

National Curriculum mapping of Global Citizenship Education challenges and opportunities

STUDIES

GCE
in curriculum

Diamorfosis

September 2024 - May 2025



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Introduction

The research was carried out within the framework of Work Package 2 (WP2) of the Global Education Time (GET) project and focused on curricula aimed at the 11-16 age group. These curricula cover the upper grades (Fifth and Sixth Grades) of primary education and the three years of lower secondary education (Gymnasium). The aim of the research was to understand how the main global challenges analyzed - climate change, gender inequalities, global inequalities and migration - are presented in curricula and courses considered strategic for the development of global citizenship. The official documents and the framework of the Curriculum and the individual study programs that were taken into account for this specific research and analysis are the following:

The Unified Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework (Government Gazette 303B/13-03-2003, Government Gazette 304B/13-03-2003), focuses on the holistic development of students and on creating conditions for their successful social integration through shared values and the cultivation of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor skills.

As a part of the reform effort “New School- the school of the 21st century”, the new curriculum firstly introduced during the school year 2011-2012 (Government Gazette 351/2011, New Curriculum, Horizontal Act" MIS: 295450), which emphasizes 21st-century skills, environmental awareness, and students’ ability to manage their personal and professional growth.

In the context of the review and production, where necessary, of the **Curricula and educational support material**, as well as the, where appropriate, reform of existing ones or the production of new educational packages (Government Gazette 4003/B/30-8-2021 Horizontal Act MIS: 5035542), which aim to respond to the needs of all students, to the new social reality and to the new data of the sciences for teaching, learning, the subjects and their practices, as well as the development of the skills that are necessary for citizens of the 21st century.

The “**Active Citizen Actions” Curriculum** (Government Gazette 6048/ 1 -11- 2024, Ministerial Decision 130372/GD4/01-11-2024 on the subject: "Curriculum "Active Citizen Actions" for Kindergarten, Primary School, Middle School and High School") integrates the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, empowering students to actively contribute to a fairer and more sustainable world. The initiatives aim to promote the integration of sustainability into educational programs and a paradigm shift in the educational process, laying the foundations for the creation of schools that embrace sustainability and adopt a sustainable approach at all levels.

State of the Art

Both in primary and secondary education curriculum innovations and reforms are determined by political will and reflect the social, educational, scientific, technological or, political changes which occur. Issues related to inclusion, environmental education or gender equality, modern teaching approaches, changes in the labor market and the economy play a significant role towards curriculum reforms, as well as the need for convergence with European standards and the international educational trends and recommendations of international organizations. The most important innovations, which reflect initiatives aimed at promoting the integration of sustainability into educational programs and a paradigm shift in the educational process, and in addition to strengthening Global Citizenship Education are described below:

2003 Reform: The Pedagogical Institute introduced a comprehensive “Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Curricula” for compulsory education (primary and lower secondary), implemented between 2006–2009. An



important innovation was the Flexible Zone of Interdisciplinary Approaches, allowing 2 hours/week (ages 11–15) for project-based learning on contemporary and local issues (e.g., health, environment, technology). This structure ended in 2015–16.

2011 Reform – “New School”: New curricula were developed to align education with social, cultural, economic and technological developments, prioritizing student-centered, cooperative, and inquiry-based learning. Emphasis was placed on an open, flexible, coherent, and interdisciplinary curriculum from early childhood to upper secondary education. Notably, two new curricula were produced:

- Environment and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): Focused on human needs and rights, participatory democracy, ecological interdependence, responsible consumption, ecological footprint, and the precautionary principle.
- School and Social Life: Aimed at strengthening students’ mental resilience through experiential, community-based activities across four thematic axes. It functioned horizontally rather than as a conventional subject.

Although not implemented, these curricula informed the 2021 curriculum framework set for implementation in 2025–26.

2016–2019: Topic Week: Lower secondary schools implemented a dedicated week for project-based work on ESD issues.

2020 Skills Workshops: Introduced across compulsory education to cultivate soft, life, and STEM-related skills. For ages 11–16, one hour/week was allocated. No additional curriculum time was provided for sustainable development or life-skills education for ages 15–16.

2024 Active Citizen Actions: A new interdisciplinary curriculum aligned with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was introduced across all levels of schooling. It promotes cross-curricular integration, teacher–student collaboration, and project-based learning to address complex social, economic, and environmental issues and to highlight the relevance of the SDGs in all subjects.

Analysis

Three subjects were selected in order to investigate in each of them the manner and structure of the presence of the four big ideas identified by the GET project, namely:

- climate change,
- gender equality,
- international inequalities and
- migration

The cognitive subjects selected are:

- Geology and Geography for student level/age 12–15 (Lower Secondary School Grades 1 & 2),
- Active Citizenship Actions, an interdisciplinary subject which is implemented in combination with the 4 thematic modules of the Skills Workshops, student level/age 11–16 years (last two grades of Primary School and the three grades of Secondary School), and
- History, student level/age 12–16 years (3rd cycle, 1st to 3rd year of High Secondary School)



The aim of the research was to determine to what extent curricula provide explicit or implicit references to these issues and to identify potential areas for further development. The analysis of the results showed that:

Geography & Geology curriculum: The curriculum analysis reveals that Geography & Geology teaching on climate change, gender equality, and global inequalities remains largely descriptive and lacks critical, justice-oriented perspectives. Key gaps include limited attention to climate justice, gender equity, colonial legacies, and the experiences of the Global South. To address these issues, the curriculum should integrate interdisciplinary themes such as climate-induced migration, gendered dimensions of inequality, and historical–contemporary connections to global injustices. Active learning methods, diverse case studies, and critical media literacy are essential for fostering student agency and reflective citizenship. Strengthening teacher training and redesigning assessments to promote critical thinking and systems thinking are necessary steps toward cultivating informed, socially responsible, and globally aware learners. Incorporating case studies on climate-induced migration at both local and global scales, alongside critical analysis of migration policies, human rights, and media narratives, would support the development of critical media literacy and a more holistic understanding of migration dynamics.

Active Citizenship Actions: Interdisciplinary subject in mandatory combination with Skills Workshops, for all levels of education (Primary school, High school). The Active Citizenship Actions curriculum strengthens climate education by promoting community engagement, advocacy, and sustainable practices, while encouraging students to understand the social, economic, and ethical dimensions of climate change. It effectively supports gender equality through data-driven analysis, anti-stereotype initiatives, and experiential learning, though it could further link gender issues to human rights and global development. The curriculum also aligns well with SDGs on poverty, inequality, and strong institutions, fostering awareness of global injustices and human rights challenges. Further enhancement should deepen connections between environmental issues, historical inequalities, and international social justice to develop critically aware and socially responsible citizens.

History (low Secondary school): The analysis of the lower secondary History curriculum identifies substantial gaps in addressing climate change, gender equality, international inequalities, and migration. Climate change is treated minimally, lacking links to the Industrial Revolution, ethical dimensions, climate justice, and disproportionate impacts on the Global South. Gender perspectives are insufficiently integrated, with limited attention to women’s roles, feminist movements, and gendered experiences across historical periods. International inequalities are presented through a predominantly Eurocentric lens, with inadequate connection between colonial legacies and contemporary global disparities. Migration is covered descriptively rather than critically, missing systematic links to colonialism, climate change, gender inequality, and global power structures. Across these domains, curricula require interdisciplinary approaches, inclusion of diverse global perspectives, and development of critical global literacy. Strengthening teacher training, embedding active learning and participatory activities, and deepening analysis of governance, justice, and media representations are essential for fostering informed, empathetic, and socially responsible citizens.

Across all case studies, the Greek curricula engage with the GET thematic areas—climate change, gender equality, migration, and international inequalities—yet predominantly at a descriptive and surface level, with limited emphasis on ethical dimensions, justice-oriented perspectives, or the cultivation of student agency. Although subjects such as Geography, History, and Social Studies constitute natural entry points for these themes, a genuinely transformative curriculum requires their systematic integration across all disciplines. Embedding the GET themes throughout the curriculum—from literature and the arts to STEM fields and civic education—would enable deeper interdisciplinary linkages, enhance critical and systemic thinking, and support the development of empathy and global citizenship.

Achieving this necessitates a shift from traditional, content-focused instruction toward action-oriented and inquiry-based learning, underpinned by sustained teacher professional development and opportunities for



participatory, community-oriented projects. Such an approach ensures that students are not merely recipients of information but become active, critically engaged participants capable of understanding and responding to complex global challenges.

Furthermore, while curricula should avoid excessive rigidity or prescriptiveness—conditions that constrain teachers' creativity and their capacity to respond effectively to local contexts—the treatment of the GET themes should likewise not remain abstract or overly generalized. Teachers should be encouraged to employ specific, contextually relevant examples and to design collaborative, research-based student projects that draw upon concrete case studies. This approach preserves teacher autonomy while ensuring that the exploration of the GET themes becomes meaningful, contextualized, and conducive to the development of critical awareness, ethical reflection, and empathy.

Conclusions

The analysis of Greek curricula for ages 11–16 demonstrates that, although recent reforms emphasize sustainability, 21st-century skills, and Global Citizenship Education, the integration of climate change, gender equality, global inequalities, and migration remains fragmented and largely descriptive. Among the subjects examined, Active Citizenship Actions provides the most substantial engagement with global challenges through SDG-aligned activities, experiential learning, and community-based approaches, yet still requires stronger links between environmental issues, historical inequalities, and human rights frameworks. Geography & Geology introduces climate and inequality topics but lacks critical perspectives on climate justice, colonial legacies, gendered dimensions, and interdisciplinary connections—particularly concerning climate-induced migration. History presents the greatest deficiencies, offering minimal treatment of climate change, limited and Eurocentric approaches to inequalities and migration, and insufficient integration of gender perspectives. Overall, the curricula necessitate:

- Explicit and systematic incorporation of the four global themes.
- Critical, justice-oriented perspectives beyond descriptive content.
- Interdisciplinary frameworks that reflect global interdependence.
- Enhanced teacher training to support critical literacy and participatory, student-centered methodologies.

Strengthening these areas is essential for cultivating informed, empathetic, and globally responsible learners capable of understanding and addressing complex contemporary challenges.



Greece



Innovation Organization for Sustainable Development



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Curriculum case studies

Case study 1:
Geology and Geography in Lower Secondary School (Grades 1–2, ages 12–15) is compulsory, with 35 hours in Grade 1 and 70 in Grade 2.

The curriculum highlights natural disaster awareness, environmental protection, and preservation of natural monuments. It examines population distribution and migration, analyzing causes, impacts, and human–environment patterns. The subject fosters civic responsibility, collaboration, and participation, linking geography to social and natural sciences, while promoting critical thinking, digital research, and action-oriented learning (Gov. Gazette 1859/24-03-2024).

Case study 2:
Active Citizenship Actions is a compulsory interdisciplinary subject linked to the four thematic modules of the Skills Workshops, addressed to students aged 11–16 (final Primary and Secondary). It spans 250 hours over five years, with 200 hours for Skills Workshops and 50 for Active Citizenship Actions.

The curriculum adopts a holistic approach aligned with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), structured into 17 units. It cultivates critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and responsibility, enabling students to address social, economic, and environmental challenges. Through projects, learners connect global goals with local realities, fostering civic participation, sustainability, justice, and 21st-century skills—communication, cooperation, inquiry, and problem-solving (Government Gazette 6048/1-11-2024).

Case study 3:
History is a compulsory subject for students aged 12–16 (3rd cycle, 1st–3rd year of High Secondary), with a recommended 237 teaching hours over four years.

The course fosters democratic citizenship, critical thinking, and historical consciousness. Students explore causal relationships, significance, and contexts linking national, European, and global perspectives. Emphasis on space, time, and causality promotes historical literacy, respect for diversity, and reflective understanding of history as a dynamic process (Gov. Gazette 217/19-01-2023).

Main findings Climate Change

- Active Citizenship Actions Curriculum is the most alignment with GET LOs, followed by the Secondary Geography Curriculum and lastly History
- Geography and Geography
 - The lower secondary Geography Curriculum incorporates climate change education within thematic units, aligned with GCE priorities. It highlights environmental and human impacts but requires enhancement to prioritize climate change more explicitly, linking classroom learning with real-world crises, solutions, and applied skills.
- Active Citizenship Actions
 - The Active Citizenship Actions Curriculum, structured around the 17 UN SDGs, substantially addresses GET learning outcomes for climate change by promoting paradigm shifts in teaching through practical, targeted programs. However, stronger emphasis is needed on LO3.3 areas, including global–local governance interactions, partnerships for mitigation and preparedness, issues of social justice, and recent international climate agreements.
- History
 - The history curriculum lacks explicit reference to climate change, it could be strengthened by addressing the industrial revolution's impacts, ethical issues of resource use, and unequal effects on the Global South. Greater focus on proactive action and teacher training would enhance its integration as a cross-cutting theme.

Main findings Gender inequality

- GET LOs for Gender equality are implemented mainly through the Active Citizenship Actions curriculum, limited by History and insufficiently by Geography.
- Geography and Geography
 - The lower secondary curriculum insufficiently addresses gender equality as a core dimension of social justice. Strengthening Learning Outcomes requires explicit references to equality and diversity, integration of gender perspectives across units, and action-oriented projects fostering critical reflection and engagement.
- Active Citizenship Actions
 - Most GET Learning Outcomes on gender equality are addressed within the Citizenship Actions program, complemented by Social and Political Education, cross-curricular subjects, and Skills Workshops. Nevertheless, stronger emphasis is needed on international initiatives, links with human rights and sustainable development, and fostering respect, empathy, and critical awareness toward groups facing stereotypes, prejudice, or gender-based discrimination.
- History
 - The history curriculum makes limited reference to women's status, yet it can illuminate the historical evolution of gender roles and the persistence of inequality. Stronger integration of gender-related content, revised objectives, and participatory activities would foster critical awareness and inclusive citizenship.

Main findings International inequality

- GET LOs for international inequality are implemented mostly through the Active Citizenship Actions curriculum, also equally important, but with gaps by History and Geography.
- Geography and Geography
 - It is observed that the Geography-Geology curriculum is predominantly descriptive with limited critical engagement. While it identifies global inequalities, it insufficiently connects past injustices to present dynamics and neglects actionable mechanisms. Assessment practices privilege recall, overlooking authentic evaluation. Strengthening migration literacy requires intentional and cross-disciplinary curricular design.
- Active Citizenship Actions
 - The Active Citizenship Actions curriculum demonstrates full alignment with SDGs 1, 10, and 16, addressing poverty, inequalities, and justice, while also meeting GET learning outcomes on international inequalities. Supported by thematic skill workshops and applied programs, it promotes understanding of the restrictions and rights violations faced by vulnerable groups, fostering awareness and critical civic engagement.
- History
 - It is observed that curriculum mapping reveals significant gaps in addressing international inequalities. Although history traces colonial roots of North–South disparities, it remains Eurocentric and ethnocentric, lacking mechanisms to connect past injustices with present realities. Advancing competence requires intentional cross-disciplinary integration of critical global literacy.

Main findings Migration

- GET LOs for Migration are fully addressed by the Active Citizenship Actions curriculum, is acknowledged by History and is insufficiently integrated by Geography and Geology.
- Geography and Geography
 - It is noted that the Greek curriculum provides a foundational focus on climate change but insufficient integration of migration. The emphasis remains on factual description rather than critical understanding, neglecting global, historical, and contemporary dimensions. Strengthening migration literacy requires systematic inclusion of civic and media competences.
- Active Citizenship Actions
 - The Curriculum for Active Citizenship Actions, complemented by Skills Workshops, fully addresses migration-related learning outcomes, while additional objectives are reinforced by subjects such as Geography and Social-Political Education. Given Greece's refugee-hosting role and culturally diverse student body, comprehensive intercultural education programs have been developed across all educational levels to respond at both institutional and classroom levels.
- History
 - It is noted that the High School History Curriculum acknowledges migration across eras but lacks systematic links to colonialism, climate change, global and gender inequalities. Greater emphasis is required on connecting past and present migrations and comparing their causes for Greeks and other people.



Image description

Conclusion and recommendations for education stakeholders

- Conclusions**
1. Significant differences in the structure and implementation of curricula among participating countries highlight the need for adaptable teaching materials and strategies.
 2. GET project learning outcomes (LOs) and teaching and learning units (TLUs) must reflect the principles of curricula but should not be rigid, as prescriptiveness reduces teachers' flexibility and responsiveness.
 3. Abstract discussions of GET themes risk disengagement; concrete examples, case studies, and collaborative projects are essential to foster critical thinking and active participation.
 4. While Greek curricula reference GET themes, a truly transformative approach requires holistic integration across all disciplines, positioning global citizenship as a cross-cutting element rather than an isolated topic.
 5. Teacher education is a pivotal factor in ensuring effective integration of GET, equipping educators to address both historical roots and contemporary dimensions of inequalities.

- Recommendations**
- Educational stakeholders:**
- Ensure flexibility in curriculum design and support localized adaptations.
 - Promote holistic integration of GET themes across subjects to avoid fragmentation.
 - Invest systematically in teacher training to develop critical and interdisciplinary teaching approaches.
- Project Partners:**
- Align LOs and TLUs with national curricula while maintaining adaptability.
 - Produce resources grounded in case studies, concrete examples, and collaborative methodologies.
 - Encourage transformative curricula that frame global citizenship as active and responsible engagement.
- Associated Partners:**
- Share best practices and local experiences to inform implementation.
 - Support joint teacher training initiatives to ensure sustainability.
 - Disseminate holistic approaches linking local realities to global challenges.

Lead Partner



Project Partners



Associated Partner



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