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**THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN
CIVIC EDUCATION AND
POPULISM:**

RESTORING CIVIC FAITH
AMONGST EUROPE'S YOUTH

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PREAMBLE

The 89 Initiative was originally founded in 2016 as the “1989 Generation Initiative” by a group of post-graduate students at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The Initiative is driven by the vision of a connected Europe, underpinned by principles of solidarity and equality of opportunity. It aims to harness the passions and skills of the Millennial generation of young Europeans, the ‘89ers’, to revitalise the European project so that it can meet the defining challenges of the 21st century.

Initially conceived as an inter-generational platform for policy debates, the Initiative soon expanded its geographical scope to become a pan-European organisation, with regional chapters across the continent, including in Brussels, Athens, Aberdeen, and Maastricht.

In 2018, the 89 Initiative adopted a new structure dedicated to knowledge production and project implementation, becoming the first pan-European ‘think-do-tank’. Today, the Initiative boasts in-house expertise on a variety of EU policy issues, with six research programmes that conduct research into Europe’s most serious problems and produce policy recommendations.

Education and populism are one of the Initiative’s main areas of research. Populism, in particular has attracted much scholarly attention since 2016, but while an expanding literature is fostering a deeper understanding of its symptoms and implications for democracy, research on its causes is still unsatisfactory. In contributing to these debates, the 89 Initiative’s Civic Education programme analyses the causes of populism using education approach. Specifically, this research stream aims at examining whether and how civic education policies and practices in Europe can reverse this ‘civic deficit and produce positive attitudes towards political participation and democracy, helping ultimately to generate trust in national and European institutions. Based on original research, this report offers a first contribution in this domain, as well as policy recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Populism is on the rise in most European countries, with a general dissatisfaction among European citizens with their governments driven by factors such as globalization, financial and economic crisis, austerity measures, rise of unemployment and reforms of welfare (Pinto, 2017; van Kessel, 2015). Populist parties can be placed in the context of a new cleavage in the European political sphere, that runs along inclusion versus exclusion and pro-European cosmopolitans versus nationalist orientations (Kneuer, 2019 : 40). Since Brexit, manifestations of Euroscepticism have made clear that EU citizens, and young people in particular, feel disconnected from European institutions, together with common concerns that the European project seems to have benefited elites and technocrats (Kerr and Lopes, 2008). Within these challenges, there is an increasing need to socially and politically re-engage Europe's youth. In this respect, civic education offers a solution in targeting young people, making them more active members of their communities, and by empowering them to change and challenge the status quo (Schulz et al. 2016). By teaching the youth notions of active, democratic, and responsible citizenship and by teaching students about how the European Union works, a true European identity can then be fostered (EFVET, 2016). As such, civic education can be a bridge to restore civic faith and re-connect citizens with their institutions.

The aim of this report is to examine policies, practices, and challenges regarding how civic education is taught in the classroom and to what extent it is equipped to tackle the current populist challenges that Europe is facing. Specifically, our study looks at the context of civic education in Europe as a whole and further zooms in on two European countries that have experienced, though in different forms, populists threats and youth disengagement from political participation: Italy and England. The methodology consists of three key activities: desk research for policy and academic

studies; pilot focus groups conducted in Italy and semi-structured expert interviews for the case of England.

Overview

The first section of this study outlines the main policies and practices of civic education in European countries. It identifies what civic education is, its value in the context of today's global challenges and the manner in which it is practically taught in schools. In addition, the section focuses on different strategies formulated at EU and national level to effectively teach civic education. The final part of the section examines some current challenges of linking civic education to populism including the implementation of non-formal methods to teach civic education; improving teachers training; and better incorporating into civic education curricula themes and topics such as populism, discrimination, and digital literacy. Section Two and three focus on Italy and England. Section Two looks at the link between populism and civic education in Italy. It outlines the decline in political participation for Italian youth against the appeal of populist parties. The section then moves on to look at how civic education is embedded in the national curricula and traces the historical-political drivers of this subject discipline in Italian schools. The final part of the section draws upon the findings of the desk research and the pilot focus group by identifying the main challenges to improving the link between civic education and populism: on the one side the gap between Ministerial guidelines for the civic education curricula and what is in practice taught in the classroom; on the other the lack of specific training - either initial or continuous - for teachers.

Section Three looks at the link between populism and civic education in England. It outlines the decline in political participation among the youth and the implication of Brexit for youth (dis-)engagement in politics. The section then moves on to look at how

civic education is embedded in the national curricula in terms of policies and practices. The final part of the section draws upon the findings of the desk research and the semi-structured interviews by identifying the main challenges: first, a gap between national guidelines and what is in practice taught in the classroom; second, the lack of specific training - either initial or continued - for teachers. Third, the importance of emphasizing the “skill” component of civic education and the need to increase synergies with local communities.

The final section of the report presents the conclusions of the study and proposes recommendations for addressing the link between civic education and populism as a way to restore civic faith and which improve youth participation in current political and societal challenges that Europe is experiencing.

On the basis of the findings of the desk research, the pilot focus group and the semi-structured expert interviews, the following conclusions emerged.

Conclusion 1: The gap between legislation and implementation of civic education in schools must be bridged

A clear gap exists between national guidelines and legislation on the civic education curricula and the actual implementation in schools. Civic education should be approached - and taught - in relation to the current challenges to democratic values and principles and better framed to address young people concerns and attitudes towards democracy and political participation.

Conclusion 2: Specialist teacher training on civic education needs to be improved.

The majority of EU countries do not have regulations or recommendation on the development of competences related to civic education. Initial, in-service, and continuous teachers’ training on specific

civic education content-related issues is regarded as one of the main challenges when referring to civic education teachers’ practices in schools.

Conclusion 3: There are specific “skills” associated with civic education and these should be developed by embracing a better dialogue with local communities.

Civic education should provide basic notions of “political literacy”; but it should also provide specific ‘skills’ associated with active citizenship, community involvement, social responsibility and critical thinking. Students’ active participation in the school life and their involvement in the wider local communities should be promoted as fundamental learning experiences linked to civic education curriculum and, possibly, assessment

Conclusion 4: Civic Education should systematically incorporate concepts of European citizenship in its curriculum through direct initiatives in the classroom

Civic Education should systematically incorporate concepts of European citizenship in its curriculum and initiatives; not only by providing an understanding of EU institutions and governance, but by exploring the role of the European Union in relation to the exercise of active citizenship, democratic principles and the protection of human rights.

Policy Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. EU institutions conduct specific cross-country studies and cross-country evaluations which could further support national governments in better understanding the gap between national legislation and actual implementation of civic education in schools, not only in relation to the national-level, but in relation to a wider European and global perspective.

2. The EU Commission expands the scope of coordination and support for teachers' training in civic education and increases its activities through policy dialogue and networking, supporting governments to establish better frameworks in which teachers' training for civic education can further be developed.

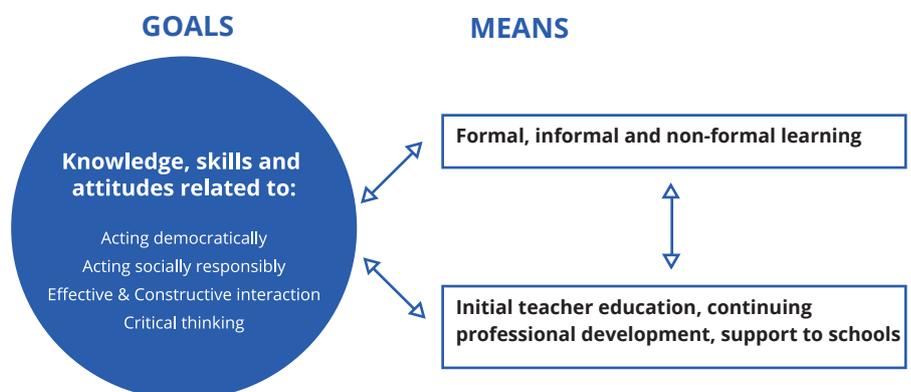
3. The European level acts as key catalyst for policy engagement at national level by providing guidance and knowledge through research, increased networking through existing civic education organisations, and small scale projects fostering a greater involvement involvement of schools and local communities.

4. The EU devotes more attention to expanding its role by directly engaging with schools institutions and students through increased initiatives to emphasize the key place that the European Treaties assign to principles of solidarity, social justice and equality, and the protection of human rights and to enhance European themes into classroom lessons.

THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN CIVIC EDUCATION AND POPULISM: RESTORING CIVIC FAITH AMONGST EUROPE'S YOUTH

A huge amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the study of populism since 2016. However, research on its causes is still unsatisfactory. In contributing to the current debates on populism and young people, this report looks at populism from an education perspective. The first section outlines the main policies and practices of civic education in European countries and examines some current challenges when linking civic education to populism. Section Two and Three look at the populist experiences of Italy and UK and the extent to which civic education is equipped to face them. The final section presents the conclusions of the study and proposes recommendations for how populism might be addressed through civic education.

Figure 1.1: Goals and means of citizenship education in school



Source: (European Commission et al., 2017:9)

1. POPULISM AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE

1.1 What is civic education?

Existing studies on civic education can be mapped into three clusters of research: definition of civic and citizenship education, what value it has in today's world, and how it is carried out in schools. The most comprehensive studies on civic education in the EU are undoubtedly the Eurydice Report of 2017, which analyses the policy initiatives related to civic education covering 42 education systems in the EU, followed by the 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), which covered 28 states, 14 of which are EU member states. In terms of what is defined as being citizenship education, it is agreed that beyond developing democratic, political and social knowledge, this type of education aims at fostering personal and inter-personal abilities (European Commission et al., 2017. See also Arthur & Cremin, 2011; Reid et al., 2010;). It is not merely about teaching students how institutions work, but rather helping them interact constructively, thinking critically and being socially responsible (See Figure 1.1). Since civic and citizenship education aim to provide young people with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for their greater participation in society (Schulz et al., 2016), both terms are considered synonymous and will be used interchangeably in the following analysis.

Figure 1.2: Relationship between civic knowledge and civic attitudes, data from ICCS 2016

	Negative relationship	Positive relationship	No relationship
Conventional citizenship	BE - FI		
Institutional trust		BG, DK, HR, IT, NL, SE	
Electoral participation			BE - FI, BG, DK, FI, HR, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, SE, SI
Immigrant rights			BE - FI, BG, DK, FI, HR, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, SE, SI

Source (JRC, 2018; 17)

Looking at the value of citizenship and civic education, its inherent strength stems from its goal of encouraging younger generations to become active members of their societies (See Figure 1.2). Citizenship education, based on inclusive democratic citizenship, can help build trust, cooperation and networking skills, which in turn can help bridge distances and build social capital in divided societies (Gibson & McAllister, 2012; Print & Coleman, 2010). Related to the earlier discussion on increasing youth participation in political life, studies have found that while there may be a lack of interest in political activities, younger people are willing to partake in alternative models and forms of political participation (O’Toole, 2015). Studies also indicate that civic skills learnt in civic education are life-long (Hooghe and Wilkenfeld, 2007) and that these are valued by employers (Schulz et al., 2016).

Figure 1.3: Educational approaches measured in ICCS 2016

Formal Learning in School	Students’ report on the opportunities to learn about civic issues at school
Informal Learning in School	Principals’ perceptions of engagement of the school community
	Students’ perception of openness in classroom discussions
	Students’ participation in democratic activities at school
Informal Learning Outside the School	Student’s Active involvement in the community

Source: (JRC, 2018; 10)

Considering how citizenship education is carried out, there are opportunities to maximise outcomes both within and outside the educational system (See Figure 1.3). Within the classroom, the ICCS shows that an open classroom climate is the single most effective factor associated with positive civic attitudes including citizenship values, trust in democratic institutions, solidarity and potential for political participation (JRC, 2018). In the Eurydice report, this is referred to as interactivity, where students in class are encouraged to express opinions, ask questions and debate.

The participatory element of civic education is posited as a strength to be further developed (Pontes et al., 2017; Isac et al., 2012; Alivernini & Manganeli, 2011). In the literature, attention is also devoted to practical experiences beyond the classroom, as the Eurydice report finds that extra-curricular activities play an important role in increasing civic engagement. Non-formal education is also presented as an important educational force to influence and inform individuals' attitudes (Romi & Schmida, 2009). If students learn about social and democratic issues by experiencing it first-hand, there exists greater potential for their civic development. Maximising active citizenship can therefore be achieved by coupling educational strategies to increase civic knowledge with practical experiences that can help shape attitudes.

Experiences outside the classroom are fundamental to educating active and socially responsible students because their attitudes and intentions depend on individual characteristics that go beyond what they learn in class. Examples include personal interest in politics as well as habits of discussing political events outside the school or online (JRC, 2018; Henn & Foard, 2014). This means that civic education is a tool that can be used to improve civic attitudes, but that is context-dependent on social and historical factors (Schulz et al., 2016). Biesta and Lawy (2006) identify this context-dependency as a potential

challenge to the implementation of effective civic education. Indeed, the literature points to this as being a fundamental concern to bear in mind when formulating educational strategies.

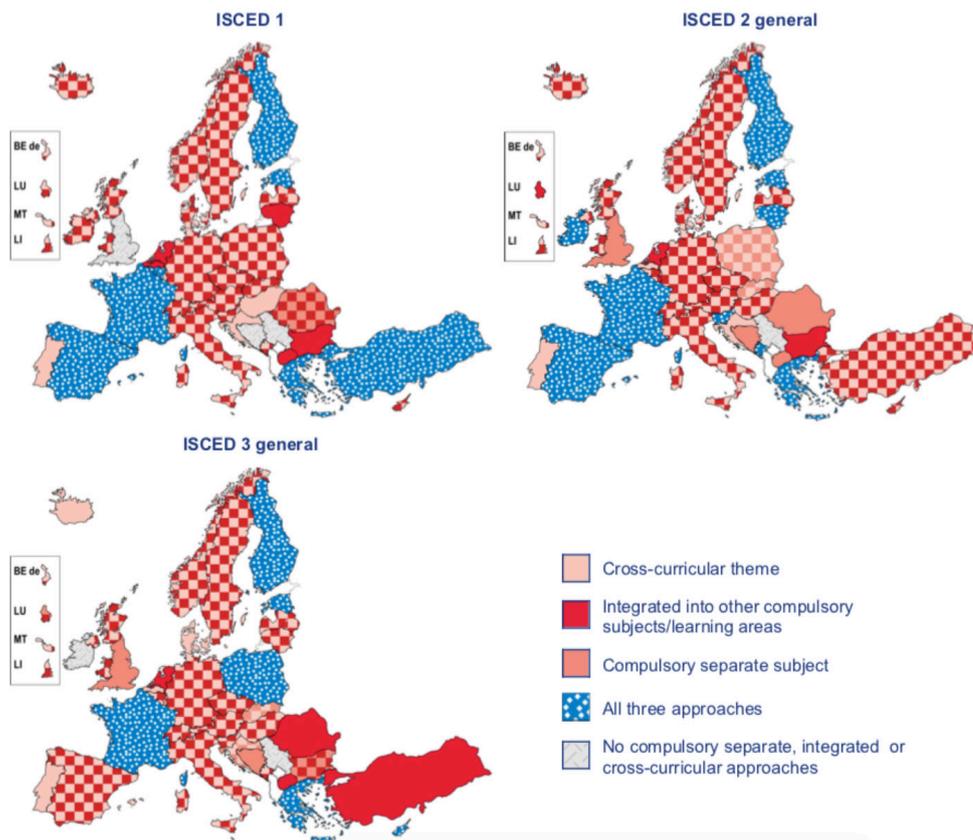
1.2 Civic education in the curricula

In almost all the Member States of the EU, citizenship education is delivered to all young people at different stages of their educational experience. While civic education may be compulsory at all levels of general education, its status, duration, place and formulation varies greatly from country to country. There are three main approaches, which can be used separately or combined: civic education as a cross curricular theme to be delivered by all teachers, as a topic integrated with other compulsory subjects or as a dedicated separate school subject (See Figure 2.1).

The method that is the least adopted is having civic education as a compulsory separate subject. Among the countries who do this are Belgium, France, Greece, Romania and Finland, although duration varies amongst them. In systems where it is taught as a separate subject, civic education is more elaborated and more attention is dedicated to it being carried out effectively. In Belgium, for example, an “Action Plan for intercultural and religious dialogue” was formulated in 2016, as a project-based learning approach (European Commission, 2018). Finland leads in terms of knowledge acquired by students and has one of the most comprehensive approaches in terms of a high number of recommended hours and with teachers being trained actively (European Commission, 2018). With France and Estonia, Finland offers civic education throughout the whole of general education. Not surprisingly, Finnish people are among those with the strongest civic skills (Schulz et al., 2016).

In terms of what is the content considering the curriculum, Eurydice identifies four broad areas. Curricula will not necessarily feature all competences, but can chose to focus on some (European Commission et al., 2017). There is no order of importance, so the following classification is merely for the purpose of exposition. The broad areas are firstly, **interacting effectively and constructively with others**, focused on personal responsibility, communication, listening and learning how to cooperate with others. Secondly, **thinking and reflecting critically**. Thirdly, **acting in a socially responsible manner**, revolving around respecting justice, human rights, solidarity and sustainable development. In terms of presence in curricula, this has a slight lead over others. **Acting democratically** is the final broad area, where there is a focus on knowledge of political institutions, political processes, authorities, respect for the rule of law, to name a few. It is difficult to discern any pattern of distribution across Member States, even when comparing North and South, East and West or new and old EU members. One similarity is that while personal development tends to be focused on in primary school, critical thinking and acting democratically are present in secondary education.

Figure 2.1: Approaches to citizenship education according to national curricula for primary and general secondary education (ISCED 1-3), 2016/2017.

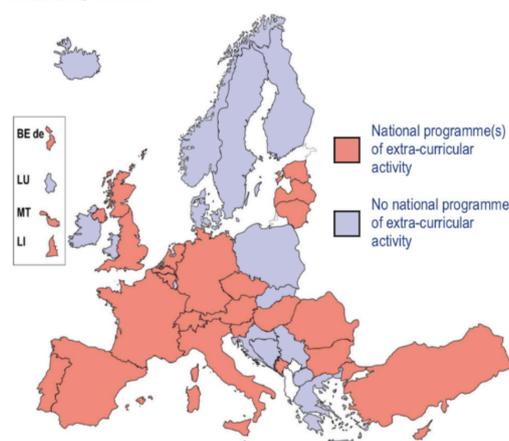


Source: (European Commission et al., 2017; 30)

1.3 Mapping national strategies and initiatives in Member States

The ICCS report shows that, since 2009 – date of the previous report – students’ civic knowledge increased in the countries participating, where most students reached a level B in civic and citizenship knowledge, implying they have some familiarity with concepts of democracy and rule of law (JRC, 2018). Indeed, since 2009, there have been various and diverse strategies formulated both at EU level and at national level to effectively teach civic education (See also Appendix). An example is the 2019 cross-national Teach#EU conference which aims at conceptualizing and enabling debate regarding the relationship between the idea of Europe and civic education. As a pan-European conference, engaging members of civil society, academia and the private and public sector, this initiative promotes best-practice sharing and an exchange of ideas on themes underlying civic education. While assessment of the conference is currently under evaluation, its foundations seem promising. Assessment of EU level initiatives is indeed difficult, as most are ongoing and have been implemented recently. Other examples include the Civic Education Working Group (CEWG) aiming to coordinate the European Students Forum’s (AEGEE) work on civic education, the Message to Europeans 3.0, an initiative with a grassroots approach to teach and involve Europeans in citizenship education, and the Survival Toolkit for EDC in Post-factual Societies (STEPS), which tries to provide a framework to address current political trends including populism and post-truths.

Figure 3.1: National programmes supporting extra-curricular activities



Source: (European Commission et al., 2017; 16)

In terms of practical experiences beyond the classroom (See Figure 3.1), one successful example is engaging students in the democratic life and governance of the school. This strategy is present in France, Latvia and Slovenia, with the last being among the European countries where students have a higher level of civic knowledge (European Commission, 2018; 104; 170; 226). Other extra-curricular activities can include sports, political life, volunteering and environmental activities, with countries most commonly recommending the last. In Hungary, for example, students can participate in the Hungarian Network of Eco-Schools, where schools not only have a curriculum that touches upon ecological issues, but also the functioning of the school itself, including practices such as waste management, are encouraged to be eco-friendly (European Commission, 2018; 138).

Activities that help students engage with and contribute to their wider communities help them feel more involved (European Commission, 2018; 115). Examples include the 'ConCittadini' Program in Italy, that organizes meetings, public talks and connects regional and civic institutions with schools, youth organizations and adult citizens. Another case of community engagement exists in Germany, where young people don't attend school to work in the social, environmental, cultural or political sectors as part of the 'voluntary social or environmental year' (European Commission; 2018; 124).

Furthermore, role plays, simulations and political excursions are being studied by different scholars and have proven to be successful way to engage students (Bursens et al, 2018; Weber and Kotter, 2017). More schools are trying to actively participate in both national and European projects to promote civic education. Two examples are the Italian "A day in the Senate" (European Commission, 2018; 161), where students can visit the political institution and talk to Senators, and the European Youth Parliament, present as an extra-curricular in many schools across Europe.

1.4 Concluding remarks

From the literature, we can conclude that citizenship education in it and of itself has important value for the functioning of our societies. It increases civic knowledge and skills most prominently when it is taught as a separate compulsory subject, rather than when it is integrated with other subjects or presented as a cross-curricular theme.

A core finding from the existing literature is that **participatory, practical and open approaches to civic education lead to higher expected future political participation** (JCS, 2018). Swedish students have among the strongest civic skills in Europe, and the fact that they focus on open classrooms and consider diversity an asset points to its importance (European Commission, 2018; 281). Educational systems should therefore focus on ensuring that classroom environments represent these principles and make students feel included. This can be in the form of more debates and discussions, or by allowing pupils to have a say in what they would like to learn and resultantly participate in democratic practices of the school. In terms of a proposal, this would have to be formulated by increasing and improving training for teachers.

In terms of areas for further research, although some studies focus on **teacher training** (Olser, 2006; Buchanan 2017), there is scope to further investigate the subject. The Eurydice report gives a comprehensive overview of the type of training and support that teachers receive: only 6 Member States offer teachers the possibility to specialise in civic education, some offer guidance on general pedagogical competences and 17 countries have no regulations or recommendation on the development of competences related to civic education (European Commission et al., 2017). Indeed, a report by the European Parliament (2016) suggests that more should be done with regards to the curriculum, teacher training and teaching methods.

Another area for future research is that of **specific content in the civic education curricula**. The Eurydice Report identifies four broad areas covered in curricula: interacting effectively and constructively with others; thinking and reflecting critically; acting in a socially responsible manner and acting democratically. In terms of what competences countries decided to cover, any discernible pattern is difficult to identify. In the European Commission's Education Monitor (2018), there is some mention of themes in curricula (See Figure 4.1) but it is not exhaustive. Some studies evaluate mentions of racism related to civic education (Wilkins, 2006; Singh, 2010) but these tend to, again, be country-specific. Further, most these studies are focused on how civic education can be the solution to specific themes, such as racism or resistance to migration (Patterson & Choi, 2018), rather than evaluating how they are taught in school. It can be said that there is a more European dimension to civic education, however, especially when referring to threats to Europe's core values, there can be more attention devoted to how civic education tackles pressing subjects such as discrimination, fake news, migration and populism.

Figure 4.1: Mention of specific themes in national contexts, from the European Commission's Education Monitor.

Country	Theme mentioned in the teaching of civic education
Austria	Discrimination
Cyprus	Civic education is a point of focus in digital education. Racism prevention is also specifically mentioned
Estonia	Entrepreneurship taught as part of civic education
France	Racism and inclusion
Germany	Media literacy, fake news and populism
Slovakia	Racism, discrimination and populism
Spain	Specific measures to fight racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism
Sweden	Focus on racism and diversity

Source: (Durazzano (2019) elaboration on data based on the European Commission, 2018)

A further interesting but underdeveloped aspect of civic education is that which focuses on digital and entrepreneurial skills, especially given the importance the EU is awarding to the completion of the Digital Single Market as well as investments in Research and Development. In the literature, some attention is being dedicated to young generations given their familiarity with new forms of media. Heiss and Matthes (2017) evaluate how social network sites have become territories for right-wing populist actors, especially when attracting adolescents who have shifted their participatory activities to social networks. Resultantly, authors such as Ranieri (2017) cite the importance of increasing media literacy and media education to counter populism. New technologies have the potential to disrupt the way we socialize but most importantly, advancements such as Open Data and Open Governments will revolutionise the notion of active citizenship. This is because citizens will have more opportunities to engage with open, transparent and accountable governments, but it is important to teach them the skills to do this effectively (See Figure 4.1 for the mention of digital in civic education).

2. POPULISM AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN ITALY

2.1 Italian youth and the rise of populism

Political participation of European youth has declined significantly over the past few decades leading to young people being alienated from mainstream electoral politics (Sloam 2014, p. 217). This is particularly true for Italian youth (Gozzo, 2010), whose decline in political participation has coincided with the country's long term economic downturn. This is marked by one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the European Union, high level of short-term, atypical employment, late school-to work transition and a significant socio-economic divide between North and South. (Crepaldi et al., 2014; Fullin and Reyneri, 2015; Sergi et al, 2008; Walther, 2006). According to Gozzo (2010), these converging macro-structural features impact on the commitment of Italian youth to political life; especially, if we consider the acquisition of financial independence as an important factor in shaping political interest and participation.

At the same time, in the last few years, we registered an increasing engagement in alternative forms of participation from among Italian youth, like acts of protest and self-directed involvement (Gozzo, 2014). In particular, young Italians seem to have rejected mainstream politics and turned to alternative political parties that present a populist message (Sloam 2013, 2014). According to ISPOS analysis of 2018 election, a large number of people aged 18-34 voted for Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement (35,3 %) and, to a lesser extent, for Matteo Salvini's League (17,8%) (Formigoni and Forni 2018). In particular, the Five Star Movement (M5S) is overwhelming the preferred party among new voters (aged 18-22) who voted for the first time (Formigoni and Forni, 2018).

M5S's ideological platform mixes a virulent anti-establishment discourse and open criticism of traditional representative democracy with notions drawing on environmentalism and left-wing economics (Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015), as well as its innovative use of the Internet (McDonnell, 2018) as tool for bottom-up democracy (Bordignon

and Ceccarini, 2013). The other party, the League, share the same anti-establishment sentiment. Since Matteo Salvini became its leader in 2013, the new League's populism reshaped the traditional 'us versus them' narrative mainly on anti-EU and anti-migrant stances, particularly in relation to the so-called 'refugee' crisis (Albertazzi et al., 2018)

2.2 Citizenship education in the Italian Education System

The Italian education and training system includes early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education. At the end of the upper secondary school education, students who successfully pass the final exam ('Esame di stato'), receive a certificate that gives them access to higher education. (Eurydice, 2018). In Italy, civic-political education is seen as a general aim of the whole education system, to which all school subjects should contribute (Losito and D'Apice, 2003). The most common name for describing this educational activity is 'educazione civica' ('civic education'), used often in a very broad manner, including both cognitive and affective /behavioural aspects (Bombardelli and Codato, 2017).

'Civic Education' is part of the Italian national curriculum since 1958, when Italian education minister, Aldo Moro, introduced this as part of the subject of history in secondary schools. According to Luciano Corradini (2013), Moro's approach was evidently inclined in treating civic education not as a separate subject, but rather as a cross-curricular theme, inspired and grounded in the study of the Italian Constitution. This approach will inform the subsequent reforms (for a detailed review see Bombardelli and Codato, 2017; De Luca 2010) until 2008, when the teaching of civic education was reformed with a new subject called 'Citizenship and Constitution' ('Cittadinanza e Costituzione', law no 169 of 30 October 2008). The law defines this a key objective of education, but there is no systematic approach to its implementation, which happens at school level (European Commission 2018). According to Italy's Ministry of Education (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2018) the main objective of education is to develop in all students a sense of "active citizenship" inspired, among others, to the values of responsibility, legality, participation and solidarity. The Ministerial Circular Letter 86/2010 explicitly introduced a long list of dedicated and cross-disciplinary themes of 'Citizenship and Constitution', intended to be

delivered through a cross-curricular dimension integrated into several conventional subjects, although without a precise time table and without a final assessment (Bombardelli and Codato, 2017). Schools and individual, indeed, teachers have the autonomy to choose how to implement these to reach the expected goals (European Commission 2018). Across the national territory, schools are implementing projects and courses related to different areas of civic education (Losito and D'apice, 2003) often in partnership with NGOs, voluntary sector, and other institutions (Bombardelli and Codato, 2008).

Overall, there is a general consensus on an implementation gap between intended and implemented curriculum (Losito, 2003). That is why the League party has recently presented a bill that make civic education a compulsory subject and establish how this should be an integral part of final evaluation in secondary education; (Tuttoscuola, 2018); another similar initiative has been presented by the Anci, the organization which reunites Italian municipalities; some region like Veneto and Emilia Romagna have also launched their own autonomous initiatives (Zunino, 2018).

Lastly, the current Minister of Education Marco Bussetti recently announced that Citizenship and Constitution will be part of the oral component of this year final exam in secondary school.

2.3 Concluding remarks

Drawing on data analysis from the focus group we conducted in Sicily with teachers and students, and the review of the significant literature on civic education in Italy, we identify some major limitations that mostly concern issues to do with implementation. In line with the relevant literature on citizenship education in Italy (Bombardelli and Codato, 2017; European Commission, 2018; Losito, 2003) participants agree that the formal implementation of 'Citizenship and Constitution' curriculum has been sparse and lacking of a systematic approach. Implementation largely depends on the proactivity and the skills of single teachers. Participants in our focus group describe being constantly informed of a plethora of different projects and initiatives promoted by the Ministry Education around civic education in key topics like anti-bullying, gender equality and legality. These initiatives, however, never touch on issues to do with populism. They explicitly argue that such word is never used in the ministerial directives. Civic education should be rethought as an autonomous compulsory subject assigned to a specific teacher; with a defined, coherent curriculum, instruction time and mode of assessment. Teachers should receive clear and systematic guidelines on learning objectives, contents and expected outcomes; more efforts should be placed on both pre-service and in-service teacher training; Interdisciplinary is seen therefore as a weakness, although collaboration among teachers is presented as positive factor, participants argue that there should be a responsible teacher in charge of the subject. History and Law teachers are seen as the ideal candidates for this role. In particular, law teachers should be valorised when available in the school.

Cross-disciplinary themes, initiatives and projects should be used as integrative teaching strategies; however, these should be always systematically planned and coordinated in terms of content and learning outcomes in partnership with the civic education teacher; teachers staff meeting ('consiglio di classe') should be the deputy place for the planning of cross-disciplinary initiatives. Lack of assessment is deemed to affect the status and perception of the subject among students. Most importantly, participants see inadequate training received by teachers as major factor impacting the quality of teaching. Teacher in focused group complained about not receive formal training on Citizenship and Education; in-service teacher training, although being available, appears to not be efficient or systematic. A significant divide is identified between general (Licei) and technical/ vocational upper secondary education. This expresses the historical class-based stratification of the two secondary education streams in many parts of the country and impact the mode of teaching. Lastly, the introduction of Civic Education in the final examination at the end of secondary school is seen negatively by participants as abrupt and unexpected; students, in particular, complain about the lack of basic training received across secondary education. This initiative should therefore follow a coherent reform of the current governance of 'Citizenship and Constitution'.

Excerpt from our focus group

'Things that belong to everyone, belong to anyone'

Participant 1, teacher (on the cross-disciplinary status of Civic Education in the Italian Education System)

'We need a general reform of education curriculum, we are far behind compare to other countries...'

Participant 2, teacher

'You cannot plan individually, the 'civic education' teacher... need to plan his curriculum with teachers of other subjects...so that students can have different perspectives (on a single topic)...the challenge is to plan within the teacher staff meeting'

Participant 4, teacher

'(Civic Education)... is not considered as important... in schools, many times it is not even taught...like in my school...we never have done it'

Participant 3, Student

3. POPULISM AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE UK

3.1 British youth and the Rise of Populism

Certainly since 1997, British youth participation in political life has been characterised by a growing disengagement (Henn and Heart, 2017; UK Parliament, 2018). The 2017 UK General Election, in line with the Brexit Referendum and the Scottish Independence Referendum, represents a significant reversal of this trajectory; youth turnout reaching 64% for those aged 18-24 led to a significant 21-point increase compared to the 2015 General Election (Henn and Heart 2017). According to Henn and Heart (2017), these trends might suggest that British youth are not apathetic or disfranchised, although they have a complex and nuanced relationship with traditional politics, they will vote when motivated by the political issues at stake or feel that they can influence the result. In this sense, the 2016 decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union might have been a wakeup call for British youth, who discovered to live in a deeply divided country, not only along class and education, but also across generational lines (Hobolt 2016). With most of young people supporting remain while the majority of those aged 55+ voted to leave (Ipsos MORI, 2016). At this juncture, it worth noting that Brexit has been identified as a major manifestation of growing right-wing populism in Europe (Iakhs et al. 2018). The Leave campaign highlighted the relationship between EU membership and the risks of uncontrolled immigration, increasing terrorist threats, the loss of sovereignty and an accompanying erosion of democratic accountability (Clarke et al, 2017). Youth firm engagement in the pro-Europe camp seems to suggest that young British people locate themselves in opposition to such narrative.

3.2 Citizenship education in the English Education System

Full-time education is compulsory from the term following a child's 5th birthday until they turn 16. Primary education consists of Key Stage 1 for ages 5 to 7 and Key Stage 2 for ages 7 to 11. Secondary School is composed of Key Stage 3 for ages 11 to 14 and Key Stage 4, which is for ages 14 to 16. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is measured mainly through a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Students can remain in part-time of full-time education or training beyond the age of 16. (Eurydice, 2018).

The history of citizenship education in England is characterised by lack of interest in developing this as independent subject (Kerr, 2003). Compared to other countries, England has been slow to provide a systematic form of citizenship education as a matter of national policy (Mclaughlin, 2000). Historical explanations are varies, including the decentralization of school curriculum (Mclaughlin, 2000) and the absence of a codified constitutional framework (Andrews and Mycock, 2007).

Since 2002 citizenship education has been a part of the national curriculum in England for key stages 3 and 4 with an optional GCSE available in the subject (UK Parliament, 2018). In primary schools for pupils aged 4-11 citizenship education was introduced as part of the statutory cross-curricular theme of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) (Andrews and Mycock, 2007). The introduction of CE as a statutory curriculum requirement was part of the recommendations produced by the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools, chaired by Professor Bernard Crick and for this commonly known as the Crick Group, formed in 1997 by the new Labour Government (Kerr, 2003). The background to this initiative was the growing evidence of a general decline in civic engagement in Britain, including electoral turnout, civic disengagement, diminishing interest in formal politics, and pessimistic projections of active citizenship (Whiteley, 2014;

Pontes et al., 2019). In particular, Bernard Crick saw enhancing the political literacy of young people as a means to counter rising levels of democratic apathy (Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). In the 70s, Crick was closely involved in the Politics Association and the Hansard Society's 'Programme for Political Education' initiative between 1974–1978 (Kisby, 2009); his view of citizenship education was therefore much focused on recovering the specificity of political relations and political processes as core subject separated from the generality of morals and values (Frazer 2000). On the other side, the Labour government's commitment to encourage citizenship education was connected to New Labour's political agenda of combining an emphasis on social justice with individual responsibility (Kisby 2009, p. 44).

The Crick Report (1998) recommended that schools educate pupils in citizenship and democracy as a separate statutory curriculum requirement (Andrews and Mycock, 2007, Frazer, 2000) defining 'effective education for citizenship' as comprising three separate but interrelated strands: social and moral responsibility; community involvement and political literacy (Burton et al., 2015). According to James Weinberg and Matthew Flinders 'Crick's vision of citizenship education was explicitly framed as a corrective to the dominant liberal tradition with what was interpreted as its overly individualistic, litigious and apathetic approach to democratic engagement' (2018, p. 575). The report, therefore, relies on a republican rather than a liberal conception of citizenship with a great emphasis on active citizenship, civic morality and responsible participation (Kerr, 2003; Kisby, 2009). Citizenship education emerges as statutory requirement on schools and as an educational entitlement of all students. This means that uncoordinated local initiatives were seen as no longer adequate (McLaughlin 2000). Across the years, however, the actual implementation of CE was lacking (Weinberg and Flinders 2018), leading the UK Parliament Citizenship Civic Engagement Select Committee to

define the current state of citizenship education as 'poor' (UK Parliament 2018). Following the 2010 general election, the Conservative-led Coalition Government enacted some major in the governance of citizenship education; first of all, we have seen an ideological shift from the Crickean vision of active citizenship towards a neoliberal 'character' agenda, focused on personal rather than public ethics has been registered (Weinberg and Flinders 2018). This shift coincided with the adoption of 'fundamental British values' by the Department for Education (2014), as part of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils, which is one of the overall aims for schools (Starkey, 2018). Secondly, since 2010, secondary school system in England have undergone a radical transformation marked by the expansion of independent academies, run by private companies and funded directly by central government (West and Bailey, 2013; West and Wolfe, 2013). These schools do not have to follow the national curriculum, although they are required to meet SMSC standard (West and Wolfe, 2018). As argued by the UK Parliament Citizenship Civic Engagement Select Committee, the decline in use of the national curriculum has particularly affected citizenship teaching (UK Parliament 2018).

3.3 Concluding remarks

Drawing on data analysis from interviews conducted with key informants, and the review of the significant literature on civic education in Italy, we identify some major limitations that mostly concern issues to do with implementation and governance. Participants agree that CE has suffered what in specialist literature has been defined as an 'implementation gap' (Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). Overall, teachers have lacked of adequate directions regarding learning objectives, instruction time and assessment. This greatly affects the status of the subject and its place as a statutory subject in the national curriculum. In particular, since 2010, it appears a significant downgrading of the subject which mirrors the ideological shift from Crick's active citizenship model to a more character-based approach. This results in CE being side-lined in comparison to SMSC education in terms of both guidelines and funding.

In post Brexit-era, however, participants argue that Brexit could be an opportunity to rethink citizenship education; especially if the British public will be called to make other decisions about the future of UK. In particular, in the high polarization of post-Brexit era, political efficacy should include the capacity to understanding the other point of view and negotiating compromise across different opinions with respect and tolerance. In order to do this, participants argue that the original spirit of the Crick report should be recovered; especially in relation to its emphasis on active citizenship, as composed of both political literacy and skills' enhancement components. At this point, it is fundamental that schools are provided with more resources to promote students' active involvement; extending citizenship education beyond the classroom and into the community (Del Ponte et al. 2019, p. 7). Providing adequate training to teachers is also another essential element that requires further efforts. Without these adjustments, the status of the subject will not be improved. Moreover, given the Brexit vote, which revealed uncovered, profound divisions in contemporary British society (Osler, 2016 p.14); it is necessary moving beyond nation-centric conceptualization of Citizenship education, toward a more inclusive, international and cosmopolitan approach, reflective of the multicultural and diverse composition of UK society (Starkey, 2018; Osler 2002). Lastly, citizenship education is deemed to be particular important even at a young age (UK Parliament 2018) so that its place in primary education should be carefully addressed and reconsidered.

Excerpt from interviews with key informants

'Brexit could be a big opportunity to reinvigorating citizenship education...we need to focus on political learning in schools and citizenship education is the natural home for that to take place'

Interview 1

'You see things take it out of it and things add it according to the priorities of governments'

Interview 2 (on the curriculum)

'Democracy is not just simply the enactment of popular will... it is also a system of checks and balances, it is about ensuring that everyone's opinion in a pluralistic society are heard and avoiding tyranny of majority. Those are the principles of democracy that should be taught very early on in the classroom'

Participant 4, teacher

Interview 1

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our study provided a preliminary mapping of civic education practices and policies against the challenges of populism and youth's civic disengagement at European level, and specifically in Italy and the UK. The following conclusions and policy recommendations are developed in line with our findings in the previous sections.

1. Bridge the gap between legislation and implementation of civic education in schools

It is difficult to identify a discernible patterns in civic education curricula and how they are linked to national curricula guidelines in terms of students' assessment, teachers' competences and subject areas. In addition, the study of civic education should be approached not only under an historical-notional perspective – for instance the role of the Constitution in Italy and the role of the “British values” in England - but in relation to the contemporary challenges to democratic values and principles. Whereas several studies focus on how civic education can be the solution to specific themes, such as racism or resistance to migration, there is fragmentary information on how certain themes are tackled in civic education and how this might affect students' attitudes towards pressing topics related to populism such as (i) discrimination, racism and xenophobia; (ii) information provision and fake news; (iii) protection of minorities' rights and ethno-racial inequalities; (iv) digital skills and media education (v) relationship between representative and direct democracy. In order to understand the themes and topics civic education addresses in schools and how do they might differ from national guidelines, **it is therefore recommended that EU institutions conduct specific cross-country studies and**

cross-country evaluations. This would support national governments in better understanding the gap between national legislation and actual implementation of civic education in schools, not only in relation to the national-level, but with a wider European and global perspective in mind.

2. Improve teachers' specialist training on civic education

There is lack of specific content oriented teachers' training. Only very few Member States provide teachers with the possibility to specialise in civic education, with the majority of EU countries having no regulations or recommendations on the development of competences related to civic education. Teachers should receive clear and systematic guidelines on learning objectives, contents and expected outcomes; and more efforts should be placed on both pre-service and in-service teacher training. In this light, **it is therefore recommended that the EU Commission expands the scope of coordination and support for teachers' training in civic education and increases its activities through policy dialogue and networking in supporting governments to establish better frameworks in which teachers' training for civic education can further develop.**

3. Develop the specific “skills” associated with civic education through better dialogue with local communities

Civic education should provide basic notions of ‘political literacy’; but it should also provide specific ‘skills’ associated with active citizenship, community involvement, social responsibility and critical thinking which in turn are affected by the broader socio-economic context in which young people interact. Participatory, practical and open approaches to civic education lead to higher expected future political participation. The implementation of civic education teaching objectives, content and strategies should take into account the specificity of individual schools in dialogue with the local socio-economic landscape. Students’ active participation in the school life and their involvement in the wider local communities such as NGOs, the voluntary sector, and youth clubs - should be promoted as fundamental learning experiences linked to the civic education curriculum and, possibly, assessment. **It is therefore recommended that the European level acts as key catalyst for policy engagement at national level by providing guidance and knowledge through research, increased networking through existing civic education organisations, and small scale projects which foster a better involvement of schools and local communities.**

4. Systematically incorporate concepts of European citizenship in Civic Education curriculum through direct initiatives in the classroom

Civic Education should systematically incorporate concepts of European citizenship in its curriculum and initiatives; not only by providing an understanding of EU institutions and governance, but by exploring the role of the European Union in relation to the exercise of active citizenship, democratic principles and the protection of human rights. **It is therefore recommended that the EU devotes more attention to directly engaging with schools and students through increased initiatives to emphasize the key place that the European Treaties assign to principles of solidarity, social justice and equality, and the protection of human rights and to enhance European themes into classroom lessons.** A promising way forward would be to re-establish the project “Spring Day for Europe”, which was an annual campaign organised by European Schoolnet with the support of the European Commission composed by several initiatives. This aimed to enhance citizenship education by bringing Europe closer to its citizens and to strengthen existing Erasmus+ actions by setting specific priorities and themes in civic education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Note on Methodology

The methodology consists of three key activities: desk research; a pilot focus group and semi-structured expert's interviews. Firstly, the research was considerably based on the 2017 Eurydice Report and on the 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, both used as starting points. To cover the EU level, the research was carried out by analysing the European Commission, European Council and European Parliament websites and publications, searching for works that included the terms civic or citizenship education. In researching populism and civic education in the scholarly literature, Google Scholars was used, using key words such as indeed: populism, civic education, civic faith, youth political engagement, citizenship education and citizen initiatives. Using the same key terms, various education and political journals were consulted, including for example, *the Cambridge Journal of Education*, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *Contemporary Politics* or *British Journal of Educational Studies*. When researching specific themes included in civic education curricula, the key words were: discrimination, populism, fake news, digital, migrants, racism and diversity. This is because civic education tends to focus on traditional issues of citizenship such as justice, social equity and respect for democracy, and the themes mentioned above are all contemporary threats to democracy, which have only recently started to gain salience. In addition, we conducted a pilot focus group to better understand the themes that civic education tackle in classrooms in secondary schools in Italy and semi-structured interviews for the case of England. The main purpose of the focus groups and the interviews was to gain further insights on the link between populism and civic education in the two countries and validate the findings emerged through the desk research.

Appendix 2: Section 1: Civic education initiatives at EU level and In Member States

EU-level initiatives

Initiative	Description	Objectives	Approach	Implementation
Networking European Citizenship Education (NECE)	Networking process with stakeholders and institutions	Initiated by the EU Federal Agency for Civic Education, aiming to create a long-lasting network of stakeholders to give a pan-European definition of key concepts underlying civic education.	Multilevel approach	Small scale projects and networking.
Message to Europeans 3.0	A practical toolkit to address current political trends like populism and post-truths.	To understand how education can respond to current issues and how to engage civil society.	Pedagogical approach.	Implemented through meetings and workshops around Europe.
STEPS (Survival Toolkit for EDC in Postfactual Society)	A practical toolkit to address current political trends like populism and post-truths.	To understand how education can respond to current issues and how to engage civil society.	Pedagogical approach	Implemented through meetings and workshops around Europe.
Civic Education Working Group	Network initiative welcoming volunteers and contributors from all around Europe	Aiming to coordinate AEGEE's (European students forum) work on civic education, and avoid structural fragmentations across Europe	They formulated a toolkit with materials on civic education to enable training and debates on civic education at local level.	Toolkit and the strategic plan for 2017-2020 are available online to anyone.

Initiative	Description	Objectives	Approach	Implementation
Conference Teach#EU	A cross-national conference to discuss how civic education curricula can integrate the topic of Europe and the EU	Initiated by Eurosoc Digital and Gesellschaft fur Europa, to address relationship between the idea of Europe and civic education. Aiming to put in	A pan-European conference, made of two-days of conference with experts and stakeholders from across Europe	A two-day conference in Postdam held in September 2019.

Source: <http://www.icip.org/resource-library/icp-publications/global-youth-service-database/europe-2/>

National level approaches to civic education governance

Country	Strategies, programs and legislation to tackle civic education and knowledge	Authority responsible
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2015 - Decree concerning organisation of a course on philosophy and citizenship education at primary level (implemented September 2016) July 2017 - Decree on philosophy and citizenship education at secondary level (implemented September 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry for Education Ministry for Higher Education Ministry for Youth Minister for Social Equality
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2015 - Action plan including 11 measures for citizenship education, ensuring secularism and promotion of republican values, developing cultural engagement, fighting inequalities and fostering social diversity, strengthen sense of belonging to republic and mobilise higher education and research. The plan includes training for teachers and professionals. 2015 - Classes on Moral and Civic Education, implemented to promote the core value of the French republic: liberty, equality and fraternity (plus the values of justice, mutual respect and non-discrimination). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Education Directorate General for School Education

Country	Strategies, programs and legislation to tackle civic education and knowledge	Authority responsible
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017-2018 – National Citizenship Education Strategy (ENEC) aims to help students develop and participate more, while promoting fairer and more inclusive societies. Based on diversity and respect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education/ DG for Education
Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth strategy 2014-2020 - reflects the needs of the youth, especially in the areas of education and mobility, employment of young people and their entrepreneurship, culture and creativity, their participation, health and a healthy lifestyle, young people with fewer opportunities and volunteering. It also addresses environmental and global development problems, including young people's access to rights and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education, Youth and sports • National Institute for Further Education
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012 – Media education in schools • 2013 – Intercultural education in schools • 2014 - Remembering our past for our future – Recommendations for a culture of remembrance to form an object of historical and political education in schools • 2014 – Euro I Topic: a European Press Roundup, teaching children practical tools to analyse coverage. Implemented to give a wide and in-depth overview on current debates on the issues of interest to European citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • The Institutes of School Pedagogy of the Länder • Federal Education Agency
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014-2020 – Lifelong learning strategy 2020 which provides guidelines for development in education, planning to provide Estonians with learning opportunities and to promote self-actualization. • 2014-2020 – Youth field development plan for 2014-2020, targeted specifically for the youth to ensure self-actualization, avoiding unemployment, poverty, risk behaviour etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of education and research
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2015 – Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 which program for teaching, learning and assessment practices for post-primary education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Professional Development Service for Teachers

Country	Strategies, programs and legislation to tackle civic education and knowledge	Authority responsible
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016-2020 – Strategic plan for school co-existence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF)
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012-2016 - National strategy for creating an enabling environment for civil society development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Teacher Training Agency
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 012 - National guidelines for the curriculum of the pre-primary school and the first cycle of school education • 2014 – ConCittadini programme of meetings and public talks between regional and civic institutions and schools, youth organisations and adult citizens. Created to forge a strong network between citizens and institutions, to promote civic values and educate young students to become good citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR)
Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 – Government manifesto for 'an educational system which encourages a nation of free-thinking people within a democratic framework, invests in education that is inclusive, allows for the individual to develop and express himself freely and provides opportunities for learning throughout life' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR)
Latvia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014- 2020 - Education development guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Centre for Education
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014-2024 - Inter-institutional action plan for civic and national education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Development Centre (EDC)
Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014 – 2024 - Education strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute for Education

Country	Strategies, programs and legislation to tackle civic education and knowledge	Authority responsible
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2013-2018 - Working program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Centre of Societal Learning and Education
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 - White paper on education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for Education
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012 – The Citizenship Curriculum, a program of study at secondary level to provide students with knowledge about politics, democracy and Westminster as well as the skills to be active citizens. Initiated by the Labour Government. • 2015 – Prevent strategy, aiming to protect children from radicalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL)
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014 – Action plan against radicalisation and violent extremism • 2016 – Action plan against hate speech • 2016-2020 – Action plan against anti-semitism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry for Education

Source: (European Commission et al., 2017)

Appendix 3: Section 2: Populism and civic education in Italy

Members of the Focus Group – Italy

- Giovanna Riolo, Secondary School Teacher
- Albina D’agostino, Secondary School Teacher
- Milena Romei, Secondary School Teacher
- Francesca Patti, Secondary School Teacher
- Francesco Nobile, Student
- Carlotta Venezia, Student
- Domenico Licata, Secondary School Teacher
- Lucia Ingorgia, Secondary School Teacher
- Fabrizia Fasulo, Secondary School Teacher

Appendix 4 Section 3: Populism and civic education in England

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