
NATIONAL REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Context

Countries and regions across the world are going through a period of dramatic change, encompassing aspects of culture, politics, economy, and society, broadening horizons and internationalising outlooks. This makes it all the more important that citizenship education is comprehensive, clear, and that it equips learners to understand and function as comfortable and effective global citizens. This is particularly important in rural areas, which, some studies have found, are often left behind in the implementation of global citizenship education initiatives and agendas.

1.2 Project Objectives

Given the issues and context set out above, the aim of the Rural GCE project is to develop and disseminate a set of tools and materials that educators in particular can use to improve the uptake and implementation of global citizenship education in rural areas in particular. As a broader objective, the project hopes in the longer run to be able to facilitate greater citizenship participation in rural areas through this citizenship education and the development of more and better global citizens.

1.3 Project Target Group

There are a few main target groups, mostly centred around being rural, but reaching a number of different demographics nevertheless. These include employees and supporters of civil society organisations in rural areas, activists for NGOs based in rural areas or concerned with rural issues, local government and municipalities in rural areas, and of course educators and teachers in rural areas. It should be borne in mind that this is not a finite list, and that others with links to rural issues, or citizenship and education may be valid target groups also.

2. National Report

2.1 The Objectives of the Report

The national report concerns the identification of the current state of play rural global citizenship education in each partner country, and in particular the needs that must be met in each country to sufficiently improve the state of global citizenship in rural areas. Following a process of validation to ensure the veracity of these needs with stakeholders, the “TO-BE” situation will be identified in a common, overall report, defining what exactly it is that should be focused on to go from the current status quo to the desired, optimal situation.

As such, this report will form the foundation for the body of work that this project hopes to accomplish by establishing the parameters and rough aims of the content to be developed going forward.

2.2 The methodology

Partners will conduct desk research on the current situation around rural global citizenship education in rural areas and needs to be met in their own country. They will identify qualitative and quantitative data to describe their national “AS-IS” situations, and may present good practices in the field that will be used as examples to provide motivation and ideas to the project participants.

These will be verified through a validation survey that will be distributed to a number of stakeholders in the relevant area, then a final overall report produced, describing the ideal situation for rural global citizenship education and the gaps that must be bridged to reach this situation.

2.3 The results

2.3.1 Set out the most commonly used, useful, and effective definition of “rural areas” that are used in your country

The concepts of urban and rural areas are used and understood on a daily basis by almost everyone. However, not a clear and exact definition can be given due to each country’s particularities and characteristics. For example, the UN relies mostly on national definitions of these areas, however, the EU with close collaboration with OECD in 2014 created the Urban-rural typology for Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) level 3 regions which classifies the countries and their areas in three main types: i) predominantly rural, ii) intermediate and iii) predominantly urban (Dijkstra & Poelman, 2014).

Cyprus is characterized as intermediate, meaning that its population that lives in rural areas is between 20 and 50%. In fact, 33% of the island’s population lived in these areas in 2020 which corresponds to 400 605 people. In addition, there is not a big distinction between a village, a town or a city in Cyprus, making it complicated to differentiate them. Even though Cyprus is an island small in size, it is largely formed by large rural areas with low population density according to the Degree of Urbanisation for local administrative unites level 2 (LAU2). Moreover, these villages are not well communicated because nearby large towns with business, shopping or social services are lacking. Therefore, economically active population of rural areas tend to move to urban areas in order to find better job opportunities (Finn, 2019).

2.3.2 What sorts of topics and issues are generally covered by global citizenship education in your country?

Since Cyprus’s accession to the EU in 2004, the government redefined its policies and educational system in order to modernize it. In 2010, the National Seminar on Global Education concluded with the initiation of an informal multi-stakeholder group that would work with the support of the European Commission to develop a strategy for promoting

Global Education in schools but also by implementing a number of national events (Carracedo Bustamante, et al., 2017). This does not only mean the addition of further topics in the educational curriculum but also the offering of professional training for teachers. This has been possible since 2015 that the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has been responsible for the implementation of this new system for teachers.

2.3.2.1. Civic education

First of all, since 2003, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) has integrated in the education material different toolkits and topics in order to help students become active citizens by participating in society, by respecting diversity and by being open to new worlds and cultures. According to the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, the student that follows this kind of education will be responsible for himself, conscious citizen for his country and creative citizen for the world (CPI, 2015).

The new curriculum, under the theme “[For a democratic and humanitarian school of the 21st century](#)”, declared its aims to educate young people and transform them into active and democratic citizens and highlighted how important it is in the 21st century. A particular issue that was included in this new curriculum for Cyprus was the relation between the Greek and Turkish community that are both present on the island. Moreover, according to Eurydice¹, this civic education, in primary and secondary education, is promoted as a cross-curricular topic, meaning that it is integrated into several subjects instead of being a subject of its own (Valanidou, 2013).

2.3.2.2. Racism and Xenophobia

One of the main topics that have been covered in Cyprus in recent years, have been racism and xenophobia due to the recent phenomenon of immigration in the island (Carracedo Bustamante, et al., 2017). Third Country Nationals (TCNs) represent 7% of Cyprus’s population with the three most represented countries of origin being Philippines, Russia and Sri-Lanka. In fact, Cyprus has become the highest per-capita recipient of asylum seekers in the EU and has one Reception and Accommodation Center for Applicants for International Protection in Kofinou, an area that is characterized as rural (O’Connor, 2019). Therefore, educating people about this issue and trying to tackle racism among society has been a priority mainly in schools.

Since 2016, teachers have been encouraged by the MOEC to implement its anti-racist policy which is based on many European conventions. This policy does not only include guidelines on how to deal with an episode of racism but also, basic concepts on different terms related to this topic such as racism, discrimination, stereotypes, diversity etc. Teachers have been then able to teach their students about these topics and to make them more socially sensible and acceptable of any form of difference (ethnicity, color, language, sexual orientation etc.) (CPI, 2016).

¹ The EU Network on education.

This comes in compliance with the Global Citizenship Education and its key attributes. In fact, students learn about immigration which has become a major issue all around the world, they understand the rights and responsibilities of all individuals as well as about the value of respect for difference and diversity (UNESCO, 2015).

2.3.2.3. Gender Equality

Another attribute that UNESCO aims the learners of global citizenship education to cultivate is the awareness of women's rights (UNESCO,2015), an issue that has been integrated in the educational system of Cyprus as part of the education of human rights in general (CPI, 2016). In the European Union, a gender employment gap of 11.8% exists (2018) however it varies in each country. In fact, the lowest gap was reported in Lithuania (2.3%) and the highest in Malta (21.9%). In Cyprus, only 21% of higher positions were occupied by women, which is the lowest percentage in EU-27 (Eurostat, 2020).

One of the aims of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus since 2013 has been the cultivation of a culture of active citizenship that emphasizes on non-discrimination, this time, in regards to gender. Teachers, parents as well as students have participated in seminars and programmes in order to cultivate respect and acceptance among them, despite any gender differences. The Ministry of Education and Culture has adopted a National Action Plan (2018-2020) with different goals that wishes to establish such as the transformation of a fairer educational system in regards to gender, and the inclusion of educational material that promotes gender equality (CPI, 2020).

2.3.2.4. Climate change

It is widely known that climate change is a severe issue that we have to tackle not only as individuals but also as a collective group. The environment and the consequences of climate change could not be missing from the global citizenship education issues taught in Cyprus. In fact, in 2015, the MOEC adopted a policy on environmental education and sustainable development in order to study and protect the environment (Carracedo Bustamante, et al., 2017) in all types (formal and non-formal) and levels (primary, secondary, adult) of education at a national level (MOEC, 2019).

The Network of Environmental Research and Education Centers of Cyprus has contributed to the promotion of a more environmentally sensible education, its values and a friendlier way of life towards the environment since 2007. Currently, this network is formed by five centers in Cyprus with the majority of them being located in rural areas. These Centers offer informative programs with a variety of topics related to the environment such as the forest, the water, biodiversity, local cultivations, energy and tourism. (MOEC, 2019).

Moreover, numerous seminars have been held not only for the teaching of instructors and teachers but also for the parents in order to work together in the development of more environmentally friendly behaviors of children. More progress has been noted, with an example being the teaching material concerning marine education, a new topic related to water pollution, that was completed in 2019, (MOEC, 2019).

Students are encouraged to get to know the environment and the biodiversity of the island as well as the climate change that is already visible in Cyprus and to be actively responsible for their actions as well as to have personal and social duty to care about the environment. Moreover, they develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes to care about the environment and they become civically active in order to tackle climate change (MOEC, 2019). Both are highly requested attributes for global citizenship education (UNESCO, 2015).

Moreover, this is a particularly sensitive topic not only for Cyprus as a whole but for the island's rural areas. In fact, the country faces major challenges highly connected to climate change such as biodiversity, low precipitation, high temperatures and long periods of droughts. Therefore, people living in rural areas are the first ones that are affected by climate change, since the majority of them has an income from the agricultural sector (European Commission, 2020).

2.3.2.5. Media Literacy

Nowadays, we are bombarded by different types of media and messages. People are entitled to be informed the way they wish to, however they need to critically evaluate the information they receive and be media literate in order to be aware of the dangers misinformation brings. In Cyprus, this topic was mainly requested by school teachers, students as well as parents alongside with other issues such as the safe use of the internet and its use for more creative purposes (e.g. creation of videos) (MOEC, 2019).

The aim of the MOEC is to help students, teachers and parents to evolve to more media literate and creative citizens that critically evaluate the information found online, and are aware of the dangers and the numerous possibilities offered on the internet in order to promote a safe online culture. Due to the demand and the high interest from schools, additional workshops and videos have been available for the academic year of 2019-2020 (MOEC, 2019). This is another issue that comes in compliance with the global citizenship education since UNESCO aims for the learners to be active citizens not only of society but also online and to be able to understand how information is mediated and communicated (UNESCO, 2015).

2.3.3 Are there any particular skills or approaches to teaching global citizenship education in your country that are considered particularly useful, effective, or widely used?

Many are the innovative approaches that have been adopted for teaching global citizenship education issues. Apart from standard ways to inform students such as books, dictionaries with definitions and theory, modern and interactive ways are now adopted in schools in order to correspond to our modern and digital society.

One of them is the creation of interesting guidebooks with real life examples or case studies that make teachers put themselves in a situation and think what they would actually do in front of an incident of racism for example. These guidebooks have also divided the activities and the goals to be reached according to different age and educational level in order to be more suitable to students (CPI, 2016).

In addition, parents should be informed also for their children's education as well as the global issues of our society. The production of leaflets that aim to inform the parents about various global issues is mostly seen as a positive and effective way for their briefing. A noteworthy addition is the production of some of these leaflets also in foreign languages such as in English, Russian and Arabic (CPI, 2016). In fact, it has many benefits as it makes education more interesting and at the same time it promotes language learning (Carracedo Bustamante, et al., 2017). In addition, it can be seen as a demonstration of respect, inclusiveness and anti-discrimination behaviour for people that do not speak Greek.

Another way of teaching about topics of global citizenship education has been the organization of national competitions. An example is the competition for a research paper on the Science of Meteorology that has been organized since 2007. This competition aims to make students of secondary education familiar with scientific research while promoting the establishment of critical thinking and environmental consciousness. It has been positively seen by all educational institutions of secondary education and in 2018-2019, 15 teams have participated in this competition (MOEC, 2019).

Lastly, seminars, lectures and workshops are also interactive ways to help learners understand more practical issues such as media literacy and racism (MOEC, 2019). In addition, online games with educational purposes have been created at a European level, such as "Happy Onlife" which promotes safe use of the internet (Mortara, 2021) and SELFIE, which helps schools embed digital technologies into school education. However, this is only one of the many online games that exist with different issues².

2.3.4 What is the attitude towards global citizenship issues and education in rural areas in your country? Does it significantly differ to the attitude in urban areas?

The attitude towards global citizenship education issues varies due to different importance and impact that an issue has on people's life in rural areas. As it was aforementioned, people living in rural areas are mostly impacted by climate change. Therefore, more emphasis and interest is given to this topic in comparison with others. More specifically, people working as farmers, and especially young people, will receive training under the European Innovation Partnership on specific topics such as climate change, sustainable management of resources and environment-friendly farming practices (European Commission, 2020).

Other issues such as migration have been integrated in the lives of people in rural areas however without the same rapidity. But, it remains an issue due to the fact that Third Country Nationals (TCNs) live also in rural areas. In fact, due to more affordable rental prices, African asylum seekers are choosing to live in rural areas and this phenomenon is increasing. The attitude of locals concerning these people is rather negative with many racist incidents over the years as some people view outsiders with distrust. As a consequence, their arrival has caused division between the locals because some are more open-minded, they offer help and others, especially older people, are suspicious (O'Connor, 2019).

² More can be found here: <https://esafeschools.pi.ac.cy/yliko-listing-esafe-school/interactive-games>

In regards to gender equality, this issue is less common in rural areas. As it was mentioned before, young people tend to leave for bigger towns and cities in order to find better employment possibilities. However, for those who choose to stay in rural areas, women are at a disadvantage as the least popular professions for women in Cyprus are the ones related to farming and agriculture (Louca, et al., 2005). In addition, the gender employment gap in rural areas in the island was 14.9% in 2019 according to Eurostat (Trading Economics, 2020). Therefore, the need for gender equality is visible, as it is not yet implemented in rural areas. However, it is important to keep in mind that neither in urban areas gender equality is well established.

2.3.5 What are the main barriers or disadvantages to effective global citizenship education, in terms of teaching, learning, and broader participation, in rural areas your country?

The curriculum taught in schools is the same for all cities and regions, therefore also for all types of areas; rural or urban. However, it is identified over the years that there are some obstacles preventing a fuller integration of topics related to global citizenship education such as the lack of time within the curriculum, the pressure that teachers face to cover all topics instructed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the long-term procedures that changes may bring. In addition, according to the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, it would be easier to integrate these topics into primary school than into secondary one (O'Loughlin & Wegimont, 2004).

Concerning adult education, the percentage of adults (25-64 years old) that receive some kind of non-formal education in Cyprus remains low at only 5.9% in 2019, in comparison with the EU average of 10.8% and it has decreased since previous years. This is mostly due to the fact most providers require the physical presence of learners and because the topics offered to them do not correspond to their needs and interests. In regards to adults living in rural areas, choosing to follow this kind of educational programmes can be tricky, as they are unable to attend them all the time (O'Loughlin & Wegimont, 2004).

Moreover, online learning opportunities are also limited so far, in comparison with other EU countries (O'Loughlin & Wegimont, 2004). This last observation is also approved by the fact that only 45% of adults (aged 16-74) in Cyprus declared in 2019 that they have basic or above digital skills, whereas the average of EU Member States is at 56% (Pisiotis, 2020). If we take into consideration the division between urban and rural areas, people living in urban areas in the EU are more digitally skilled than the ones living in rural areas. In fact, 62% of adults living in urban areas have basic digital skills whereas 48% of people living in rural areas have the same competences, bringing the gap in digital skills, on average, at 14 percentage points (pp) (2019). Cyprus is close to this EU average (Gold News, 2020).

2.3.6 What are the particular strengths or advantages of the way global citizenship education is implemented in rural areas your country?

Global Education has started to receive support from policy makers in the education sector in Cyprus over the last few years. The importance of educating people, no matter their age,

about democratic values, respect, individuality, active citizenship and the rule of law has been recognized (Carracedo Bustamante, et al., 2017).

Moreover, there are approximately 400 adult education centres, in both rural and urban areas. These centres focus mainly on foreign language teaching, arts and crafts, health and cultural programmes in order to help citizens develop in all sectors. In addition, another major advantage is the implementation of projects and initiatives that targeted mainly to people of rural areas, such as this one. More specifically, initiatives aiming for women in rural areas also exist, especially for developing their entrepreneurial skills and becoming independent.

Lastly, due to the fact that Cyprus is so small and also in its majority formed by rural areas, people living in these areas have a significant benefit. Events, competitions or seminars can be attended by people in different areas due to how close it is.

2.4 Conclusions

The difference between urban and rural areas in Cyprus is not that strong due to the fact that the whole island is being characterized as intermediate based on the NUTS level 3. In addition, differences in the education system and curriculum do not exist in different areas since the Ministry of Education and Culture decides for the education of the whole country. Since the integration of Cyprus in the EU, changes have been made and the curriculum and educational material have been updated and has integrated modern and current global issues such as immigration, active participation to society, climate change and media literacy. However, there seems to be a gap concerning other issues related for example to health (the COVID-19 pandemic) and conflicts (war and peace maintenance).

In addition, despite the fact that the educational system is continuously trying to evolve, it seems that there is a gap between school systems and NGOs or other organizations that promote adult education, especially in rural areas. The majority of the information found for this report was related to school education, highlighting the fact that people that are not parents, do not receive this kind of information. The fact that rural areas are not digitally literate brings another problem for its population as they are not that well informed than the rest of the population.

Moreover, despite the fact that some global issues are considered more important and essential for people in rural areas, such as climate change, global issues are necessary to be taught to all groups of people. In fact, urbanization is a common phenomenon in Cyprus with people, especially young, leaving rural areas in order to find a better future in urban areas. Having received education on global issues and topics will help them adapt more easily in cities and be more aware of current essential concepts such diversity, multiculturalism, gender equality etc. In conclusion, global citizenship education is essential in rural areas therefore, this project will aim to help adult trainers to raise awareness of global issues to adult learners.

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