continue after the end of the life of the projects. The latest initiative on active educational programmes was held during the school year 2013-2014. One of the emphasised goals set by the Ministry of Education was the cultivation of active citizenship with an emphasis on social solidarity in all schools in the Republic of Cyprus. The majority of the participants referred to a seminar and a conference held by the Pedagogical Institute during that year. A number of schools, in order to meet the emphasised goal, participated in activities covering certain aspects of active and responsible citizenship such as "active citizens," "Health, Safety, and Emotions", "Active citizenship and others, "Socio-cultural diversity", "Social gender", "Active citizenship and the environment", "Sustainable development", "Rights and obligations", "European dimension of citizenship".

UNL

With the "Intercultural Citizenship Education Through Picturebooks in Early English Language Learning" EU project, the ICEPELL Consortium (2022) showed that English teachers are not familiar with the intercultural domain of the English language and lack the necessary skills to plan classes which cover citizenship themes. Therefore, the ICEPELL project produced a teaching pack and a handbook to guide teachers while they implement practices and methodologies that educate for intercultural citizenship.

Caetano et al. (2016) referred that, in the context of the project named "Construindo Pilares do Projeto Europeu com Educação, Cultura e Cidadania" [COPPEECC], groups of students elaborated and presented the result of autonomous research about European citizenship. These students valued the experience of collaborating with others and the freedom of deciding which information to highlight on their presentations. Caetano et al. (2016) also affirmed that twelve

months after, in a follow-up group, the students involved still showed interest in European themes.

Reis and Marques (2015) describe an experience done in the context of the We-Act project. After being given some information about the environmental dangers of pollution, eight-grade students created videos with the purpose of raising awareness about the topic. This work was made in groups, it required previous research and the development of students' digital skills. After being taught a module named "what would you change in your city?", in the context of LoCALL project (Lourenço & Melo-Pfeifer, 2022), a group of primary-school students collected photos of their city and data from foreigners living there and contacted with strong linguistic discrepancies. This gave rise to concrete proposals, such as the inclusion of the most representative languages in public signs, restaurant menus and newspapers.

CSC

The content guidelines of civic education (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2019) can be grouped into 3 macro categories:

- Constitution, law (national and international), legality and solidarity: knowledge, reflection on the meanings, and daily practice of the constitutional dictate represent the first and fundamental aspect to be covered.
- Sustainable development, environmental education, knowledge and protection of heritage and land: the UN Agenda 2030 has set the 17 goals to be pursued by 2030 to safeguard coexistence and sustainable development.
- Digital citizenship: an individual's ability to consciously and responsibly make use of virtual media.

To pursue the goal of social justice and cohesion, it is necessary to train and encourage citizens, particularly the youngest, to actively participate in social and political life. Achieving this ambitious goal requires educational systems to assume a key role in developing social and civic citizenship skills.

The Council of the European Union has included citizenship competence among the key competencies for lifelong learning. The definition can be found in the European Reference Framework: citizenship competence refers to the ability to act as responsible citizens and to participate fully in civic and social life, based on an understanding of social, economic, legal and political structures and concepts as well as global developments and sustainability (Coster et al., 2012).

HU

At the European level, the CoE and the European Union have developed some concepts, for example a concept of citizenship promotion, which aims to promote democratic citizenship, or the concept of active citizenship to promote civic education (Abs, 2021). Under the last concept, the EU is engaged in a continuous and systematic effort in this area through its own official educational information network, Eurydice (Abs, 2021). Furthermore, a reference

framework for competences for democratic culture has been created, which addresses democracy education within active citizenship (Abs, 2021).

Within Germany, the federal government has been promoting extracurricular political education for several years with the help of broad-based programmes such as "Democracy Live!" (Anchour & Wagner, 2020). Whereby the project character and the accompanying lack of regular structures and sustainability should be critically discussed (ibid.). However, in a cross-curricular principle, political issues are dealt with as well as a democratic teaching culture between teachers and students is realized (ibid.). For example, many schools have established opportunities for participation, e.g. school assemblies, school parliaments or project days, which enable students to experience concrete action (ibid.). Different formats such as the development of a democratic school and teaching culture, human rights education, global/intercultural learning, etc. have already been subsumed under the term democracy education for several years (ibid.). In this regard, the Conference of Ministers of Education (CoMoE) also updated its recommendations on democracy education in 2018. In doing so, the CoMoE also refers to Germany's active role in the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the global community of the United Nations (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2018). The recommendations indicate to schools' what competencies students should acquire and what the school's role is in this process (ibid.).

However, studies dealing with the comprehensive topic of civic education focus only on individual sub-aspects, e.g., curricula, competencies and mindset of students, or teacher-related influence on democracy education, but it turns out that the interest in education policy is rather low (Anchour & Wagner, 2020).

1.5. Existing teacher training on active and responsible citizenship

UNIC

According to the literature and local curriculum, education in Cyprus does not provide for Citizenship Education as a separate course, '[although] citizenship modules are included in a number of courses in graduate and post-graduate programmes' (Koutselini, 2008, p. 165). Therefore, teachers who teach citizenship education are not required to hold formal qualifications in the subject 'but they customarily specialize in subjects such as literature and history' (Savvides & Pashiardis, 2016, p. 507). None of the local universities in Cyprus that offer teacher professional development (undergraduate programmes) includes a course on citizenship education. Finally, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute which is the formal in-service training body in Cyprus occasionally offers non-compulsory training on issues relevant to active citizenship, but these are either linked to environmental education or multicultural classes.

UNL

Linhares and Reis (2022) inform that, in 2020, future schoolteachers on the first year of their bachelor degree tackled several environmental issues of their community and raised awareness, via facebook, of the ecological dangers of some activities.

Research by Oliveira and Sousa (2022) referred that some teachers considered that the integration of arts education on training teacher programmes could help to develop the imaginative and creative spirit necessary to promote an active disposition in students.

Reis et al. (2018) informed that, between 2013 and 2016, there was developed a community of practice (within the project IRRESISTIBLE) to get teachers and students involved in the field of scientific research. This was done by, firstly, getting students involved on the research of scientific and technological proposals, as well as on the discussion of the criteria they needed to fulfil to be considered adequate. Secondly, students were integrated on initiatives of information spreading, to promote public reflection about (and discussion of) responsible scientific investigation. Reis et al. (2018) said that sessions with scientists and experts in education were organized, the works done by students were exposed on schools and there was a last meeting on Germany, between all the countries that took part in the project.

Reis et al. (2018) also found that, since 2012, the project “We Act” promoted student-led research about scientific and technological issues with the aim of finding and implementing possible solutions through collective actions. The community of practice implementing the programme was mainly constituted by teachers. Reis (2020) highlighted the example of a group of students from rural areas, who created a manifesto to tackle the problem of the collapse of bee colonies and the substitution of old agricultural practices for new environmental and sustainable ones.

On the website of the project named Assessment for Learning in Citizenship Education [ALICE] (2022) it was referred that, on September 2022, there took place a training programme in the context of ALICE, a European project that included nine countries, Portugal included. In the first session each team identified the core goals they wanted to reach with activities in citizenship classes. Later, teachers participated in two workshops, where they created specific tasks and activities to target citizenship education in each discipline of the school’s curricula. Andrade and Lourenço (2019) analyze the advantages of a meta-reflexive methodology in the initial teacher training. Documenting the case of a future teacher who implemented topics of global citizenship in high-school English classes, they show how a regular activity of self-assessment and written description of the classes’ dynamics enables one to understand what helped students and what need to be improved. Research done by Lourenço (2018) show that long-term collaborative work among teachers, structured in a workshop-based methodology, is an adequate way for teachers to restructure school curricula and give them a more international character.

In addition to the projects mentioned above, there are also other teacher training programmes organised by specific public and private entities. For instance, Ministério da Educação (2022) mentions that, since 2020, DGE (Direção-Geral da Educação) has been offering various training programmes for teachers about citizenship education. Peace and sustainable development are among the themes specifically addressed. These training sessions are optional, but they can be used for career development purposes. Faculdade de Desporto da Universidade

do Porto (2016) mentions the training given by the Faculty of Sports of the University of Porto on the promotion of gender equality in a professional context. The Portuguese website Webstudy (April 3, 2023) mentions a training programme about various topics in the citizenship area, with a particular focus on the promotion of awareness and understanding of individual civic rights and duties. Another website named Evolui (April 3, 2023) also mentions a training programme that tackles citizenship, human rights and civic participation. The course provides recorded classes in a video format and material uploaded on the online platform, without a face-to-face interaction component.

CSC

Teacher training on active and responsible citizenship in Italy is not a well-established or systematic practice, but rather depends on the initiatives and interests of individual teachers, schools or networks. However, some examples of existing teacher training on this topic are (Chistolini, 2019):

- The courses offered by Europass Teacher Academy, which is the largest European provider of professional development courses for teachers. Among its topics, there are several courses related to active citizenship, such as European Citizenship: A Multicultural and Multidisciplinary Perspective, which explores the structure and function of the European Institutions, the rights and responsibilities of EU citizens, the European values written in the European Constitution, and the historical process bringing to the creation of the EU; Global Citizenship Education: A Path to a Better Future for All, which aims to foster the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable learners to contribute to a more peaceful, tolerant and sustainable world; Human Rights Education: A Path to Peaceful and Inclusive Societies, which promotes democratic values, human rights, intercultural dialogue and social responsibility; and Intercultural Competence for Teachers: How to Educate Students for a Globalized World, which develops intercultural awareness and competence for teachers and students (Europass Teacher Academy, n.d.).

- The guidelines developed by the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe (CiCe) network, which is a Jean Monnet network funded by the Erasmus+ programme (Pratas et al., 2017). The guidelines provide a framework for linking research and practice in teacher education for citizenship, and include recommendations, examples and resources for teacher educators and teachers. The guidelines cover topics such as: citizenship education in Europe; citizenship education in teacher education; citizenship education in schools; citizenship education across the curriculum; citizenship education methods and assessment; citizenship education competences for teachers; citizenship education professional development for teachers.

- The projects supported by the Global Citizenship Education (GCE) initiative promoted by UNESCO and the European Commission, which aim to foster the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable learners to contribute to a more peaceful, tolerant and sustainable world. Some examples of GCE projects in Italy that involve teacher training are Global Schools

which supports teachers; professional development and curriculum innovation for GCE; Global Action Schools (Global Action Schools, n.d.), which involves teachers and students in awareness-raising and fundraising activities for global causes; and the Global Campus Network (Global Campus Network, n.d.), which connects teachers and students from schools and universities around the world through online platforms and exchanges (Pratas et al., 2017). These examples show some of the efforts and opportunities for enhancing teacher training on active and responsible citizenship in Italy, but also highlight some of the challenges and gaps that need to be addressed.

HU

The CoE identified that, depending on the type of school, between 27% and 86% of civic education classes are taught by teachers without the appropriate formal qualifications (Abs, 2021). Furthermore, there is no specific recruitment initiative for student teachers in civic education, neither from universities nor from schools (Abs, 2021). Thus, civic education is an underfunded academic discipline that is often underrepresented in national teacher education curricula and lacks clear standards and differentiated research profiles (Abs, 2021).

This is also evident in the area of further and continuing education (Albrecht & Huttel, 2020). They found out that the subject "civic education" in the 16 federal states is mainly taught by non-specialists (ibid.). Mostly, it is lateral entrants without comprehensive initial professional training who teach the subject in schools (ibid.). Also, the government or the Ministry of Education do not directly recommend that "civic education" should be taught by trained personnel (ibid.). The federal states spend little money on in-service and continuing education for teachers and there are major deficits in the quality and quantity of in-service and continuing education for teachers (Daschner & Hanisch, 2019). The needs of teachers are not systematically recorded and the offers mostly refer to traditional contents (ibid.).

Chapter 2: Evidence-based practices through online survey and focus group

To further examine the state-of-the-art, the practices, and challenges of promoting active and responsible citizenship in the partner countries, the consortium followed a mixed methods research approach, to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The survey was implemented between March 3rd and April 20th. Regarding the first part of the survey, the partners constructed an online questionnaire, based on the literature review and the topics emerged. There were thirty-four (34) questions which gathered data about the demographic profile of the participants and their opinions/knowledge about (a) the value of the education to active and responsible citizenship to prepare students for their social and professional life, (b) the value that students, schools and governments recognize in such an education, (c) the current practices being held in schools to teach active and responsible citizenship, and (d) the main challenges faced by teachers on their daily activity in each partner country (see Annex 1). The

questionnaire targeted school leaders, teachers of any subjects. In total, 216 individuals completed the questionnaire. The partners analyzed the data using MS Excel and/or IBM SPSS Statistics 25, finding the frequency of answers and the percentages, depending on the type of scale of each question.

Then, for more insights into the context of active and responsible citizenship in the partner countries, the partnership conducted focus groups to collect qualitative data and support the quantitative results. The focus group followed the form of a semi-structured interview with 10 – 12 questions covering various areas (see Annex 2). The average duration of each focus group was fifty (50) minutes and ideally included a group of eight (8) participants-representatives of the target group. The focus groups were implemented between March 8th and April 26th, either online, with the support of web conferencing tools such as ZOOM, Skype, or Google Meet or in-person. Throughout the survey, the partnership complied with the GDPR regulations, asking for the respondents’ written permission for participation and recording of the focus group sessions (see Annex 3). Ethical issues were considered; anonymity, confidentiality, and objectivity were maintained.

2.1 Cyprus

2.1.1 Results from the questionnaire

Questionnaire information

This questionnaire was conducted between 3/3/23 and 17/3/23. The participants were recruited via previous connections/ contacts with school groups.

Questionnaire results

Participants of the study were 62 teachers, 57 females and five males, with the majority in the age range of 30-49. The majority of the participants (79%) were early years and primary school teachers. Furthermore, most of the participants (70%) stated that they had an MA in Education.

Table 2 presents the types of professional development in which the teachers of the study have participated in in relation to teaching active and responsible citizenship.

Table 2. Type of professional development about evaluation and teaching of active and responsible citizenship

Type of Professional Development	%
Informal and self-training on the subject (Internet; informal contacts, work and personal experience)	35
Formal training at my Institution	5
Formal training at my Institution & Informal and self-training on the subject (Internet; informal contacts, work and personal experience)	3
Formal training at my Institution & Formal training outside my Institution	8
Formal training at my Institution & Informal and self-training on the subject (Internet; informal contacts, work and personal experience) & Informal and self-training on the subject (Internet; informal contacts, work and personal experience)	2

Formal training outside my Institution	13
Formal training outside my Institution & Informal and self-training on the subject (Internet; informal contacts, work and personal experience)	5
None	29

According to the findings in Table 2, 29% of the teachers did not receive any professional development on active and responsible citizenship, and of those who received training, 35% did so on their own through informal means.

Table 3 presents participants' views on active and responsible citizenship and current local situation. The participants responded to 6-point Likert scale questions.

Table 3. Teachers' view on active and responsible citizenship and current local situation

Statements	Average
It is vital that we further promote active and responsible citizenship in schools in Cyprus.	5.6
Our government is aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship.	3.2
Teachers in schools in Cyprus are aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship.	3.6
Our school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) know the concept of active and responsible citizenship.	3.4
Our school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) are aware of the importance of promoting active and responsible citizenship in schools in Cyprus.	3.4
Our students know the concept of active and responsible citizenship.	2.8
Our students are aware of the importance of learning how to be active and responsible citizens.	2.8

Based on the findings presented in Table 3, teachers believe that active and responsible citizenship is of high importance but stakeholders (teachers, school community, government) are not recognizing the importance. Furthermore, teachers state that students are not familiar with the notion of active and responsible citizenship.

Only 27% of the teachers reported that dialogue and teacher professional development on active and responsible citizenship are encouraged in their schools. Those teachers reported that active and responsible citizenship is encouraged through students' participation in school councils, in the Health Education course, and in school-based environmental actions.

Table 4 presents teachers' challenges and opportunities in presenting active and responsible citizenship in their classroom.

Table 4. Teachers' challenges and opportunities with active and responsible citizenship

Statements	Average
I have the needed soft skills to teach and promote active and responsible citizenship. (soft skills: non-technical skills that relate to how you work)	4.1
My students have the maturity to understand the concept and importance of active and responsible citizenship.	3.8
The socio-economic situation of most of my students constrains dialogue on active and responsible citizenship.	3.8
Most of my students' household environments value the promotion of active and responsible citizenship.	3.7
I know how to adapt topics related to active and responsible citizenship to my students, regardless of their age.	4.0
I react with tranquillity to strong opposite opinions.	5.1
I can easily manage conflicts amongst my students.	4.8
Active and responsible citizenship impacts all areas of learning.	5.5
A well-structured programme on active and responsible citizenship will help students on the acquisition of knowledge in all subjects.	5.4

The findings highlight teachers' views that active and responsible citizenship is important and can affect learning, and their need for a teacher professional programme focusing on active and responsible citizenship. Furthermore, the findings highlight teachers' challenges about students' ability to understand active and responsible citizenship.

Challenges of the promotion and teaching of active and responsible citizenship

The qualitative content analysis of the teachers' responses revealed six categories of challenges in the promotion and teaching of A&R citizenship. The categories are described below:

1. Need for teacher professional development (10/63): Teachers' responses referred to the need to train teachers to help them develop teaching practices that promote A&R citizenship.
2. Development of the required students' skills and values as A&R citizens (9/63): Teachers referred to the students' skills and values that are required for being considered A&R citizens are difficult to develop. Specifically, they mentioned: the cultivation of responsibility, acceptance of diversity, respect for school and social environment, active involvement, rejection of stereotypes, coexistence without prejudice, and ensuring social cohesion.
3. Student-related factors as challenges (6/63): Teachers referred to factors related to the students' background as challenges. These include students' low maturity level which does not allow students to understand the importance of A&R citizenship and their family background (i.e. low SES, open-mindedness of parents and consequently students).
4. Societal factors as challenges (12/63): Teachers' responses paint the picture of an increasingly multicultural society due to the growing waves of immigrants entering the country. The responses suggest that this leads to increased feelings of racism due to the lack of values of solidarity, participation and belonging.

5. School and system-level factors (8/63): As the educational system in Cyprus is centralised under the control of the Ministry of Education, teachers' responses refer to the need for educational reform, for curriculum adaptations and for school-wide approaches for teacher professional development and a plan of action.

6. Lack of time (3/63): Teachers mentioned lack of time as a challenge for teaching A&R citizenship.

7. Resistance to new ways of teaching and learning (6/63): Teachers referred to the risk of changing teaching practices. Specifically, they mentioned experiential learning activities, out-of-class learning opportunities, dialogue for decision-making and resolution of issues, participation in actions.

Reported students' benefits when developing A&R skills

The qualitative content analysis of the teachers' responses revealed three areas in which the promotion and teaching of A&R citizenship can be beneficial for students. The categories are described below:

1. To become active and responsible citizens in future societies (in 34 out of 63 answers). Teachers' responses referred to the different ways that students can become active and responsible citizens. For example, one teacher wrote:

“[Students to] actively participate in shaping a better quality of life for themselves and their fellow human beings and to realize that everyone can make a small difference in this direction.”

“They can become active and responsible citizens, who will participate in decision-making processes that concern them, they will be able to cooperate with their fellow citizens, they will be interested in commons affairs, they will respect the rights of others, they will respect the laws, they will undertake the responsibility of their actions, etc.”

2. To develop democratic values (in 6 out of 63 answers). Teachers' responses referred to the development of democratic values, such as respect to others, accepting diversity and solidarity. The following response is representative:

“They undertake actions for their social and general environment, to understand the problems that happen around us, to develop positive perceptions, to discover the power of solidarity, love, selfless giving, participation.”

3. To develop personal attributes (in 16 out of 63 answers). Teachers' responses referred to a range of personal attributes that they expect students to develop as part of developing A&R skills. These include critical thinking, maturity, self-reflection, personal development disposition and better judgment. The following quote is representative:

“They deal with various situations with critical thinking, respect for others, self-criticism and a desire for individual and social improvement.”

Teachers’ needs in order to promote A&R citizenship can be grouped into the following eight categories:

- 1) Teacher training and professional development (mentioned in 26 responses)
- 2) Time to teach the subject (mentioned in 21 responses)
- 3) Materials in the form of targeted action plans, practical ideas, flexible curricula, interactive and experiential activities, bank with relevant material, and examples of how these can be applied in different educational (mentioned in 14 responses)
- 4) System-level support; in the case of Cyprus, this refers to the Ministry of Education which is responsible for all aspects of education. Teachers referred to appropriate guidance, clear goals, flexible hours, less material to cover on other subjects, including A&R citizenship as a subject in the curriculum (mentioned in 12 responses)
- 5) School-level support in the form of forming an appropriate school culture via the school leader and collaboration with colleagues (mentioned in 3 responses)
- 6) Teacher autonomy (mentioned in 3 responses). This comes in contrast with category 4, which groups responses that seek different kinds of system-level support.
- 7) Financial support (mentioned in 3 responses)
- 8) Parental involvement and training (mentioned in 2 responses).

2.1.2 Results from the focus group

The careful and systematic process of reading, coding, and analyzing the data in order to identify meaningful patterns and themes, led to the identification of the following themes:

Main pedagogical challenges of addressing active and responsible citizenship

Participants addressed a number of pedagogical challenges as well as systemic factors that affect the promotion of active and responsible citizenship in the schools. As they stated, it is rather challenging to foster empathy, understanding, and respect towards diverse perspectives, beliefs, and experiences, as well as critical thinking on issues related to active and responsible citizenship. Additionally, encouraging students to become active citizens and take action in their communities is also challenging for teachers. They recognize the need to develop effective teaching strategies that can engage and motivate students to take an interest in civic issues and participate in such activities. In terms of systemic factors, the participants mentioned increased workload, overloaded curricula, lack of resources, and absence of efficient training as the most important inhibiting factors in promoting responsible citizenship.

Another important factor that was mentioned by all the respondents was the resistance from students, parents, and school administrators to address this kind of issue. Specifically, the latter seem to prioritize other academic subjects over responsible citizenship while the former may hold opposing beliefs and perceptions on topics related to active and responsible citizenship.

Socioeconomic issues pose an additional challenge in addressing active and responsible citizenship. As the participants mentioned, students from lower-income backgrounds or marginalized communities may face unique obstacles that can affect their ability to engage in the learning process.

Importance of addressing responsible citizenship in schools

Participants considered addressing responsible citizenship a priority. As they explained, preparing students to become active and responsible citizens should be embedded in all school subjects, as it helps them to develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate in their communities and contribute to society as a whole. They consider that teaching responsible citizenship in schools, helps students develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility. Preparing students to participate in civic life, make informed decisions, and advocate for themselves and others help in the development of a more cohesive and democratic society. Despite acknowledging the importance of promoting active and responsible citizenship, schools and stakeholders do not put emphasis on this subject area. Instead, they prioritize other academic subjects over responsible citizenship such as Greek, Maths, etc. According to the participants, the overloaded curriculum does not allow much time for anything else. Nevertheless, they do recognize the need for schools and Ministry officials to acknowledge the importance of promoting responsible citizenship and take steps to prioritize it in their educational programs and policies.

Active programs on active and responsible citizenship in place

During the school year 2013-2014, one of the emphasized goals set by the Ministry of Education was the cultivation of active citizenship with an emphasis on social solidarity in all schools in the Republic of Cyprus. The majority of the participants referred to a seminar and a conference held by the Pedagogical Institute during that year. A number of schools, in order to meet the emphasized goal, participated in activities covering certain aspects of active and responsible citizenship such as “active citizens,” “Health, Safety, and Emotions”, “Active citizenship and others, “Socio-cultural diversity”, “Social gender”, “Active citizenship and the environment”, “Sustainable development”, “Rights and obligations”, “European dimension of citizenship”. However, focus group participants highlighted that such activities are held only periodically solely to address the goals set by the Ministry. For the students in secondary education, there is the Cyprus Children's Parliament initiative whose primary goal is the participation of the children themselves in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To achieve this goal, children participate in sessions, conferences, and various other actions and activities.

Professional development on responsible citizenship

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute conducted a seminar on active and responsible citizenship during the year 2013-2014. It was an introductory session on this topic. The seminar was non-mandatory and was held on the premises of the CPI outside of school hours. In addition, during

the two-day mandatory professional development for all teachers every year, there are some thematic areas related to active and responsible citizenship such as “equality”, “inclusion”, “excellence, quality, and solidarity”. All the participants agreed that the seminars are impractical and based on theory. As they explained, when training is based only on theory, it does not prepare them for addressing such issues in the classroom. The Ministry sends out circulars and sends material and it is up to each teacher whether to participate in training activities and whether to research the specific topic further on their own. While they recognize the importance of theoretical knowledge, they suggest that it needs to be supplemented with practical experience to be truly effective. Teachers addressed the need to have the opportunity to apply what they have learned in a real-world setting, in their schools in order to fully understand how to apply what they have learned in the training. Teachers' training needs to strike a balance between theory and practice in order to be effective based on their testimonies.

Practices endorsed for addressing responsible citizenship

According to participants, they incorporate civic education into the curriculum, aiming at providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become responsible citizens. Participants stressed the use of an interdisciplinary approach to promote responsible citizenship. They considered it important to embed it in all school subjects in order to become part of students' life. They mentioned the project method as the most popular method to promote active and responsible citizenship. Through this method, students work collaboratively, investigate a topic, and participate in hands-on learning activities. The teachers act as facilitators, guide the students through the project, and assist in the development of skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. The Debate and the circle of discussion were also mentioned as effective methods for teaching active and responsible citizenship, as it encourages students to engage in critical thinking, research, and argumentation. Through these methods, focus group participants asserted that students can develop the skills necessary to effectively communicate their ideas and opinions, listen to and understand opposing viewpoints.

Ways to promote responsible citizenship

To address the pedagogical challenges and existing barriers to the successful promotion of active and responsible citizenship, participants addressed the need for the Ministry to prioritize civic education as a core component of the curriculum and provide adequate resources to support its development. As they also mentioned, officials need to invest in meaningful professional development opportunities for teachers. Family and community involvement were mentioned by the majority of the participants as important factors in promoting active and responsible citizenship. Moreover, they stressed the need for other stakeholders such as public and private universities to collaborate with the Ministry and offer meaningful training activities based on adult learning theory, which is practical and not theoretical. Practical training allows teachers to engage in reflective practice and continuously improve their teaching methods based on their experiences in the classroom. Factors such as good interpersonal relationships amongst colleagues, support from the school leader, collaboration amongst all involved

interested parties, a structured program with adequate materials (movies, books, music), and flexibility in the timetable were mentioned by the participants as contextual and systemic factors that can support active and responsible citizenship.

2.2 Portugal

2.2.1 Results from the questionnaire

Questionnaire information

The questionnaire was conducted between February 15th, 2023 and March 19th, 2023 and distributed through an online survey using GoogleForms. The participants were recruited via previous connections with the Universidade Nova de Lisboa and contacts with school groups.

Questionnaire results

Demographic information

In total, we received 62 complete responses to the questionnaire. Among the respondents, 80.6% identified themselves as female and 19.4% as male. The majority (41.9%) were between 40 and 49 years old, 29% were among 50 and 59 years old, and the rest was above 60. Almost half of them (53.2%) were holders of a Bachelors' degree, while 38.7% held a Masters' and 8.1% had a Phd. They were one preprimary school teacher, nine primary school teachers, 29 middle-grade school teachers, and the rest taught at secondary school alone, or in combination with middle-grades, or at a higher education level. More than half of them (70.9%) had more than 15 years of experience. Fourteen participants did not have any previous training in teaching and assessing active and responsible citizenship, twenty-nine had received some kind of formal training, while the majority (36) declared that they were trained informally (e.g. through internet, personal and professional contacts and experience, etc.)

Main findings

To begin with, 77.4% of the participants fully agreed that promoting active and responsible citizenship in schools is crucial.

Most participants fully or moderately agreed that:

- Teachers are aware of the relevance of active and responsible citizenship education (14.5 % fully agree, 32.3% agree, 30.6% moderately agree);
- The school communities in which they are integrated are familiar with the concept of active and responsible citizenship (9.7% fully agree, 25.8% agree, 46.8% moderately agree);
- The school communities in which they are integrated are aware of the relevance of active and responsible citizenship education (6.5% fully agree, 38.7% agree; 38.7 moderately agree);

- Their students (or the students they contact with) are familiar with the concept (6.5% fully agree, 29% agree, 46.8% moderately agree) and are aware of the relevance of learning to be active and responsible citizens (4.8% fully agree, 37.1 % agree, 41.9% moderately agree). Moreover, 71% of respondents said that their school promotes dialogue and training in active and responsible citizenship. The specific answers about how it is done varied; some referred the existence of conferences, seminars, meetings and discussions. Others mentioned external partnerships to raise awareness about the topic. The specific programmes referred to were the following: A Voz dos Jovens (Municipality of Cascais), Parlamento dos Jovens, Programa EcoEscolas, UBUNTU.

It is remarkable to notice that 80.6 % of respondents affirm that students in Portugal value activities that promote active citizenship. About the specific activities, they refer to volunteer work and local projects done within the community and family context. They also mentioned students' participation in projects such as EcoEscolas, Escola Azul, A Voz dos Jovens, UBUNTU and partnership with other schools and ONGs, such as International Amnesty.

Among the challenges faced by teachers while promoting active and responsible citizenship, there were mentioned:

- The lack of available time to reflect about citizenship and to implement activities at school,
- The disparity of schedules between teachers that prevents them from collaborating as they need,
- The lack of empowering and cost-free training to provide teachers with effective resources and methodologies,
- The fact that not all educative agents are aware about the relevance of active and responsible citizenship,
- The lack of collaborative networks and forums,
- The overemphasis laid on final exams and quantitative assessment.

About the relevance of citizenship education, teachers expect their students to:

- Be more responsible and understand the impact of their actions on others,
- Be more aware of the problems affecting their community and co-citizens,
- Be more collaborative and proactive on their society,
- Take part in the democratic mechanisms of their society.

Among the requirements needed to implement more activities about citizenship, teachers mentioned:

- More available time on their schedules,
- More support by the school directors,
- More training about active and responsible citizenship,
- The building of schedules that make it easier to cooperate,
- The creation of cooperative networks,
- The mitigation of the weight of quantitative assessment,
- More external and meaningful partnerships to motivate students for active citizenship.

A large majority of the participants (93.6%) think they have the necessary skills to promote active and responsible citizenship and 87.1% think their students are mature enough to understand the relevance of the concept.

Students' economic situation overall was not considered a limiting factor in the promotion of active and responsible citizenship by the majority of the respondents (62.9%). The same amount of participants further thought that students' domestic environments value and promote active and responsible citizenship.

In addition, almost all teacher participants think they are capable of adapting citizenship topics to students of various ages (22.6% totally agree, 54.8% agree). All teachers say they react calmly to opinions opposed to theirs (16.1 moderately agree, 50% agree, 33.9% totally agree). All teachers say they can easily manage conflicts between their students (11.3% moderately agree, 61.3 % agree, 27.4% totally agree). All teachers see active and responsible citizenship as having impact on other areas (6.5% moderately agree, 29% agree, 64.5 % totally agree,). Finally, almost all agreed that a well-structured programme about active and responsible citizenship will help students understand the contents of other disciplines (58.1% totally agree, 25.8 % agree).

2.2.2 Results from the focus group

Focus group information

The eight (8) participants of the Focus Group Discussion were recruited via previous professional connections, contacts with school groups, and formal invitations to relevant policymakers. The participants were seven (7) female and one (1) male and their professions were as follows: four (4) of them are teachers (two of them with teacher training experience, and one with research experience in the field), and the other four (4) are academics in Portuguese institutions (three different institutions from continental Portugal – Lisbon- and the islands – Azores). Due to lack of common availability among the participants, we conducted two separate discussions, each one of them lasting approximately one hour. The first discussion took place on the 8th March and the second on the 12th March. Both discussions were held virtually using the ZOOM application. Signed consent forms were previously collected by all participants allowing for the recording of the discussions.

Focus group results

The transdisciplinary character of citizenship education

Some participants highlighted that all disciplines should contribute to the promotion of active and responsible citizenship (not only the specific discipline called “Cidadania e Desenvolvimento” - Citizenship and Development). Each teacher should approach citizenship in a way that is allowed by their subjects, but few do that explicitly. We can see that from the following statements:

“... in our system, (...) it is referred even in a previous way the obligation of all curricular areas to contribute to the promotion of citizenship. That’s something that our teachers sometimes tend to forget or do in different ways (...)” (Researcher, male).

“... the promotion of citizenship is a component of the Portuguese educational system (...). What worries me here is that some teachers do that in a very implicit way (...)” (Researcher, female).

Economic differences among students

All participants agreed that students’ economic background is not an obstacle to the promotion of active and responsible citizenship. We can see that in the following statements:

“There are economic disparities, for sure. And those disparities turn out to be essentially difficulties of access, of lack of power on the part of some parts of the population, who think they don’t have the power to intervene and, as such, that they can’t do anything. ‘How can they change things?’ So, they opt for non-intervention. It’s not so much a lack of financial resources that will stop the work done about citizenship. To promote citizenship, we don’t need specific resources – we promote citizenship by being citizens, exercising citizenship and that can be done with any situation (...). I only see the seriousness of that lack of cultural resources in a perception that may exist in many citizens about the feeling that they don’t have the power, and, because of that, they give up. And they also don’t know how they can exercise that power.” (Researcher, male).

“(…) There can be actions, workshops or seminars that are discontinued in time, so that people implement them (...), so that students and even teachers, or future-teachers, understand the methodologies and strategies they can implement in citizenship education. And this doesn’t depend on economic resources, it depends on the type of methodologies that come to be adopted (...)” (Researcher, female)

“Economic and intellectual disparities aren’t an obstacle to the development of citizenship” (Teacher, female).

“I think that students’ economic difficulties, in my opinion, don’t seem to me to be an obstacle to an active and responsible approach. On the contrary. I think children react very well to more active strategies, that make them the main character – in which they are the ones who decide what to do in that period of the class. I don’t agree that the social and economic advantage may constitute a charge, because I lectured citizenship in English to a very difficult group of students, who showed a very disruptive behavior and a very low level of English. They didn’t like school and they reacted very well when I proposed to the family the realization of the citizenship project in English. The approach was based on active strategies inside the classroom. Basically, the role of the teacher was faded away, they were the leaders of their own learning, they developed working groups, debates, oral presentations, and they felt responsible for their own learning.” (Teacher and researcher, female)

“I don’t think that economic disparities are an obstacle to the work on citizenship. (...) I find it very important to know students and (...) the respect for the other. If we create that environment in the classroom, economic disparities won’t ever have a negative impact.” (Teacher and teacher trainer, female)

Teacher training

About the topic of training, it was evident that some participants valued the disclosure of initiatives that take place in various areas of the community, more than specific formal training with benefits in terms of career development. It is thought that communications and interactions in the context of (or about the results of) activities, events and projects mobilize students and teachers much more than a “classic” training. We can see this aspect in the following statements:

“(...) Training should not be understood as a session to explain what it is to be an active citizen. It means giving children the opportunity, since a very young age, of seeing how they can transmit their opinion, how they can exercise their duties and their rights, and we, as teachers, should accompany them in that process (...). There is a lot to be done on the training area, but I believe it is not so much with classic training. It is with movements, through everyday participation, by seeing examples of groups who did this and that. We do that with students, as citizens in general

– we show examples, concrete successful cases, and those not so successful but also important”. (Researcher, male)

“(....) It is not by decree, or sessions, that we can teach to be an active citizen. It is by actually creating training, and I mean by that creating workshops... I have to transmit concepts, but there may be actions, workshops or seminars that are even discontinued in time, to give people the opportunity to implement them (...). (Researcher, female)

“(...) About teacher training ... to think that we will go through a course, and we will leave it with all the answers... It’s not that kind of training that we need. It is the training who takes teachers to actually put their hands in the dirt and to be confronted with situations where they have that theoretical framework, but they go to the classroom and experiment – they try materials, they try to use them and see what works and what doesn’t...” (Teacher, female)

The second important point has to do with the nature of teacher training on citizenship education. In Portugal, teachers who deliver the “Citizenship and Development” course are not required to do any specific training in the field. As one of the participants affirms:

“... Teachers aren’t obliged; whoever is in charge of this discipline (Citizenship and Development) isn’t obliged to have training in the area. They can get the training sessions they need to develop their career in other scientific areas, not in this one – it is up to them” (Researcher, female).

In addition, the busy schedules of teachers are often an obstacle to get all the training they need:

“In terms of teacher training, it exists. Now, the question is to know if people have available time. If we think about a school, if people have the time for that... and that kind of training must happen out of regular teaching time” (Teacher and teacher trainer, female)

Difficulties faced by teachers

About the topic of the difficulties faced by teachers in the promotion of active and responsible citizenship, the participants mentioned that some teachers are not aware of the need to implement innovative activities and / or they lack the knowledge of how to do it:

“... We try to encourage English teachers to be active in the implementation of this topic [active citizenship] on their classes. (...) They don't understand that they can do it and that it is their job to include citizenship on English classes. ... Teachers are very fearful of stepping out of their comfort zone and they are rarely active or rarely promote citizenship-related activities...” (Researcher, female)

“(...) There is the fact that English teachers (and this applies also to other disciplines) don't understand they can work on citizenship, that they should so work, in an explicit and active way, on their classes (...). We have seen colleagues checking the hours reserved for citizenship on their schedule and saying: “I don't know what I'll do there”, “I didn't get the required training”, “I am not ready”.” (Teacher, female)

Some participants preferred to highlight the need to raise teachers' awareness about the way that already promote active and responsible citizenship:

“(...) It is difficult to take teachers to understand that they already promote citizenship, and always have, they only didn't know they were doing it. (...) Many times, I say “wait, I have to speak with this class director or with this teacher, because they need to understand, they have to come to the realization, and that realization is very important because if it takes place, students will also understand that they are promoting citizenship (...)” (Teacher, female)

It was also said that the teaching routines still in practice are not the ones needed to promote an active disposition on students:

“(...) Classes are always very centred on teachers, not on students. Teachers don't know how they can get students to feel interest in school subjects and how they can work on citizenship and give students an active component. They feel they must finish all the textbooks and those textbooks don't approach citizenship in an explicit way – actually, not even in an implicit way, when it comes to the English discipline”. (Researcher, female)

“... Another set of problems that I see doesn’t concern exclusively this area [of Citizenship and Development]. In the case of foreign languages in general, I see it very concretely and it is about the methodologies and approaches. What I mean is this: (...) citizenship education (...) should be mainly experimental. It shouldn’t be a theoretical area; it shouldn’t be used to work theoretical contents (...). A difficulty that teachers face nowadays is related to the methods and the approaches in the case of the teaching of foreign languages, and it is caused by a sedimentation, by the routines in the teaching of languages (...). The discourse changed but practices remain the same. For example, the teaching focused on the student, which is a buzzword that we are parroting for decades, and the actual teaching is still mainly centred on the teacher. The teacher controls everything, it is the teacher who talks, students are sited individually ...”. (Researcher, female)

Some participants focused a possible incompatibility between the promotion of active and responsible citizenship and the preparation for national exams, that assess only theoretical skills:

“(…) the problem of assessment of student’s learning and competencies is a central problem (...). Once there is a national exam to access university that focus mainly on reading and text comprehension skills, students ask themselves if [citizenship education] will be relevant for the national exams. And teachers, as they want their student’s success in the end of the year, legitimately approach their teaching as a way to prepare for the exam, more than for any other element”. (Researcher, female)

“We still live in a culture where the assessment of knowledge through exams is the most important, because we have to prepare ourselves for the exams. So, when we want to develop competencies... We obviously can only develop competencies when we have knowledge but both things must be done simultaneously” (Teacher and researcher, female)

A model too much centred on quantitative assessment was also said to have negative impacts on students and families:

“Other question – focused more on students and parents, not so much on teachers and schools – is the teaching too much centred on quantitative assessment, not on qualitative assessment. Many students and parents are focused on tests and quantitative results. I think that is a challenge” (Teacher and teacher trainer, female)

Lastly, it was also referred that the physical and technological conditions that teachers currently face on schools are not the most adequate to the promotion of active and responsible citizenship:

“... What I think can really constitute an obstacle, and that I see in my school, is the fact that we don’t have rooms that are organized for working in groups. We may have two or three classes in a “U” model, because they are used by colleagues from musical formation area and they asked to have that disposition. (...) And teachers also don’t feel confident trying out

strategies when the internet doesn't work well, or the computers don't work well, or there aren't rooms with the appropriate disposition. Physical and technological conditions are important.” (Teacher and researcher, female)

A participant also mentioned the tendency to avoid controversial issues. We can see that, for example, in the textbooks:

“the textbooks avoid discussing religion, sex, additions, nationalisms, totalitarianisms, everything that is controversial and involves more active discussion. They are, as I use to say, sanitized textbooks – they show a very straight and very clear world; a world that doesn't exist” (Researcher, female).

Active Programs

During the discussion, two participants informed the group about initiatives with relevance for the promotion of active and responsible citizenship:

“(…) We collaborated with a project about how to work topics such as citizenship and interculturality through picture books. (…) Of course, many students don't have the English skills necessary to express themselves, but once we tell them they can speak Portuguese, we see that they have opinions and want to participate and for some teachers this is still something unseen.” (Teacher, female)

“(…) Last year, I developed with other teachers a project in a partnership with a journalist, and it lasted for the whole year – a project of production, of people coming to the school, and then of artistic production from thought, in terms of debate, and it ended with an exposition. And the attitude of those kids was outstanding. This year we kept the same partnership and extended it to more classes, because more teachers are now involved (…)” (Teacher, female)

Lack of cooperation in schools

Lastly, the lack of collaboration between teachers was highlighted by many participants. There were mentioned two different causes for it: (a) the passive and individualistic attitude of some teachers, and (b) the lack of an organizational model (in terms of schedules) that promotes cooperation. We can see that in the following statements:

“(…) Another thing that needs to be done is the curricular integration, that many teachers cannot do, and many university professors can't explain how to do. It is crucial that English, biology, chemistry, History, philosophy, that all areas work together to build citizenship. It can't be an isolated thing. Teachers need to discuss that on their class councils (…)” (Researcher, female)

“An issue that is very important for me is the collaborative work, and I worked in a citizenship classroom with a geography teacher, a physical education teacher and an English teacher. It

was extremely interesting, but it is mainly volunteer work, because it's hard to build everyone's schedules in a conciliatory way ...” (Teacher and teacher trainer, female)

“I think there is a serious lack of teamwork. (...) That exists in business corporations. It doesn't exist in schools. (...) In our school, I coordinated three courses, and it worked out very well, because we had a very important component in our schedule – it was a weekly meeting. I think that component made all the difference because we gathered weekly. Colleagues knew already that we would talk about problems from last week, but the remaining time was dedicated to discussing projects, group activities, and trying to find those skills that we could promote in a horizontal way. So, we could find a transversal project, in which all disciplines took part (...)” (Teacher and researcher, female).

2.3 Italy

2.3.1 Results from the questionnaire

Questionnaire information

The questionnaire was conducted between March 20th, 2023 and April 20th, 2023 and distributed through an online survey using GoogleForms. The participants were recruited via previous connections with the Centro Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci and contacts with school groups.

Questionnaire results

Demographic information

In total, we received 60 complete responses to the questionnaire. Among the respondents, 85% identified themselves as female and 15% as male. The majority (43.3%) were between 50 and 59 years old, 18.3% were among 40 and 49 years old, 18.3% were among 30-39 years old, 13.3% were between 20 and 29 years old and the remaining 6.7% was above 60. 85% of them hold a Master's degree, 10% hold a Diploma, 3.3% hold a PhD, 1.7% hold a Bachelor's degree, 71.7% are secondary school teachers, 26.7% are elementary school teachers, 1.7% are secondary school vice principals. 41.7% had more than 20 years of experience, 11.7% had experience ranging from 16 to 20 years, 10% between 11 and 15 years of experience, 16.7% between 6 and 10 years, 1.7% between 3 and 6 years, and 18.3% less than 2 years of experience. Eleven participants had no previous training in teaching and assessing active and responsible citizenship, nineteen had received some kind of formal training, and most (26) said they had been trained informally (e.g., through the Internet, personal and professional contacts and experiences, etc.).

Main findings

To begin with, 61.7 percent of participants strongly agreed that promoting active and responsible citizenship in schools is crucial.

Participants answered the following questions showing different opinions.

- The government is aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship (6.7% strongly disagree, 16.7% disagree, 21.7% somewhat disagree, 23.3% somewhat agree, 15% agree, 1.7% strongly agree, 15% don't know).

- The teachers in Italian schools are aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship (11.7% disagree, 8.3% somewhat disagree, 45% somewhat agree, 23.3% agree, 5% strongly agree, 6.7% don't know).

- The school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) are familiar with the concept of active and responsible citizenship (3.3% strongly disagree, 5% disagree, 15% somewhat disagree, 33.3% somewhat agree, 35% agree, 5% strongly agree, 3.3% don't know).

- The school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) are aware of the importance of promoting active and responsible citizenship in Italian schools (5% strongly disagree, 3.3% disagree, 15% somewhat disagree, 31.7% somewhat agree, 35% agree, 6.7% strongly agree, 3.3% don't know).

- The students are familiar with the concept of active and responsible citizenship (6.7% strongly disagree, 18.3% disagree, 20% somewhat disagree, 36.7% somewhat agree, 11.7% agree, 6.7% don't know).

- The students are aware of the importance of learning to be active and responsible citizens (6.7% strongly disagree, 11.7% disagree, 13.3% somewhat disagree, 40% somewhat agree, 18.3% agree, 1.7% strongly agree, 8.3% don't know).

For most participants (78.3%) it is possible to conduct pedagogical research in the educational institution. Moreover, 56.7 % say they are personally responsible for teaching and promoting active and responsible citizenship. 80 % of respondents say that their school encourages dialogue or training on active and responsible citizenship. The types of these activities are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Types of activities to promote active and responsible citizenship mentioned by the FG participants in Italy.

Activities	Frequencies
Through projects	14
Through training courses and/or curricular teaching activities	14
Through participation in events (conferences, meetings with professionals, institutions)	7
Other	5

Total responses	40
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Almost all (90%) believe that their students appreciate activities aimed at promoting active and responsible citizenship. The types of these activities are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Types of activities to promote active and responsible citizenship appreciated by the students according to the FG participants in Italy.

Activities	Frequencies
Through projects	7
Through workshops and/or group activities	17
Through participation in events (conferences, meetings with professionals, institutions)	9
Other (indicate some of the above activities together)	10
Total responses	43

Table 7 presents a summary of the main challenges of promoting and teaching active and responsible citizenship as mentioned by the participants.

Table 7: Main challenges of promoting and teaching active and responsible citizenship mentioned by the FG participants in Italy.

Main challenges	Frequencies
Building pathways to promote legality and awareness towards respect for the environment, territory and society	25
Organising activities and reconciling them with curricular activities	10
Raising awareness among teachers and families	6
Involving young people	8
Doesn't specify/doesn't know	5
Others	6
Total responses	60

Participants answered the following questions showing different opinions.

- "I have the soft skills needed to teach and promote active and responsible citizenship" (soft skills: non-technical skills that relate to the way of working) (6.7% disagree, 5% somewhat disagree, 41.7% somewhat agree, 25% agree, 16.7% strongly agree, 5% don't know).

- "My students have the maturity to understand the concept and importance of active and responsible citizenship" (11.7% disagree, 11.7% somewhat disagree, 45% somewhat agree, 25% agree, 1.7% strongly agree, 5% don't know).

- “The socio-economic situation of most of my students hinders the dialogue on active and responsible citizenship” (10% strongly disagree, 21.7% disagree, 21.7% somewhat disagree, 21.7% somewhat agree, 11.7% agree, 3.3% strongly agree, 10% don’t know).
- “Most of my students and my students’ family environments value the promotion of active and responsible citizenship” (3.3% strongly disagree, 11.7% disagree, 15% somewhat disagree, 38.3% somewhat agree, 18.3% agree, 1.7% strongly agree, 11.7% don’t know).
- “I know how to adapt topics related to active and responsible citizenship to my students, regardless of their age” (1.7% disagree, 3.3% somewhat disagree, 38.3% somewhat agree, 38.3% agree, 11.7% strongly agree, 6.7% don’t know).
- “I react calmly to strongly opposing opinions” (1.7% somewhat disagree, 31.7% somewhat agree, 46.7% agree, 18.3% strongly agree, 1.7% don’t know).
- “I can easily handle conflicts between my students” (1.7% disagree, 33.3% somewhat agree, 41.7% agree, 21.7% strongly agree, 1.7% don’t know).
- “Active and responsible citizenship impacts all areas of learning” (18.3% somewhat agree, 26.7% agree, 55% strongly agree).

2.3.2 Results from the focus group

Focus group information

The seven (7) focus group participants were recruited through previous professional contacts, contacts with school groups, and formal invitations to policy makers. There were five (5) female and two (2) male participants, and their professions were as follows: five (5) of them are teachers and the other two (2) are educators. Due to the lack of common availability among the participants, we conducted two separate discussions, each lasting about an hour. The first discussion was held on April 21 and the second on April 26. One discussion was conducted in-person through the google meet platform, and the other was conducted in-person through an interview given the impossibility of engaging everyone at the same time. All participants collected signed consent forms in advance to enable the interviews to be recorded.

Focus group results

The analysis of the data was made through a thematic deductive approach, focused on the semantic as well as on the latent undertaking. Each participant’s contributions were transcribed, coded, and analysed. The results gathered are presented in the following paragraphs.

Active programmes

The first topic addressed in the two focus groups was active programmes in Italian schools on active citizenship. In relation to the first question, the participants point out that there is a state-level civic education programme that teachers must follow, but at the same time there is a lot of freedom on the topics that can be addressed within the classroom.

“(…) active citizenship is presented in the Italian school system with civic education, it is a subject that is dealt with by all teachers, (…) in particular in my school being a nautical high school environmental issues are dealt with (…). For about three years now, civic education has been a cross-curricular subject, every teacher deals with citizenship issues related to their teaching subject. I have also noticed that there is a lot of interest in environmental issues in my school. In my 30-year journey I can say that in the last 20 years there is a lot of active citizenship being done in school, something that did not exist before”. (Teacher, female)

“...In the school where I teach there are three macro areas which are related to environmental sustainability, digital citizenship and the third related to the constitution. In our school beyond the theoretical part on the mentioned topics, there are many extracurricular activities always related more to environmental issues.” (Teacher, male)

Training opportunities

Training in Italy is still too inadequate, the focus group participants express this lack of training or only general training.

“...from the moment the legislation made civics hours mandatory, my school-initiated trainings for teachers to address civics education issues in the classroom, the training was face-to-face. The difference is the experience because other than that first training time, there were no other times”. (Teacher, male)

“...I want to underline that the ministry of education has brought down this discipline which only serves to enhance the assessments of children, we teachers have always made legality and citizenship, there was no need to structure transversal discipline. The civic education subject was the prerogative of history/geography or law professors. It was a ministerial strategy to avoid school failures, but we have always addressed the issues of citizenship even before the law.” (Teacher, female)

“...training was carried out by us following the guidelines of the ministry and therefore on the topics that we have mentioned previously. Each colleague according to the classes, in autonomous subjects, has modeled the topics to be treated”. (Teacher, female)

“... as an educator I do not have specific training on active citizenship issues, I have trained individual issues but not structured as a training.” (Educator, Female)

Challenges

The participants addressed a number of pedagogical challenges and systemic factors that influence the promotion of active and responsible citizenship in schools. As one teacher stated, it is quite challenging to promote active citizenship due to the lack of time available. In other cases, the family context can be an obstacle. For others, there is willingness on the part of the students, but it is necessary to translate what is taught from theory into practice.

“... the students have always shown themselves to be active, but in my opinion, getting into the specifics of making them understand legal and correct behavior is always difficult, I think the work must be very concrete. Speaking of active citizenship is understood as respect for the rules, respect for people, for the place and for the reality in which I live.” (Teacher, female)

“... the main challenge we face at school today is time, there is no time to be able to do any activity including civic education. The school is targeted by activities, by external projects, completely detached from the context and from the teaching that do not allow us to carry out a serious disciplinary work which would also be that of citizenship. The quantity of inputs that arrive, some of which are inconsistent and do not allow us to work well.” (Teacher, female)

“... I echo what my colleague said, in my opinion the most complex challenge is to translate everything we do regarding civic education from theory to practice. The students’ approach is wrong, because they consider themselves just another grade to take in school. So I think we need to take them further and further out if we really want to leave a mark and make sense of this civic education journey. The first impression, at the beginning, was as if it had come from above for the teachers and had little effective impact on the students. Now after a couple of years I can say that things have improved, but we need to invest more in so-called soft skills. For me they must mix formal and non-formal education in schools and in teaching. Non-formal education can be a great way to better teach civics.” (Teacher, male)

“... The difficulty I encountered in projects dealing with combating drop out in school and, therefore, in very difficult contexts. The biggest challenge was the total inconsistency between the speeches that could be proposed in class and the environment, dynamics and practices of the community in which these students were immersed, even making speeches on legality was sometimes problematic. There was a reluctance on the part of the students to address certain issues due to the family or community context in which they found themselves. There weren’t structured pathways and adequate teacher training to deal with citizenship issues in these contexts.” (Teacher, female)

On the contrary, participants agreed that students’ economic background is not an obstacle to the promotion of active and responsible citizenship. We can see that in the following statements:

“...it emerged how fundamental the socio-economic context is to receive certain stimuli, I have always taught in high schools with a certain audience now that I teach in a provincial school

therefore a very varied socio-economic-cultural context I feel how much the issues related to legality are very heartfelt.” (Teacher, female)

“...I teach in a professional school, therefore a different audience than that of a high school, in my experience the socio-economic aspects have not represented an obstacle to the didactic action in the teaching of civic education, the problem has arisen for other subjects where the lack of materials and tools for teaching was problematic. Socio-economic issues can therefore be an obstacle in family contexts but not during teaching” (Teacher, male)

“...may be an obstacle the socioeconomic aspect, may be more challenging but not impossible to deal with” (Educator, Female)

Other challenges

Two further aspects that came up as challenges in promoting active and responsible citizenship are: a lack of collaboration between families/schools as an institution and a lack of time when it comes to prioritizing the subject of citizenship.

“...probably the involvement of families is a sore point, especially for active citizenship everything that is done at school would be important not to lose it in the family context, therefore the involvement of families is certainly a very important aspect. Another aspect that I think is missing are forms of non-formal education.” (Teacher, male)

“...an economic involvement of the school community, an involvement of families. Basically what we need is time, we teachers are forced to do everything wrong in the absence of time available. Let us remember that many hours have been taken away from school over the years, from 33 to 30 hours. Now in school you are forced to work badly.” (Teacher, female)

“...Involving students not only in theoretical activities but also in practical ones. I have noticed that more involvement in this type of activity can create more interest from students.” (Teacher, female)

“... I have noticed that there is a lack of a non formal approach to education, not focusing only on lectures but going beyond them. Organizations/associations could have a greater role in supporting the school system in promoting active and responsible citizenship” (Educator, Female)

“...involve students in structuring a programme that can make them feel more involved in the even daily actions they undertake as active citizens.” (Educator, Female)

Definitions of active and responsible citizenship

Some ways of defining active and responsible citizenship include the following:

“...Living with respect for what surrounds us, active citizenship passes from a knowledge of oneself (rights and duties) to a knowledge of the other.” (Teacher, male)

“...I would differentiate conscious citizenship, therefore awareness of one’s rights and duties, and active citizenship, the defense of one’s rights” (Educator, Female)

“... In addition to the curriculum that is followed in class, involve the children in activities in the area. Surely it is easier to do it in small towns, on issues such as respect for the environment or animals” (Teacher, male)

Importance of active and responsible citizenship

Participants in the focus group believe that although active citizenship is not given much importance by Italian institutions, it is crucial to address it as a priority. As they explained, preparing students to become active and responsible citizens should be embedded in all school subjects, as it helps them to develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate in their communities and contribute to society as a whole.

“... It is clear that it must certainly take place, that it is important is an aspect that I have been trying to understand over the years. There is an awareness-raising process for both teachers and students, the importance of active citizenship is perceived”. (Teacher, male)

“...I think that the school must always face it, because active citizenship is the ultimate aim of the school. With the involvement of third-party organizations that can support teachers in extra-didactic activities.” (Teacher, male)

“...It should further enhance the students’ idea of a citizen, so without a doubt it is important that it be done.” (Teacher, female)

“...with the new law making the subject of civics compulsory in school, it could have a greater importance within the school system” (Educator, Female)

2.4 Germany

2.4.1 Results from the questionnaire

Questionnaire information

This questionnaire was conducted between March 10th, 2023 and April 5th and distributed through an online survey using Limesurvey. The participants were recruited via previous connections with the Humboldt-Universität and contacts with school groups. The results were

entered into the SPSS analysis software and analyzed descriptively. The open questions within the questionnaire were evaluated qualitatively.

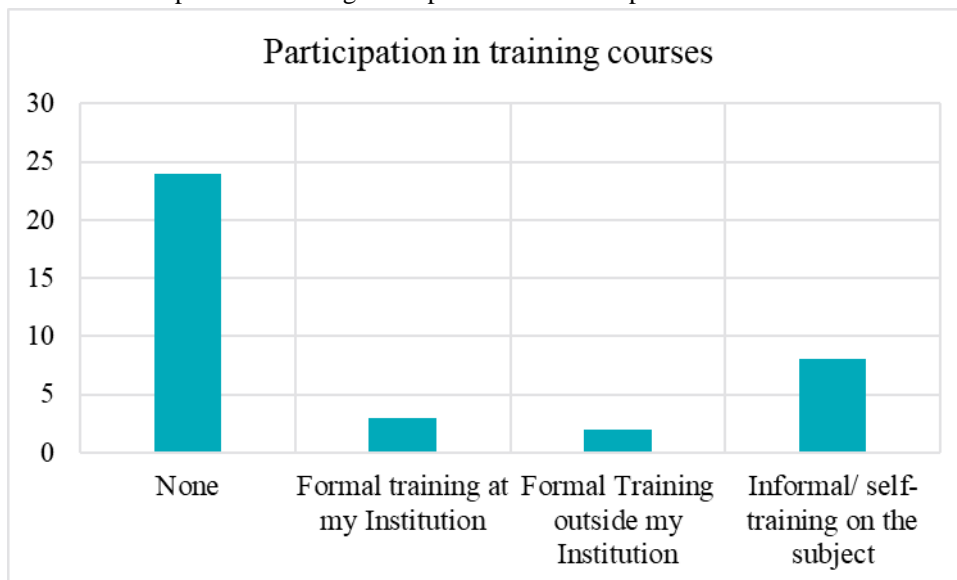
Questionnaire results

Demographic information

A total of 32 people (24 female and 8 male) participated at the online survey. The majority (n = 10) feel they belong to the 30-39 age group (under 25 years: n = 8; 25-29 years: n = 5; 40-49 years: n = 7; 50-59 years: n = 2). Of the participants, 17 individuals have a bachelor's degree, nine have a master's degree, and six have a diploma as their highest level of education. One person currently holds a job as a primary school deputy head-teacher, 13 people hold a job as a primary school teacher, and 18 people reported working as a secondary school teacher. All participants work in a government institution. In addition, the majority (n = 10) reported that they had been in the profession for less than two years (3-5 years/over 16-20 years: n = 6; 6-10 years/11-15 years: n = 4; over 20 years: n = 1).

Looking at the training on the topic of responsible citizenship, the following picture emerges:

Table 8: Participation in training on responsible citizenship.



No information was provided on external training providers. Furthermore, six people state that they are responsible for teaching and promoting active and responsible citizenship in their institution.

Main findings

On average, participants strongly agree with the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship in school (N = 32; mean (M) = 5.66; standard deviation (SD) = .483). On average, participants agree with the following statements as follows¹ (Table 9).

Table 9. Mean and Standard Deviation of participants' answers to questionnaire's items.

Statements	N	M	SD
Our government is aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship.	30	4.73	1.337
Teachers in German schools are aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship.	30	4.90	.759
Our school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) know the concept of active and responsible citizenship.	31	4.74	1.210
Our school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) are aware of the importance of promoting active and responsible citizenship in German schools.	30	4.80	.925
Our students know the concept of active and responsible citizenship.	32	4.03	1.150
Our students are aware of the importance of learning how to be active and responsible citizens.	32	4.22	1.157

The above picture is very positive. The participants agree that the government and teachers in German schools are aware of the importance of the topic. They also agree that their own school community is aware of the concept and the need for promotion. The participants somewhat agree with the statement that their own students are aware of the concept and its importance. Pedagogical research is conducted at only four institutions. However, 19 participants indicate that their institutions promote dialogue on the topic. With focus on the teachers, this mostly took place within team meetings, informal exchange with colleagues or internal training offers. With focus on the students, the dialogue was mostly promoted through guided discussions, joint project days or weeks as well as fundraising activities on various topics and the promotion of the formation of student initiatives. Here, 27 participants indicated that their students appreciated these activities. Lack of time and classroom materials were cited as the biggest challenges within the promotion of active citizenship. Other points refer to the lack of knowledge among teachers and students, lack of understanding and commitment among students, the heterogeneous competencies of students, and the lack of an orientation framework for teaching the topic.

On average, participants rate their soft skills for teaching active and responsible citizenship very positively (N = 32; M = 5.72; SD = .457). Participants agree with the following potential challenges as follows (Table 10).

Table 10. Mean and Standard Deviation of participants' answers to questionnaire's items.

Challenges	N	M	SD
My students have the maturity to understand the concept and importance of active and responsible citizenship.	32	5.72	.457

¹ Answer options: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat disagree; 4 = Somewhat agree; 5 = Agree; 6 = Strongly agree; I do not know.

The socio-economic situation of most of my students constrains dialogue on active and responsible citizenship.	32	4.56	1.076
Most of my students' household environments value the promotion of active and responsible citizenship.	32	2.44	1.076
I know how to adapt topics related to active and responsible citizenship to my students, regardless of their age.	32	3.75	1.218
I react with tranquillity to strong opposite opinions.	32	4.47	.879
I can easily manage conflicts amongst my students.	32	5.56	.504

Furthermore, the average participant agrees with the statement that active and responsible citizenship impacts all areas of learning (N = 32; M = 5.38; SD = .751). The fact that a well-structured programme can assist in the acquisition of necessary skills, the average fully agrees (N = 32; M = 5.38; SD = .483).

Participants see different benefits in teaching active citizenship to students. These can be categorized as follows: 1. acquisition of social competencies 2. acquisition of political competencies. Here, social competencies can be summarized as the ability to critically examine different topics, the development of empathy and social commitment, a general personal development, the reflection of one's own actions including the consideration and acceptance of consequences as well as the strengthening of social cohesion and self-organized and collaborative work within the class community. Under the category of acquiring political competencies, the strengthening of interest in world political events and the promotion of participation in political events can be summarized on the one hand, and participation in decision-making processes within the school on the other.

When asked what members need in school to teach the topic of active citizenship, the majority stated that they would need more time. This is an aspect that can be implemented, for example, within the expansion of all-day schools. It is also stated that further training can help to acquire the relevant knowledge. It would also be helpful to have a platform on which teaching materials on various topics are available in a structured form. Differentiated teaching materials should also be made available for the heterogeneous learning requirements of the students. An orientation framework with regard to the necessary competencies that students should acquire within citizenship education as well as space in framework curricula were also named as helpful.

In summary, a positive picture emerges with regard to the topic of active and responsible citizenship. In addition to existing challenges, helpful aspects for giving the topic more space in school are also comprehensively named.

2.4.2 Results from the focus group

Focus group information

We conducted two focus groups with two and six participants respectively, in order to accommodate participants' availability. Participants were two policy makers (both male), three teacher educators (one female, two male) of whom two are actively researching in the field of

active and responsible citizenship, and finally three teachers (two female, one male). The focus groups were conducted online via zoom in March and May and lasted for approximately 50 minutes each. All participants received information about the project, the focus group, and data protection and gave their informed consent. Including the moderators' questions, across both focus groups 102 statements were coded. Statements were double coded as they included paragraphs about multiple categories simultaneously.

From the focus group guideline as well as from carefully reading the data, nine categories were identified (see Table 11) which will be described in detail below.

Table 11. Overview of categories and the number of coded Statements within

Category	Coded Statements
The breadth of the concept “active and responsible citizenship	10
Competences required to be(come) an active and responsible citizen	7
Challenges when promoting active and responsible citizenship	29
Support from other stakeholders	6
Education on promoting active and responsible citizenship	6
Relevance of active and responsible citizenship in schools	3
Programmes on active and responsible citizenship – or the lack thereof	4
Ideas for addressing active and responsible citizenship in class and beyond	23 (in class: 21 beyond: 2)
Off-topic statements (e.g., the moderators' questions, organisational information)	41
Total	129

Focus group results

The breadth of the concept active and responsible citizenship

It was difficult for the focus groups to define the concept of active and responsible citizenship. On the one hand, finding an appropriate German translation was problematic. On the other hand, the focus groups struggled with specifying the aspects included in the concept.

For example, both Teacher Educator 1 (female) and 2 (male) highlighted that the definition depends on the underlying understanding of “democracy”, “politics”, and “society”. The participants were not sure about where active and responsible citizenship starts and argued that even deciding whether to ride a bike or eat vegetarian are implicit political decisions and therefore constitute active citizenship. Teacher Educator 1 further highlighted the difference between participating in elections and actively shaping politics between the elections – they questioned whether every degree of participation is active and responsible citizenship. In this vein, thoughts about citizens paying taxes and following the law were characterized as responsible.

Nevertheless, the focus groups agreed that in their understanding, active and responsible citizenship is more than political participation. Rather than it being solely a cognitive skill, it is defined as an “attitude” or “way of life” which focusses on society rather than the individual. Accordingly, helping neighbors or questioning political debates are incorporated in the concept of active and responsible citizenship.

In this vein, two participants attempted a definition: Policy Maker 1 (male) suggested “holistic participation in life in society” and Teacher Educator 2 “citizen’s active participation in democratic societies in different aspects of political and societal living”. Thereby, the focus on the possibilities for actively shaping society are a prerequisite for active and responsible citizenship.

Competences required to be(come) an “active and responsible citizen”

When discussing the definition, participants frequently mentioned competences that characterize “active and responsible citizens”. Generally, active and responsible citizenship can be learned but is better described as an attitude and can therefore only develop intrinsically. In this vein, participants raised the question to what extent our society, including students, is willing to fight for our democratic system and stand up for change. This willingness to be actively involved in shaping society is seen as an important aspect of active and responsible citizenship.

To begin with, a certain political interest and understanding as well as electing are required for “active and responsible citizens”. Building on this, citizens can become an active and responsible part of society. Therefore, they need to communicate properly: Participants highlighted the importance of being able to “make implicit claims explicit” (Teacher Educator 2) and speaking up for ourselves based on having an informed opinion. In this vein, “active and responsible citizens” need to critically question, reflect, take responsibility, have understanding, empathy, as well as sympathy that allow taking others’ perspectives, arguing for different perspectives and appreciating diverse perspectives. With these competences, conflicts can be handled by finding a compromise which was further mentioned as an important part of democratic living. In the context of “active and re-sponsible citizenship”, “learning how to handle diversity and plurality of society” is important, states Policy Maker 2 (male).

Challenges when promoting active and responsible citizenship

A variety of challenges could be identified from the data. These relate to the concept of active and responsible citizenship, socioeconomic issues, teachers’ resources, didactical and pedagogical methods, and finally a teacher’s role.

As mentioned earlier, the definition or distinction of active and responsible citizenship is not easy. In this vein, it is rather complicated to engage with the topic in higher education and schools.

Secondly, statements addressing challenges related to socioeconomic issues were identified. In this context, focus group participants highlighted the heterogeneity of students regarding language or origin. For example, prejudices could hinder openness to others’ perspectives, socio-economic background could be the reason for more or less interest in the topic and more

or less opportunities to participate in democratic processes. Thus, on the one hand, students might not know how to become involved due to a lack of opportunities or do not want to become involved due to feeling excluded and not identifying with the democratic system. Involving students' parents or families is thus of importance. In order to successfully promote active and responsible citizenship, students have to feel like they belong to society and acknowledge that "we're all in the same boat" as Teacher 1 (female) puts it. It is important to address all school forms and students from a variety of backgrounds to take down barriers which require engaged school personnel among others.

Another group of challenges refers to teachers' resources. A frequently mentioned aspect here is that the curricula do not leave room for incorporating active and responsible citizenship even if wanted. A related challenge regards the structure of the school system. In the system as it currently is, the possibility of implementing rather practical courses aimed at developing an attitude is scarce. For example, grading a class promoting active and responsible citizenship would be unfair. In addition, it might be asking too much of teachers to not only invest extra time but also acquire new knowledge and skills as for example, achieving below mentioned labels are seen as extra work and teachers express frustration about the lack of time as well as financial and personnel support, for example, for the creation of informal learning experiences. When offering such spaces, it is challenging to address the target group and make the space attractive. Furthermore, support from politics is often not granted.

Regarding didactical and pedagogical aspects, the focus group participants expressed some challenges. One concerns the use of language depending on the characteristics of the students (in line with the heterogeneity of the group). Policy Maker 2 highlighted the value of a compromise particularly in heterogeneous groups. This depiction might be challenging as compromising is often seen as something negative. Another challenge in this vein is to remain inclusive and address the heterogeneous needs of the students. While promoting competences like empathy and perspective-taking, teachers sometimes struggle with rational arguments and depict some students as too immature and not ready for such discussions. A challenge is seen in finding an appropriate way to react to those students.

The last group of challenges deals with the role of the teacher. Teachers are expected to act as role models when promoting active and responsible citizenship. In this context, participants raised the question whether all teachers are "active and responsible citizens" and thus have an according attitude. It is important for teachers to reflect on how they perceive themselves and are perceived by their students. Furthermore, estimating enough knowledge and skills to promote this topic can be seen as a challenge. Conclusively, it is challenging to assess a teacher's readiness. This points at the only brief consideration of the topic in formal education (see below).

Support from other stakeholders

In some respect, teachers are challenged as outlined above. The focus groups pointed out their need for support from other stakeholders. For example, politics sometimes stands in the way of creating new spaces for people to get together. Furthermore, parents are perceived as barriers as they are not adequately involved in the school practices. Regarding the implementation in schools, support from the principal is required as they have a huge influence on the school

culture. But also, other school personnel like social workers or teacher students are named as potential and needed sources of support, for example to facilitate role plays.

Education on promoting active and responsible citizenship

One category addressed the inclusion of (educating) active and responsible citizenship in teacher education. The concept is not attended to properly in neither general nor subject-specific courses. Rather, it is briefly addressed in related courses such as political science or history: “I’ve got the impression that it [active and responsible citizenship] is rather marginally discussed in higher education” (Teacher Educator 2 (male)). Furthermore, during teacher training, a module on value education and how to convey these with content and methods is mandatory. Methods enabling students to experience active and responsible citizenship in schools are known from the studies, but as outlined above, it is challenging to implement these in practice due to a lack of resources.

Relevance of active and responsible citizenship in schools

The focus groups agreed on the relevance of the topic as indicated by their discussions. For example, Policy Maker 1 outlined that active and responsible citizenship is relevant across different subjects. Nevertheless, in this vein, the participants stressed the gap between the relevance and the implementation: Since active and responsible citizenship is not anchored in curricula, (early career) teachers are not paying a lot of attention to it. This is in line with what Teacher Educator 2 and Teacher 1 (female) say: theoretically, the topic is of interest, but it is not practically applied nor lived in schools. Conclusively, this category also refers to the lack of support as well as further challenges teachers face when including active and responsible citizenship in their classrooms.

Programs on active and responsible citizenship – or the lack thereof

The participants referred to several labels and initiatives that address topics in the context of active and responsible citizenship. For example, they mentioned “school without racism, school with courage”, “Living democracy”, “Democracy school” or “Student parliaments”. Teacher 2 (female) re-membered a project they recently heard of for the first time which addressed social learning, bullying, prevention, and democratic participation.

There was uncertainty whether these programmes were actually relevant and intend to promote active and responsible citizenship actively. While Teacher 1 stated that aiming at achieving such a label would at least start some processes at schools, Teacher 2 was skeptical and outlined the gap between having the label and acting accordingly. Here, it is important to refer back to the importance of support and school culture for the implementation of democratic practices in schools.

Ideas for addressing active and responsible citizenship in and out of the classroom

Even though many challenges were mentioned, participants of the focus groups came up with various ideas for addressing and promoting active and responsible citizenship. These can be distinguished in ideas for application in and beyond the school context.

For promoting active and responsible citizenship in class, the focus groups referred to (didactical) approaches aiming at theoretical input, active experience, and competence development. This can be done in various subjects such as social sciences like politics or history, language, or sports or even implemented cooperatively between different subjects. First, participants mentioned the active engagement with the topic active and responsible citizenship as well as related topics like democracy, inequalities, or citizenship. In this vein, the participants highlighted the need for critically reflecting on the topic as well as the students' place in their environment. Further promotion of competences like compromising and communicating (as outlined before) should be focused on in class. For this purpose, didactical approaches with group work like discussions, argumentations, role plays, or theatres can be implemented.

In this vein, it is important to highlight the rather subordinate role of the teacher. After all, students have to become "active and responsible citizens" by themselves (as outlined above). This means they provide information and then facilitate and guide the students' own experiences. This can be done by being inclusive and acting as a model, not emphasizing authorities, and interacting with the students on one level. For example, teachers could introduce self-regulated learning and involve the students in certain decision processes in class, e.g., the order of tasks or respect students' interests by adjusting topics to their needs as far as possible. Overall, the importance of promoting self-efficacy was highlighted: Students should experience that it matters what they do or say, no matter how well they do or say it.

Activities aiming at promoting active and responsible citizenship do not have to be attached to the classroom but involve the school culture and practical aspects. Enabling active participation outside of the classroom and involving students in certain decisions and thus giving them more responsibility by introducing self-regulatory committees, kiosks or mediators can be an important step to living actively and responsibly. Enabling such positive experiences and ascribing additional responsibilities to students can enhance their self-efficacy beliefs according to the focus groups. Another idea is that of conducting projects or project weeks dealing with the topic to react to the challenges (e.g., concerning the curricular restrictions) and offer a variety of formats.

The focus groups state that all-day schools have huge potential for promoting active and responsible citizenship. Like this, spaces for exchange, creativity, or sports in form of task forces can be created in which students can show initiative.

Apart from possibilities in schools, the participants mentioned ideas for promoting active and responsible citizenship outside of schools. They highlight the importance of informal learning possibilities in so called "third spaces" next to students' home and school.

Conclusions

The data collected in each of the partner countries showed similar trends in the education for active and responsible citizenship. The Focus Groups and questionnaire results also showed that some problems and suggestions are specifically pointed out by the experts and teachers in each country. As such, the following conclusions highlight those similar and dissimilar tendencies and present some specific issues in a comparative fashion.

Importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship

In all four countries' reports, the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship is highlighted by all three data collection instruments (literature review, focus group, and questionnaire). In Cyprus, focus group and questionnaire participants believe that teaching responsible citizenship in schools is essential to help students become active and responsible members of society. They argue that this topic should be incorporated into all school subjects to help students develop the necessary skills, knowledge, personal values and attributes. They believe that teaching responsible citizenship helps in the development of critical thinking skills, empathy, and social responsibility. In Portugal, the questionnaire responses showed that the vast majority of teachers find active and responsible citizenship to be a relevant discipline to teach. They even say they have adequate knowledge about the concept and possess the necessary skills to implement activities in the classroom. Nevertheless, the focus group participants showed less optimism and consider that a significant number of teachers, when faced with difficulties, give up on trying to implement the kind of activities that actually would promote active citizenship. In Italy, the questionnaire results also showed that most teachers think they have adequate knowledge about the concept of active and responsible citizenship and think it is a necessary subject to teach. The focus group participants expected to see active citizenship topics to have a more obvious representation in the school curricula. In Germany, the results from the questionnaire indicate that teachers believe they have sufficient soft skills to promote students' active and responsible citizenship. In a similar vein, focus group participants point at the importance of teachers themselves being active and responsible citizens, i.e., having developed a certain attitude towards living in a democratic society. Since teachers act as role models in schools, this attitude is crucial. From the questionnaire, it can be concluded that teachers do indeed perceive themselves as active and responsible citizens.

The above results are in line with studies that highlight that the promotion of active citizenship is highly valued especially given the current social, political, economic, and cultural context. Therefore, preparing students to participate in civic life, make informed decisions, and advocate for themselves and others is crucial in building a cohesive and democratic society (Ireland et al., 2006; Birdwell et al., 2013; Hoek et al., 2022).

Teacher training and professional development for active and responsible citizenship

Regarding teachers' actual preparedness for the promotion of active and responsible citizenship, all four countries' analyses agree on a current insufficiency or lack thereof of available programs and initiatives. In Cyprus, the results from both the survey and the focus

group highlighted the impractical character of the training provided by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI). As the focus group data further revealed, the only formal training was organized by the CPI in 2013-2014, as active and responsible citizenship was one of the main objectives set by the Ministry that year, and was supposed to be achieved by all schools. The training was non-mandatory and held outside school hours as most of the training offered by the CPI. From that year on, no further initiatives were reported. In Portugal, when it comes to teachers' preparedness regarding the promotion of active and responsible citizenship, a significant number of questionnaire respondents confirmed the lack of adequate training. The focus group discussion concluded that we should not lay too many expectations on traditional training sessions, and that regular participation in activities and projects would be more adequate. The questionnaire also showed that most teachers think they have the necessary skills to promote active and responsible citizenship, but they still need to be given concrete tools to implement activities in their classrooms. In Italy, a significant number of respondents to the questionnaire also confirmed the lack of adequate training. The focus group discussion concluded that the school provides a training base to initiate discussions on active citizenship issues, but there are no further educational opportunities. It is up to the teachers to choose how to deepen their knowledge on the issues highlighted by the Ministry of Education guidelines, but this deepening is not guided, resulting somehow personal and intuitive, i.e. based and limited on teachers' own experience. Similarly, in Germany, the results from the online questionnaire and the focus groups show that the topic of active and responsible citizenship is only briefly considered in teacher education. Engagement with the topic is mainly via self-study or external training and bits and pieces are covered in other subjects but a specific module on the topic is lacking.

The inadequacy of current training schemes has also been identified in previous research. As stated in Danau & Pauly's (2019) report on the challenges and good practices related to promoting citizenship and values, the lack of adequate professional support and development for teachers and school leaders in teaching democratic citizenship and universal values is a major challenge.

Teacher-related challenges in promoting active and responsible citizenship

In addition to teachers' preparedness challenge described above, other key factors to the promotion of active and responsible citizenship include, according to Cyprus' analysis, concrete materials in the form of targeted action plans, practical ideas, flexible curricula, interactive and experiential activities, and examples of how these can be applied in different educational contexts. In Portugal, there was also highlighted a conflicting tension between the promotion of active and responsible citizenship and the preparation of students to perform well on the national exams. The participants in the Portuguese focus group also reported a tendency of avoiding controversial political and social issues. Critical thinking, which is an important component of citizenship education, can only be promoted if this tendency is reversed. For that, an attitude of teachers and teaching administrators that does not only focus on assessment and quantitative results is necessary, as the Focus Group participants in Portugal confirmed. The Portuguese focus group also identified the lack of cooperation and discussion among teachers in schools as one of the biggest obstacles for the promotion of active and responsible

citizenship. This challenge was also identified by the Italian analysis which further concluded that teachers need to find the time, energy and motivation to engage their students in community-related projects, almost all of them being extracurricular. Finally, lack of knowledge about active citizenship education among teachers was highlighted as a major challenge among the German participants.

The above results agree with the most recent Eurydice report (Coster & Sigalas, 2017) that lists school culture, sufficient material, flexible timetables and curricula amongst the factors prompter to enhance the promotion of active and responsible citizenship in schools. Besides this, research studies (Evans, 2002; Sim, 2008; Ersoy, 2014) identified contextual and systemic factors especially in centralized and structured education systems where top-down teaching and learning approaches are adopted and are primarily focused on subjects and exams. As a result, teachers may not have the opportunity to customize the curriculum to meet the specific needs of the local society, which can make it difficult for them to develop critical and analytical thinking skills, values, and behaviors in students or support their participation in school and community-level activities, which are the main objectives of citizenship education (Coster & Sigalas, 2017).

Student-related challenges in promoting active and responsible citizenship

Some student-related challenges were also mentioned by some countries' analyses. For instance, in Cyprus, teachers consider that the skills necessary to become an active and responsible citizen are not easy to develop, in the first place. The lack of maturity they find in students makes them fearful of big changes in the teaching strategies. More involvement from parents and parent training is considered as a possible solution to mitigate these challenges. The focus group participants think students do not value enough the teaching of active and responsible citizenship because the school curriculum itself forces them to prioritize other subjects. As such, they expect that the relevance of active citizenship gave rise to a different curriculum design.

A review of the Portuguese literature indicates that the teaching of active citizenship tends to be teacher-centered. The results of the questionnaire survey and the focus group show somewhat contradictory statements in this regard. While the questionnaire indicates that projects are carried out which are also perceived as positive by the students, the participants of the focus group plead for an involvement of the students within discussions. This suggests that they feel that involvement is currently not being done sufficiently. The literature also reveals that students lack understanding and knowledge of the topic of active citizenship. The participants in the questionnaire survey do not fully agree with this. They report that their students are aware of the concept of active and responsible citizenship and also perceive it to be relevant.

In Italy, most teachers think that their students are aware of the concept of active and responsible citizenship and find it relevant. The student-centered challenges are associated with a lack of cooperation between families and schools. The experts recommend the creation of more opportunities for interaction between the various school agents and the involvement of students in the creation and management of the curriculum.

In Germany, most teachers think that their students value the education for active citizenship. Nonetheless, the focus group participants highlighted the heterogeneity of cultural and linguistic background among the student population. According to them, this makes it harder for children and their families to get involved in the school dynamics. Therefore, it is necessary to create opportunities for students to really take an active part in changing the school environment. The main goal of the educational system should be an inclusive one: to get everyone to feel a part of the school community. That is the necessary starting point for them to interact more.

In Cyprus, the questionnaire and focus group results showed that socioeconomic issues are seen as an additional challenge. In fact, the economic problems affecting students from marginalized communities prevent them from feeling included in the school community and inhibit their active participation. In contrary to what was verified in the other countries, in Portugal, students' economic situation is not considered an obstacle to the promotion of active and responsible citizenship. Some participants in the focus group even suggested that students from poor neighborhoods benefit more with practical approaches. In Italy, the economic situation of students is considered by some as an obstacle to the promotion of active and responsible citizenship, although not the most serious one, while for others it is not. However, in Germany, it was clear by both the questionnaire and the focus group discussion that socioeconomic issues are considered a challenge to the education for active and responsible citizenship. This is because they tend to distance the most disadvantageous students from the school community and from society as a whole.

Teaching practices for the promotion of active and responsible citizenship

When it comes to the teaching practices in Cyprus, respondents advocated for an interdisciplinary approach to embedding this active and responsible education in all subjects. Teachers can try out new teaching strategies, receive feedback from colleagues and mentors, and refine their approaches to better meet the needs of their students. Reflection was also highlighted as a strategy that helps in the assessment of teachers' own learning and the development of metacognitive skills. By reflecting on their experiences, teachers can identify what worked well and what did not, and make adjustments to their teaching practice accordingly while sharing their experiences, discussing challenges and receiving feedback. The need for schools to support reflective practice and provide learning opportunities that will help to transform their practices has been supported in several studies on teachers' professional development. Specifically, professional development that involves a reflective approach is found to facilitate growth and development in teachers as they critically reflect on their practices and develop new knowledge about content and pedagogy (Gudeta, 2022; Taddese & Rao, 2022).

Related to the type of activities that may promote active and responsible citizenship, the Portuguese literature review showed a reduced number of initiatives being held in the schools. The focus group discussion revealed a possible reason for this limited number: the emphasis of teaching is still laid on the comprehension of theoretical knowledge, not on the planning and execution of communal initiatives. The activities done in the context of research projects (such as ALICE and WE ACT) in the past showed that students themselves are not familiar with the

process of working in groups and developing activities outside the classroom. At the same time, studies published as part of the above-mentioned research projects show that such activities have motivational power and, when done with future teachers, they constitute an adequate type of teacher training. Through the construction of discussion spaces between teachers from different disciplinary fields (e.g. history, science, geography, etc.), engagement in transdisciplinary projects can be one way of not deviating from the curriculum but learning actively with the curriculum. From simple activities such as a previously designed visit to a museum to more complex projects such as the active environmental citizenship initiative discussed in Reis and Tinoca (2018), learning how to be an active and responsible citizen is possible. New ways to prepare teachers with the necessary pedagogical tools for the design and implementation of initiatives and activities are required.

When it comes to Italy, it was noted that ordinary classes are the first choice in the Italian system, but very often teachers also try to involve students in outside activities related to citizenship issues (e.g., issues related to the environment or legality, such as the fight against the Mafia). As emerged from both the questionnaire and the focus group, active citizenship should not be seen only as a formal subject and as an excuse to give students one more (easy) grade. The Italian focus group participants stressed that teachers need to have more time to implement extracurricular activities, getting students out of school more often. They also concluded that through building spaces for discussion between teachers, students, families and the school institution, it is possible to create pathways that are truly constructive and give young students the opportunity to grow and form critical thinking.

In Germany, the literature review showed that activities involving the use of metaphors are prioritized, especially to tackle politically relevant issues. The focus group participants argued for the dissemination of practices such as discussions, argumentative activities and role plays. Nonetheless, there are still a few practical activities being organized, especially outside the classroom. More could be done at this level, as such initiatives have a high potential to increase student engagement and participation. One the challenges most often mentioned by teachers is directly related to the teaching methods – overall, there is a lack of resources, as well as opportunities to create them in a cooperative way.

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Annex 1 (Questionnaire)

Section 1: Demographic data

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to say

Age:

- Under 25
- 25-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+

Education Level:

- Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Phd degree

Position held:

- Kindergarten teacher
- Primary school teacher
- Primary school deputy head-teacher
- Primary school head-teacher
- Secondary school teacher
- Secondary school deputy head teacher
- Secondary school head teacher

Type of Institution you are currently working at?

- Private
- Government

Years of experience:

- Two or less
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years

- More than twenty years

Section 2: Knowledge and perception about the promotion of active responsible citizenship in [country] schools

What type of training have you received on the assessment and teaching of responsible citizenship?

- None
- Formal training at my Institution
- Formal training outside my Institution
 - Which Institution? _____
- Informal and self-training on the subject (Internet; informal contacts, work and personal experience)

The following items describe statements about the teaching of responsible citizenship. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements by circling your response.

It is vital that we further promote active and responsible citizenship in [country] schools.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Our government is aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Teachers in [country] schools are aware of the importance of teaching active and responsible citizenship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Our school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) know the concept of active and responsible citizenship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Our school communities (school leaders, parents, school employees) are aware of the importance of promoting active and responsible citizenship in [country] schools.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Our students know the concept of active and responsible citizenship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Our students are aware of the importance of learning how to be active and responsible citizens.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Section 3: Challenges and opportunities of teaching and promoting active and responsible citizenship

Is it possible to conduct pedagogical research in your Institution?

- Yes
- No

Are you personally responsible for teaching and promoting active responsible citizenship in your Institution?

- Yes
- No

Does your Institution encourage dialogue and/or training on active and responsible citizenship?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how?

Do you consider that your students value activities that aim to promote active and responsible citizenship?

- Yes
- No

If yes, which type of activity/-ies?

The main challenges of promoting and teaching active and responsible citizenship in your Institution are:

Overall, learning about active and responsible citizenship will help your students / students at your institution to:

What do you need in order to be able to do more activities that promote active and responsible citizenship in your school/classroom?

The following items describe statements about the possible challenges of teaching and learning of responsible citizenship. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements by circling your response.

I have the needed soft skills to teach and promote active and responsible citizenship. (*soft skills: non-technical skills that relate to how you work.*)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

My students have the maturity to understand the concept and importance of active and responsible citizenship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

The socio-economic situation of most of my students constrains dialogue on active and responsible citizenship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Most of my students' household environments value the promotion of active and responsible citizenship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

I know how to adapt topics related to active and responsible citizenship to my students, regardless of their age.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know
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I react with tranquillity to strong opposite opinions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

I can easily manage conflicts amongst my students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Active and responsible citizenship impacts all areas of learning.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

A well-structured programme on active and responsible citizenship will help students on the acquisition of knowledge in all subjects.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Annex 2 (Focus group questions)

Semi-structured Questions

Please adjust the below suggested list of semi-structured questions based on your target group needs.

1. Are there active programmes on active and responsible citizenship in place in [country] schools?
2. What are the main pedagogical challenges of addressing active and responsible citizenship?
3. Do socioeconomical issues pose an additional challenge on addressing active and responsible citizenship?
4. Do you, as a teacher/policymaker/school leader/teacher educator, have formal training on responsible citizenship?
5. What is responsible citizenship?
6. What are the main practices endorsed on addressing responsible citizenship?

7. What do you feel is lacking on the responsible citizenship approach in [country] schools (e.g. Governmental support, school communities support (e.g., family involvement), a structured program)?
8. What should be the main focus when restructuring classes in order to promote responsible citizenship (e.g., interpersonal relationships, materials provided (movies, books, literature), a broader available schedule)
9. Is responsible citizenship considered a relevant topic/theme in [country] schools?
10. What is the importance of addressing responsible citizenship in [country] schools?

Annex 3 (Focus group consent form)

I, [NAME] , hereby declare that:

- I consent to participate in the focus group, organised by [NAME OF ORGANISATION], in the context of the Erasmus+ project “Active Citizenship Through Dialogue in Virtual Teacher Communities (ACT-DI-V),” [Project number: 2022-1-CY01-KA220-HED-000086763].
- I was informed about the project and I understood the project goals and expected results.
- I was informed that the discussion will be recorded and that photos will be taken and that the recording and photos will be solely for internal use by the researchers for the recording and analysis of the data.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that I will be asked and may stop participating in the focus group at any time I wish. During the focus group, or at its end, I can ask to modify or remove some of my remarks.
- My name will not be published or communicated to anyone outside of the project team.
- The information I will provide will only be used for this project and for the exploitation of its results.
- Each participant should respect the personal data of the other team members. I fully understand that any information provided by me, or the other members of the group should be kept confidential.
- My participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- I received the invitation with the information, I read it and I clearly understand the process that I will follow.

Place and date:

Participant’s signature