

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY TEXTBOOK AUDIT IN BULGARIA

Iva Boneva, ARCI - Bulgaria

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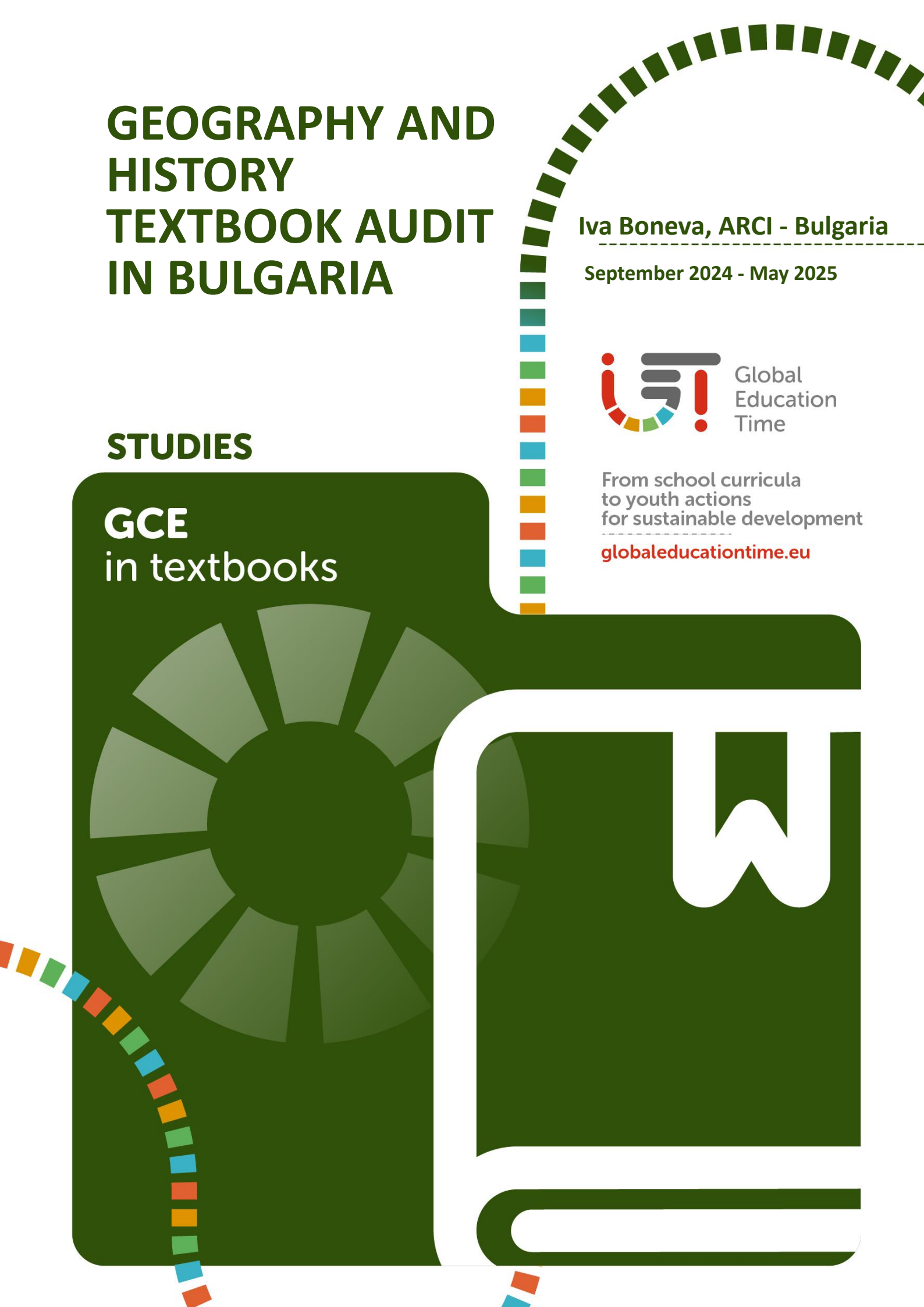




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Section 1

1.1 Brief description of education textbooks in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria textbooks remain a central instrument for implementing the national curriculum and continue to structure teaching and learning across subjects and grade levels, particularly in core disciplines such as Geography and History. Although recent policy discussions have suggested that the role of textbooks may evolve in the context of digitalisation and increased teacher autonomy, they currently function as the primary officially sanctioned learning resources in compulsory education. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has acknowledged that textbooks may not remain mandatory in the long term, but at present their role remains dominant. Textbooks exist for all curriculum areas examined in this audit and continue to function as the primary mediating instruments between curriculum intentions and classroom practice, making them a key site for assessing how Global Citizenship Education priorities are translated into teaching and learning materials.

Textbooks are not state-authored but are developed by author teams affiliated with publishing houses, most of which are commercial educational publishers. Authors are typically experienced teachers, university academics, and subject specialists, often working in collaboration with educational consultants. Completed textbooks are submitted to the MES, which oversees a formal review and approval process to ensure alignment with the national curriculum and state educational standards, as well as pedagogical quality, age-appropriateness, and factual accuracy. This process may involve expert commissions or subject councils composed of teachers, academics, and inspectors. Only textbooks that meet these criteria are authorised for classroom use and entered into the official public register maintained by the Ministry. While production is decentralised and competitive, the MES thus retains a central gatekeeping role across all subjects and grades, including those analysed in WP2 and WP3.

Schools in Bulgaria have autonomy to select textbooks from among those approved for each subject and grade, typically for a defined multi-year period, and teachers retain discretion over how intensively textbooks are used and whether additional materials are introduced. Public debate has periodically questioned this pluralism; however, a 2024 parliamentary proposal to introduce a single compulsory textbook per subject and grade was rejected, preserving a competitive textbook environment.

In terms of access, Bulgaria has expanded state funding for textbooks. Textbooks are provided free of charge to students in grades one to seven, and since the 2024–2025 academic year this provision has been extended to grades eight through twelve.



The three textbooks analysed in this audit were all developed and approved within this national framework. These include Geography and Economics for Grade 9 (Case 1), Geography and Economics for Grade 7 (Case 2), and History and Civilisations for Grade 5 (Case 3). Although all three align with the same national curriculum, they are authored by different teams and published by different houses, allowing the analysis to distinguish between systemic curricular patterns and publisher- or author-specific pedagogical choices.

An important nuance concerns the Grade 9 Geography and Economics textbook analysed in Case 1, which is designated for specialised (profiled) and vocational education with intensive foreign language instruction (за профилирано и професионално образование с интензивно изучаване на чужд език). In the Bulgarian upper secondary system, this designation refers to classes in which Grade 8 is devoted predominantly to intensive foreign language study, so that the general-education content which other students cover in Grade 8 is studied in Grade 9. The textbook is written in Bulgarian and follows the same content structure as Grade 8 Geography and Economics – Planet Earth, Geography of Nature, Geography of Society and Geography of the Continents – building directly on what students learned in Grades 5–7. The designation therefore concerns the timing of instruction rather than a more advanced or language-specialised level of content. Findings from Case 1 can thus be read as broadly representative of the compulsory Geography and Economics content at the start of upper secondary education, and the persistence of limitations in the integration of Global Citizenship Education dimensions in this textbook indicates that these limitations are systemic rather than track specific.



Section 2

Case 1

2.1 General description: Klett Geography and Economics for Grade 9 (2021) textbook

The audited textbook is Geography and Economics for Grade 9 for specialised and vocational education with intensive foreign language learning (География и икономика за 9. клас за профилирано и професионално образование с интензивно изучаване на чужд език), approved by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. It was first published in 2018–2019 (authors' and Anubis Publishing House copyright 2018; Klett Bulgaria as publisher, 2019); the copy audited here is the 2021 reprint of the first edition. Its authors are Anton Popov, Plamen Lakov, Kliment Naydenov, Ekaterina Ilieva and Svilen Stoychev. The publisher is Klett Bulgaria Ltd.



It is designed to implement the state educational standards and the compulsory curriculum in Geography and Economics at the beginning of upper secondary education. As explained in Section 1, its designation for specialised and vocational education with intensive foreign language instruction means that the textbook is used in Grade 9 by classes that spent Grade 8 in intensive foreign language study, and its content corresponds to the Grade 8 Geography and Economics curriculum of the general track. The textbook is organised into four sections – Planet Earth, Geography of Nature, Geography of Society and Geography of the Continents – and covers a broad thematic range, including the Earth's spheres (atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere) and climate, natural resources and global environmental problems, the political map of the world, population, settlements, urbanisation and migration, the world economy and its sectors, international trade and organisations, and the regional characteristics of selected world regions and countries.

Structurally, the textbook is organised into four sections, subdivided into individual lessons of different types (new knowledge, activity, review, summary and assessment). Each new-knowledge lesson typically includes: a short introductory framing (“What you will learn”, key concepts and a learning strategy), expository text presenting key concepts and factual knowledge, maps, charts, photographs and other visual materials, and end-of-lesson questions and tasks (“Check what you have learned”), which regularly include a “Critical thinking” rubric asking students to compare, present their own opinion and draw conclusions. The textbook is very colourful, with many pictures, maps and graphs,



contains 232 pages and is a big format (22,5 cm x 30 cm). Although there are newer editions, this one was chosen also because it is only in one part. There is no price, as discussed in Section 1.

In line with prevailing Bulgarian textbook design traditions, the emphasis is placed on systematic presentation of knowledge, conceptual clarity, geographical terminology and classification, interpretation of statistical and cartographic data.

From a pedagogical perspective, the expository core of the textbook supports teacher-led instruction, with students positioned mainly as recipients and interpreters of pre-selected information rather than as active knowledge producers or social actors. At the same time, the recurring “Critical thinking” tasks and the activity lessons, which are based on team work, discussion, presentations and small geographical projects (e.g., pp. 130–133, 182–183, 225–226), create regular opportunities for more active, collaborative and project-based learning.

2.2 Rationale for inclusion

This textbook was selected as a case study for the WP3 audit for several reasons. First, Grade 9 Geography and Economics occupies a strategic position in the Bulgarian curriculum. As identified in the WP2 curriculum mapping report for Bulgaria, upper secondary Geography is one of the subjects with the highest potential alignment with Global Citizenship Education (GCE), due to its explicit engagement with global-scale processes, inequalities between regions, sustainability and environmental challenges, population movements and demographic change.

Second, the WP2 analysis highlighted that while the formal curriculum framework for Geography includes references to global interdependence and sustainable development, these references often remain conceptually broad, weakly operationalised, and insufficiently translated into student-centred pedagogical expectations. Auditing a Grade 9 textbook therefore allows an assessment of whether and how these curriculum-level intentions are materialised in concrete teaching and learning materials.

Third, the textbook’s designation for specialised and vocational education with intensive foreign language instruction means that it is used in Grade 9 by students who spent Grade 8 in intensive foreign language study; its content corresponds to the Grade 8 curriculum of the general track (see Section 1). Additionally, it was recommended to the author by some Geography teachers as innovative. Because the designation concerns the timing of instruction rather than a more advanced level of content, the findings from Case 1 are broadly indicative of how the compulsory Geography and Economics curriculum is translated into teaching materials at the start of upper secondary education. The fact that there are still issues with integrating Global Citizenship Education components in a textbook regarded by teachers as innovative suggests that these issues are systemic rather than publisher- or track-specific.



Finally, as this is Case 1 of three planned textbook audits in this report, this case establishes an analytical baseline, a coding framework and key comparative dimensions for subsequent cases.

2.3 Audit methodology

The audit follows a qualitative, coding-style content analysis, guided by the structure and criteria outlined in the WP3 textbook audit draft template. The approach is interpretive and analytical rather than quantitative.

Unit of analysis. The following textbook elements were systematically analysed: core lesson narratives, definitions and conceptual explanations, lesson objectives and introductory framings, student tasks, questions and suggested activities, visual materials (maps, graphs, photographs, infographics), implicit assumptions embedded in language and examples. Each of these elements was treated as a potential carrier of explicit or implicit GCE-relevant content.

Analytical framework. The analysis is structured around three main pillars. The first is alignment with national curriculum expectations, as documented in the WP2 Bulgaria curriculum mapping report. The second is Key Global Citizenship Education themes, with a particular focus on climate change and environmental sustainability, global and regional inequalities, migration and population mobility, gender equality. Third pillar is pedagogical orientation, including opportunities for critical thinking, student agency and participation, engagement with values, perspectives and ethical questions. For each theme, attention was paid not only to presence or absence, but also to depth of treatment, framing (descriptive vs. analytical vs. normative), positioning of students (observers, analysts, or potential actors).

Use of evidence. The audit makes systematic use of direct quotations from the textbook, translated into English, original Bulgarian terminology in brackets, references to page numbers and lesson titles. Quotations are used selectively, to illustrate typical patterns, representative examples or particularly revealing omissions or framings.

Critical stance. The analysis adopts a critical but constructive perspective. Identified gaps or limitations are not treated as shortcomings of individual authors, but as indicators of structural constraints, dominant curricular traditions, and broader systemic patterns in Bulgarian education. Where GCE-relevant dimensions are weakly represented or absent, the analysis explicitly explains why these dimensions matter for the development of global competence, democratic participation and students' capacity to understand and respond to global challenges.



2.4 Alignment – Curriculum, GCE Pedagogy and GET Big Ideas

2.4.1 Alignment with Curriculum Documents

The Grade 9 Klett Geography and Economics textbook mirrors the Bulgarian national curriculum in sequence and outcomes, covering topics such as the Earth's climate and climate change (pp. 40–45), global problems of the present day, with a focus on resource and environmental problems and sustainable development (pp. 108–111), population and urbanisation (pp. 118–133), with sex-age pyramids, and the world economy (pp. 134–183), including GDP indicators and a world map of GDP per capita (p. 136). The regional geography section (pp. 184–226) matches regional geography requirements with natural, demographic and economic indicators for world regions and selected countries. Its lesson structure, with explicit learning outcomes and end-of-lesson tasks, supports outcome-based learning.

However, the alignment is strongest at the level of topics and factual knowledge, and weaker at the level of learning aims and competencies. The curriculum aspires (at least implicitly) to develop students' understanding of global interdependence, sustainable development and shared responsibility. In the textbook, these aspirations are largely translated into descriptive explanations, classification of regions and indicators, and interpretation of statistical data. There is only limited evidence that curriculum-level intentions related to critical reflection, ethical judgement or civic agency are operationalised in concrete learning tasks. Where such tasks do appear – for example, asking students whether they support China's "one family – one child" policy (p. 121), to draw conclusions about the state of "our common home – planet Earth" and "the responsibilities of each of us" (p. 111), or what they would change if they had the opportunity (p. 132) – they remain isolated exceptions. This confirms, rather than contradicts, the WP2 conclusion that Bulgarian Geography curricula tend to privilege knowledge transmission over transformative or participatory learning.

2.4.2 GCE pedagogical practice

In the Grade 9 Geography and Economics textbook, pedagogical practices related to Global Citizenship Education are embedded within a broader set of cognitively demanding and methodologically varied learning tasks. Student activities addressing sustainability and environmental issues combine explanatory, analytical, and project-based elements, including team tasks, research assignments, and the interpretation of maps, graphs, and case-based materials. Typical prompts ask students to explain causes and consequences or to analyse environmental phenomena, for example: "Identify the causes of the raw material and energy problem and of the ecological problem" (Посочете причините за суровинно-енергийния и екологичния проблем, p. 111). Such tasks position students as active learners and interpreters of scientific and geographical knowledge and support the development of



subject-specific competencies. At the same time, explicit prompts inviting reflection on students' own environmental practices, their own local–global interconnections, or civic and collective forms of action are less systematically foregrounded (a notable exception is the task asking students to draw conclusions about “the responsibilities of each of us”, p. 111), which means that sustainability is addressed primarily through knowledge and analysis rather than through agency-oriented perspectives.

A comparable pattern can be observed in the treatment of international inequalities, gender equality, and migration. Tasks related to inequality typically emphasise comparison, classification, and the use of socio-economic indicators, supporting analytical thinking and data literacy, but rarely extending into explicit ethical reflection on fairness, responsibility, or global justice. Gender equality appears mainly in descriptive contexts, such as demographic or labour-related data, and migration is predominantly approached as a demographic and economic process, with attention to spatial patterns and impacts. While these approaches are consistent with the disciplinary logic of Geography and with the cognitive aims of upper secondary education, opportunities to engage more explicitly with rights-based perspectives, lived experiences, and ethical dimensions (central components of Global Citizenship Education) remain comparatively limited. In this sense, the textbook provides a strong foundation for knowledge-based and collaborative learning, which can be further enriched through pedagogical mediation by teachers to strengthen the agency and civic dimensions of GCE.

2.4.3 Framing of global issues: descriptive rather than critical

Climate change is addressed in two places: in the lessons on climate (pp. 40–43), which explain that human activity – deforestation and the burning of fuels – increases greenhouse gases, intensifies the greenhouse effect and raises global temperatures, and in the lesson “Global problems of the present day” (Глобални проблеми на съвременността, pp. 108–111), which covers air pollution and the greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, water and soil degradation and deforestation, supported by maps, graphs and photographs. Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without depriving future generations of the possibility to meet their own needs” (устойчиво развитие, p. 110), which corresponds to the internationally used Brundtland definition and to WP2 curriculum links. Pedagogical elements include tasks for identifying causes, interpreting graphs (e.g., the rise in global temperature, Fig. 4, p. 109) and an activity lesson (pp. 44–45) in which students prepare a presentation or report on what is important to know about climate change on Earth, promoting inquiry-based learning. This factual and visual emphasis supports student understanding of environmental dynamics as a scientific-geographical topic. The lesson on global problems also lists measures with an implicit justice dimension – polluters paying for ecological damage, a fair distribution of environmental protection costs between present and future generations, and support for less developed countries in fighting poverty (Table 1, p. 110) – and names the “unjust distribution of material goods” among the global problems of humanity (p. 108). However,



these elements are presented as items in a list rather than as questions for discussion: the framing does not invite discussion of power relations, does not address historical responsibility, and does not encourage students to question why global differences persist or who benefits from them. From a GCE perspective, this limits students' opportunities to develop critical global awareness, understanding of structural inequality, and ethical reasoning — dimensions emphasised in international GCE frameworks.

2.4.3.1 Climate change: presence without agency

Climate change and environmental sustainability are clearly present in the textbook, particularly in the lessons on climate (pp. 40–45) and on global problems and sustainable development (pp. 108–111), which deal with global warming, pollution and ozone depletion with supporting diagrams and maps. The pedagogical treatment is moderate and inquiry-based, with typical student tasks including identifying causes and consequences, explaining concepts, and interpreting maps or graphs. The strengths of the textbook are the clear scientific explanation, effective visuals and an explicit recognition of the human impact on the climate. Responsibility is acknowledged in general, normative terms – the text states that overcoming these problems “requires the efforts of every person” (p. 108) and asks students to draw conclusions about “the responsibilities of each of us” (p. 111) – but it is not translated into concrete individual or collective action, nor linked to local–global connections in students' own lives. As a result, climate change is constructed primarily as a scientific and geographical problem, and only secondarily as a civic and ethical challenge, aligning with WP2 observations that sustainability is present in Bulgarian curricula mainly as a topic, not as a field of action or policy debate.

2.4.3.2 Migration and mobility: a demographic variable and a “problem”

Migration is addressed in the population geography lessons (pp. 118–125), where it is defined as the mechanical movement of population, comprising immigration and emigration (p. 119). The text notes that the highest positive net migration is found in economically highly developed countries and the most negative in the poorest countries (p. 119), and that migration influences the sex structure of the population because “men tend to migrate more than women” (p. 124); rural–urban migration is discussed in the lesson on settlements and urbanisation (pp. 126–129). End-of-lesson tasks (“Check what you have learned”, e.g., p. 121) ask students to explain the types of population movement and to compare demographic situations in different countries. This demographic treatment aligns with curriculum outcomes for population dynamics. However, migration is far from neutral in the textbook as a whole: “huge flows of migrants” are listed among the global problems of humanity (p. 108), “limiting migration” appears among the social measures for overcoming global problems (Table 1, p. 110), “refugee flows and illegal migrants” are presented as specific problems of the Europe region (p. 188), and in the country profile of Germany migrants are described as one of the main social problems, over half of whom are said to be unemployed and whose growing number “creates cultural and



political tension” (pp. 189–190). There is no engagement with migrants’ rights, no discussion of the causes of forced displacement, of discrimination or integration, and no reference to migration as a lived human experience. WP2 identifies migration as a topic with high GCE potential but low transformative uptake in Bulgarian curricula; the textbook confirms this assessment and goes further: migration is treated either as a demographic variable or as a problem to be limited, rather than as a human, ethical or civic issue.

2.4.3.3 Gender equality: marginal and uncritical presence

Gender equality is not addressed as an explicit topic in the textbook. Gender appears mainly indirectly, through demographic data on the sex structure of the population and sex–age pyramids (pp. 122–125), which reflects the focus on core statistical content. The few substantive references are brief and uncritical. The decline in birth rates in Europe is partly attributed to “the engagement of women in public life” (ангажираността на жените в обществения живот, p. 120); the sex structure of the population is presented as important, for example, for building enterprises that require “predominantly male or predominantly female labour” (p. 122); and the text states that in a number of countries in Asia and Africa women are in an unequal position “for religious reasons”, perform heavy physical labour and lack medical care (p. 122). A reading on the food problem also mentions gender, alongside income and age, among the factors affecting access to food (p. 147). None of these references is developed further: there are no lessons addressing gender inequality, no tasks inviting reflection on gender roles and no links between gender equality and economic or social development, while inequality is located in “other” regions and attributed to religion rather than examined as a global and structural issue. This mirrors previous findings, which identify gender equality as one of the least visible GCE dimensions in Bulgarian Geography curricula. From a GCE perspective, this is significant, as it limits students’ understanding of intersectionality, social justice, and equality as a global challenge.

2.4.3.4 International inequalities

International inequalities receive good coverage via economic indicators and regional comparisons: GDP and GDP per capita, including a world map of GDP per capita (pp. 134–137), undernourishment and the food problem (pp. 146–147), trade and tourism (pp. 174–177), and the regional section (pp. 184–226), which compares world regions and selected countries. Quantitative comparisons prompt analytical questioning – for example, comparing the contribution of individual countries to world GDP (p. 137) or identifying the countries with the highest levels of undernourishment and explaining why most of them are located on particular continents (p. 146) – fostering evidence-based perspectives on the global economy. The approach mirrors curriculum expectations for interdependence and regional studies, providing balanced factual treatment. The coverage provides strong quantitative analysis and questioning of differences. However, apart from the brief mention of the “unjust distribution of material goods” among global problems (p. 108), it lacks social justice or ethical

framing, treating inequalities as neutral facts rather than issues warranting critical ethical consideration.

Case 2

2.1 General description – Prosveta Geography and Economics for Grade 7



The second textbook selected for this audit is Geography and Economics for Grade 7 (География и икономика за 7. клас), developed for lower-secondary students aged approximately 13–14. It is authored by Stella Dermenjieva, Petya Subeva, Petar Stoyanov, Nikolay Popov, Tsvetelina Peykova, and Nadezhda Nikolova and published by Prosveta – Sofia JSC („Просвета – София“ АД), which is a member of the European Education Publishers Group. The textbook is officially approved for use in Bulgarian lower secondary education and is designed to implement the compulsory national curriculum for Geography and Economics at the end of the lower secondary stage. It is big (22,5 cm x 30 cm), has 156 pages (first edition, 2018) and is richly illustrated.

This textbook corresponds to a curricular phase in which students transition from introductory geographical literacy toward more complex regional and socio-economic analysis, playing a formative role in shaping their basic geographical worldview. The Grade 7 curriculum focuses primarily on regional geography, with an emphasis on Europe, the Balkan Peninsula, and Bulgaria, alongside introductory elements of population geography, economic activities, and spatial inequalities. This positioning makes the textbook a key bridge between the largely descriptive geography of earlier grades and the more explicitly global and systemic perspectives introduced in Grade 9, and therefore a critical point for the age-appropriate introduction of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) concepts.

Unlike the Grade 9 textbook analysed in Case 1, this textbook is produced by a different author team and publishing house, a distinction that is relevant for understanding stylistic and pedagogical differences despite alignment with the same national curriculum framework. Structurally, the textbook follows a conventional chapter-based organisation, with units dedicated to specific regions or thematic blocks. Lessons typically include short expository texts, maps and other visual representations, highlighted key concepts, and end-of-lesson questions or tasks. Alongside these, the textbook includes numerous activity lessons (уроци за дейности) built around group work, discussion and small projects. Visual materials, including political and physical maps, graphs, and photographs, are central to the pedagogical design and support spatial understanding and comparative analysis.



Overall, the textbook prioritises factual knowledge acquisition and the development of core geographic skills, such as map reading, regional comparison, and interpretation of demographic data.

In contrast to the Grade 9 textbook, which explicitly addresses global systems and global challenges, the Grade 7 textbook adopts a more implicit approach to global issues. Concepts such as interdependence, inequality, migration, and sustainability are embedded mainly within regional descriptions rather than framed as global processes. While this approach reflects both the developmental stage of learners and the authors' interpretation of curriculum requirements, it also limits the visibility and depth of GCE-related learning opportunities at this stage.

2.2 Rationale for inclusion

The inclusion of the Grade 7 Geography and Economics textbook in this audit is justified by both curricular and analytical considerations. From a curricular perspective, Grade 7 is the year in which students first encounter structured regional comparisons at the European and sub-European level, including discussions of population distribution, economic activities, and territorial differences. These topics correspond directly to several of the GET project's "big ideas," particularly international inequalities, migration, and interdependence, albeit at an introductory level.

From an analytical perspective, the textbook offers an opportunity to examine how GCE-related themes are introduced earlier in the educational trajectory and how they are framed before the more explicit global focus of Grade 9. Comparing this textbook with the Grade 9 textbook analysed in Case 1 allows for an assessment of progression, continuity, and potential loss or dilution of civic and global perspectives across grades.

Moreover, the WP2 curriculum mapping identified Grade 7 Geography as a key locus for population geography and migration-related content, while simultaneously noting that these topics are treated primarily at a descriptive and demographic level, with limited attention to social, political, or human rights dimensions. Auditing the textbook therefore provides an empirical basis for assessing whether these curriculum-level observations are replicated, mitigated, or exacerbated at the level of teaching and learning materials.

2.3 Audit methodology

The audit of the Grade 7 Geography and Economics textbook follows the same methodological approach applied before; see Section 2.3 of Case 1.



2.4 Alignment – Curriculum, GCE Pedagogy and GET Big Ideas

2.4.1 Alignment with Curriculum Documents

The Grade 7 Geography and Economics textbook demonstrates a high level of alignment with the Bulgarian national curriculum in terms of prescribed content and thematic scope. As noted in the WP2 curriculum mapping, lower secondary Geography aims to provide students with foundational geographical knowledge, introduce regional differentiation, and develop basic skills related to spatial orientation and comparison. These expectations are reflected in the textbook's structure and content, which closely follow the curriculum's emphasis on continents and regions, population characteristics, natural environments, and introductory economic activities.

Consistent with WP2 findings, global-scale topics at this stage are primarily framed in descriptive and technical terms, and the Grade 7 textbook largely reflects this orientation. Global perspectives are introduced mainly through regional descriptions and comparative information, rather than through explicit engagement with global interdependence or shared responsibility. When compared with the Grade 9 Geography and Economics textbook analysed in Case 1, a strong continuity in epistemological orientation is evident. In both cases, Geography is presented as a discipline focused on description, classification, and explanation, with differences mainly in complexity, language density, and the level of abstraction appropriate to learners' developmental stages.

This continuity is analytically relevant, as it suggests that the approach to global issues observed in upper secondary Geography is established earlier and maintained across grade levels. Despite being produced by different author teams and publishing houses, the Grade 7 and Grade 9 textbooks converge in their largely descriptive and technical treatment of global themes. This convergence indicates that the observed patterns reflect broader curricular traditions rather than individual editorial choices.

From a Global Citizenship Education perspective, the Grade 7 textbook confirms the presence of meaningful topical entry points for GCE, particularly given students' increasing capacity for abstract thinking and perspective-taking at this stage. These opportunities are realised mainly at the level of cognitive understanding, but several activity lessons go further and explicitly address values such as tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue between peoples (e.g., pp. 40–41, 74–75), providing a foundation that can be further developed through pedagogical mediation.

2.4.2 GCE pedagogical practice

The pedagogical framework of the Grade 7 Geography and Economics textbook combines a knowledge-centred core with a notable number of activity lessons. The regular lessons prioritise foundational geographic literacy: instructional design emphasises the acquisition of information and basic analytical skills, such as map interpretation and the identification of cause-effect relationships, and typical tasks require the description and comparison of regional characteristics – for example,



“Compare the countries of the Balkan Peninsula by area and by population” (p. 77). In these lessons, learners are positioned mainly as recipients of established knowledge rather than as active participants in meaning-making.

The activity lessons, by contrast, include tasks that are directly relevant to Global Citizenship Education. In the lesson “We, contemporary Europeans, in a world of opportunities” (pp. 40–41), tolerance is defined as recognising “the right of every people and every culture to be different”, and students are asked to imagine a Europe in which all people were the same and to discuss in groups how similarities and differences between peoples, state borders and the internet affect life on the continent. The lesson “Dialogue between the Balkan peoples and countries – from getting to know each other to respect” (pp. 74–75) invites students to reflect on the tendency to assume that others think as we do, to explain why the Balkan countries should be seen by the rest of Europe as equal in cultural and economic terms, and to follow media coverage of Balkan events, asking how they and their families perceive these events and how different media comment on them. Other tasks ask students to research examples of tolerance and mutual respect between people in Europe (p. 37), to propose solutions to the problems of their own settlement (pp. 125, 127) and to write a reflective text beginning “I consider myself a European...” (p. 145). These tasks support perspective-taking, intercultural understanding and elements of media literacy, although their focus is European and Balkan rather than global.

At the same time, global themes such as sustainability, migration and international inequality are treated mainly as external demographic or economic facts, and the ethical dimensions of global responsibility and social justice are rarely engaged. Some elements of the “hidden” curriculum also work against GCE aims. The description of the population of Europe opens with its “racial composition”, stating that the population belongs to the “Europoid race” and that this composition is becoming more diverse as a result of external migration (p. 36) – a framing that is scientifically outdated and is not problematised. Illustrations of infrastructure and architectural landmarks foreground historical and economic achievement. Consequently, while the textbook offers genuine entry points for intercultural and civic learning, the realisation of GCE objectives – particularly their global dimension – remains largely dependent on teacher mediation.

2.4.3 Framing of global issues

2.4.3.1 Climate change

The textbook approaches climate primarily through the scientific lens of physical geography, emphasising “climatic factors” (фактори на климата) and climatic zones; climate change as such is not mentioned. The glossary defines climate factors as the “reasons why climates are different: latitude, air masses, relief, proximity or distance from large bodies of water and ocean currents” (p. 155). The activity lesson “Climate and waters in favour of the people in Europe” (pp. 26–27) focuses



on the utility of climate and water for human activity. Environmental problems are addressed mainly at national and regional level: the section “Protection of the natural environment in Bulgaria” (“Опазване на природната среда в България”, pp. 100–101) and several regional lessons identify human activity as the cause of pollution, deforestation and the loss of species, and the activity lesson on the Black Sea (pp. 120–121) presents the sea as “synonymous with problems” caused by human activity, noting the cooperation of the Black Sea states to protect it. Consequently, while the foundational science of climate and a regional environmental awareness are present, the critical GCE dimension of climate change as a global socio-political challenge is absent.

In comparison with the Grade 9 textbook analysed in Case 1, the Grade 7 treatment of climate is much less explicit – climate change is not mentioned at all – but not fundamentally different in orientation. While the Grade 9 textbook more clearly names climate change and refers to global environmental risks, both textbooks prioritise scientific explanation over civic engagement. Neither textbook systematically encourages students to reflect on responsibility, intergenerational justice, or the role of citizens and institutions in addressing environmental challenges. The difference between grades is therefore one of degree rather than of pedagogical paradigm.

From a GCE perspective, the textbook’s treatment of human agency is uneven. At the local level, students are explicitly invited to act: the activity lesson on protecting the natural environment of the home region (pp. 102–103) asks them to reflect on their own behaviour and to imagine that environmental protection in their home region depends on them, proposing a protected area and the institution that would manage it, while the Black Sea lesson asks groups to identify “possible counteractions” to its ecological problems (p. 120). However, these local and regional forms of agency are not connected to global environmental challenges, and students are not invited to see themselves as actors in relation to climate change. As a result, environmental sustainability is presented as a field of local responsibility rather than as a global ethical and civic issue. This finding is consistent with the WP2 observation that sustainability is treated more as an environmental issue than as a civic one within the Bulgarian curriculum.

2.4.3.2 Migration and mobility

Migration is addressed as a demographic and socio-economic phenomenon, predominantly appearing in the context of Western and Central European countries. For instance, in the section concerning Germany, the text explicitly notes that “the number of immigrants is significant” and highlights the resulting cultural and religious shifts, stating that “The majority of the population are Christians... Islam is widespread among some of the immigrants” (“Значителен е броят на имигрантите. Преобладаващата част от населението са християни... Ислямът е разпространен сред част от имигрантите”, p.45). The textbook frames migration as a factor that influences the labour market and demographic structure of highly developed nations. However, the discourse remains descriptive of “immigrants” as a statistical group rather than exploring the complexities of



migrant rights, the causes of global displacement, or the lived experiences of integration, which are central to global citizenship.

Migration is further discussed in relation to Europe as a whole. The textbook notes that immigration to Europe has a long history and grew most significantly after the Second World War, and that a “crisis with immigrants” began after 2015 as a result of the deteriorating political and socio-economic situation in the Middle East and North Africa (p. 37); it also presents population ageing as a reason why Europe needs “labour immigrants” from other continents (p. 42), and mentions emigration from the Balkan countries to the USA and the more developed EU countries (p. 72). Some visual elements add a human dimension: a photo caption notes that thousands of refugees arrive in Europe “risking their lives” (p. 37), and an image of a Syrian family at the Serbian–Croatian border is included in a task on the problems of the Balkan countries (p. 75). However, migration is not explicitly connected to human rights, integration, discrimination or social cohesion, and the language of “crisis” is not examined. Migrants are presented mainly as statistical categories rather than as social actors with rights, needs and identities.

When compared with the Grade 9 textbook analysed in Case 1, a strong continuity in framing becomes apparent. Although the Grade 9 textbook introduces migration within a more explicitly global context, both textbooks treat migration primarily as a process to be explained – and, in the Grade 9 textbook, frequently as a problem to be limited – rather than as a social issue requiring ethical reflection or civic engagement. The Grade 7 textbook thus contributes to an early stabilisation of a technocratic perspective on migration that persists into later grades.

Despite these limitations, the textbook does include implicit entry points for more critical engagement. References to unequal economic development, demographic decline, and labour shortages implicitly relate to migration decisions and their social consequences. However, these connections remain unarticulated, and the textbook does not provide conceptual or pedagogical scaffolding to support a more nuanced understanding.

From a GCE perspective, the treatment of migration in the Grade 7 textbook reflects a missed opportunity to introduce values of empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility at an age when students are increasingly able to engage with such concepts. This finding is consistent with the WP2 observation that migration is present in the curriculum but rarely framed in ways that support civic learning or critical global awareness.

2.4.3.3 Gender equality

A systematic audit reveals a significant lack of content regarding gender equality. The textbook does not use the term “gender equality” (равенство между половете), and neither the text nor the table of contents refers to the role of women in the economy or society. The demographic sections focus on total population numbers and on ethnic, religious and linguistic composition rather than on



gender-disaggregated data or rights. A notable indicator of the “hidden curriculum” is the selection of prominent personalities. For instance, in an activity task on Great Britain the textbook highlights the physicist Isaac Newton, the navigator James Cook, the polar explorer Robert Scott and the writers William Shakespeare and George Byron (p. 57), and the four “famous Europeans” presented in the summary lesson on Europe are Charles Darwin, Dmitri Mendeleev, Ludwig van Beethoven and Christopher Columbus (p. 59). There is no balancing representation of female scientists, explorers or writers. The absence of gender-diverse representation implies that this instructional framework does not prioritise gender equality.

References to gender, social groups, or vulnerable populations are largely absent from the main narrative and appear, if at all, only indirectly through neutral descriptions of population structure and labour force characteristics. This absence reflects both the traditional disciplinary focus of Geography and the way in which social differentiation is framed in the national curriculum at this level.

Population-related lessons include references to age structure, employment sectors, and economic activity, but these are typically presented in aggregated statistical terms. For example, discussions of the working-age population or economic sectors do not differentiate between men and women, nor do they address gendered patterns of employment, care work, or access to resources. As a result, gender remains an invisible category within the geographic analysis, implicitly treated as irrelevant to spatial and economic processes.

This pattern closely mirrors the WP2 findings, which identify gender equality as weakly represented across the geography curriculum, particularly in lower secondary education. The Grade 7 textbook does not deviate from this tendency and offers no explicit content related to gender rights, gender-based inequalities, or gender as a social construct. In this respect, the textbook neither challenges nor expands the curriculum’s limited engagement with gender-related issues.

When compared with the Grade 9 Geography and Economics textbook analysed in Case 1, the Grade 7 textbook is even more silent on gender. The Grade 9 textbook at least contains a few brief – and uncritical – references to the position of women in society, whereas the Grade 7 textbook contains none; neither textbook systematically integrates gender perspectives or inclusive frameworks. The consistency across grades and publishers suggests that this omission is structurally embedded rather than incidental.

From a Global Citizenship Education perspective, the lack of attention to gender and inclusion represents a significant missed opportunity. Grade 7 students are developmentally capable of recognising social differences and questioning fairness, yet the textbook does not provide conceptual tools or examples that would allow them to explore how geographic and economic processes affect people differently. By excluding gender from its analytical lens, the textbook implicitly reinforces a neutral and universalised view of human experience.



2.4.3.4 International inequalities and development

The textbook addresses international inequalities through the lens of economic development and European integration. In the activity lesson “Has the dynamics of the European economy and countries been mastered?” (p. 56), the text discusses the uneven development of the European economy: “...progress is not the same, which is why there is reason to use concepts such as ‘Europe at two/many speeds’” („...напредъкът не е еднакъв, поради което има основание да се използват понятия като „Европа на две/много скорости“). It thus acknowledges the disparate rates of progress across the continent, using a concept from European policy debates to describe these differences. Elsewhere, the gap between Western and Eastern Europe is explained with reference to the political changes after 1989 and the transition to a market economy (pp. 42–43), and the development of the Bulgarian economy is described as passing through “the difficult transition to a market economy” (p. 132). While the textbook provides the economic data necessary to identify international disparities, it focuses on the mechanics of integration and economic indicators rather than on the ethical implications of global wealth distribution or the structural causes of global inequality.

International inequalities are addressed primarily through regional comparisons of population density, economic activities, and standards of living. Differences between countries and regions are presented as observable spatial patterns, often illustrated through maps, tables, and statistical indicators. Economic disparities are typically explained through factors such as natural resources, historical development, industrialisation, and geographic location.

This approach closely reflects the WP2 curriculum analysis, which identifies international inequalities as present in Geography content but treated mainly through descriptive indicators rather than critical socio-economic analysis. The Grade 7 textbook does not significantly expand upon this baseline. Inequality is framed as a condition to be understood, not as a problem to be interrogated or addressed. As a result, students are positioned as observers of global disparities rather than as potential agents of change.

When compared to the Grade 9 textbook, a similar pattern emerges. Although Grade 9 introduces more explicit discussion of globalisation and economic interdependence, both textbooks share a tendency to present inequality as the outcome of geographic, economic and – in the European case – historical-political factors (such as the post-1989 transition), without problematising it as a question of justice. The Grade 7 textbook therefore contributes to a cumulative effect in which inequality is normalised across the educational trajectory.

At the same time, the Grade 7 textbook contains several implicit references that could support a more critical understanding if developed further. Discussions of uneven population distribution, differing access to resources, and regional economic specialisation all point towards global interdependence.

However, these connections are not made explicit, and students are not encouraged to consider how consumption patterns, trade relations, or policy decisions in one region affect conditions in another.

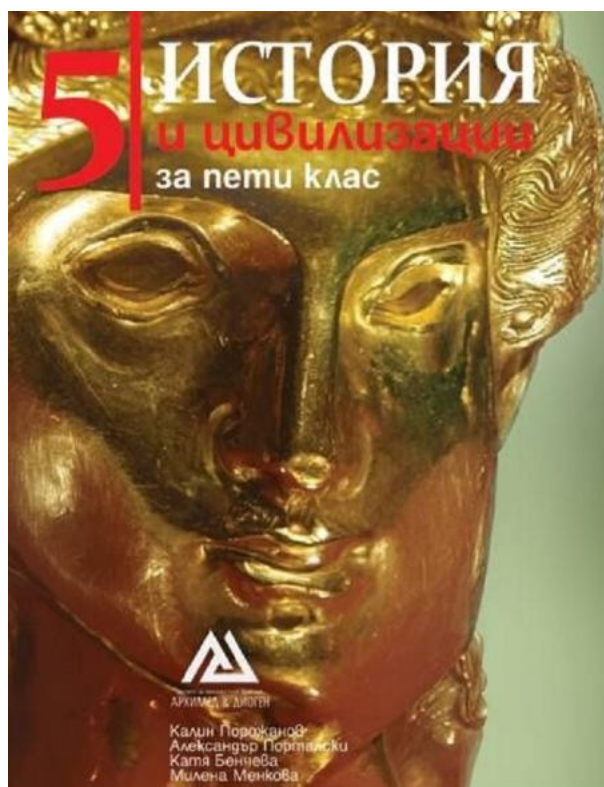
From a Global Citizenship Education perspective, the limited engagement with inequality as a justice issue represents a significant gap. At this age, students are increasingly capable of understanding fairness and social responsibility, yet, apart from a task asking why the Balkan countries should be perceived by the rest of Europe as equal in cultural and economic terms (p. 75), the textbook does not explicitly invite them to reflect on these dimensions, and not at all at the global level. This finding aligns closely with the WP2 observation that civic and ethical perspectives are underrepresented in Geography, despite the presence of relevant content.

Case 3

2.1 General description of the textbook: History and Civilisations for Grade 5

The third textbook included in this audit is History and Civilisations for 5th Grade (История и цивилизации за 5. клас), intended for students aged 11–12 years old and marking their formal entry into structured historical learning at lower secondary level. The textbook introduces history as a school subject, presenting both the nature of historical knowledge and a chronological overview from prehistory through the civilisations of the Ancient East, Ancient Greece and the Hellenistic world, Ancient Thrace and Ancient Rome.

Its authors are Kalin Porozhanov, Alexander Portalsky, Katya Bencheva, and Milena Menkova. The publishing house is Archimedes and Diogenes Institute for Educational Policies. The textbook has 144 pages, and its format is 21 cm x 30 cm.



Unlike the Geography textbooks analysed in Cases 1 and 2, this textbook is explicitly concerned with human societies, social organisation, power, culture, and belief systems. Its stated educational purpose extends beyond factual knowledge to include the development of historical thinking, such as understanding chronology, causality, and change over time. Early lessons emphasise that history is reconstructed through sources, noting that historians study the past through historical sources (introductory lesson “History and its sources”).



The textbook is organised chronologically, beginning with an introduction to historical time and sources, followed by units on prehistory, the first civilisations (Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Ancient East), Ancient Greece and the Hellenistic era, Ancient Thrace and Ancient Rome. Each lesson combines narrative text with visual materials, including archaeological artefacts, reconstructions, maps, and timelines, and recurring rubrics present historical sources, important dates, “History detectives” and a glossary. End-of-lesson questions typically ask students to recall information, explain processes, or identify causes and consequences of historical developments.

From a pedagogical perspective, the textbook adopts a narrative approach, presenting history as a coherent story of human development. While this approach is age-appropriate and supports engagement, it also shapes how social relations, power, and inequality are represented, often implicitly rather than through explicit conceptual discussion.

2.2 Rationale for inclusion

The inclusion of the Grade 5 History textbook in the WP3 audit is methodologically and conceptually justified for several reasons. First, history constitutes a core subject through which values, identities, and worldviews are transmitted at an early stage of formal education. Unlike Geography, which often frames global issues in spatial or technical terms, History directly addresses human actions, social structures, conflict, cooperation, and cultural diversity.

Second, the WP2 curriculum analysis identified History as a subject with significant potential for Global Citizenship Education, particularly in relation to themes such as cultural diversity, power relations, social hierarchy, and the evolution of governance and belief systems. At the same time, WP2 also noted that this potential is not always realised explicitly, especially in lower grades, where emphasis is placed on narrative coherence and national heritage.

Auditing the Grade 5 History textbook therefore allows for an examination of how global and civic dimensions are introduced at the earliest stage of historical learning, and whether foundational narratives enable or constrain later engagement with human rights, democracy, inclusion, and global interdependence. This is particularly important given that students encounter History before they study Geography at a global level, and before formal civic education becomes more pronounced.

Finally, including History as Case 3 enables a cross-subject comparison within WP3. Analysing History alongside Geography makes it possible to assess whether limitations observed in Geography are subject-specific or reflect broader curricular patterns. It also allows for identifying complementarities and gaps between subjects that are intended to jointly contribute to civic and global learning.



2.3 Audit methodology and analytical focus

The audit of the Grade 5 History textbook follows the same methodological principles applied in Cases 1 and 2; see Section 2.3 of Case 1.

2.4 Alignment - curriculum, GCE pedagogy and GET project big ideas

2.4.1 Alignment with curriculum documents

The Grade 5 History and Civilisations textbook demonstrates a strong formal alignment with the Bulgarian national curriculum in terms of content scope, chronological structure, and expected learning outcomes. As outlined in the curriculum and confirmed in the WP2 analysis, the primary objectives of History at this stage are to introduce students to historical time, historical sources, and the earliest stages of human social development. These objectives are clearly reflected in the textbook's emphasis on chronology, causality, and the gradual complexity of human societies.

Early lessons explicitly frame history as a form of knowledge constructed through evidence, stating that historical sources help us learn about the life of people in the past (lesson 1, "History and its sources", p. 6). This approach aligns well with competency-based curriculum goals related to historical thinking and critical engagement with sources. From a Global Citizenship Education perspective, this epistemological framing is significant, as it opens conceptual space for understanding knowledge as constructed rather than absolute.

The curriculum further emphasises the study of human development from prehistory to early civilisations, focusing on changes in lifestyle, social organisation, and belief systems. The textbook follows this progression closely.

In relation to Global Citizenship Education frameworks, the alignment is more implicit. The textbook introduces themes that are central to GCE, such as cooperation, division of labour, leadership, and cultural expression, but it does so without explicitly framing them as civic or ethical issues. For instance, social hierarchies – such as the Egyptian social pyramid (p. 37) or the division of the Athenian and Roman population into citizens, free people without civic rights and slaves (pp. 89, 137) – are clearly described, but as structural features of past societies rather than as issues of power and justice. While it provides numerous examples of collective decision-making, shared labour, and cultural diversity, these are presented as descriptive features of past societies rather than as entry points for reflection on values such as equality, justice, or participation.

When compared with the Geography textbooks analysed in Cases 1 and 2, a notable difference emerges in alignment. Geography aligns with the curriculum primarily through spatial and technical descriptors, whereas History aligns through narrative and social explanation. However, both subjects share a common limitation from a GCE perspective: neither systematically translates curriculum



content into explicit civic learning. In this sense, the History textbook complements Geography thematically but does not compensate for its civic omissions.

The age of the learners is an important contextual factor. The curriculum positions Grade 5 as an introductory stage, and the textbook's narrative simplicity and avoidance of explicit normative judgement are partly developmentally appropriate. The authors' foreword does convey a civic message – that “only the active behaviour of citizens can give them a future they would want to leave to their children” – while also inviting students to see “with pride” that their ancestors held a worthy place among the best-known states and cultures of antiquity (p. 3), which signals the national framing of the narrative. Nevertheless, the civic message is not operationalised in lesson tasks, and the absence of explicit links between historical developments and contemporary civic values means that opportunities for early value-based learning are postponed rather than scaffolded.

2.4.2 GCE pedagogical practice

In the analysed 5th-grade History and Civilizations textbook, the pedagogical practice aligns with a traditional, knowledge-oriented design that prioritizes foundational historical literacy. The text utilizes structured inquiry through the figure of Clio, the muse of history, who “asks you questions related to the material from the lessons” [p. 2], yet these prompts primarily support cognitive recall rather than evaluative judgment. For instance, the textbook effectively establishes the link between environmental shifts and human development, noting that during the New Stone Age, “a warming of the climate occurred” which led people to “leave the caves” and “create the first settlements” [pp. 14, 20]. While this provides a robust base for understanding human-environment interactions, it remains a descriptive historical account rather than a platform for discussing contemporary environmental responsibility or personal practice.

Regarding social justice and equality, the textbook provides a factual map of ancient hierarchies but lacks the transformative elements of GCE that encourage students to question systemic inequality. The text describes the exclusion of various groups in Athens, explicitly stating that “women, foreigners and slaves had no political rights” [p. 87] and presenting foreigners, women and children as “free without civic rights”, above slaves, in the diagram of Athenian society [p. 89]. Similarly, international and social inequalities are depicted as structural realities of the era, such as when the Romans “became richer and richer at the expense of the provinces,” a process that directly “increased the number of slaves” [p. 144]. While these sections offer a “strong factual foundation,” as noted in the WP2 report, they do not prompt the “reflection, dialogue, and civic participation” necessary to meet GCE's transformative aims.

The importance of learner agency in History education lies in its capacity to support empathy, ethical reflection, and an understanding of social change. Without opportunities to question historical narratives or explore multiple perspectives, students' engagement with the past remains largely



passive. This limits the contribution of the textbook to Global Citizenship Education, particularly in relation to developing critical awareness of how societies organise power, inclusion, and exclusion.

Ultimately, the textbook's pedagogical practice supports the development of basic analytical skills through the interpretation of "historical sources" and "important dates" [p. 2], but it reinforces a transmissive model of learning. The themes of migration, inequality, and climate are present as "demographic or economic facts" rather than shared global challenges. As concluded in the WP2 document, the current curriculum lacks explicit "action-oriented approaches," leaving the integration of critical global perspectives largely dependent on the initiative of individual teachers rather than the inherent instructional design of the textbook.

2.4.3 Framing of global issues

The textbook serves as a robust resource for understanding the historical roots of social stratification and the impact of the environment on human development. From a GCED perspective, the content remains largely descriptive. The presentation of gender exclusion and slavery as "factual" elements of ancient society lacks the critical inquiry necessary to connect these historical injustices to contemporary human rights and global citizenship values. The pedagogical approach prioritizes factual accuracy over the development of a critical stance toward the systemic inequalities it depicts.

2.4.3.1 Climate change and environmental relations

In the Grade 5 History and Civilisations textbook, climate change is conceptualized not as a modern crisis but as a foundational driver of human evolution and civilizational shifts. The text explicitly links the development of early humanity to environmental transitions, noting that during the Old Stone Age, "the Upright Man [*Homo erectus*] began living in caves and dugouts due to the cooling of the climate" (p. 20). Conversely, the transition to the Neolithic period is attributed to a warming phase, which enabled settled life and the birth of agriculture: "During the New Stone Age, a warming of the climate occurred. People left the caves, began building houses, and created the first settlements" (p. 20; see also p. 14). This approach frames climate as an external, natural force that dictates human survival strategies and settlement patterns, particularly in the Nile Valley, where the drying of North Africa after the Ice Age led to the formation of the Sahara and forced human migration toward the river (p. 28). The textbook also links a severe cooling and a decade-long drought to mass famine and the collapse of the Old Kingdom in Egypt (p. 32). While the text effectively demonstrates the historical impact of climatic shifts, it does not engage with contemporary anthropogenic climate change or the ethical dimensions of environmental stewardship.

From a Global Citizenship Education perspective, this implicit framing is important but limited. The textbook does not draw connections between past human–environment interactions and present-day environmental challenges. Climate is presented as a background condition rather than as a dynamic



system influenced by human activity. As a result, students are not encouraged to see historical knowledge as relevant to contemporary debates on sustainability or climate responsibility.

2.4.3.2 Migration

Migration is presented as a structural necessity driven by environmental pressures or the expansionist policies of ancient empires. The narrative describes the settlement of Egypt as a response to climate-induced displacement: "After the end of the ice age, warming led to drying in North Africa... People moved to the banks of the Nile River" (p. 28). Furthermore, the textbook addresses migration through the lens of colonization and military conquest. The "Great Greek Colonization" is explained as a result of population growth and shortages of land, raw materials and food (p. 59), while the expansion of the Roman Empire is depicted as a process of subjugating external territories, referred to as provinces, which were "territories outside of Italy that were subordinated to [Rome]" (p. 144). In these contexts, migration is treated as a demographic and geopolitical phenomenon. The "othering" of non-citizens is also evident, as the text notes that the "population of the provinces was deprived of civil rights" (p. 144). This provides a basis for discussing modern themes of displacement and citizenship, though the text focuses primarily on the administrative and economic consequences of these ancient movements.

Migration is thus framed as a natural and adaptive behaviour, as well as a consequence of conquest. Beyond the subordinate status of conquered populations, the textbook touches on integration only through the process of romanisation – for example, Caesar's granting of Roman citizenship to many provincial towns (p. 118) and the rise of romanised Thracians to the imperial throne (p. 93) – without framing it as a civic or ethical issue. The experiences of displaced people are not discussed, which is understandable given the historical periods covered; however, the textbook also does not encourage students to draw connections between historical migrations and contemporary migration processes.

From a Global Citizenship Education perspective, the treatment of migration is neutral and descriptive. It contributes to an understanding of mobility as a long-standing human practice, which can help counter narratives that depict migration as abnormal or exceptional. At the same time, the lack of explicit links to present-day migration limits the textbook's capacity to foster empathy or civic reflection related to current global mobility challenges. This finding aligns with WP2, which notes that History introduces migration earlier than Geography, but often without explicit civic framing.

2.4.3.3 Gender inequality

Gender representation in the textbook adheres to a traditional patriarchal narrative, where women are largely marginalised or excluded from the spheres of political and military power. The pedagogical structure often reinforces this exclusion through omission. In the diagrams of Athenian and Roman society, "women" and "children" are listed together with "foreigners" as "free without civic rights" (pp. 89, 137), the text states that in Athens "women, foreigners and slaves had no political rights" (p.



87), and, with reference to the Ancient East, that in antiquity “only adult men had the rights of free people” (p. 37). Historical agency is almost exclusively reserved for male figures such as Hammurabi, Alexander the Great, and Octavian Augustus; the female pharaoh Hatshepsut appears only in the caption of a photograph of her temple (p. 40). Where women are mentioned, the focus is on domestic life or appearance: Greek women stayed at home and were not allowed to be present at dinners with guests, while men spent their time in the agora (p. 73), and Roman women wore “a lower and upper tunic and a cloak” (p. 124). By presenting the “public” world of the ancient East, Greece, and Rome as a male domain, the textbook reflects historical realities but offers no critical reflection on the origins or persistence of gender-based inequality, a missed opportunity for GCE integration.

The division of labour in prehistoric societies is described in similar terms: hunting “was done by men”, while gathering edible plants and fruits “was done by women” (p. 12). Such statements reflect conventional anthropological narratives and are presented without critical commentary. Gender roles are described as functional and complementary, rather than as socially constructed or historically contingent. The textbook does not question power relations between genders, nor does it discuss the differential status, rights, or agency of women and men in early societies.

From a Global Citizenship Education perspective, this treatment represents a significant limitation. While the textbook introduces gender as a category of difference, it does so in a way that naturalises traditional roles and leaves inequality unexamined. Students are not invited to reflect on how gender roles have changed over time or how they relate to contemporary understandings of equality.

This finding is consistent with WP2, which identified gender equality as one of the weakest big ideas across subjects, particularly in History. The Grade 5 textbook neither challenges nor contextualises traditional gender narratives, thereby missing an opportunity to introduce early critical awareness in an age-appropriate manner.

2.4.3.4 International inequalities

The textbook addresses international and social inequalities through the lens of labour structures and the hierarchy of ancient states. Inequality is most sharply illustrated through the institution of slavery, which the text describes as a core component of ancient economies. In Mesopotamia, laws “stipulated the rights of the two main groups of the population: free and slaves,” noting that “usually prisoners of war became slaves” (p. 36). The Roman section further highlights systemic wealth disparities, explaining that “Romans became richer and richer at the expense of the provinces,” which led to an increase in slaves and eventually triggered “the largest slave uprising in history – that of the Thracian Spartacus” (p. 144). Additionally, the text explores internal social stratification, such as the struggle between Roman “patricians” (the landed aristocracy) and “plebeians” (the common people), and the eventual emergence of a “nobility” consisting of wealthy members from both groups (pp. 113, 120). The textbook also notes that slave revolts were provoked by the cruel exploitation of slave labour and by the “disregard of any human rights” of slaves (p. 121) – a rare rights-based formulation that could



serve as an entry point for linking past and present, but which is not developed further. While these sections provide a clear framework for understanding power imbalances and economic exploitation, the analysis remains localized to the ancient world without drawing explicit parallels to modern global structural inequalities.

In relation to WP2, this confirms that History contributes to understanding inequality primarily as a historical condition, without explicitly linking it to present-day international inequalities. While this approach is developmentally cautious, it limits the subject's contribution to Global Citizenship Education at this stage.

Section 3

3.1 Main findings

The audit of the three Bulgarian textbooks analysed in WP3 - Geography and Economics for Grade 9 (profiled and vocational education with intensive foreign language instruction), Geography and Economics for Grade 7, and History and Civilisations for Grade 5 - reveals a largely consistent pattern in the way Global Citizenship Education relevant themes are addressed across subjects, grades, and publishing houses. While differences related to grade level, subject logic, and publisher traditions are evident, the similarities in underlying approaches are more pronounced than the divergences.

Across all three textbooks, global themes such as climate change (изменение на климата), international inequalities (глобални неравенства), migration (миграция), and, to a much lesser extent, gender inequality (неравенство между половете) are present and, in some cases, substantively addressed at the level of factual knowledge. Geography textbooks, in particular, capitalise on curricular opportunities to introduce global-scale processes, environmental challenges, and spatial inequalities, often supported by maps, statistical data, and descriptive explanations. The Grade 9 Geography textbook, although intended for classes that follow an intensive foreign language year, implements the same compulsory content and does not diverge significantly in its framing of these issues from the Grade 7 textbook, suggesting a strong curricular steering effect.

The treatment of these themes in Geography and Economics case studies is predominantly descriptive and explanatory, with limited engagement in normative, ethical, or participatory dimensions of Global Citizenship Education. Climate change is largely presented as a scientific and environmental phenomenon (and is not mentioned at all in the Grade 7 textbook), with minimal attention to questions of responsibility, justice, differentiated vulnerability, or civic agency. International inequalities are framed mainly through economic indicators and regional disparities, while the historical and political processes that produce and sustain such inequalities are only partially



addressed. Migration is often discussed as a demographic or economic process – and, in the Grade 9 textbook, frequently as a problem – with limited exploration of migrant rights, lived experiences, or host–migrant relations. Gender inequality appears only sporadically and is rarely framed as a structural or rights-based issue. The Grade 7 textbook stands out for its activity lessons on tolerance, dialogue and mutual respect, which, however, focus on Europe and the Balkans rather than on global citizenship.

The History textbook for Grade 5 shows similar patterns, albeit shaped by the constraints and conventions of early lower-secondary history education. While historical narratives offer potential entry points for discussions of power, inequality, and social change, these opportunities are rarely developed into explicit reflections on contemporary global citizenship or connections between past and present forms of injustice. As a result, historical content tends to reinforce a national narrative focus, with global perspectives remaining peripheral.

The WP3 findings align closely with those of WP2. No major discrepancies were identified between curriculum intentions (as analysed in WP2) and textbook implementation (WP3). Where GCE dimensions are weak or underdeveloped in textbooks, this reflects corresponding ambiguities or omissions in the curriculum itself rather than editorial failure alone. Conversely, where the curriculum provides openings for global perspectives, textbooks tend to follow these openings, albeit cautiously and without extending beyond the minimum requirements. This coherence between WP2 and WP3 findings suggests that limitations in GCE integration are systemic rather than accidental.

Overall, the textbooks demonstrate strong alignment with national curricular requirements and provide solid disciplinary knowledge. At the same time, they underutilise their potential to foster critical global awareness, ethical reflection, and learner agency — core components of transformative Global Citizenship Education.

3.2 Recommendations

For **teachers**, the audit suggests that textbooks should be treated as structured reference points rather than as exhaustive pedagogical scripts. Teachers can play a crucial mediating role by supplementing textbook content with discussion-based activities, case studies, and locally or globally relevant examples that foreground agency, empathy, and multiple perspectives. In the Bulgarian context, where teachers retain autonomy in how textbooks are used, professional development focused on GCE could support educators in recognising and activating latent global citizenship potential within existing materials.

For **textbook publishers**, the findings point to a need to move beyond minimal curricular compliance and to engage more proactively with the broader educational purposes embedded in Global Citizenship Education. Publishers could strengthen future editions by explicitly integrating rights-



based perspectives, ethical questions, and opportunities for critical reflection into existing content, particularly where global challenges are already addressed. This does not require adding entirely new topics but rather reframing existing material to include questions of responsibility, power relations, and civic engagement, adapted appropriately to students' age and subject context.

For **GET project**, the findings have both cautionary and enabling implications. On the one hand, the limited depth of GCE treatment in textbooks underscores the importance of GET Teaching and Learning Units as complementary resources rather than extensions of textbook content. GET materials can explicitly address gaps identified in WP3, particularly by foregrounding participation, justice, and learner agency. On the other hand, the strong alignment between curriculum and textbooks means that GET units should be carefully mapped to curricular language and textbook topics to enhance their legitimacy and uptake in schools.

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