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# Electoral Education – a Basic Citizenship Attribute in a Culture of Participatory and Representative Democracy

RESEARCH STUDY

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# 1. Democratic Culture and Electoral Literacy of School Students

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## 1.1 Background and Challenges

*One of the education tasks in democratic societies is to support and encourage the young generation to become active and devoted citizens, who are willing and capable to engage in decision-making that concern them in public and political life.*

*The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova stipulates “the establishment of an upright character and development of a system of competences, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, which enable an individual to actively participate in social and economic life”<sup>1</sup> (Authors’ emphasis) as the core objective of education. The appropriate educational inputs and practices, primarily, of formal education, but also those of non-formal and informal education may stimulate democratic engagement by developing a well-informed, engaged and responsible citizen. In this regard, the school curriculum in the Republic of Moldova, just like in other countries around the world, includes compulsory school subjects, such as Civic Education (implemented for the 8th – 9th grades over the last years), Education for Society (implemented for the 5th – 7th grades and for the 10th – 12th grades in 2020-2021), Moral and Spiritual Education (primary school, the 1st – 4th grades), History of Romania and Universal History (the 4th – 12th grades), along with many optional school subjects that bring their inputs for the development of pupils’ competences and civic commitment: Education for Human Rights (the 1st – 4th grades, the 5th – 9th grades, the 8th – 9th grades), Debates (the 5th – 12th grades), Learning to Speak Argumentatively (the 10th – 11th grades), Education for Media (the 3rd – 4th grades, the 7th – 8th grades, the 10th – 11th grades).*

Some Units of Content covered by the Romanian Language and Literature/ Mother Tongue (Bulgarian/Russian/Gagauz, Ukrainian), Personal Development, Foreign Language are also relevant as they contribute to the development of pupils’ civic spirit and their democratic awareness, referred to by many European documents, such as Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting with the Council of Fostering democratic awareness and democratic engagement amongst young people in Europe of November 2020<sup>2</sup>, but also the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027)<sup>3</sup>. Fostering participatory and inclusion-favourable democracy is one of the Strategy guiding principles, having recommended the countries to support the engagement of European young people in modelling the society and policies.

It is worth recalling the Council of Europe Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe (2015/C 417/02). The Concept of political participation is defined by “...the representation of young people in the structures of representative democracy, i.e. participating in elections as voters, standing in elections as candidates and participating in political parties. Political participation can also take place through membership in (youth) organisations advocating for the interests of young people, political face-to-face or online debates and other forms of opinion-shaping and cultural expression. Political participation can also be experienced in the frame of citizenship and human rights education activities and actions to bring about positive change in society.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Education Code of the Republic of Moldova. Law No. 152 of 17.07.2014, Article 11. Education Goals. In: Official Gazette, No.319-324/634 of 24.10.2014.

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13177-2020-INIT/ro/pdf> (Accessed on: 19.05.2021). One of the Council recommendations is “lowering the age to vote and to stand for election to 16 for all elections, while removing all barriers to voting and ensuring encouragement of participation in elections”.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ilegis.ro/eurolegis/ro/index/act/72472> (Accessed on: 18.05.2021)

<sup>4</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215\(02\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215(02)&from=EN) (Accessed on: 18.05.2021)

Indeed, participation is a key element of democracy. “Democracy can be learned!” This is the message upon which training, research and education activities for voters rely. Such activities are carried out by the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (CICDE), established by the Moldovan Central Electoral Commission (CEC) in 2011. Significant changes can be recorded in the development of a prosperous and modern society through political participation of the young generation – this is the view taken by many voices.<sup>5</sup> The Moldovan youth can and shall engage actively in the country social and political life, including the electoral process, as voters, candidates, observers, electoral officials. Romanian experts<sup>6</sup> and those working for the Russian Electoral Education and Technology Centre by the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation believe that “the increase of youth activism requires regular political education, commencing in school and continuing through the lifetime.”<sup>7</sup>

Hence, nowadays, the endeavours of various European and national institutions are focused on educating democratic citizenship to include all matters of life in a democratic society. Within the wide range of topics, such as: sustainable development, inclusion of people with disabilities in society, gender equality, prevention of terrorism, etc. an important place belongs to the legal status to be a citizen and the voting right this status is giving. Therefore, we should bear in mind that Electoral Education is an integral part of education for democratic citizenship, which is focused primarily on rights, responsibilities and active participation in connection with civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural dimensions of the society.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Cf.: V.Saca and N.Azizov. Participation of Moldovan young people in the political process: significance and motivations. pp. 99-112. [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/Participarea%20tinerilor%20din%20RM%20in%20procesul%20politic.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/Participarea%20tinerilor%20din%20RM%20in%20procesul%20politic.pdf) (Accessed on: 01/05.2021); Participation – key element of democracy. Five research projects in the electoral area. CICDE, Ch., 2019, 174 p. Available at [https://cicde.md/media/files/files/5\\_studii\\_cicde\\_9\\_9720911.pdf](https://cicde.md/media/files/files/5_studii_cicde_9_9720911.pdf) (Accessed on: 01.05.2021)

<sup>6</sup> See: Citizenship and political participation of young people file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/CETATENIA\_SI\_PARTICIPAREA\_TINERILOR\_LA\_V.pdf (Accessat: 22.05.2021)

<sup>7</sup> Молодежь и выборы – опыт России (проблемы участия, развития правовой культуры, развития гражданского общества). Российский центр обучения избирательным технологиям. In: Вестник ЦИК РФ. 2004. № 13, стр.106.

<sup>8</sup> Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. <https://www.living-democracy.com/ro/about-edc-hre/> (Accessat: 10.05.2021)

The increased concern of electoral management authorities, civil society and Media institutions for awareness raising and training of voters of all ages, and, in particular, of first-time voters, is justified and strongly required. There are many challenges affecting voters' turnout and representativeness as forms of democracy and active citizenship outcomes, such as:

- moving away from political systems;
- increased lack of confidence towards male politicians, but also towards female politicians;
- reserved attitude towards state institutions;
- confusion concerning political institutions;
- scepticism concerning the importance of voting;
- intolerance and prejudices towards ethnic and religious minority groups;
- manipulation and disinformation of citizens by Media;
- lack of knowledge concerning the voting procedures.

When lacking Electoral Education at the system level, such challenges may induce electoral absenteeism, which is manifested through non-exercising the voting right or, even worse, abstentionism that implies demonstrative abstention from exercising the voting right. Experience shows that such phenomena may jeopardize the rule of law and democracy. Therefore, it is important to educate social activism. The latter takes a variety of forms: political activism, civic activism, legal activism and, of course, electoral activism, which does not involve just exercising political (electoral) rights. Electoral activism “shall be treated in wider terms, not as the opposite of electoral absenteeism; it covers active engagement of citizens in conducting electoral campaigns, both to promote electoral candidates/platforms and to monitor the accuracy of information disseminated through such campaigns, avoiding manipulations and corruption of voters or infringement of electoral competition rules.”<sup>9</sup>

The Occidental ideologists of education reforms and governments more frequently talk about the deepening of voters' incompetence and reducing the relevance of elections as a democracy toolkit. The concern also stems from the fact that in many countries, just like in our country, the electoral rights are regarded from the perspective of possibility, rather than necessity, while electoral culture is pretty “thin”, regardless of voters' age and profile.

Nowadays, the young people make up approximately 3 billion of the world population, while in some countries they represent more than half of the country citizens. In the Republic of Moldova, the youth represents 31.7% of the total population with voting right.<sup>10</sup> Their limited participation in democratic processes, elections inclusive, doubts the representativeness and perpetuates some categorical opinions about the lack of young people's interest towards political topics, although it could become one of the most influential groups of voters in the history.

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<sup>9</sup> Railean Petru. Civic Culture and Education – foundation of citizens' electoral activism. In the book titled The impact of political culture and social cohesion phenomenon on Moldovan citizens' electoral behaviour. Chisinau: “Princeps”, 2020, p. 65.65.

<sup>10</sup> As of 25 May 2021, the overall number of voters was equal to 3.282.670, of whom 1.040.156 were aged between 18 and 35 years.

Absenteeism is understood as a displayed lack of interest towards political, life and is fuelled by the opinion of some people that nothing depends on them in politics. “Ignoring the laws and own rights, including the electoral ones, can politically isolate the life of citizens, in particular, of young people, while this severely affects the level of patriotic education”<sup>11</sup>, Sabila Mustafina, member of the Kazakh Central Electoral Commission, pointed out, not without reasons.

Nonetheless, the Study titled The Moldovan Youth Attitude towards the Electoral Process, conducted in late 2016 – early 2017, revealed two types of such attitude. On the one hand, there is pretty low confidence in central state institutions, i.e. the Government, the Parliament, but also political parties. On the other hand, there is an increased interest to participate in elections. For the latter category, one of the main arguments is that their vote matters and represents a manifestation of their rights as citizens. Moreover, they believe that, in this way, they contribute to the expression of collective political will.<sup>12</sup>

Taking into account the demonstrated behaviours and attitudes, as well as the existing challenges, the need to design measures<sup>13</sup> aimed at overcoming the political inaction of citizens and, in fact, of young people, has become obvious today, because each country evolution depends, ultimately, on the results of elections.

The existing formal education, along with the informal and non-formal education, focused on the electoral component to be detailed in a separate sub-Chapter, is a vital instrument applied in the endeavour to educate school students as committed and responsible citizens. This instrument shall be strengthened and tailored to address the aforementioned democratic slippages, by providing the young generation with Electoral Education, and encouraging massive participation in elections.



<sup>11</sup> В вузах Казахстана введут занятия по электоральной грамотности. In: „Baigenews.kz”, 25 декабря 2018.

[https://baigenews.kz/news/v\\_vuzah\\_kazahstana\\_vvedut\\_zanyatiya\\_po\\_elektoralnoi\\_gramotnosti/](https://baigenews.kz/news/v_vuzah_kazahstana_vvedut_zanyatiya_po_elektoralnoi_gramotnosti/) (Accessed on: 09.05.2021)

<sup>12</sup> [https://prodem.md/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Studiu\\_AtitudineaTinerilor\\_ro1.pdf](https://prodem.md/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Studiu_AtitudineaTinerilor_ro1.pdf) (Accessed on: 09.05.2021)

<sup>13</sup> Расширение политического участия молодежи на всех этапах электорального цикла. Руководство по передовой практике. 2013, р.3. Cf. și Выборы, электоральная культура, будущий избиратель, избирательное право, элективный учебный курс. [https://studylib.ru/doc/2209929/vybory-i-izbiratel.\\_noe-pravo.-e-lektoral.\\_nye-sistemy](https://studylib.ru/doc/2209929/vybory-i-izbiratel._noe-pravo.-e-lektoral._nye-sistemy) (Accessed on: 15.05.2021)

*In other words, it is meant to prepare the future voters on electoral matters, which are appropriate for the new socio-political processes, pursuant to an optional curriculum aimed to:*

- ✓ enhance young voters' legal culture;
- ✓ ensure their active and informed participation in electoral campaigns;
- ✓ increase their confidence in the electoral system and in elections;
- ✓ use the available opportunities to engage them in the electoral process as electoral officials or as electoral candidates.

The nature, course and outcomes of electoral events depend on the voters' electoral culture, which builds the frame and preliminary conditions in order to shape and develop the institutions of elective democracy.

## 1.2 Conceptual Lines Drawn amongst “Civic Education”, “Electoral Education”, “Electoral Awareness”, “Electoral Literacy”

*The consulted sources rely in their recommendations on a range of terms referring to Electoral Education of school students, as well as of other voter categories: “Civic and Electoral Education”<sup>14</sup>, “Electoral Education”/ “Voter Education”<sup>15</sup>, “Education for Elections”, “Political Education”<sup>16</sup>.*

It is necessary to distinguish amongst “Voter Awareness Raising”, “Electoral Education/Voter Education” and “Civic Education”. Certainly, each term has its place in a continuous range of educational activities to support elections and democracy, having supplemented one another. Therefore, it would be appropriate to imply that Electoral Education, for instance, could be a component of a wider programme of Civic Education. At the same time, the target public for these three areas is different, but it may overlap for just several activities and/or topics.

The education programmes shall offer opportunities for self-affirmation in the frame of legal behaviour, self-determination through the development of an active life position in school students, active and constructive socialisation being the most important quality of future citizens.

<sup>14</sup> ACE Electoral Knowledge Network) <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/ved/ved01/ved01d>, and also IFES International Foundation for Electoral Systems) <https://www.ifes.org/issues/civic-and-voter-education> (Accessed on: 18.04.2021)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter5.htm> (Accessed on: 18.04.2021)

<sup>16</sup> Kjetil Børhaug. Voter education. The political education of Norwegian lower secondary schools, UTBILDNING & DEMOKRATI 2005, VOL 14, NR 3, pp.51-73, <https://www.oru.se/globalassets/oru-sv/forskning/forskningsmiljoer/hs/humus/utbildning-och-demokrati/2005/nr-3/kjetil-borhaug---voter-education.pdf> (Accessed on: 22.05.2021)

There is a direct link amongst democracy, legal awareness and electoral culture of citizens. Electoral education consists of educational programmes intended for citizens to learn their constitutional rights and obligations in the area of electoral legislation and the core principles of electoral law and processes. This led to an enlarged electoral component within the system of civic education in the Western countries, directed to a greater extent towards the foundation values of democracy. Therefore, it is certain that Electoral Education is part of a wider concept, i.e. **Educația civică**, a subject that aims to shape active citizenship and civic behaviours, which are compulsory elements of democratic school. Civic Education develops civic culture in pupils, and this culture has been founded on values and principles of democracy, having the power to unite people in a society that is driven by civic duties, commitment and, likewise, to make the Government accountable for the ideals of democracy.

Civic Education is an ongoing process, which is carried out independently from the electoral cycle. Nonetheless, awareness raising and electoral education of voters may be part of larger civic education endeavours, which are carried out through the school and university systems, civil society organisations and, possible, Government agencies, although not necessarily through the electoral authority.

The narrative of European key competences<sup>17</sup> will help us decipher and understand the civil competences (B), defined in the 2006 European Reference Framework on key competences for lifelong learning, in the context of the tackled subject-matter.



## Knowledge

knowledge of the concepts of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, and civil rights, including how they are expressed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and international declarations and how they are applied by various institutions at the local, regional, national, European and international levels; knowledge of contemporary events, as well as the main events and trends in national, European and world history; an awareness of the aims, values and policies of social and political movements; knowledge of European integration and of the EU's structures, main objectives and values; an awareness of diversity and cultural identities in Europe."



## Skills

the ability to engage effectively with others in the public domain, and to display solidarity and interest in solving problems affecting the local and wider community; critical and creative reflection and constructive participation in community or neighbourhood activities as well as decision-making at all levels, from local to national and European level, in particular, through voting".

<sup>17</sup> The Narrative of European key competences as per the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC1), p. 4. (Accessed on: 30.04.2021) Cf. and Teaching methods for skills development. Coordinators: Aurel Ardelean, Octavian Mândruț, Arad, 2012, p.25.

<sup>18</sup> Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning [Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006].



## Attitudes

full respect for human rights, including equality as a basis for democracy, appreciation and understanding of differences between value systems of different religious or ethnic groups; displaying both a sense of belonging to one's locality, country, the EU and Europe in general and to the world; demonstrating willingness to participate in democratic decision-making at all levels; demonstrating a sense of responsibility, as well as showing understanding of and respect for the shared values that are necessary to ensure community cohesion, such as respect for democratic principles; engagement in civic activities, support for social diversity and cohesion and sustainable development; readiness to respect the values and privacy of others."

Having summarised the aforementioned statements, civic skills should help a person be a participant in public life, being based on the knowledge of concepts, social and political structures. Such a person should be committed to take an active part in the democratic process, "in particular, through voting". The democratic process takes place at all levels, i.e. in education institutions, business structures or organisations, local communities, regions, and in the state. Consequently, citizens shall have the knowledge, capacity and availability to participate actively in all levels of public life.

One of the main forms of engagement in the democratic process is participation in elections. No efficient democracy may exist without competent voters. Therefore, **promoting a democratic electoral culture, developing civic skills required for competent and responsible participation in elections should be one of the key dimensions of lifelong civic education.** Because upon reaching the age of 18 years, a person has got the possibility to actively exercise his/her electoral right (in some European countries the age threshold for the participation in municipal elections is < 16 years<sup>19</sup>), the mission to develop the electoral skills and knowledge shall be fulfilled by school. In the EU Member States and in those aspiring to adhere to the European common space there is a clear trend to strengthen this civic education dimension through school courses.

Preparing the school students to exercise their civil rights and obligations is taken into consideration in the context of civic education, building citizenship, in the process of political socialisation of pupils, newer – in education for society, education for democratic culture and for human rights.

The term „**Electoral Education**” shall be distinguished and explained to be properly understood. In the broad sense, this means an array of systemic actions concerning the dissemination of information, materials and programmes in order to raise awareness and develop, in a conscientious manner, the voters, having emphasised the role, importance and specificity of the voting process. This type of education shows the advantages and impact of a certain electoral system, and is often made by comparison. Concurrently, it approaches the motivation, preparation of voters to fully participate in elections. It also covers the sharing of "elections related experience, electoral culture, systemic and conscious influence of intellectual and moral development concerning elections, a range of measures applied regularly in order to shape a conscious electoral behaviour."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See the Report Raising Their Voices: How effective are pro-youth laws and policies?, describing the approach to reduce the minimum age for voting, youth quotas, etc. [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_2019\\_pro-youth\\_report\\_english.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_2019_pro-youth_report_english.pdf) (Accessed on: 20.05.2021)

<sup>20</sup> Central Electoral Commission. Study to analyse the needs for raising electoral awareness and education of voters appropriate for the target group. Chisinau, 2014, p. 5.

[http://old.cec.md/files/files/studii\\_analiza/studiu%20ed%20electorala%20final.pdf](http://old.cec.md/files/files/studii_analiza/studiu%20ed%20electorala%20final.pdf) (Accesat: 12.05.21)

Electoral education pursues the goal to approach more complex information about voting, electoral process, and refers to concepts and matters such as:



the link between basic human rights and voting right;



voters' role, responsibilities and rights;



the correlation between elections and democracy;



the conditions necessary for democratic elections;



secret ballot;



the electoral systems;



the importance of each vote and its impact over public accountability;



the way how the votes are transposed into mandates.

Such concepts imply explaining and exploring certain processes by the trainees, not just the description of facts. Respectively, Electoral Education requires more preparation time for implementation than raising voter awareness and, ideally, should be ongoing: "As a rule, Electoral Education shall be sustainable, long-term, carried out in schools, in other education institutions and in civil society organisations and/or in collaboration with the electoral authorities".<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, Electoral Education involves the education of non-citizens and future citizens, not just of people who enjoy the voting right. It is worth noting that Electoral Education stems from general legal education in the area of electoral law, legislation concerning elections and referenda, as well as special training in electoral law. Moreover, legal education addresses the issue of conscious engagement and participation in the electoral process of young voters. It envisages obtaining, in the frame of socio-humanistic subjects, knowledge about the state structure of the country, history of its development, electoral system, and citizens' rights and obligations.

In most EU Member States there is a clear trend to strengthen Electoral Education as a civic education dimension of school courses. The same trend is projected through the educational policy documents in the Republic of Moldova, where school has got this mission and contributes directly to the development of engaged and responsible citizens, while expressing the voting right is one of the behaviours expected to be the end-goal.

<sup>21</sup> Discussions concerning the definitions. Material from the BRIDGE Module, Civic education and raising voter's awareness. <https://www.bridge-project.org/> (Accessed on: 06.06.2021)

This mission is carried out in a cross-sector manner in the frame of formal, non-formal and informal education as part of *Electoral Education*. The concept has been defined as per Article 1, General Definitions of the **Electoral Code**, as



„an educational and non-political activity, carried out by civil society organisations and groups, education institutions, Media and other stakeholders, which aims to increase citizens' knowledge about political and electoral processes, and to allow them casting their votes freely and in an informed manner. Electoral education may be freely conducted by interested actors, having organised seminars, trainings, round-tables, information campaigns, public electoral debates and other education activities to this end, which are not regulated by the Central Electoral Commission or by other authorities” .<sup>22</sup>

– Electoral Code

<sup>22</sup> Electoral Code. No.1381-XIII of 21.11.97. In: Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova No.81/667 of 08.12.1997.



# The main purpose of Electoral Education

The main purpose of Electoral Education is to ensure access to information for all citizens. That is why in carrying out Electoral Education account is taken of many matters, such as communication language(s), national minorities, level of literacy, cultural specificity, but also the level of Media education, of information culture.

When talking about Electoral Education in the wide sense of this concept, we do not confine ourselves to the pre-electoral stage. This is a long-term pathway, which is carried out in schools, in other education institutions, in civil society organisations and/or in collaboration with electoral authorities, which ultimate goal is to develop citizens' electoral competences. Moreover, we find that Electoral Education is an important form of lifelong education, having an ongoing feature.<sup>23</sup> This "implies education of citizens, not just of those who enjoy the voting right, but also of those who will enjoy it in the future", and it targets different groups, regardless of age, status or level of electoral competence. It is carried out by the electoral authority, targeting not only those who "do not know", but also the informed people, and it should take place in education institutions as well.<sup>24</sup>

"Education of voters" develops basic attitudes, behaviour and provides knowledge to citizens of all ages, fostering and strengthening democracy. During elections, such education ensures efficient organisation and activism of citizens to support political parties and/or cases, behaviours appropriate for holding peaceful elections, acceptance of results and tolerance to competition and opposition.

In the narrow sense, "**Electoral Education**" / "**Voter Education**" overlaps the concept of "**Electoral Awareness**" and involves the dissemination of information, in particular, on the eve of elections, about who is eligible to vote; how the voters may check the Voters' Lists to make sure their name appears there; what type of elections is taking place; where, when and how to cast their vote; what features are typical for a non-valid ballot paper; who the electoral candidates are; how to lodge complaints; how voters with special needs can vote; what acts enable the person to vote.

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<sup>23</sup> Railean Petru. Civic Culture and Education – foundation of citizens' electoral activism. In the book "The impact of political culture and social cohesion phenomenon on Moldovan citizens' electoral behaviour". 2020, p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> Comisia Electorală Centrală. Studiu de analiză privind necesitățile de informare și educație electorală a alegătorilor corespunzător grupurilor țintă. Chișinău, 2014, p. 5. [http://old.cec.md/files/files/studii\\_analiza/studiu%20ed%20electorala%20final.pdf](http://old.cec.md/files/files/studii_analiza/studiu%20ed%20electorala%20final.pdf). (Accesat: 12.05.21)

## Alfabetizare electorală

Pretty often, these activities may be implemented quickly (although they require thorough planning). As a rule, the electoral authorities are required to supply this type of awareness raising programme. Electoral competitors, political parties, civil society organisations, etc. may also engage in this activity. Electoral education is carried out during the electoral period and is targeting exclusively the citizens who enjoy the right to participate in elections.

Other concepts, such as: “Electoral” (Anthony Downs, P. Lazarsfeld, S.M<sup>24</sup>. Lipset, S. Rokkan<sup>25</sup> et al.), “Electoral Process” (R. Katz, N.P. Pishchulin, D. Robertson, N.V. Troshina et al.), “Electoral Culture” (I.N. Gomerov, A.M. Sutyurin et al.), and “Electoral Behaviour” are also considered in sociological, political, cultural and psychological studies.

“Electoral Literacy” is a new concept for research in the area of education science, stemming from the idea of human functional literacy. Electoral literacy in the frame of implementing general basic education programmes in the Russian Federation and justification of this concept is also demonstrated by Alexandra Rusina who has analysed the events from modern history textbooks for the 7th-8th grades and from the teaching materials.<sup>26</sup>

### Electoral literacy

as a result of civic education, means pupils' availability/preparation for the qualified implementation of electoral rights and freedoms, which are defined for citizens in a regulatory manner. It is significant that electoral literacy may be presented as an array of interdependent motivational-valued, cognitive-informational and operational-behavioural components, which have been developed by the Russian Researcher A. Rusina in her Doctoral Thesis.<sup>27</sup> These components are relevant for our Study and, therefore, we shall briefly describe them below.

### The Motivational-valued Component

can be described as an individual valued attitude towards civil rights and freedoms and through the rights to choose and freedom in the future carried out by school students, who have reached the age of majority. The array of valued guidelines, which are significant for shaping the motivational-valued component of electoral literacy, concerns the following matters:

- **civil rights and freedoms** ((awareness of inalienability of human natural rights and freedoms, reflecting the value of life, freedom and personal inviolability);

- **civic participation** (conscious wish of pupils to act in the interest of society, for its benefit, having ensured its progress and development);
- **values of civic** (social) prosperity (awareness of the importance of individual civic (social) activity in public interest);
- **civic accountability** (awareness of the duty to act in public interest, accepting the consequences stemming from the undertaken actions);
- **civic justice** (accepting the due compliance between the action and retribution relative to a person and society);
- **civic initiative** (conscious wish of lyceum students to be proactive in proposing options aimed at civic improvement and the status of majority);
- **civic choice** (as an idea of alternative ways of civil society development through participation in the electoral process).

The values that constitute the semantic basis of electoral literacy are mirrored in the sources of electoral legislation, primarily, at the constitutional level.

<sup>24</sup> Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Berelson Bernard, Gaudet Hazel. The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign. New York: Columbia University Press, 1944.

<sup>25</sup> Systems of political parties and electoral alignments. Co-edited with Seymour Martin Lipset. Free Press, 1967.

<sup>26</sup> А.С. Руси́на. Формирование электоральной грамотности при изучении школьниками событий Новой истории. In: Актуальные вопросы социальной педагогики и психологии: теория и практика. Материалы Всеросс. науч.-практ. конф. (Азов, 19 November 2019).



## The cognitive-informational component

implies the completeness of lyceum students' ideas about the electoral process content in the civil society, concerning the algorithms for implementing the electoral rights and freedoms by a citizen, as well as awareness of how important the exercise of electoral rights and freedoms is as the core mechanism for the operation of the rule of law. The information component includes a series of knowledge and ideas about:

- originality and specificity of state historical development; challenges in shaping the civil society and the rule of law, rights and obligations of citizens;
- political system as a system of interaction amongst politics, the subjects who exercise state power and social management;
- legitimacy of the institution of power and its concentration (distribution and redistribution) according to the (political) status and the legislation in force;
- alternation of political activity in the frame of political parties, associations, communities;
- electoral legislation, electoral rights and possibilities for their implementation in a specific type of political system;
- electoral process phases, legal and regulatory opportunities for participation therein (electoral rights and methods of their implementation, options for participating in elections, knowledge about electoral campaigns and country political situation, getting acquainted with the programmes of political parties and electoral candidates).

**The Cognitive component** involves an accurate understanding by the subjects of learning of the following actions needed to:

- reexercise, by a citizen, the electoral rights and freedoms for the functioning of the rule of law;
- critically analyse and understand the information about the electoral process for proper participation therein, the need to have relevant skills;
- construe personal significance of participation in the electoral process in order to properly exercise the electoral rights and freedoms in the future.



## The operational-behavioural

The operational-behavioural component implies acknowledgment by future voters of the social role played by a participant in the electoral process, who exercises his/her electoral rights and freedoms, having experience in analysing and decision-making according to the electoral law in force. A young voter shall possess the following skills:

- self-organisation and participation in all phases of the electoral process according to the current rules of electoral law;
- critical analysis of the socio-political situation, electoral process, electoral campaign results;
- participation in political discussions, formulating and putting questions to electoral candidates, having shaped in this way an opinion about them and about their electoral programme;
- analysing and comparing the political views and the provisions of political programmes;
- formulating the arguments favouring certain options to address social issues;
- electing according to the applicable legislation;
- capacity to fill properly a ballot paper, understanding the vote counting algorithm, construing the ratings of electoral commissions;
- analysing the electoral campaign results.

The operational-behavioural component emerges, therefore, through specific actions of the individual in the electoral process and through the expressed choice.<sup>28</sup>

Nowadays, the relevance of Electoral Literacy tasks for gymnasium and lyceum students is stemming from the changes in the civic education paradigm:<sup>29</sup> from the education of a citizen who passively accepts and supports the ideological structure of society and state as a whole to the preparation of a society member who is socially and politically active, capable to have his/her own opinion about the state and express it, to show confidence and commitment towards the ideals of democracy.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Adapted information from the Doctoral Thesis of the Russian Researcher Alexandra Rusina. Idem, reference No. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Cf.: G. Biesta. Learning democracy in school and society: education, lifelong learning, and the politics of citizenship. Sense Publishers, 2011, Rotterdam, 114 p.

<sup>30</sup> See to this end the opinion of a civic education expert from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Dr. Greer Burroughs interview on Civic education for democracy: Questions and Answers. <https://www.ifes.org/news/civic-education-democracy-qa-dr-greer-burroughs> (Accessed on: 20.05.2021).



## 1.3 What is the Moldovan curriculum content and how does electoral literacy evolve?

Like in other countries, in the Republic of Moldova, where elections are still too far from playing the role of a real institution of democracy, coupled with poor competences of voters, the electoral dimension of civic education is either ignored at some schooling levels or set out incompletely at the gymnasium and lyceum education level. According to Article 6 of the Education Code, “The educational ideal of school in the Republic of Moldova is to develop a personality with initiative spirit, capable of self-development, who has got not only the necessary knowledge and competences to be employed, but also **independence of opinion and action (Authors’ emphasis)**, (being open for an intercultural dialogue in the context of assumed national and universal values.”<sup>31</sup>

Hence, the “independence of opinion and action” is an important component of citizens’ profile shaped on the basis of educational ideal, set out at the level of the education system. At the same time, this educational ideal is described through the school graduate profile by school levels and cycles, defined in compliance with **the Reference Framework of the National Curriculum**, which distinguishes four missions of the National Curriculum. The fourth one is the development of “(...) **committed and responsible citizens**, who can undertake the general human values that are important for a democratic society, having known, appraised and promoted their cultural identity, are **active, aware and committed citizens (Authors’ emphasis)**, who contribute efficiently to the society development and prosperity.”<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, the **European reference framework on key competences for lifelong learning**<sup>33</sup> defines those eight essential competences recalled in the previous sub-chapter, and “social and civic competences”, through which the role of citizenship is emphasised, along with common values and human rights. The European reference framework on key competences for lifelong learning is the milestone in defining the Education Code goals (Article 11). This fact shows the declared and partially undertaken interest of the Republic of Moldova to contribute to the education of young people, making them accountable to act as responsible, active citizens, and contribute to building peaceful, tolerant and safe societies that are favourable to inclusion.

<sup>31</sup> Education Code of the Republic of Moldova. Law No. 152 dated 17.07.2014, Article 11. Education Goals. In: Official Gazette No.319-324/634 dated 24.10.2014. (Accessed on:15.05.2021)

<sup>32</sup> The Reference Framework of the National Curriculum. Chisinau, 2017, p. 33. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/cadrul\\_referinta\\_final\\_rom\\_tipar.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/cadrul_referinta_final_rom_tipar.pdf) ) Accessed on: 17.05.2021)

<sup>33</sup> Idem, p.5.



Certainly, participation in elections is one of the main forms of inputs to the democratic process for each democratic state. Elections are one of the main institutions of democracy. There is no efficient democracy without competent voters. Therefore, promoting democratic electoral culture, developing civic skills, which are necessary for competent and responsible participation in elections should be one of the key dimensions of lifelong civic education. Respectively, school has got the core mission to develop skills and electoral knowledge.

## 1.3.1 Continuity and Discontinuity in the Current Curriculum

### 1.3.1.1 Moral and Spiritual Education, primary

#### Moral and Spiritual Education <sup>34</sup> 2010

**Document Milestones:** the 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grades, 2010, MoECR, compulsory school subject, part of socio-humanistic subjects, implementing period: 2010-2018, beneficiaries: primary school pupils, teaching staff, parents, authors of textbooks.

The curriculum for Moral and Spiritual Education (MSE) covers four sub-competences:

- Using the concepts specific for moral and spiritual values for the knowledge and observance of national traditions, religious experience, rules of coexistence in the society;
- Applying the human value rules in setting positive interpersonal relationships;
- Showing a **socially active and responsible behaviour that is appropriate for a changing world**;
- Participating in decision-making and in addressing community issues.

#### Moral and Spiritual Education <sup>35</sup> 2018

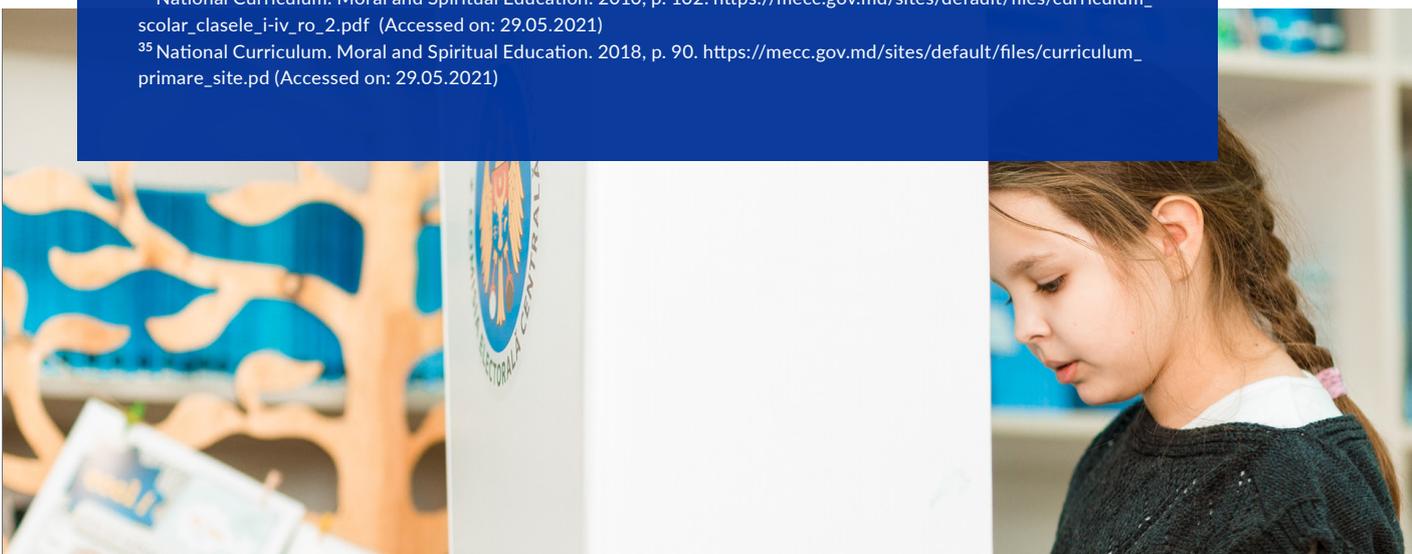
**Document Milestones:** the 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grades, 2018, MoECR, compulsory school subject, part of socio-humanistic subjects, beneficiaries: primary school pupils, teaching staff, parents, authors of textbooks.

The curriculum for Moral and Spiritual Education (MSE) covers three specific competences:

- Recognising moral and spiritual values in different life contexts, showing positive and responsible attitude towards self and those around;
- Valued appreciation of own behaviour and of other people behaviours in the context of moral and spiritual rules, exercising due critical attitude and assertive communication;
- Transposing the knowledge acquired for this subject during the educational/community/cultural activities, tending towards moral and spiritual virtues.

<sup>34</sup> National Curriculum. Moral and Spiritual Education. 2010, p. 102. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum\\_scolar\\_clasele\\_i-iv\\_ro\\_2.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum_scolar_clasele_i-iv_ro_2.pdf) (Accessed on: 29.05.2021)

<sup>35</sup> National Curriculum. Moral and Spiritual Education. 2018, p. 90. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum\\_primare\\_site.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum_primare_site.pdf) (Accessed on: 29.05.2021)



The contents are distinctly designed for the 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grades, amongst which we can mention:

- For the 1<sup>st</sup> grade – topic 4: Child rights and obligations;
- For the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade – topic 11: Love for the Homeland;
- For the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade – topic 2: Central values of Christian religion: Freedom, Love, Justice, Truth;
- For the 4<sup>th</sup> grade – topic 2: Personal values and national values.

Pentru clasele I-a, a II-a, a III-a, a IV-a sunt proiectate 4 unități de conținut (UC) (module):

- Me at school;
- Me in the family;
- Me in the community;
- I learn to be human.

The Unit of Content includes six hours for the 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> grades and, respectively, seven hours for the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grades.

We can mention that the UC “Me in my community” specified for all grades the following moral behaviour: **I do care about my community**. The topic: **Love for the Homeland – motivation for participation** (without clarification of the type of participation) is proposed for the 4th grade only.

Other contents correlated directly with Electoral Education have not been identified.

## Conclusions:

- Both 2010 and 2018 MSE curricula have limited reference to elements or acquired knowledge specific for Electoral Education;
- It is worth noting that in the 2010 curriculum, there were clearly highlighted the values of participatory democracy, development of socially proactive behaviours at the level of at least two sub-competences (specific competences). In the 2018 curriculum the focus on developing civic attitudes is less significant – there is no transfer from the contents centred on religion to the ones focused on social and civic contents;
- Even though the UC Me in the community is part of the new curriculum, being kept for all grades, the content details are insufficient to ensure the development of active citizenship and civic behaviours, which are compulsory elements of democratic school since primary school.

## 1.3.1.2 Education for Society, gymnasium education cycle

**Background: Civic Education** was reconceptualised as of 2018 and renamed in Education for Society. The curriculum was also conceptualised back in 2010, in light of the transition from the curriculum model centred on objectives to the model centred on competences, and suggested the common schedule of rights and responsibilities centred on active citizenship.



### Civic Education 2010 <sup>36</sup>

**Repere cu privire la document:** clasele a V-a – a IX-a, 2010, MECC, disciplină obligatorie, perioada implementării 2010-2018, beneficiari – elevi/eleve de gimnaziu, cadre didactice, părinți, autori/autoare de manuale.

### Education for Society (EFS) 2018 <sup>37</sup>

**Repere cu privire la document:** clasele a V-a – a IX-a, 2018, MECC, disciplină obligatorie, implementare graduală, începând cu anul 2018 în clasa a V-a, beneficiari – elevi/eleve de gimnaziu, liceeni/liceene, cadre didactice, părinți, autori/autoare de manuale.

<sup>36</sup> National Curriculum. Civic education, the 5th – 9th grades, 2010, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curric\\_civica\\_tipograf.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curric_civica_tipograf.pdf), (Accessed on: 26.05.2021)

<sup>37</sup> National Curriculum. Education for Society, the 5th – 9th grades, 2018, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps\\_gimnaziu\\_2018-08-14\\_curriculum\\_Guide.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps_gimnaziu_2018-08-14_curriculum_Guide.pdf) (Accessed on: 27.05.2021)

## The 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Civic Education 2010

Building on sub-competence “identifying the situations of exercising the child’s rights and associated responsibilities”, Module II. Democratic Society suggests Units of Content, which underpin the culture of democracy, such as: Significance of Democracy; School Democratic Governance; Local Community; Local Administration Bodies; Local Public Administration.

**The proposed activities for acquiring the sub-competence:**

- role-play to simulate some situations of community life.

### Education for Society (EFS) 2018

There are contents directly correlated with Electoral Education for the 5th grade only, amongst all gymnasium grades. The Units of Competence: applying school procedures for participating in decision-making within the grade/school and applying an efficient toolkit/method in the group to monitor the observance of children’s rights. (p. 9)

**Module: Everybody’s opinion matters**

- The rights to participate (express opinions, access to information, association);
- The decisions of our grade;
- School Regulation about elections in the Pupils’ Council;
- Organising elections in the grade/school;
- Your Vote Matters.

**Proposed activities:**

- Elections in the school self-management bodies.

**Recommended products:**

- Minutes of elections in the school self-management bodies.

## The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

In order to develop the required sub-competences in the 6th grade, i.e. “identifying democratic values and principles and describing the appropriate frame of exercising the state power in the Republic of Moldova” (p. 10) it is proposed to teach the subjects of Module II. Democratic Society: Democracy: values, principles, and rules; Democracy and addressing the personal interests; State power in the Republic of Moldova: Parliament, Government, Presidency, and Justice.

**Proposed activities:**

- discussing some real and virtual situations on how the rights are observed and the responsibilities exercised.

The EFS curricular elements for the 6th grade provide, only marginally, some continuity of the elements correlated with Electoral Education in the 5th grade.

The Units of Competence: comparison of behavioural occurrences of pro-social and anti-social type pursuant to the established criteria; correlation of daily life issues with the observance of child’s rights/freedoms.

**Module: Human Dignity and Human Rights**

- All people are equal in their rights;
- Ownership.

**Proposed activities:**

- duties of state institutions and of family, and own moral responsibilities.

# The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

## Civic Education 2010

**Sub-competence:** designing the models of an active and responsible citizen.

### Module II. Democratic Society

- Valued milestones for a good citizen<sup>38</sup>;
- The basic rights and responsibilities of Moldovan citizens;
- Democracy and civil society: types of democracy, democracy pillars, power of civil society.

### Proposed activities:

- exercising some roles specific for the model of good citizens;
- case study about real or virtual situations of compliance/non-compliance with the rights and responsibilities;
- holding meetings with representatives of local administration / civil society.

## Education for Society (EFS) 2018

### Units of competence:

- applying the rules and laws for peaceful co-existence in democratic society;
- assessing the rules and school regulations in light of respecting accuracy, fairness, justice, etc.;
- identifying strategies for risk management in the process of exercising the rights and responsibilities. (p. 12)

### Module: Responsibility

- Responsibility in decision-making;
- Duties at home, in school, in community;
- Civic accountability.

### Proposed activities:

- classroom discussions concerning a law / regulation of the education institution (for example, Law on Petition, School Regulation);

### Recommended products:

Project: "The first legislative initiative experience of the grade".



# The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

## Civic Education 2010

**Sub-competences:** substantiating the need to observe the Constitution in a democratic state; designing actions/ activities to address some issues within the grade/school/community.

### Module II. Democratic Society

- Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. The limits of power in a democratic state;
- Governance of the majority and civic interest;
- Transparency of public authorities' work. Public authority competences;
- Civil society and citizens' initiatives. Community development project;
- Participation.

### Proposed activities:

- participation in decision-making at the level of grade, school, civil society, LPA;
- exercises aimed to identify the situations, which require assuming individual and social responsibility.

## Education for Society (EFS) 2018

### Unit of competence:

Review of laws as a toolkit to protect human rights in an intercultural society.

### Module: Pluralism of Opinions

- The right to the freedom of expression – methods to approach controversial subjects/ topics;
- Strategies to debate the subject-matters;
- “Voxes” (different voices) without pluralism – threat to democracy.

### Proposed activities:

- Simulation of strategies to debate controversial subject-matters.

### Produce recomandate:

- Monitoring report of compliance with human rights in community/ school or in other environments;
- Substantiated request to improve / amend the national legal framework concerning the rights of children/young people;
- Logo on “Human rights” developed for T-shirts.



## The 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Sub-competence:

- assessing the functioning of human rights, freedoms and responsibilities within the system.

### Module II. Democratic Society

- Democracy and civic participation. Forms of democracy in the world and in the Republic of Moldova;
- Specificity of citizen – state relationship. Characteristics of citizenship. Law on citizenship. European citizenship;
- Civil society. Pluralism.

### Proposed activities:

- exercises aimed to develop a virtual society model in light of fundamental values and rules of democratic co-existence;
- round-table: “What means to be a Moldovan citizen?”.



### Recommended products:

- Pupils' Council' Activity Programme;
- - Monitoring report of compliance with human rights in the locality;
- - Advertising spot to motivate the citizens to fulfil their citizenship duties.

### Units of competence:

- identifying sources of information about the issues of civic interest;
- substantiating the role of Media in a democratic society;
- expressing civic position, accepting no behaviours that breach the principles of democracy;
- determining the ways of active engagement in the education institution through the bodies they represent;
- expressing the interest to participate in decision-making in classroom/school;
- supporting the principles of democracy, justice, fairness and rule of law. (p. 1)

### Module: Threats to Democracy

- Citizen's apathy to engage in public life;
- Populism.

### Module: Active Citizenship. Volunteering

- Citizen – local/ national community;
- Citizen of the Republic of Moldova, of Europe, of the world – mechanisms of civic, political participation;
- Pluralism and consensus in decision-making; Ways and instruments to bring inputs to decision-making in school and community.

### Proposed activities:

- meetings with resource people (journalists, activists, NGO representatives, community leaders, etc.) and guided discussions about democratic society specificity;
- critical review exercises of Media products;
- making suggestions, initiatives for the activity of Pupils' Council;
- exercises to participate in decision-making at the institution level;
- game – simulation of interactions in a democratic society (Media, authorities, civil society, business sector);
- simulating democratic participation of pupils in school self-management bodies;
- creating the profile of model citizens;
- conducting a survey concerning the functioning of decision-making mechanisms with the engagement of school students (Management Council, Pupils' Council, etc.).

# NU TĂCEA!



## Conclusions:

Education for Society, gymnasium education cycle, through its curricular elements, shall contribute to the development of democratic culture, in general, but is less targeting the electoral culture, in particular, through Electoral Education. There are Units of Content aimed directly at organising and holding elections in the 5th and the 9th grades, namely: Organising elections in classroom/school and Your Vote Matters. It is worth noting that in the 9th grade, an important stage for gymnasium students, keeping in mind that many of them choose vocational education (where Education for Society is not compulsory), the curriculum does not expressly target Electoral Education: many Units of Content compared above are marginally correlated with the concept of Electoral Education. They are rather aimed to trigger electoral training, to raise questions an Electoral Education course could provide answers to.

The curriculum keeps coherence in developing democratic culture, as a whole, but the limits imposed on a subject taught one hour per week do not allow for sufficient strengthening of Electoral Education elements.

# VOTEAZA!

### **1.3.1.3 History of Romania and Universal History, gymnasium education cycle <sup>39</sup>**

**Document Milestones:** the 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grades, 2019, MoECR, compulsory school subject, part of socio-humanistic subjects, beneficiaries: gymnasium students, teaching staff, parents, authors of textbooks.



<sup>39</sup> National Curriculum, History of Romania and Universal History, the 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grades, 2019, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/iru\\_gimnaziu.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/iru_gimnaziu.pdf) (Accessed on: 26.05.2021)

## THE 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



### Units of competence

- Describing in one's own words the meaning of the studied historical terms;
- Using historical terms specific for pre-history and Ancient Age to develop sentences / texts.



### Units of content

- Greek polis. Systems of Governance.
- Athens and Sparta. The Age of Pericles.
- From royalty to the Roman Republic.

### Comments

At this stage pupils know the concept of democracy and its history and learn to use it in their discourse.

## THE 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



### Units of competence

- Commenting the causes of historical events and processes;
- Formulating the conclusions concerning the changes that occurred in the history of Middle Ages.



### Units of content

- Genesis of modern society in England;
- France between Middle and Modern Ages

### Comments

At this stage pupils know the concept of democracy and its history and learn to use it in

## THE 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



### Units of competence

- Describing, on the basis of sources, the historical events, which attest the genesis of democracy;
- Reviewing the written or visual sources referring to modern history pursuant to the suggested algorithm.



### Units of content

- England – from absolutism to Parliamentary monarchy;
- French Revolution;
- European Revolution of 1848.

### Comments

The pupils determine through these contents the citizens' rights and freedoms mirrored in the programmatic documents of modern revolutions.

## THE 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



### Units of competence

- Applying historical terms in the review of changes that occurred in the modern society.



### Units of content

- Socio-political doctrines;
- Modern thinking and social movements.

### Comments

Socio-political doctrines and the principles underpinning them are known. Contents mentioning the electoral reforms implemented often upon the pressure of people are also studied in the 8th grade.

## THE 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE



### Units of competence

- Appraising the level of citizens' responsibilities in the contemporary society;
- Correlating the reasons and economic, social, political and cultural consequences of events/ facts/ processes of contemporary history;
- Substantiated defence of a point of view concerning the causes and effects of a historic event/ process/ phenomenon of the contemporary ages.



### Units of content

- Democracy and totalitarianism.

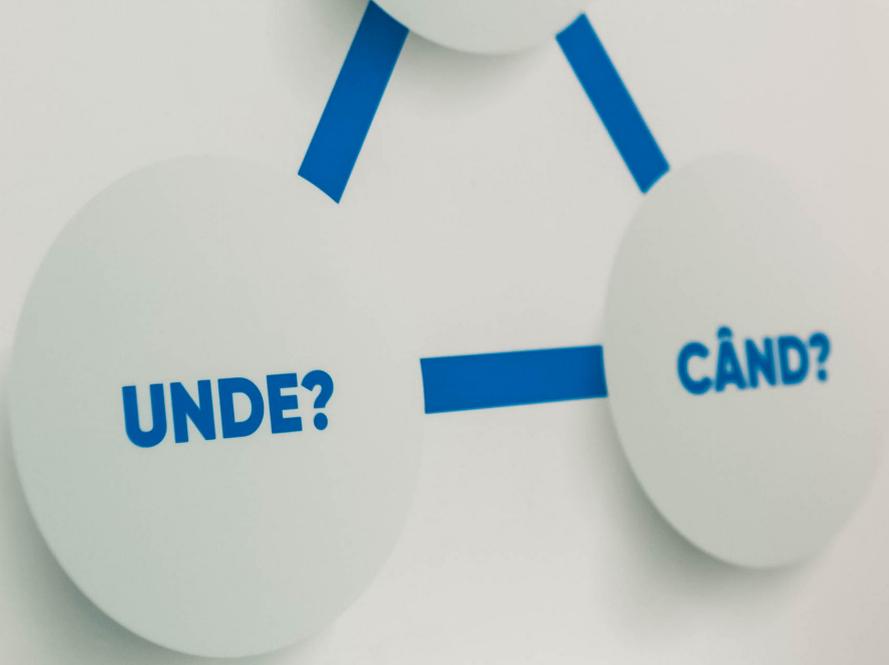
### Comments

The fundamental principles of a democratic regime, including people's sovereignty and holding periodically elections.

## Conclusions:

The subject History of Romania and Universal History brings its inputs to shape and develop key competences, mainly related to the qualities of future democratic citizens, although it has a pretty general correlation with the Electoral Education concept, the teacher having the role to guide them in the classroom.

This subject contributes significantly to the accomplishment of the education goal, according to which school has got the mission to develop critical thinking through the concepts integrated into its Units of Content. Although, as the ultimate goal, pupils would understand the role of voting right and its historical journey, the contents do not correlate directly with the electoral process. History teaches the school students how the voting right has evolved, why there is a need to have voting rights and, in part, why it is important to exercise it and how to exercise it.



**UNDE?**

**CÂND?**

## 1.3.1.4 Civic Education and Education for Society, lyceum education cycle

### Civic Education 2010 <sup>40</sup>

**Document Milestones:** the 10th – 12th grades, 2010, MoECR, compulsory school subject, implementing period: 2010-2018, beneficiaries: lyceum students, teaching staff, parents, authors of textbooks.

The document represents the second generation of curriculum centred on competences.

#### Specific competences:

1. Applying the acquired knowledge specific for the civic area to investigate/appraise certain actions, events, processes of daily life.
2. Making use of opportunities for personal development, career development and employment.
3. Resolving individual, group, and community issues.
4. Valuating on a daily basis the respect shown for national and European values, for

### Education for Society (EFS) 2018 <sup>41</sup>

**Document Milestones:** the 10th – 12th grades, 2018, MoECR, compulsory school subject, gradual implementation in the 10th grade beginning with 2019, beneficiaries: students from schools, teaching staff, parents, authors of textbooks.

The document represents the second generation of curriculum centred on competences.

The document purpose is to develop pupils' competences for democratic culture. The Curriculum is focused on **psycho-centric** approaches (school students have come to the foreground with their peculiarities and needs, own learning and development pace) and socio-centric (focusing on undertaking the values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and cultural diversity). It contributes to the achievement of educational ideal through the employment of the European Reference Framework, composed out of 20 competences for democratic culture, grouped in:

1. values (three sets);
2. attitudes (six sets);
3. skills (eight sets);
4. knowledge and critical understanding (three sets).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> National Curriculum. Civic Education, the 10th – 12th grades, 2010. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps\\_gimnaziu\\_2018-08-14\\_curriculum\\_Guide.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps_gimnaziu_2018-08-14_curriculum_Guide.pdf) (Accessed on: 02.05.2021)

<sup>41</sup> National Curriculum, History of Romania and Universal History, the 10th – 12th grades, 2019, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/iru\\_liceu.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/iru_liceu.pdf) (Accessed on: 26.05.2021)

<sup>42</sup> National Curriculum. Education for Society, the 10th – 12th grades, 2018, p. 6 [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps\\_liceu\\_2018-08-14\\_curriculum\\_Guide.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps_liceu_2018-08-14_curriculum_Guide.pdf) (Accessed on: 02.05.2021)

# The 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

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## Civic Education 2010

There is nothing to identify with reference to Electoral Education in the previous version of the curriculum for the 10th grade.

## Education for Society (EFS) 2018

**We identify several Units of Competence correlated with Electoral Education:**

- Exploring the ways how citizens may influence local public policies;
- Substantiating personal views and decisions;
- Accepting other views in decision-making through democratic procedures;
- Applying legal mechanisms for the participation in decision-making in the institution/ community;
- Reviewing the impact of personal/other people decisions on the community;
- Taking responsibility for errors.<sup>43</sup>

**Two Units of Content are correlated with Electoral Education, comprising several relevant contents:**

### DECISIONS SHAPE THE IDENTITY:

- Views related to decisions and identity;
- Irreversible elections and elections that may be altered;
- Decisions that defined our identity;
- Freedom means the capacity to decide.

### DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

- Forms of governance;
- Constitutional provisions;
- Representation mechanisms;
- Organisation of elections;
- Citizen's vote matters;<sup>45</sup>

There are many such activities, which are relevant for the development of electoral competences, namely: debating **individual decisions** in public; building the mental map referring to elections; **exercises to analyse the electoral legislation; organising elections in school self-management bodies; simulation: "Should I be the Mayor of the Locality ..."**, presenting and considering public statements; exercises aimed to develop criteria for **adopting decisions**; critical reflections concerning some basic political views (liberal, social-democrat, conservative, green, etc.); negotiation exercise to adopt a decision.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.

## The 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Civic Education 2010

We have identified the sub-competence: **Exercising the right of association, to vote, for which the unit Law – protection instrument for people** is suggested, comprising such topics as: Civil society; The right of association; Citizens' organisations; Role of civil society in society democratisation; **Citizens' right to vote.**

Analytical exercises are suggested for legal provisions, reflective essay: "Me as a Moldovan citizen".<sup>46</sup>

### Education for Society (EFS) 2018

Unlike the 10th grade, the Units of Competence for the 11th grade are not directly focused on Electoral Education, but rather consequently.

The proposed activities shall ensure decision-making continuity:

- simulation of decision-making under pressure;
- cognitive game on decision-making.

Project-based learning enables drafting public policy proposals, but this might be a too complex task for the pupils of this age.

## The 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Sub-competence: Submitting proposals/methods of exercising citizenship, correlated with some relevant contents for the Unit: **Humans – social beings** with the topics: The individual and exercising citizenship. Proactive citizenship; **Citizenship and elections:** Articles 17 and 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. The proposed exercises/activities are again of essay type, and this does not foster pupils' mobilisation and engagement.

We have identified correlated Units of Competence, such as:

- Identifying procedures for fair management of minority-majority relationships.
- Substantiating the preferences for certain types of Media and messages, etc.

The Units of Content employ Media, which could be marginally correlated with the Electoral Education:

- All Media are "built";
- **Behaviour of Media Consumer – receiver and emitter of information;**
- Decoding Media messages.

The Curriculum of *History of Romania and Universal History*,<sup>46</sup> lyceum education cycle, comprises in its Units of Content the concepts already studied in the gymnasium education cycle, but the concepts are tackled from the social, economic, political and cultural perspective, as per the principle of matters. Examples of Units of Content, which have correlation with Electoral Education at an incipient stage, include: *Models of political organisation of Ancient Greece, Socio-political revolutions in the Modern Age, General and specific characteristics of political regimes of the Contemporary Age, Democracy and totalitarianism.*

<sup>46</sup> National Curriculum. Civic Education, the 10th – 12th grades, 2010. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps\\_gimnaziu\\_2018-08-14\\_curriculum\\_Guide.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/eps_gimnaziu_2018-08-14_curriculum_Guide.pdf) (Accessed on: 02.05.2021)

## Conclusions

1

There are dedicated Units of Content for the reconceptualised subject, starting with the 10th grade, different for each grade, expressly covering **Electoral Education – Decisions Shape the Identity, Democratic Governance, Freedom Involves Responsibilities, Participation in Democracy through Media**, ensuring the part of knowledge (for instance, renewed updates of governance forms through critical reflections over some basic political views: liberal, social-democrat, conservative, green, etc.), but also the part of skills and attitudes, supported through the engagement of school students in developing some specific products, for instance, the Elections File for the Pupils' Council;

2

Regrettably, in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, there is no continuity in developing electoral competences. The only retained element refers to decision-making. Unlike the 10th grade, the Units of Competence for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade are not directly focused on Electoral Education, but rather consequently. It is worth noting that the general orientation to develop pupils' values and attitudes in the spirit of democratic culture, contributes indirectly to the achievement of certain Electoral Education matters;

3

We shall note the importance of acquiring solid knowledge from the gymnasium education cycle, from the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspective, in particular, of competences derived from other Socio-humanistic Education subjects (History of Romania and Universal History);

4

It is important that in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade a solid focus is placed on **developing education competences for Media** as an important part of electoral competence, Media being an important factor in voters' decision-making. As such, we welcome the fact that in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade focus is placed on the development of skills of empathy and addressing conflicts, respectful attitude towards the idea of protecting the minority, having promoted citizens' activism through the proposed products and activities. Approximately 30% of the planned hours on this subject are dedicated to **Project-based** learning activities, through which the pupils are engaged in identifying and addressing some issues at the level of classmates, school or community – this fact provides the possibility to achieve some educational contexts favourable for the development of Electoral Education competences;

5

In principle, taking-up the pupils on electoral law is done gradually through the transition from the **psycho-centric** dimension (me, my view, my identity, my decision) to the socio-centric dimension, which is shaped through clear and continuous definition of Units of Competence, in particular for the 10th grade, in part for the next grades: awareness of citizens' role, of vote importance, conscious ownership of citizens' responsibilities – the 10<sup>th</sup> grade; identifying civil society features in the frame of democratic society; drawing the advantages of transparent decisions of public interest for citizens – the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

### 1.3.2 Promoting Electoral Education through Optional Subjects

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Out of the generous array of optional subjects developed over the last years and approved by the National Council for Curriculum (more than 60 optional subjects), only few of them are correlated with Electoral Education:



Grades I - IV, V - IX, VIII - IX

Education for human rights, 2015

Grades V - IX

Education for human rights, 2018

Grades V - IX

Education for Media, 2017, 2018, 2019



The review of these curricula proved they have marginal links with Electoral Education. Hence, certain elements are taught which, in the long-run, converge towards shaping democratic culture of pupils. Hence, for instance, we identify two curricula for the optional subject **Education for Human Rights**, a 2015 version and a 2018 version, tailored to the new requirements aimed to develop curricula pursuant to the Reference Framework of the National Curriculum. The versions developed pursuant to the Partnership Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Amnesty International Moldova in 2015 and, respectively, in 2018, cover significant deepening of learning contexts and shaping behaviours centred on educating respect for the values of human rights and fundamental freedoms: “At the behavioural level, Education for Human Rights prepares the child to undertake life responsibilities in an open and free society, based on understanding, peace, non-discrimination, gender equality and friendship amongst all peoples and social, ethnic, national and religious groups”. There are no contents directly correlated with Electoral Education in the 2015 document. Instead, the 2018 version, expanded for all gymnasium grades, is noteworthy by a successive approach of elements of democratic culture and Electoral Education. Conceptual orientation of the optional subject to all education cycles is focused in the training context on the concept of learning: about-through-for **Human Rights**.

## Below we present, in a table format, these relevant Units of Content correlated with Electoral Education:

<b>Grades V, VI</b>	1.6. Views concerning elections and identity 2.3. Me in the democratic society 3.5. I shall be an active citizen
<b>Grades VII, VIII</b>	1.1. Pluralism. We – holders of rights 1.6. Should I be elected ... 1.9. I want and I can! Participation in pluralistic democracy
<b>Grades IX</b>	3.1. What type of Governance we plead for? 3.2. What is the best way of governing the country? 3.3. Should I be leading the country... 3.4. Policy cycle <sup>48</sup>

In case of Education for Media, an optional subject developed for each cycle, for certain grades (III/IV, VII/VIII, X/XI) we identify some elements that contribute to the shaping of critical thinking, civic competences of school students, the subject aiming to: “enhance the skills for analysis, assessment and critical reporting of messages disseminated by Media, develop the capacity to create their own Media products, take decisions and act in full knowledge of civic responsibility and attitude”. <sup>49</sup>

Contents, such as: Media Functions, Media Information, Information Quality, Danger of Manipulation (gymnasium education cycle); Environments: from raising awareness to developing civic awareness, Pluralism of Ideas, The Role of Journalists and Citizens in Building Participatory Democracy (lyceum education cycle) shall contribute to enhancing the competences of school students for democratic culture and Electoral Education.

<sup>47</sup> National Curriculum. Education for Human Rights, the 8th – 9th grades, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final\\_curriculum\\_optional\\_edo\\_04.02.2015.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/final_curriculum_optional_edo_04.02.2015.pdf) (Accessed on: 29.05.2021)

<sup>48</sup> National Curriculum. Education for Human Rights, the 5th – 9th grades, pp. 10-15 [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum\\_optional\\_educatie\\_pentru\\_drepturile\\_omului\\_cl\\_v-ix.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum_optional_educatie_pentru_drepturile_omului_cl_v-ix.pdf) (Accessed on: 29.05.2021)

<sup>49</sup> National Curriculum. Education for Media, the 7th - 8th grades, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum\\_educatie\\_pentru\\_media\\_gimnaziu.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum_educatie_pentru_media_gimnaziu.pdf), p. 5. (Accessed on: 30.05.2021)

The review of curriculum for the optional subject **Debates** revealed no content connections and specific competences correlated with Electoral Education, but it may strengthen pupils' civic competences in expressing/substantiating their own options. At the same time, we have identified more common elements of Electoral Education in the frame of another optional subject **Learning to Substantiate One's Discourse**, for the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grades. The Units of Content, such as: "We learn to have argument-based discussions"<sup>50</sup> (six hours) and "We learn to hold public discourses" shall help the lyceum pupils express argument-based ideas, develop their skills to bring arguments in their discourses, cultivate tolerance and pluralism of opinions, learn how to prepare and deliver public speeches.

## Final Conclusions following the Review of the National Compulsory and Optional Curricula

The review of those three curricula for socio-humanistic subjects directly correlated with Electoral Education – Moral and Spiritual Education/ Civic Education/ Education for Society – proved there is partial connection amongst those three documents in terms of developing democratic culture in school students. The 2018 MSE showed some correlation with the dominant democratic culture and citizenship competences of pupils, which are so necessary to be built at this age.

Concurrently, we have attested the curricular frame lack of coherence: primary school-gymnasium-lyceum, as the European Reference Framework, composed of 20 competences for democratic culture, is not employed by primary school.

Indeed, following the approval, in 2017, of the new Reference Framework of the National Curriculum, Civic Education for gymnasium and lyceum education cycles was reconceptualised, being renamed into Education for Society. It is aimed at developing the rule of law values in pupils, the competences necessary to respect citizens' rights and responsibilities in light of studying integrated modules with reference to "Education for Democratic Citizenship, Education for Human Rights, Education for Integrity, Patriotic Education, Intercultural Education, etc." The stated objectives are generous and compliant with the needs/ challenges of a changing society. Moreover, the adoption of European practices in the Republic of Moldova is commendable, in particular, the adoption of competences for **democratic culture**. However, the vertical connection of all constituents occurs quite often through discontinuity, while Electoral Education takes place through partial consolidation of knowledge that fails to provide the pupils with a coherent pathway, sufficient for the goal itself and with all the answers to multiple dilemmas stemming from the exercise of civic rights and freedoms, of electoral rights.

It has been ascertained modest coverage of Electoral Education at the level of optional subjects, more precisely, there are three optional curricula (Education for Human Rights, Education for Media, We Learn to Speak Argumentatively), which partially exploit this area and which should be taken into account in the process of developing a thematic curriculum.

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<sup>50</sup> National Curriculum. We learn to speak argumentatively, the 10th-11th grades, pp. 8-12 [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum\\_optional\\_invatam\\_sa\\_vorbim\\_argumentat\\_cl\\_x-xi.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/curriculum_optional_invatam_sa_vorbim_argumentat_cl_x-xi.pdf) (Accessed on: 02.06.2021)

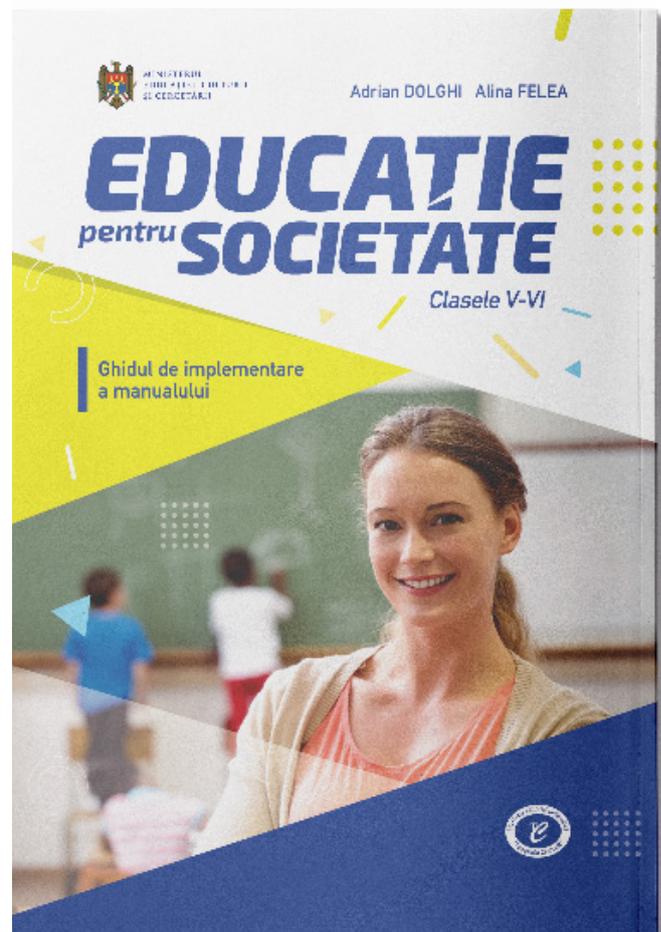
<sup>51</sup> Framework Plan for Primary, Gymnasium and Lyceum Education Cycle, 2018-2019 school year, p.6. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/plan-cadru\\_2018-19\\_rom\\_rus\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/plan-cadru_2018-19_rom_rus_final_1.pdf) (Accessed on: 02.05.2021)

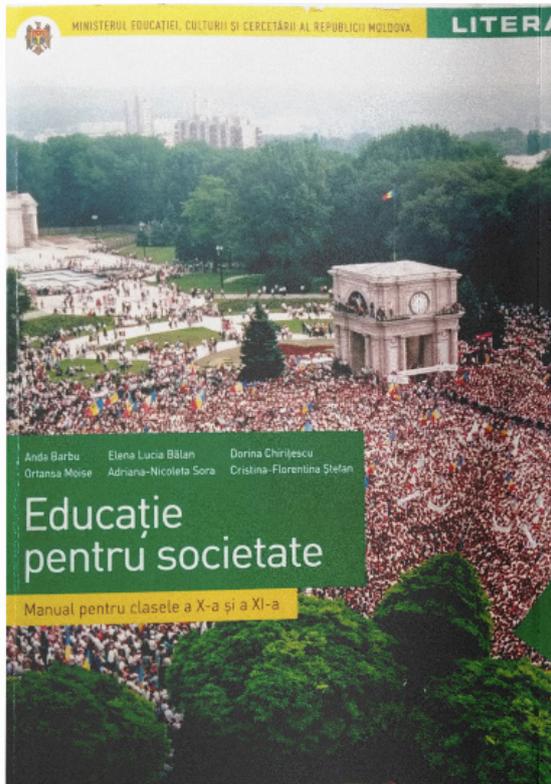
## 1.3.3 Relevance of Education for Society textbooks in light of tackling Electoral Education

This Chapter would focus on reviewing the Education for Society textbooks for the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grades with reference to Electoral Education and transposing the designed curricular contents into textbooks. We refer here to the four grades framed into two textbooks, which, from the outset, lowered the textbook attractiveness.

The Education for Society textbook for the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades, which has been developed pursuant to the new curriculum, provides a various structure of each lesson, compliant with the ERRE (Evocation, Carrying out the meaning, Reflection, Extension) framework, with the focus on more suggestive headings, oriented towards the values of democratic culture, such as: "I learn to address the life issues", "I compare the opinions", "We work in teams", etc.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the development of pupils' competences, from the Electoral Education perspective, is marginally done through the topic "Everybody's Opinion Matters", and through the topics "Human Dignity and Human Rights" and "Social Behaviour" in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. It is worth specifying that topic 16 "The Rights of Participation (express opinions, access to information, association)" and topic 18 "Substantiated Opinion from Different Sources" employ relevant concepts of Electoral Education, such as "information", "right to information" – with direct reference to Article 34 of the Moldovan Constitution, while for topic 19 "Decisions of our Class" the pupils shall consider what a "decision" is, as well as "Pupils' Council".





i.e. “designating, through voting, the members of state/organisation representative bodies. Direct elections or ballot is an electoral system where the voters cast their vote for a candidate or for a political party.”<sup>52</sup> It is worth specifying that the definition encompasses a pretty complicated feature for the understanding capacity of a 5th grade pupil, while the topic elaboration involves more new, unknown, theoretic elements, namely working with the Guidelines on Setting and Operation of Pupils’ Council or the task to draft a Regulation on electing the Council members of the Class. The focus is deviated from understanding the substance of the exercise of holding elections and their importance to the review of some documents. Nonetheless, it is worth appreciating the focus placed on the stated topics and content details provided pursuant to the curriculum. In general terms, the textbook graphics, diversity of tasks support the motivation for learning. These topics are accompanied by detailed supports, where the playful dominance and relevant

visual support can help the pupils understand the content, develop skills and, the most important, develop attitudes.

The Education for Society textbook for the 10th – 11th grades, edited in 2019, provides contexts for education learning by teenagers, in particular, through the proposed modules for the 10th grade, as they naturally stem from the approved curriculum.

Atragem atenția la unitatea de învățare 2 – **Guvernarea democratică** și în mod expres la temele: „Forme de guvernare”, „Mecanisme de reprezentare”, „Organizarea alegerilor” și „Votul cetățeanului contează”. Manualul oferă un suport informativ consistent despre rolul partidelor politice, clasificări ale partidelor (liberale, conservatoare, social-democratice, socialiste, religioase, naționaliste <sup>54</sup>), despre sistemele electorale și despre organizarea alegerilor. Tema 2.4.

We shall draw attention to Learning Unit 2 – Democratic Governance and, expressly, to such topics like “Forms of Governance”, “Mechanisms of Representation”, “Organising Elections” and “Citizen’s Vote Matters”. The textbook provides consistent information support about the role of political parties, their classification (liberal, conservative, social-democratic, socialist, religious, nationalist), about electoral systems and about holding elections. Topic 2.4. “Organising Elections” includes matters such as: procedures and institutions engaged in organising elections, references to the Electoral Code, voters, and electoral candidates.

Topic 2.5. “Citizen’s Vote Matters” deals with terms such as “political participation”, detailing the factors that influence voter’s turnout: institutional factors, political factors, economic factors, individual factors (age, education background, income, interest for political life, etc.).<sup>54</sup> All these contents are mirrored in the textbook for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The second part of the textbook for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade contains no reference to Electoral Education.

<sup>52</sup> Dolghi A., Felea A. Education for Society, Textbook for the 5th – 6th grades, “Texter” Publisher, 2019, p. 75.

<sup>53</sup> Barbu A., Bălan E., Chirișescu D et al. Education for Society, Textbook for the 5th–6th grades, Chisinau, “Litera” Publisher, 2019, p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, pp. 56-57.

We shall specify that the textbook, presented in poor monochromatic (grey) graphics, is lacking colours, has unattractive design for the youth, has unbalanced presentation of illustrations and texts, encompasses clear informative feature. This is the way chosen by the Authors to build their teaching strategy, which is centred on information delivery. We have attested true shortage of interactive exercises aimed to foster critical and creative thinking of school students. The principle of integrating theory and practice is poorly exploited, as well as the principle of learning through action, which are relevant for developing pupils' competences for democratic culture. In order to produce an attractive textbook it is necessary to have a balanced dosage between the information component and the actionable component, which, regrettably, is missing. The textbook merit is to bring the basic information with reference to electoral processes. Therefore, teachers' work and creative engagement is required to truly develop the expected competences.

It is worth noting that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research developed in 2020, under the aegis of the Council of Europe, the Teacher's Guide for Education for Society, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as the Teacher's Guide for Education for Society, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. These guides supplemented efficiently the teaching toolkit for this subject.

In the Guide for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, the Authors propose useful teaching materials for topics such as: Democratic elections, Functions for which citizens cast their vote, Electoral rules and procedures, Electoral campaign between raising awareness and manipulation.<sup>55</sup> The Guide provides detailed scenarios for these topics (teaching pathway), granting useful information and methodological support. The cognitive activities develop critical spirit and team work, for instance, Role-play "Election crash test", case studies, "Describe the perfect candidate", etc. It is worth specifying that this Guide provides support in implementing the descriptor-based evaluation methodology for Education for Society. informațional și metodologic util. Activitățile didactice dezvoltă spiritul critic și lucrul în echipă, de exemplu, Jocul de rol „Election crash test”, studii de caz, activitatea „Describe candidatul perfect” etc. De precizat că acest ghid oferă suport în implementarea metodologiei de evaluare prin descriptori la disciplina Educație pentru societate.



<sup>55</sup> S. Dascăl, S. Lisenco, D. Popa; Co-ordinators: C. Lungu, D. Lazur. Education for Society, the 10th Grade. Teacher's Guide, Chisinau, 2020, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/coe\\_educatie\\_pentru\\_societate\\_clasa\\_10\\_ro.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/coe_educatie_pentru_societate_clasa_10_ro.pdf) (Accessed on: 01.06.2021)

## 2. National/Local Awareness-raising and Electoral Education Teaching Practices for Future Voters

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In this Chapter we shall present some Electoral Education initiatives, which were implemented by profile organisations in secondary education institutions at the national or local level. It is important to mention that this Study covers no projects that are not implemented in school environments and are not focused exclusively on Electoral Awareness, in the meaning defined in Chapter I, although their target-groups are people of school age (the so-called first-time voters).

As a specialised electoral body, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) implements Civic Education programmes.<sup>56</sup> Building on this duty, CEC organises awareness raising activities for current and future voters in the frame of the Global Elections Day,<sup>57</sup> of topical campaigns and public lectures. In December 2011, the Central Electoral Commission established the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training<sup>58</sup> (CICDE), a public institution specialised in the training of electoral officials, but also of other electoral actors. Since 2015, CICDE has focused on Electoral Education of current and future voters through the implementation of an array of extra-curricular programmes in the country education institutions.

On 22 August 2019, the Central Electoral Commission, the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research signed a 5-year Collaboration Agreement.<sup>59</sup> The latter is aimed to intensify cooperation relationships in order to improve the awareness level of young people concerning electoral processes, active engagement of young people in all phases of the electoral cycle and their acknowledgment of the importance of elections for building a democratic state. Inter alia, the Signatories agreed to jointly develop training, awareness raising and civic education projects and programmes in the electoral area, to organise joint activities in the area of civic education and capacity building of educational system subjects; to make available methodical, analytical and information materials; to organise continuous education courses, seminars, simulations; to create a motivation frame for professional development of educational staff (including the hours of participation in the trainings organised by CEC/CICDE and activities on Electoral Education in the Portfolio for the certification of educational staff). It has been found that the Agreement is focused on the Youth segment, with little emphasis on collaboration with secondary education institutions.

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<sup>56</sup> Article 22 (1) i) of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova. No. 1381 dated 21.11.1997, published on 29.12.2017 in the Official Gazette No. 451-463 art. 768.

<sup>57</sup> It is celebrated on the first Thursday of February, <https://aceeeo.org/en/projects/global-elections-day>, (Accessed on: 19.05.2021)

<sup>58</sup> CICDE has got three priority activity areas: training of electoral actors, civic education of voters and research in the electoral area. <https://cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1178&rid=2143&l=ro>, (Accessed on: 10.05.2021)

<sup>59</sup> Collaboration Agreement of Central Electoral Commission, Centre for Continuous Electoral Training and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. [https://a.cec.md/ro/acord-de-colaborare-intre-comisia-electorala-centrala-centrul-de-2818\\_94400.html](https://a.cec.md/ro/acord-de-colaborare-intre-comisia-electorala-centrala-centrul-de-2818_94400.html); <https://cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1267&rid=2269&l=ro>, (Accessed on: 15.05.2021)

In practice, since 2015, CICDE has carried out Electoral Education Programmes for all school levels, having the motto *Democracy can be learned*. The purpose of these programmes is to contribute to the development of school students in the spirit of democratic principles and to get future voters acquainted with electoral procedures of the day of elections. An Electoral Education Programme was piloted in 2020 in pre-school education institutions.<sup>60</sup> For Master's Degree students, CICDE provides the *Political and Electoral Management Programme*<sup>61</sup> implemented jointly with the Department of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences in the frame of a partnership with the State University of Moldova.

The development of active citizens shall start since early childhood and keep going through the whole educational pathway. In many countries, the statistics show evident political apathy amongst young people. This phenomenon is stemming from the lack of confidence in the power of own vote or from the lack of knowledge of multiple opportunities to engage in and contribute to the development of the community they are part of.

In order to awake the interest of future young people towards the electoral process, CICDE started to implement interactive and interesting programmes for children. What is voting? Where it stems from? Why not all people are the same? Why a polling station needs a ramp and what secrets does the electoral process hide? All these easy-to-understand questions shall develop critical thinking and raise children's curiosity about elections. The complexity of questions and approach increases along with the age of children: from pre-school children to students.

Some CICDE programmes are circumscribed around Civic Education and Education for Society, while other programmes are extra-curricular. Most Electoral Education activities and programmes of CEC and/or CICDE were carried out under the Project "Enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections" implemented with the financial support provided by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), by the Embassy of Great Britain in Chisinau, through the Good Governance Fund, and by the Netherlands' Embassy through Matra Programme.<sup>62</sup>

Electoral Education initiatives undertaken by Promo-LEX<sup>63</sup>, Association for Participatory Democracy "ADEPT"<sup>64</sup>, National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM)<sup>65</sup>, Information and Documentation Centre for the Child's Rights of Moldova (CIDDC)<sup>66</sup> have been subject to research and review with the aim to develop this Study. It was found that Promo-LEX and ADEPT endeavours are not targeting school students. There were awareness raising campaigns prior to elections targeting the young voters or programmes aimed to engage young people in politics, without tackling their engagement in elections (see: School of Young Political Leader, organised by ADEPT over 15 years). CNTM and CIDDC covered the Pupils' Councils by their area of activities and interest as participatory and self-governing structures at the school level. We shall mention

<sup>60</sup> CICDE celebrates the Global Elections Day by trainings, awareness raising activities and promoting the electoral rights amongst children and young people. <https://www.cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1063&rid=2141&l=ro> (Accessed on: 15.05.2021)

<sup>61</sup> <https://masterat.cicde.md/> (Accessed on: 19.05.2021)

<sup>62</sup> "Enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections". <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/ro/home/projects/enhancing-democracy-in-moldova-through-inclusive-and-transparent.html> (Accessed on: 19.05.2021)

<sup>63</sup> <https://promolex.md/?lang=ro> (Accessed on: 24.05.2021)

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.e-democracy.md/adept/> (Accessed on: 24.05.2021)

<sup>65</sup> <https://cntm.md/> (Accessed on: 24.05.2021)

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.drepturilecopilului.md/index.php/ro/> (Accessed on: 24.05.2021)

## 2.1 Extra-curricular Programmes/Activities

### 2.1.1 Programmes Addressed to Primary School Pupils

#### History of elections

The first Electoral Education activities for the primary school pupils were conducted by the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training in 2019. The Centre Trainers visited three education institutions and conducted trainings on the History of Elections, which were attended by circa 80 children. The Units of Content included:

- Organising Elections in Ancient Greece;
- Secret ballot and the manner of casting votes the 19th Century;
- Organising Elections in the 21st Century in Moldova.

#### Arci – the Electoral Superhero

The first edition of Electoral Cartoons titled “Arci at the Polling Station”<sup>67</sup> – an illustrated information material about the voting process and fundamental principles of electoral integrity was disseminated during these trainings.

*The electoral cartoons are intended for children aged between 7-11 years and for their parents, their protagonist being named Arci – the Hedgehog. The latter is a Superhero, who has broad knowledge in the electoral area, helps the children get acquainted with the voting procedure, accessibility to the electoral process, the process of organising elections, voting abroad, voting during pandemic, etc. The purpose of these materials is to provide early education to future voters, getting them acquainted with electoral procedures, helping them understand the importance of votes.*

Four editions of electoral cartoons have been printed out by the time of developing this Study, all of them available in Romanian, Russian, English, Ukrainian, Gagauz and Romani (the language of Roma people). Moreover, in order to reach every child, including those with vision impairments, the 2021 cartoons included soundtrack and have been printed in Braille alphabet.<sup>68</sup>

More than 30 000 children benefited from electoral cartoons, society games with electoral topic and CICDE mascot in the frame of two awareness raising campaigns, conducted with the title *Arci’s Pathway to Elections*.



<sup>67</sup> CICDE launched a new model for the whole area of children’s electoral education. <https://www.cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1063&rid=2105&l=ro> (Accessed on: 15.05.2021)

<sup>68</sup> The Brochure of electoral cartoons “Arci’s Pathway to Elections” is available now in Braille format. <https://www.cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1063&rid=2492&l=ro> (Accessed on: 15.05.2021)

## 2.1.2 Programmes Addressed to Gymnasium Students

### Choose Democracy

The activity aimed at fostering Electoral Education amongst teenagers<sup>69</sup> has been conducted by the CICDE since 2015, having involved the 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils. Overall, 265 training seminars were conducted in 80 education institutions from different localities, mainly from the rural area throughout 2015, 2016, and 2018. Hence, 5144 children benefited from such trainings.

Through these trainings, CICDE aimed to:

- promote Electoral Education amongst teenagers;
- contribute to the development of school students in the spirit of democratic values and principles;
- provide a platform for discussions and foster the exchange of ideas with reference to political rights;
- support the engagement of school students in decision-making at the level of family, class, secondary education institution, community;
- popularise the importance of elections and democracy amongst school students;
- promote the idea that each of them is an important piece in the society, and it depends only on them/us in what type of country we live.

The training programme included the following Units of Content:

- Democracy – the form of governance that provides the citizens with the possibility to participate in decision-making;
- Taking responsibility by citizens to address the issues in the society;
- Models of behaviour – heroes, promoters of change in the society;
- Models of participation in decision-making (participatory democracy) – simulation of decision-making for different situations;
- Simulation of the electoral process.



<sup>69</sup> "Choose Democracy": electoral training for teenagers. <http://cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1063&rid=1712&l=ro> (Accessed on: 15.05.2021)

## 2.1.3 Programmes Addressed to Lyceum Students

### Umbrella of Democracy

The Electoral Education actions implemented by the CICDE for lyceum students commenced in 2015 under the slogan “**Umbrella of Democracy**”. The CICDE Trainers conducted meetings with 11th – 12th grade students in the lycea of District Centres and of five Chisinau Municipality sectors. The programme comprised the following Units of Content:

- Peculiarities of organising local general elections;
- Importance of participation in elections;
- Training and education opportunities provided by the CICDE.

These actions were attended by circa 890 pupils from 25 schools.

### Intellectual games “What? Where? When?” with Electoral Topics

In 2017, in order to promote knowledge and learning interactive activities, as well as to develop erudition, knowledge of electoral area and participatory democracy, critical spirit to analyse different elements of the electoral process, the series of Intellectual games “What? Where? When?” was started. The games are conducted in partnership with the Moldovan Club of Intellectual Games.

“What? Where? When?” is a team game where questions are asked, while the Team shall answer them in a quick manner. The activity involves competition amongst teams composed of six players at most, each of them representing secondary education institutions. Following the school competitions, the winning teams shall compete at the district level, so that the final game accommodates the best teams of country lycea.<sup>70</sup>

The questions relate to the electoral area, covering the practice of the Republic of Moldova, as well as of other countries, and refer to:

- the electoral rights;
- electoral administration;
- voting procedure;
- transparency of elections;
- accessibility of the electoral process;
- gender dimension in elections.

During 2017-2021, CICDE conducted 17 pre-selection games attended by 965 school students, and three final games attended by 162 school students. Overall, as many as 190 teams representing circa 100 schools participated in the games.

In 2020, the game was tailored to online environment so that it could be held during pandemic.

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<sup>70</sup> 2019 Final Stage. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXglXngSESc> (Accessed on: 17.05.2021)

## 2.1.4 Programmes Addressed to both Gymnasium and Lyceum Students

### Training the members of Pupils' Councils

The Education Minister written Order No. 136 of 26 March 2013 approved the mechanisms of school student participation in decision-making.<sup>71</sup> More precisely, this Order set up the foundation of Pupils' Councils<sup>72</sup> as self-management bodies at the level of secondary education institutions. According to the Guidelines concerning the establishment and operation of Pupils' Councils, the latter are representative structures of school students at the institutional or territorial level (secondary education institutions, districts, municipalities) engaged in identifying and addressing the issues that concern them, in partnership with the management team, educational staff and parents, for the benefit of pupils and (school or/and territorial) community.

In 2016, CICDE conducted for the first time 47 training seminars in secondary education institutions. The seminars were intended for 744 members of Pupils' Councils. The training was focused on the following Units of Content:

- Stages for establishing Pupils' Councils;
- Organisational matters for establishing Pupils' Councils;
- Electoral candidates and platforms.

In this first endeavour to enhance democracy at the school level, the CICDE collaborated with ARTICO – the Republican Centre for Children and Youth, designated by the Ministry of Education as Co-ordinator of the National Pupils' Council.

In 2018, the CICDE suggested the pupils to organise the elections in Pupils' Councils pursuant to a “Practical Guide for Conducting Elections in Pupils' Councils” – de facto, an Electoral Code for electing the pupils' representative bodies in education institutions.<sup>73</sup> The Guide suggests electing the Council members on the basis of a mixed electoral system, where school parties may compete in the frame of school constituency, while the electoral candidates and independent candidates may stand for elections in the frame of grade district units. The whole exercise involved simulation of all electoral procedures by school students, in the course of 20 days, playing different roles corresponding to the national electoral process, i.e. electoral officials, electoral competitors, Media, Observers and, of course, voters. In the end, they set up the day of elections and determined the winners of elections. .<sup>74</sup>

In 2020, the training programme for electing the Pupils' Council members was transposed in video version<sup>75</sup> and posted on CICDE YouTube channel. Overall, in 2016–2020, as many as 124 seminars were conducted in 124 education institutions attended by 2500 school students.

<sup>71</sup> Written Order No. 136 of 26 March 2013 approving the Mechanisms of school students participation in decision-making [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordinul\\_me\\_ce\\_rom.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordinul_me_ce_rom.pdf) (Accessed on: 21.05.2021)

<sup>72</sup> Annex 1 to written Order No. 136 of 26 March 2013, Guidelines concerning the establishment and operation of Pupils' Councils, [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/instructiune\\_creatie\\_consiliul-elevilor.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/instructiune_creatie_consiliul-elevilor.pdf) (Accessed on: 21.05.2021)

<sup>73</sup> Practical Guide “The Day of Elections in the Pupils' Council”. 2018 Edition and 2020 Edition. <https://www.cicde.md/index.php?page=news&id=1260&rid=2207&l=ro> (Accessed on: 21.05.2021)

<sup>74</sup> 51 schools in the Republic of Moldova elected their Pupils' Council members. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUTAPicQyAg> (Accessed on: 21.05.2021)

<sup>75</sup> CICDE video Guide on electing Pupils' Councils. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqjJFrpxhr8> (Accessed on: 22.05.2021)

The need to involve CICDE to provide support in electing Pupils' Council members on democratic basis is underpinned by the findings revealed by the Information and Documentation Centre on Child Rights of Moldova<sup>76</sup> and the National Youth Council of Moldova<sup>77</sup> concerning the shortcomings in the training methods of these Pupils' Councils. Both institutions make reference in their reports to the "Practical Guide for Conducting Elections in the Pupils' Councils", developed by CICDE. It is worth noting that both CIDDC and CNTM work with the Pupils' Councils in terms of their activity part. Hence, there is synergy of endeavours from the time of conducting elections of Pupils' Council members and throughout their activity. Concurrently, none of the institutions has got the capacity to cover all secondary education institutions of Moldova.



## Electoral Awareness Week

In 2028, the Electoral Awareness Week<sup>78</sup> pilot-project was implemented in 1265 schools. At least 33600 school students took part in the topical activities. CEC, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and District Education Divisions raised lyceum students awareness (mostly the first-time voters) about their rights and obligations as voters, about the principles and values of democratic elections, about the opportunities of civic engagement and, last but not least, about the importance of participation in elections. Awareness raising materials were prepared by CEC and conveyed to schools to be used in the frame of Civic Education lessons. CEC Management<sup>79</sup> and Opinion Leaders attended the awareness raising sessions in some schools.

The event included a component for the gymnasium grades (the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grades). During the hours of Visual Arts, the children reproduced through drawings the electoral processes and the role of citizens in elections. The Week Slogan was "Democracy Matters! Your Vote Matters!"<sup>80</sup> The best drawings were selected and exposed in the Square of the Stefan cel Mare si Sfânt Park in Chisinau and at Chisinau International Airport for several weeks. The drawings posted at the Airport were viewed by approximately 10,000 people, while those exposed in the Park Square – by circa 65,000 people.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> The right to opinion as it is taught and practiced in school. Study on Pupils' Engagement in Decision-making in school through Pupils' Councils. November 2019, [https://monitor.drepturilecopilului.md/files/Raportul\\_CIDDC.pdf](https://monitor.drepturilecopilului.md/files/Raportul_CIDDC.pdf) (Accessed on: 25.05.2021)

<sup>77</sup> 2019 Report on Pupils' Council Analysis and Evaluation, <https://cntm.md/rapoarte/raportul-de-analiza-si-evaluare-a-capacitatii-consiliilor-elevilor/> (Accessed on: 25.05.2021)

<sup>78</sup> Central Electoral Commission and CICDE in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research will conduct the "Electoral Awareness Raising Week" in Moldovan schools. [https://a.cec.md/ro/comisia-electorala-centrala-si-centrul-de-instruire-2781\\_88204.html](https://a.cec.md/ro/comisia-electorala-centrala-si-centrul-de-instruire-2781_88204.html) (Accessed on: 19.05.2021)

<sup>79</sup> Alina Russu and Rodica Ciubotaru. Electoral Awareness Raising Week in Schools. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIPITgVhySY> (Accessed on: 18.05.2021)

<sup>80</sup> Democracy can be learned in school. <https://medium.com/undp-moldova/democr%C8%9Bia-se-%C3%AEnva%C8%9B%C4%83-de-pe-b%C4%83ncile-%C8%99colii-675ff588a0e5> (Accessed on: 18.05.2021)

## 2.2 Extra-curricular Activities

1. Since 2015, CICDE and CEC have organised **Public Lectures** for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students on different occasions – upon the initiative of education institutions or on the Global Elections Day or on International Day of Democracy.
2. Since 2015, CICDE has organised **Elections Simulation Workshops**. The children are familiarised with the legal provisions for the organisation of elections, the conditions of participation in elections, the procedures applied on the days of elections in the Republic of Moldova. School children participate in the simulation of the elections day, being assigned the role of voters, observers and electoral officials.
3. Since 2019, CICDE has conducted **“4D Elections: Connect yourself!”** and explained those four ways of engaging in the electoral process to lyceum pupils and young people, i.e. as electoral officials, candidates, observers and voters.



## 2.3 Electoral Education Programme for the Educational Staff Teaching Civic Education and Education for Society



The curriculum for Teachers of Civic Education “The Role of Electoral Education in Democratic Society” has been developed by CICDE in response to the demand of the leadership of education institutions<sup>82</sup> – beneficiaries of extra-curricular programmes and activities organised by it. The training Module “The Role of Electoral Education in Democratic Society”<sup>83</sup> contains theoretical material and practical exercises, which can be used by teachers of Civic Education during their lectures devoted to civic participation and electoral process. The materials along with the exercises have been compiled in the following Units of Content:

- The role of Electoral Education programmes and voters’ awareness raising;
- Electoral system. Electoral cycle;
- Organising Elections in the Republic of Moldova. The regulatory framework;
- Contest type model-activity titled “Elections – an important element of democracy”;
- Simulating the voting procedure;
- Presenting the teaching support prepared by the CICDE to be used for Civic Education and Education for Society lessons.

Bearing on this programme, the CICDE conducted two training seminars for 40 teachers and a seminar for 27 representatives of the District Education Divisions. The training was conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. In 2020 it was envisaged to conduct trainings in 20 districts, but they were postponed for 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>81</sup> Enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections (Phase I) – Final Report & brochure about the Project results. <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/ro/home/projects/enhancing-democracy-in-moldova-through-inclusive-and-transparent.html> (Accessed on: 19.05.2021)

<sup>82</sup> CICDE 2019 Activity Report approved by CEC Decision No. 3794 of 06 March 2020, page 6, [https://www.cicde.md/media/files/files/anexa\\_3794\\_raport\\_anual\\_cicde\\_2019\\_318535.pdf](https://www.cicde.md/media/files/files/anexa_3794_raport_anual_cicde_2019_318535.pdf) (Accessed on: 14.05.2021)

<sup>83</sup> Youth Activism in Elections will be developed in school under the Civic Education and Education for Society. <https://cicde.md/index.php?pag=news&id=1063&rid=2097&l=ro> (Accessed on: 21.05.2021)

## 3. Regional Visions and Models of Electoral Education

### 3.1 Republic of Georgia

◇ The Information and Training Programme “Elections and Young Voters”, implemented in 2015-2021 for the 11th – 12th grade students, is extra-curricular. Civic Education includes a Chapter about elections for the 9th – 10th grades. The extra-curricular Programme pursues the goal to raise electoral awareness, increase civic responsibility amongst young people in order to develop their electoral culture. Initially it was launched in remote schools located in the mountain regions and those with ethnic minorities, being subsequently expanded to cover all public education institutions. The Programme was implemented by CEC and Centre for Development of Electoral Systems, Reforms and Trainings, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, in 738 schools, having involved 13000 pupils (face-to-face and online trainings).

The Curriculum is designed for five days, one hour per day. The fifth day is devoted to simulated elections based on the practical teaching methodology.

**The key subjects tackled interactively during the training activities are as follows:**

- ehistorical overview and modernity of elections;
- international principles and standards for holding democratic elections;
- gender equality in the electoral process;
- the role of Georgian electoral administration in organising and managing elections (including modern electoral services provided to voters);
- importance of voters’ role in democratic elections;
- legal rights of stakeholders, engaged in the electoral process and guiding principles of their activities to ensure democratic elections;
- regulations for holding elections under safe conditions and during pandemic;
- voting and counting the votes, using IT (exchange of international practice and experience of Georgia).

Practical format debates are also organised in public schools with the support of Educational Resource Centres, following which a slogan is chosen amongst those promoted by CEC (for example, “Your choice is the law”).

The people who conducted the trainings are members of district electoral commissions and trainers of electoral administration.

◇ Civic Education, studied in the 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grades, contains only the Unit of Content “The Constitutional Rights of Georgian Citizens”.

◇ Electoral Law Programme is implemented since 2010 in universities. Beneficiaries: 6000 students of Law Department, Social Science Department and Journalism Department. This Programme promotes the development of students’ practical skills and betterment of their professional knowledge on national regulations governing elections and on international electoral practices.<sup>84</sup>

## 3.2 Ukraine

- ◇ The 2017 Law of Ukraine “on Education”, No.2145-VIII, defines the education objective, which is related, in particular, to the “education of responsible citizens who are capable to elect publicly, and targeting their activities for the benefit of other people and society”.<sup>85</sup>
- ◇ The concept of state policy implementation in the area of reforming the secondary general education “New Ukrainian School”<sup>86</sup> covers the introduction, as of 2022, of a new public standard for basic secondary education – Development of Civic Education in Ukraine. The focus is placed on the implementation of electoral dimension of this type of education in compliance with the content of civic competence (Author’s emphasis) – as it has been defined in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of Europe.

Education of competent and responsible voters has been declared as one of civic education areas and one of its key tasks. Amongst the listed civic skills one could expressly notice the “constructive participation in elections”. The concept review, in the opinion of S. Topalova from the Analytical Centre “Observatoria democratii”, shows the following: “...electoral competence remains outside the Civic Education system. Formal education, which, pursuant to the concept, shall mirror the civic education content in the education standards, likewise, fully ignore the electoral component of civic education. The content of “Civic Education” for the 10th grade of secondary education schools”<sup>87</sup> is a clear proof of this statement. Respectively, the electoral dimension of civic education is proposed to have a key position and cover the whole learning process, i.e. from primary school to adults’ education.

- ◇ The university course “Democracy: from Theory to Practice”, taught since 2018 in eight universities, is built upon the IFES Global Civic Education Methodology, Strengthening Engagement through Education for Democracy (SEED), being tailored to Ukraine conditions. The knowledge-based components cover Democratic Governance, Human Rights, Civil Society and Citizens’ Engagement. The cross-section topics include: gender equality, elections, rights of minorities, inclusion and accessibility of people with disabilities, good governance, the rule of law; Media literacy, digital participation, diversity, the role of money in politics, the role of youth and corruption.



<sup>84</sup> See also other information in Civic and Voter Education Programmes. <http://electionreforms.ge/eng/list/30/amomrchevlebistvis> (Accessed on: 16.05.2021)

<sup>85</sup> Закон України “Об образовании”. <http://base.spinform.ru> (Accessed on: 10.05.2021)

<sup>86</sup> [https://osvita.ua/legislation/Ser\\_osv/54258/](https://osvita.ua/legislation/Ser_osv/54258/) (Accessed on: 27.04.2021)

<sup>87</sup> Св. Топалова, Внедрение гражданского образования в украинской школе: о компетентном избирателе забыли. 2018, Аналитический центр «Обсерватория Демократии», для «Хвилі » <https://hvilya.net/analytics/society/vnedrenie-grazhdanskogo-obrazovaniya-v-ukrainskoy-shkole-o-kompetentnom-izbiratele-zabyili.html> (Accessed on: 27.04.2021)

### 3.3 Republic of Kazakhstan

- ◇ The Kazakh Central Electoral Commission, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, had agreed in 2017, pursuant to a Memorandum, the following actions related to formal and non-formal education:
  - Electoral Education of voters shall become an ongoing process at all education levels, beginning with the upper secondary school, vocational schools, higher and post-university education;
  - devising new approaches for the development and implementation of some additional forms of Electoral Education in the educational process for the 9th – 11th grade pupils of general schools, college freshman and sophomore students and university freshman and sophomore students, thus, having addressed the issue related to conscious engagement and participation of young voters in the electoral process;
  - inclusion of different forms of Electoral and Legal Education of young people (debates, disputes, competitions, Olympiads, student governments) in the educational process of schools, colleges and universities;
  - development of mechanisms for Electoral Education at the regional level (Parliament for young people, electoral commissions for young people);
  - inclusion of elective subjects in the Curriculum of the Public Administration Academy by the President for the training of civil servants.<sup>88</sup>
- ◇ Since 2018, the Project “Elections of School President” has been implemented. It was designed to develop knowledge, practice-oriented skills and experience of school students in electoral activities under the promotion of legal culture of future voters.
- ◇ Through the Co-operation Memorandum between the Kazakh CEC and the Association of Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, signed in 2018, the parties committed themselves to:
  - shape and develop young voters’ legal culture and electoral literacy;
  - ensure their active and informed participation in electoral campaigns;
  - increase the level of confidence in the electoral system and in elections;
  - develop new directions of electoral and legal education of young voters, including through diploma papers on the electoral law, electoral process and research topics for the Academia.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> С. Мустафина, Электоральное обучение участников выборного процесса: начало пути. In: «Казакстанская правда», 5 июня 2017, № 105. <https://www.election.gov.kz/rus/news/releases/index.php?ID=3858> (Accessed on: 09.05.2021)

<sup>89</sup> [https://baigenews.kz/news/v\\_vuzah\\_kazahstana\\_vvedut\\_zanyatiya\\_po\\_elektoralnoi\\_gramotnosti/](https://baigenews.kz/news/v_vuzah_kazahstana_vvedut_zanyatiya_po_elektoralnoi_gramotnosti/) (Accessed on: 09.05.2021)

## 3.4 The Russian Federation

- ◇ **Electoral Concept for the Youth**<sup>90</sup>, approved in March 2014, set out the following objectives: enhancing the young people’s legal culture through knowledge on electoral law, legislation on elections and referenda; ending legal nihilism in their environment; increasing the level of civic responsibility, conscious and responsible social behaviour; increasing the level of electoral activities amongst young people through augmenting the status of the concept “citizen’s duty”.

The taught school programmes and courses, which represent the implementation mechanisms of the state policy targeted in the Concept, are as follows:

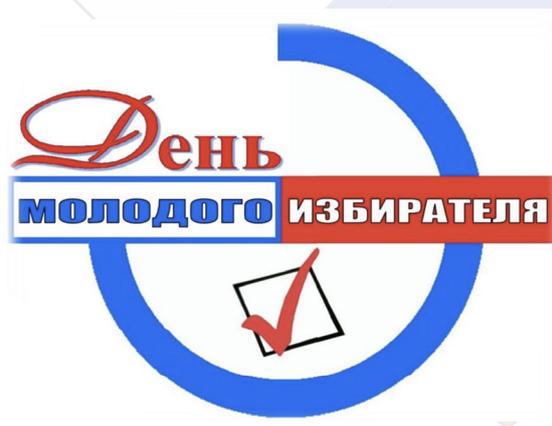
“Social Studies”, the 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades, “Citizenship”, “State and Law Foundations” (“Обществознание”, “Граждановедение”<sup>91</sup>, “Основы государства и права”).

- “School Electoral Course” (e.g. «Избирательное право и избирательный процесс в Российской Федерации») is recommended to be taught for the 14-18 old school students, while Lectures about democracy (“Уроки демократии”) – to pupils aged < 14 years.

**Along with curricular activities, there are extra-curricular programmes, such as:**

- „I am the future voter!” – role-play, through which the children are familiarised with the structure of the Russian electoral system, the electoral campaign core phases;
- “Electoral Commissions for Young People”, envisaging to increase the level of confidence of young citizens in the Russian electoral system, overcoming the political apathy and developing an active civic position.<sup>92</sup>

- ◇ **Young Voter’s Day**, set up in 2008, is organised on a yearly basis on the third day of February.<sup>93</sup> The pursued goal: develop democracy, improve the legal culture and, primarily, electoral culture of young people, raise awareness on elections, create conditions for informed participation in the voting process, foster civic accountability and increase the interest of young people, future voters in managing the issues of state and local affairs through elections.



<sup>90</sup> О Молодежной электоральной концепции / Постановление ЦИК России от 12 марта 2014 г. № 221/1429-6. <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/499093482> (Accessed on: 11.05.2021)

<sup>91</sup> <https://docplayer.ru/60330257-Rabochaya-programma-po-uchebnomu-kursu-grazhdanovedenie-dlya-5-9-klassov.html> (Accessed on: 11.05.2021)

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.admoil.ru/realizatsiya-molodezhnoj-elektoralnoj-kontseptsii> (Accessed on: 13.05.2021).

<sup>93</sup> Постановление ЦИК России N 83/666-5 “О проведении Дня молодого избирателя” (с изменениями на 22 июля 2015 года). <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/902096963?marker=64U0IK> (Accessed on: 09.05.2021)

- ◇ The target public – people aged 18-30 years, including the first-time voters, but also future voters (14-18 years old). The conducted activities:
  - thematic hours about the democratic system for organising the modern society, basic elements of the Russian electoral law, Olympiads and questionnaires on the electoral law and electoral process, different competitions involving the topic of elections (best poster, best model of diploma for the first-time voters, invitations to elections, trainings, scientific and practical conferences organised in general, vocational and higher education institutions);
  - presentations of clubs for young voters, centres for enhancing their legal culture;
  - holding meetings and discussions with CEC members;
  - inducing in elections (for the first-time voters);
  - events simulating the process of preparation and casting the vote (referenda for young people, elections for young people’s Parliaments, self-governance bodies of education institutions), etc.
  
- ◇ The university course “The Electoral Right and Electoral Process in the Russian Federation”<sup>94</sup> is taught in legal departments and in other departments as well to increase the young people subsequent electoral activity, in particular, and develop civil society institutions, in general.

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<sup>94</sup> ИЗБИРАТЕЛЬНОЕ ПРАВО И ИЗБИРАТЕЛЬНЫЙ ...<https://kubsau.ru> (Accessed on: 13.05.2021)

## 4. International Practices for Teaching Electoral Education in Schools

### 4.1 Republic of France

The example of France concerning the development of responsible citizens is a complex one in terms of vision and approach. In the French educational system, at the level of state programmes, the most recent being approved by the line Ministry in June 2020, Civic Culture includes four areas: *Sensitivity, Order and Law, Thinking, and Commitment*. Civic Culture encompasses:

- Culture of sensitivity;
  - Culture of responsibilities (rules) and of citizens' rights;
  - Culture of thinking and discernment;
  - Culture of commitment.
- ◇ **Formal education: Moral and Civic Education** is a compulsory school subject. It is centred on three goals: Respect for the Others; Acquiring and Sharing the Values of the Republic, Building Civic Culture. At the state programme level, it is worth noting that for the Acquiring and Sharing the Values of the Republic goal the following has been expressly specified at the level of knowledge and competences associated with the learning objectives for cycle II (primary school):

#### Associated knowledge and competences

Attaining the first knowledge about democratic society

#### Learning objectives

The right to vote and universal suffrage<sup>95</sup>

- ◇ In the progression, at the state programme level, for the *Acquiring and Sharing the Values* of the Republic goal, at the level of knowledge and competences associated with the learning objectives for cycle III (gymnasium), the 'Vote' as a learning objective is expressly specified in at least two associated competences:

<sup>95</sup> Programmes for cycle 2, p. 66, [https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/A-Scolaire\\_obligatoire/37/5/Programme2020\\_cycle\\_3\\_comparatif\\_1313375.pdf](https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/A-Scolaire_obligatoire/37/5/Programme2020_cycle_3_comparatif_1313375.pdf) (Accessed on: 14.05.2021)

### Associated knowledge and competences

Identification and knowledge of democratic society framework.

Understanding and expressing the commitment in the classroom, school and community.

### Learning objectives

- Citizen of the country and European citizen.
  - The vote and representation in the classroom and in the institution.
- 
- Democratic participation
  - The vote

- ◇ **Certificate of Citizenship, compulsory element** - in France, commencing with the 2017-2018 school year, in a centralised manner at the level of education system, every pupil shall obtain the Certificate of Citizenship at the end of compulsory schooling, following the completion of the Citizen's Pathway (Parcours citoyen) course.
- ◇ **Citizen's Pathway** is a compulsory course in all schools and lycea, beginning with the primary grades, having the purpose to promote the Republic values and principles through approaching the key education areas for citizenship: secularism, gender equality, respect, greening education and sustainable development, prevention of harassment, discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism, etc. At the same time, the course, carried out in the frame of formal and out-of-school education, is based on the concept of civic commitment culture through the participation of pupils in the social and democratic life of the class, school and community. The Certificate of Citizenship shall demonstrate the level of social commitment and engagement, following the completion of several stages:



- ◇ **Preparing and participating in the Day of Defence and Citizenship** (la Journée Défense et Citoyenneté/ JDC) is the last stage of the Citizenship Pathway. It is a day of awareness-raising and compulsory evaluation for all citizens, who have not reached yet the age of 18 years, concerning their rights, obligations and defence of the country. Only after having participated in the JDC, every teenager shall get the Certificate, which is a precondition to be admitted to the national exams, including the Baccalaureate or other exams, such as those for getting a Driver's Licence.<sup>96</sup>



## What can we learn from the French

Photo by Brooke Cagle on Unsplash

- ✓ We can notice that Electoral Education elements are integrated in the **Moral and Civic Education** subject, which comprises contents defined at the central level to ensure continuity and convergence of basic contents;
- ✓ The dominant emphasis defines the correlation between the Republic values and democratic values in general, so that civic education elements have a strong influence on educational goals, stipulated in this manner in the Education Code. Moreover, the completion of Citizen's Pathway encompasses, from the outset, a binding feature, and even some elements of light coercion to the extent that, along with the citizenship duty to pay taxes, the obligation to go out and vote shall be fulfilled as well.

<sup>96</sup> Le parcours citoyen | Ministère de l'Education Nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports <https://eduscol.education.fr/1558/le-parcours-citoyen-de-l-eleve> (Accessed on: 14.05.2021)

## 4.2 Republic of India

### Electoral Literacy Clubs in India

The Election Commission for Voter Education of India implements the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation Programme.<sup>97</sup> Electoral Education is carried out through formal and out-of-school educational activities in the frame of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs).

- ◇ Formal Electoral Education is carried out within Civic Education, while since 2005, following the revision of the National Curriculum Framework, Social and Political Life has been introduced for general education and Political Science for general and higher education institutions.<sup>98</sup> All three subjects are provided with textbooks. There is the possibility to develop regional Electoral Education curricula.
- ◇ ELCs are platforms used to engage school students in interesting activities and experiences to raise their awareness concerning their electoral rights and familiarise them with the electoral process of registration and voting.<sup>99</sup>

**Expanded target-group:** The Electoral Literacy Clubs are present in schools, for the pupils of the 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades (14-17 years old), but also in colleges (18-21 years old). The ELC Programmes are also available for the education of adults, in particular, for members of rural communities.

**Centralised and affordable teaching support:** the activities and games developed in the frame of ELC Projects have been elaborated in six Resource Guides separately for the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, for colleges and for the community. Indeed, the Guides contribute to citizens' literacy: they are easy to understand, are presented in a user-friendly and comprehensible format for organisation by ELCs. There are 25 activities and six games carefully designed to offer specific learning, which would help the citizens become "empowered voters".



<sup>97</sup> Election Commission of India. <https://eci.gov.in/sveep/> (Accessed on: 21.04.2021)

<sup>98</sup> Electoral Literacy: Education Curricula and Extra Curricula. <http://voicenet.in/PPT/session1/India.pdf> (Accessed on: 22.04.2021)

<sup>99</sup> Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation. <https://ecisveep.nic.in/electoral-literacy-clubs/> (Accessed on: 21.04.2021)



## What can we learn from the Indian?

Photo by Jeswin Thomas on Unsplash

- ✓ The interest, at the central level, for Electoral Education enabled the implementation of genuine literacy of population with reference to this sensitive and complex subject for such a large country with a huge number of inhabitants;
- ✓ Developing some accessible materials, comprising entertaining features, simulating different situations enabled the people to acknowledge the importance of participatory democracy, democratic culture, having reset the collective mentality of colonial feature towards the acknowledgment of citizenship role and democratic values;
- ✓ Providing with curricular resources (handbooks, textbooks) of formal and non-formal education (ELCs) enabled the unification of some conditions/requirements, of a quality standard in teaching Electoral Education and connecting with lifelong education.

## 4.3 The Kingdom of Belgium

In Belgium, following the adoption of a decree of the Government of Wallonie-Brussels Federation dated 22 October 2015, the course of **Philosophy and Citizenship** was introduced in public education, beginning with the primary school, at least one hour per week, with the option to have more hours upon request at the account of the Religion and Moral Non-confessional course. The purpose of this course is to develop open and autonomous citizens, capable to judge and decide autonomously. Following the approval of the Decree, the line Ministry developed a guide detailing the course objectives and competences.

The course also defined the correlation between citizenship and citizens' rights, including civil rights, socio-economic rights, but also political rights, the voting right inclusive. The general approach is to develop a philosophic vision in pupils regarding the citizenship concept, perceived as stake and practice/action. This covers pupils' independent activity in different situations, critical approach and conceptualisation. The school students are fostered to act, investigate and analyse specific issues/cases. Hence, for instance, the course covers suggestions for content and activities, including through detailing the relationship between the education of Media and elections, such as assessing, in the context of an electoral campaign, the impact of surveys over the results of elections. Understand – judge – decide autonomously<sup>100</sup> are those three links that define the philosophy of developing civic competences.

At the same time, the vision of approaching Electoral Education, even though this concept does not appear expressly distinguished, is oriented, at the knowledge level, towards explaining the historical pathway of country development, the transformations at the political level, state reforms, functionality of languages, the Modules where the reforms of territorial and administrative organisation influenced, over time, the elections, having distinguished the levels of power for those who were elected by the citizens to represent them: European, federal, regional, local and community levels. And this is Belgium – an advanced country in terms of education for citizenship – electronic voting is already used<sup>101</sup> in 62 out of 209 electoral cantons of Belgium. It is to note that in Belgium, pursuant to its Constitution, voting is a citizen's binding right. The vision promoted by education (formal, non-formal, informal) is that building a fair and open society involves the participation of all.

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.wallonie-bruxelles-enseignement.be/progr/CPC%20-%20Programme%20e%20et%20e%20degr%C3%A9s.pdf> (Accessed on: 14.05.2021)

<sup>101</sup> Marie-Pierre Vaan Doren. Je vote. Dossier pédagogique 2018-2019. <https://elections.inforjeunes.be/wp-content/topics/elections/media/dossier-pedagogique.pdf> (Accessed on: 14.05.2021)



**Knowledge**



**Skills/  
application**



**Transfer/mobilisation  
of acquired  
knowledge in new  
situations, e.g., in the**

## 4.4 Other countries (Australian Union, the Kingdom of Norway, the Kingdom of Sweden,

In Australia, Discovering Democracy units are studied in school. The initiative, implemented at the central level since 1998, is stemming from the idea that Civic Education is an urgent need for Australia and for citizenship. Hence, the state has developed curricular materials and resources for teachers' training. The Australian Electoral Commission, in collaboration with the entity responsible for curriculum development, devised a new curricular resource, namely Rules of Democracy: Electoral Educational Resource, and suggested for use in the frame of Discovering Democracy Units.

In the Kingdom of Norway, **Political education** is studied in the frame of Social Subjects, in the 1st – 10th grades. This includes three areas: History, Geography and Social Studies, with an overall number of 855 hours. The Norwegian Curriculum has got a different political education approach, which is centred on four topics:

- The first is the moralist emphasis, which purpose is to develop the citizen's will to observe the law, pay taxes and perform the military service;
- The second concerns the formal matter, defined by the knowledge on state institutions;
- The third defines political education as a form of debates of Media products;
- The fourth implies the reduction of political education to diverse participation of school students in school and classroom activities.<sup>102</sup>

An important focus is placed by teachers on Elections, as well as on how they are mirrored by Media. The anchored approach of elections-Media shall motivate the pupils to analyse and engage.

The Kingdom of Sweden is a country with traditions in Electoral Education. Back in 1954, the Swedish National Election Studies Programme (SNES) was implemented, which today has evolved in a network of high-profile researchers working for the Department of Political Sciences in Göteborg. The Programme serves as a collaboration platform for the Swedish and international researchers interested in electoral democracy, representative democracy, development of opinions and voting behaviour studies. This is a course for students.

- ◇ At the formal level, every teacher shall undertake the task to strengthen students' competences on Democratic Culture. In particular, Civic Education, History, Geography and Religion pay great attention to democratic values.

In Great Britain, Electoral Education is carried in the frame of **Citizenship Programmes of Study: Key Stages 3 and 4**. The national curricular content was published in 2013, being compulsory for all pupils aged between 11 and 16 years.

- ◇ For Stage 3 the pupils shall know data on the functioning of the Parliament, including voting and elections, on the role of political parties;
- ◇ For Stage 4 the pupils are prepared to learn different electoral systems used beyond the United Kingdom and actions they may undertake as citizens in democratic and electoral processes to influence the decisions adopted at the local, national level, etc.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Kjetil Borhaus, Voter education. The political education in Norwegian lower secondary schools <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/25913922.pdf> (Accessed on: 02.05.2021)

<sup>103</sup> Citizenship [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/908347/SECONDARY\\_national\\_curriculum\\_-\\_Citizenship.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908347/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Citizenship.pdf) (Accessed on: 29.04.2021)

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations concerning the Opportunity to Introduce an Optional Course

The research of sources tackling the subject of Culture and Electoral Education, of existing regional and international models, as well as the review of the current curriculum helped us understand and draw conclusions that legal/electoral literacy of all participants in the electoral process in the Republic of Moldova shall be expanded. The training is provided mainly by CICDE. The Electoral Awareness Programmes are provided primarily by the CEC, which are supplemented by some public associations, such as Promo-LEX, CNTM, ADEPT, and, of course, the Media.



The education programmes are more and more diverse and tailored to the digital era, thanks to the support provided by the development partners and donors. Since 2015, the CICDE has got continuous education programmes, independent of the electoral cycle. These programmes, initiated in the frame of UNDP projects, have been institutionalised in part, having ensured in this way the intervention sustainability. However, the Electoral Education programmes have a limited geographical coverage. Using the available networks is a good practice in this area. Since 2018, the CICDE has started using the network of public libraries, on the one hand, and the network of schools, on the other hand, to achieve better geographical coverage so that its Electoral Education programmes reach all beneficiaries. Electoral training and education shall commence in school and keep going in different formal, informal and non-formal lifelong learning contexts, so that in the long-run the Moldovan voters become competent.

The Youth Electoral Study conducted in 2003-2010 by the members of ACE Electoral Knowledge Network showed that the family and education institutions play independent but significant roles in achieving political literacy, in developing legal awareness and fostering informed elections.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>104</sup> В. В. Небредовская, Правосознание и правовая культура молодых специалистов в странах Скандинавии. Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет, 2012. <https://age-info.com> (Accessed on: 13.05.2021)

By supporting, through education programmes, young people's informed, careful and active civic participation, we can expand their potential to build democracy and be represented in decision-making processes. The need of these programmes is substantiated by the research carried out in our country over the recent years. We refer to "Education for active citizenship. Current situation and the mechanisms for its continuous development" (Promo-Lex, Chisinau, 2016, Authors: O.Gordila-Bobeico and L.Pascanean) and "Engaging the young people for positive social change in the Republic of Moldova" (Public Innovation Centre, Romania, 2017, Authors: Ovidiu Voicu, Victoria Cojocariu). One of the conclusions drawn by the authors is that school (formal education) failed to develop civic engagement, democratic citizenship, and critical thinking competences. The lycea studies have a rather limited contribution to the development of political or electoral awareness of young people, strengthening the sense of apathy towards these manifestations of civic responsibility, according to the view of some teaching staff, school students, and Master's Degree students: "The explanation of this harmful phenomenon stems from here as well. The knowledge of history and a well-shaped civic spirit may transform in axiom the need to participate in elections from both perspectives, either as a voter or as a candidate. For a better life it is necessary to undertake responsibility and understand the fact that greater power brings in greater responsibilities".<sup>105</sup>

The messages conveyed by more and more educational decision-makers, researchers, experts of civil society, institutions empowered to hold and review elections converge on the idea of building a multi-level system of Electoral Education, which should become a social mechanism to efficiently influence citizens' electoral behaviour.

Mihaela Borcoi, a Master's Degree student, who carried out a research titled Young People and Politics – between the Dilemma of Participation or Absenteeism in 2019, believes that the number of hours for Electoral Education and Culture in the national education system shall increase both quantitatively and qualitatively. "The electoral component, theoretical and practical, shall be included as part of the formal educational system, while non-formal education shall ensure exercising possibilities, which are needed to develop active and informed citizens" <sup>106</sup>

Victor Solomon suggests, in his turn, to develop Electoral Education and Culture programmes in the frame of the national education system.<sup>107</sup> "In the upper secondary education grades, we should focus more on matters related to pupils' electoral option to be exercised soon, so that they are aware of their rights, what they can do, where they may go, why it is important to go out and vote",<sup>108</sup> Eugenia Negru, teacher of Civic Education and History at Creative and Inventive Lyceum "Prometeu-Prim", pointed out.

## 5.1. Arguments for an Optional Course

Building on the assumption that the "optional subject is a choice of pupils, being different from the common core curriculum, which goal is to deepen, expand, integrate and innovate the knowledge of pupils in one or more areas",<sup>109</sup> we deem necessary to provide the pupils with the opportunities to develop their civic beliefs and attitudes relative to the multitude social roles they will have to play and undertake, while the school has to prepare them in an appropriate way.

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<sup>105</sup> Opinion expressed by the young teacher Andrei Zapșa in: History and Civic Education. What link they have with absenteeism of young people in elections. <http://reper.md/2019/04/29/istoria-si-educatia-civica-ce-legatura-au-cu-absenteismul-tinerilor-la-alegeri> (Accessed on: 22.05.2020)

<sup>106</sup> Participation – key element of democracy. Five Research Projects in the Electoral Area. CICDE, Ch., 2019, p.28.

<sup>107</sup> Idem, The Role of Civil Society Organisations in increasing the level of civic education and electoral participation of citizens, p.169.

<sup>108</sup> History and civic education. What link they have with absenteeism of young people in elections. <http://reper.md/2019/04/29/istoria-si-educatia-civica-ce-legatura-au-cu-absenteismul-tinerilor-la-alegeri> (Accessed on: 22.05.2020)

<sup>109</sup> [Conceptual milestones for developing the curriculum for optional subjects. p. 6 https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/repere\\_conceptuale\\_privind\\_elaborarea\\_curriculumului\\_la\\_disciplinele\\_optionale\\_0.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/repere_conceptuale_privind_elaborarea_curriculumului_la_disciplinele_optionale_0.pdf), (Accessed on: 30.05.2021)

The thorough review of Moral and Spiritual **Education, Civic Education, Education for Society** curricula showed discontinuity amongst these three documents in terms of developing democratic culture in school students. In primary school, Moral and Spiritual Education develops insufficient competences required for the development of active citizenship and civic behaviours in line with the requirements of democratic school and the system of competences for democratic culture. There is no coherence in the curricular frame for the primary-gymnasium-lyceum education cycles, as the primary school failed to employ the European Reference Framework, composed of 20 competences for democratic culture, especially the elements of Electoral Education are missing at this stage. Therefore, addressing this gap at the level of gymnasium and lyceum education cycle is required.

At the gymnasium education cycle, the Education for Society curriculum contributes to the development of democratic culture, in general, but is less focused on electoral culture. It is relevant that the new generation of curricula includes Units of Content aimed directly at organising and holding elections (e.g. Organising Elections in classroom/school and Your Vote Matters), but these are sporadic and insufficient elements for Electoral Education. This urgent need is also explained by the fact that in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, an important stage for gymnasium students, many of the latter choose vocational education, where Education for Society is not compulsory. Therefore, these school students – the cohort of future voters – risk graduating without having sufficient competences on Electoral Education.

In fact, in the lyceum education cycle, the Units of Contents Decisions Shape the Identity, Democratic Governance, Freedom Involves Responsibilities, Participation in Democracy through Media create opportunities for Electoral Education, supported by the acquired knowledge of **History of Romania and Universal History**, but the process lacks natural continuity between these contents, having ensured just partial correlation of Units of Content amongst socio-humanistic subjects. Hence, once the 2018 curriculum is implemented, which is centred on the European Reference Framework, including 20 competences for democratic culture, it is necessary the optional course to follow a systemic approach, having employed all useful and relevant elements, including those that could be delivered by other optional subjects, such as **Education for Human Rights, Education for Media, Learning to Speak Argumentatively**.

The same fact is emphasised through the review of some curricular products – school textbooks, toolkits available on the desk of pupils and educational staff. The area of Electoral Education is employed expressly only by the textbook for the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grades, namely Democratic Governance for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, including important and necessary topics such as “Forms of Governance”, “Mechanisms of Representation”, “Organising Elections” and “Citizen’s Vote Matters”, but they are not appealing in the proposed edition. Regretfully, these competences lack coherence, because the textbooks for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades and teaching materials mention only marginally Electoral Education or not at all. We should mention as relevant for Electoral Education two **Teacher’s Guides for Education for Society**, for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. The educational staff may find the needed support, as the Guide content is presented in a formative manner, having employed the descriptor-based evaluation methodology.

According to the international electoral theory, the current awareness raising and electoral training programmes shall cover the following Units of Content. Please compare the three columns of the Table. <sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Adapted as per the materials of Civic Education and Voters’ Awareness Raising Module, BRIDGE 2017 AEC IDEA IFES UNEAD UNDP V3, <https://www.bridge-project.org/> (Accessed on: 06.06.2021)

Topics	Electoral Awareness Raising	Electoral Education	Civic Education	The national curriculum
Democracy and totalitarianism			•	•
Decision-makers in a democracy		•	•	•
Human fundamental rights			•	•
Human political rights		•	•	
The rights to participate (express opinions, access to information, association)			•	•
Separation of powers within a state			•	•
State institutions			•	•
Elective bodies		•	•	
Accountability of elective body members			•	
System of political parties			•	•
Democratic values			•	•
Form of active citizenship		•	•	•
Volunteering			•	
Electoral Democracy		•		
Representation		•	•	•
Governance of majority and the rights of minorities		•		•
Ethnic minorities			•	
Electoral systems		•		•
Elections		•	•	
Referendum		•	•	
Electoral management institutions		•		
Voting procedure	•			•
Universal suffrage	•	•	•	•
Equal suffrage		•	•	•
Direct suffrage	•	•	•	•
Secret ballot	•	•	•	•
Freely expressed suffrage		•	•	•
Importance of vote		•	•	•
Elections stakeholders		•		
Integrity of elections		•		
Groups underrepresented in elections		•		

Topics	Electoral Awareness Raising	Electoral Education	Civic Education	The national curriculum
Corruption phenomenon			•	•
Civic responsibility			•	•
Pluralism of opinions			•	•
Media in a democratic society			•	•
Awareness raising sources on elections			•	•
Legal systems				
Legal literacy			•	
Equality and non-discrimination			•	•

The performed review of the national curriculum (Moral and Spiritual Education, Civic Education, Education for Society) clearly reveals that a large part of the content necessary for the development of electoral competences of future voters is missing (please see column 4 in comparison with columns 1-3). This situation may be improved through two approaches:

1. supplementing the current National Curriculum with relevant and necessary Units of Content to help the voters become aware and competent in decision-making and options;
2. introducing the optional subject on Electoral Education for gymnasium and lyceum students to be taught in any of the 8th, 9th, 10th or 11th grades. This, in our opinion, as well as in the view of electoral management authorities, shall efficiently contribute to the achievement of the goal: empowering citizens to participate more effectively in electoral and political processes of their country, as well as of the following objectives:
  - ✓ enhancing the legal culture of future voters;
  - ✓ ensuring active and informed participation in electoral campaigns;
  - ✓ overcoming political apathy through the development of an active civic position;
  - ✓ combating political absenteeism amongst young people;
  - ✓ fostering independence in political decision-making;
  - ✓ stimulating this category of people to determine the future of their country;
  - ✓ increasing the level of confidence of young citizens in the Moldovan electoral system, the institution of elections and referenda;
  - ✓ promoting social inclusion through exercising citizenship rights;
  - ✓ promoting awareness amongst school students on lifelong learning in the area of Electoral Education as a need to become informed and proactive citizens.

Electoral education of school students has pursued a double goal. On the one hand, they would become engaged and informed citizens/voters when they reach the voting age. On the other hand, we believe that parents and family would be more susceptible to go out and vote following the enrolment of their children in Electoral Education Programmes.

“Democracy is complicated”, Greer Burroughs, Civic Education Expert from IFES declared meaningfully. Pretty often people, especially in transition democracies, like the Moldovan one, do hope that everything would change overnight; however, any change is time consuming. Respectively, people shall be prepared to undertake commitment towards democracy and prove betterments over time. These are some of the attitudes we shall develop in children since their school age. When they are not empowered to exercise and defend their or other people’s democratic rights and responsibilities, the opportunity for disinformation, corruption and electoral fraud flourishes, augmenting in this way the leaders’ potential to undertake non-democratic actions, jeopardizing human rights, stability and well-being.

**Electoral Competence** of future citizens-voters is composed, in particular, of three elements, amongst those 20 covered by the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, namely knowledge and critical understanding of politics and legislation; civic spirit; accountability.<sup>111</sup> These pursue the goal to develop pupils’ competences in order to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in the society, employ diversity and play an active role in democratic life with the aim to promote and protect democracy and the rule of law.

Electoral competence shall be defined in the Electoral Education optional curriculum by programme designers. This definition shall be formulated in the context of the Reference Framework of the National Curriculum and of the concept of socio-humanistic subjects, having logically connected all these topics, obviously, in light of socio-political realities, the level of democratic culture and Electoral Literacy specific for the Republic of Moldova. In other words, defining the electoral and course specific competences shall have an emphasised national/local feature. We have derived this statement from the analysis of international and regional practices. Each country shall decide upon the way of carrying out formal, non-formal and informal education depending on many factors, including social or geopolitical ones, as well as the level of political culture of voters.

## 5.2 Other Recommendations to Ensure the Development of Diverse, Active and Well-informed Voters

1. Revising the Collaboration Agreement between the Central Electoral Commission, the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, signed in 2019, in light of expanding the Electoral Education applicability area for school students in the educational process, with the focus on general education.
2. Diversifying the array of out-of-school activities centred on Electoral Education at the level of general, vocational and higher education institutions, as well as in the frame of out-of-school education institutions.

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<sup>111</sup> Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Council of Europe Publishing/Éditions du Conseil de l’Europe, April 2018, volume III, p.122.

3. Introducing a compulsory Electoral Education Module for all schooling cycles, a series of activities similar to the “Electoral Week”. Eventually, the last activity in this frame could be the elections in Pupils’ Councils.
4. Considering the possibility to hold elections in Pupils’ Councils on the same day throughout the country, similar to national elections.
5. Transforming the Pupils’ Councils of education institutions in agents of electoral competences.
6. Integrating Electoral Law or Electoral Practices Modules in the continuous education subjects for the educational staff teaching History of Romania and Universal History, Civic Education and Education for Society, as well as for the managerial staff.
7. Introducing the course of Electoral Law or Electoral Practices in the curriculum of relevant departments, e.g. Legal, Political Sciences, and Journalism.

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<sup>106</sup> Cadrul de Referință al Competențelor pentru Cultură democratică. Council of Europe Publishing/Éditions du Conseil de l’Europe, aprilie 2018, volumul III, p.122.

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