

We are Europe Project

Comparative Analysis of the Curricula



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1 General information about the We are Europe project and the school systems of participating countries

The participating countries in the We are Europe project (WaE) are Austria, Estonia, Finland, Poland, Portugal and England. The aim is to study how the culture of the children's home country and children's own culture appear in curriculums and schools of basic education. For this study, the countries have included information about curriculums of primary school and lower secondary school, with the exceptions of Austria that included only lower secondary level, 10–14 years old and Poland, whose data covers only the primary level.

Children start basic school at the age of 6 or 7 (except in the UK where it is common to start at the age of 5) and finish it at the age of 14–17 depending on the country. The curricula are nationwide. Within the United Kingdom, there is no single core curriculum: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all adhere to different sets of curriculum documents produced by their own educational governing body. In this study, only the English curriculum is included.

In general, during school the teaching shifts from local to global. At lower levels of school, the starting point is pupil's own environment and home country. During the school years these things are studied more carefully and steadily develop a more global perspective.

2 Country specific content

2.1 The content in the curricula about participant countries

Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Children get to know their country and home region, official symbols, and learn to name the most common species (animal, plants & trees, fish, birds, etc.). Furthermore, the neighboring countries and their home country place in Europe is studied. Pupils also learn citizenship skills, how to act in his/her own municipality and as a citizen of the state.

Mother Language includes country-specific content. In addition to grammar, reading, and writing, folklore and regional variations of the mother tongue are explored. The syllabi of foreign languages also include national themes so that a pupil is able to tell about his/her home country. Expression, experience and understanding of different texts and media are included in the teaching of mother tongue.

Mathematics: Recognizing money and learning to use it. Local settings are used in learning.

History & Social studies: From local to global and from prehistory to the present. Laws, politics, environmental, political and geographical changes are studied. The aim is that pupils understand the historical timeline, are able to make connections between the events and see their meanings to their home countries.



Religion & Ethics (statutory only in Finland and Poland): Influences of religion in pupils' own lives and immediate environment. In Ethics citizenship, ethical, and political questions are studied. Pupils learn to respect and understand surrounding cultures, worldviews and religions.

Music: The lives of famous composers and musicians, local musical tradition and typical instruments of the home country are studied.

(Visual) Arts: architecture, important buildings and natural environments (in Technological education in Portugal); ethical and aesthetic perspectives of art. How art and design reflect, shape and influence history and culture.

Crafts (in Finland) or Design and Technology (in England; some content also in Art & Design): Buildings and natural environments; also cultural and industrial contexts of crafts and design.

Physical and/or Health education: Traditional dances and games, health and value education (in Portugal); health education, legislation & rights on national level (in Health education in Finland)

Home economics (taught only in Finland in lower secondary level): household management and Finnish traditions from this point of view; in England similar content is included in Design & Technology.

2.2 The content about culture in participant countries

Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Pupils learn about people and culture of their home region and home country (history, cultural & traditional landscapes, traditions, symbols, customs, cuisine, music, and tales). Also home country and culture in relation to neighboring countries and Europe is studied. The aim is to build one's own cultural and national identity and getting to know other cultures and minority cultures in the country, including economic activities. In Estonia, famous people are used as examples of national culture.

In *Mother Language*, national culture is studied in children's/youth literature, folk tales and fables, and through different media. In addition, popular authors and classics of literature are studied, usually in upper level. The aim is to learn to know and appreciate literary heritage. Local oral culture is incorporated, and theatre, drama and film are included in the curricula. Language studies are continued from a cultural perspective, alongside the importance of native language.

In *Foreign languages*, the aim is to learn to tell about one's home country and culture in a foreign language from the cultural point of view, exploring other cultures.

History & Social studies: Important persons of the home country are studied as well as everyday culture, lifestyle, arts, and culture of different eras. Culture is seen as a mirror of national identity but also minority cultures are studied. Influences of wars, events and being under other regime are studied.



Religion & Ethics (statutory only in Finland and Poland): Religion is studied as an undercurrent of culture and spiritual traditions that exert influence in a society. In addition, other religions and customs of the home country are examined, as are the ethical dimensions of everyday life, art, and media.

Music: Selected examples of music, musical traditions; regional and national cultural life; gaining knowledge of artists and musicians

(Visual) Arts: National art, design, and architecture; examples of art from different eras and knowledge of famous artists and their work; traditions and art history; art and design in home, school and cultural contexts

Crafts (in Finland), Design and Technology (in England; some content also in Art & Design) or Arts and Motor Skills (in Portugal; some content also in Educational Technology): Traditional and modern crafts and technologies; crafts culture, history, and symbols; art and design in home, school and cultural contexts. The aim is that pupils understand the impact of crafts (textile and technological) on individuals, society and environment and they learn basic skills in them.

Home economics (only in Finland and some of the content in Design & Technology in England): National domestic culture, manners, and food culture.

Physical and/or Health education (only in Finland, Portugal and England): national sports culture and traditions of sports and exercise. In Health education, life, culture, and the media are investigated from the perspective of safety and health.

2.3 The content about children's culture (produced by adults)

Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: The starting point for teaching is pupil's existing skills, knowledge and experiences. Content is connected to pupils themselves and to their own living environment; personal growth and interaction between the person and his/her environment; the surrounding society of the pupil.

Mother tongue: Children's and youth literature and different forms of media with cultural references in them; in language skills a shift from the spoken language of young people to standard spoken language; expressing own feelings and emotions; reading and creating stories; drama, theatre performances and roleplays; culture of different regions, clothes, traditions and customs (Poland).

Mathematics: tasks about children's life (in Estonia)

In *Foreign languages* examples of foreign children's literature.

History & Social studies: Pupil's roots and history of his/her family and home region; culture of different regions, clothes, traditions and customs; nobility and popular culture; childhood in different times.



Religion & Ethics (only in Finland): familiarize the pupil with his/her religion; educating children in ethical living; everyday life, rights and obligations; Rights of children; pupil's personal growth and world-view

Music: Age-appropriate music; singing, playing and creating music; building a creative relationship with music

(Visual) Arts: Pupils learn to estimate their media use; expressing their thoughts, opinions and viewpoints; creating art; personal growth and a relationship with art; deepening the understanding of culture

Crafts (in Finland), Design and Technology (in England; some content also in Art & Design): Crafts in pupils' lives, learning skills, understanding values and principles in surrounding environment. Creativity, joy and satisfaction from designing and producing their own work.

Home economics (only in Finland): Good living and well-being; issues important from the standpoint of personal well-being and good living – issues that deal with the young people themselves, the home, the family, and society.

Physical and/or Health education (in Finland, Portugal, and England): Health education is pupil-orientated and supports functionality and involvement. Starting points are one's daily living, growth and development. Promoting personal responsibility, cooperation, and solidarity; ethics in sports and citizenship in physical activity in connection to environment; encouraging children to sports and activities outside school

2.4 Children's own culture/children's point of view

(ONLY Estonia, Finland, Portugal and England)

Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Children's point of view, their ideas and observations are encouraged in finding answers and solutions; teaching should give experiences so that they are able to raise questions about the world around them; interaction with peers; children's play, sports, and games

Mother tongue: creativity and imagination is encouraged in writing and expression (drama).

Foreign languages: creative writing and oral expression

Mathematics: In Estonia children create and solve mathematical problems based on their experiences and everyday life

History & Social studies: Children's experiences in national traditions (in Estonia); expression of one's own opinions and justify their ideas about events, phenomena and social issues; answering and asking questions and using stories as sources. In Portugal history of monarchies, medieval times and culture were mentioned in this category.

Ethics (in Finland): Personal growth, what I know, what I can do?



Music: creative work; playing, singing and performing; how to use elements of music as building material of their own ideas and thoughts; encouraging pupils to express themselves and give a form to their own ideas;

(Visual) Arts: creative work and giving a visual form to their own ideas, experiences and thoughts.

Crafts (in Finland), Design and Technology (in England; some content also in Art & Design): Designing craft projects; creating and experimenting; designing functional and appealing products for themselves and other users; studying other cultures to identify user-needs.

Home economics (only in Finland): Pupils learn to make their own plans for using money.

Physical and/or Health education (Only in Finland, Portugal, and England): collective and individual sports; dance; choreographies and collaboration individually or with classmates; creativity and physical expression; values, cooperation, interaction with others.

3 WaE specific content

WaE project countries

Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Countries and cultures of nearby regions of the home country, interaction with them, natural conditions and human activity; Flags and symbols; Europe's geography; environmental questions; European scientists and their work; cultural, social, and political differences around Europe and the world

Mother tongue: Examples of children's books, European literature and foreign writers; different media; information about European languages, conceptions of linguistic relationships and languages related to pupils' own

Mathematics: Euro as currency

Foreign languages: Some other language, usually a common European language or of a neighboring country; also information about countries; comparison and contrasts of the countries (home & foreign)

History & Social studies: Neighboring countries, other states and people; important historical events; history of other countries (Europe and the rest of the world); inventions, farming, industrialization, urbanization; being a citizen of the home state and in the EU

Religion (statutory only in Finland): world religions and their geographic distribution

Music: Lives of famous composers and musicians, musical tradition and typical instruments are studied; music culture and life of other countries.



3.1 WaE project cultures

Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Countries and cultures of nearby regions of the home country and Europe; identifying features of own and foreign culture; positive attitude towards other people and cultures; cultural, social, and political differences around Europe and the world; science in Europe.

Mother tongue: Examples of children's books; European authors, their works and other countries' classics; national culture and traditions; literature, theatre and film of other countries; facts, issues, cultural, ethical, aesthetical, political and religious values presented in texts.

Foreign languages: Some other language, usually a common European language or of a neighboring country.

History & Social studies: European arts and culture; Arts and culture as an expression of an era; media and their impact; memory culture and their development; the influence of other WaE/European cultures on own country and culture; western culture & consumer culture.

Religion & Ethics (Finland): world religions and their geographic distribution; cultural diversity; religions' dimensions and impacts on the individual, community and culture; philosophical and cultural education about different cultures.

Music: In some countries the lives of famous composers and musicians, musical tradition and typical instruments are studied; music, culture and life in other countries; singing, playing and listening of other countries music.

(Visual) Arts: knowledge of European artists; contemporary art and visual traditions of other countries.

Crafts (only in Finland): modern and traditional crafts; also history and symbols of crafts.

Home economics (only in Finland): internationalization and multiculturalism.

3.2 WaE children's culture (produced by adults)

(Only Austria, Finland, Portugal and England)

Mother tongue: children's and youth literature; facts, issues, cultural, ethical, aesthetical, political, and religious values presented in texts.

Foreign languages: intercultural awareness.

History & Social studies: children's rights & human rights.

(Visual) Arts: making links between styles, art disciplines and practices and their own work.

Music: playing and singing; making music.



3.3 Children's own culture/children's point of view

(Only Portugal)

Portugal is the only country that has content in this category. In Foreign language (English) children are expected to relate own culture/community with what they learn and read about other cultures.

4 Content about the EU

4.1 Content about other EU countries

(Only Austria, Estonia, Finland, Portugal, & England)

Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Natural and built environments, people, diversity, health; maps; countries and cultures of nearby regions of the home country, interaction with them, natural conditions and human activity; flags and symbols; Europe's geography; environmental questions; European scientists and their work; cultural, social, and political differences around Europe and the world.

Mother tongue: linguistic relationships; folktales presenting other settings as examples of cultural diversity; poems and narratives by foreign authors; facts, issues, cultural, ethical, aesthetical, political and religious values presented in texts.

Foreign languages: studying European languages and cultures; intercultural awareness.

History & Social studies: European history; historical events; being a citizen of the state and in the EU; neighboring countries and other states and people; important historical events; history of other countries (Europe and the rest of the world); inventions, farming, industrialization, urbanization; being a citizen of the home state and in the EU.

Religion & Ethics (Finland): world religions and their geographic distribution; cultural diversity; religions' dimensions and impacts on the individual, community and culture; philosophical and cultural education of different cultures.

Music: Lives of famous composers and musicians, musical tradition and typical instruments are studied; music culture and life of other countries.

Design and Technology (only in England): the origin of food.

4.2 Content about other EU cultures

(ONLY Austria, Estonia, Finland, Portugal, & England; No content from Poland, although they have listed similar content in the EU knowledge in general)



Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Countries and cultures of nearby regions of the home country and Europe; identifying features of own and foreign culture; positive attitude towards other people and cultures; cultural, social, and political differences around Europe and the world; science in Europe.

Mother tongue: folktales; foreign authors and children's books and youth literature from other countries; European authors, their works and other countries' classics; national culture and traditions; literature, theatre and film of other countries.

Foreign languages: studying European languages and cultures

History & Social studies: European arts and culture; Arts and culture as an expression of an era; media and their impact; memory cultures and their development; the influence of other WaE/European cultures on own country and culture; western culture & consumer culture; culture & science in Europe.

Religion & Ethics (Finland): world religions and their geographic distribution; cultural diversity; religions' dimensions and impacts on the individual, community and culture; philosophical and cultural education of different cultures.

Music: The lives of famous composers and musicians, musical traditions, genres, styles, and typical instruments are studied; music culture and life of other countries.

(Visual) Arts: knowledge of European artists, architecture, art movements, periods and styles; contemporary art and visual traditions of other countries.

Crafts (Finland): modern and traditional crafts; also history and symbols of crafts.

4.3 Content about EU children's culture (produced by adults) (ONLY Portugal & England)

Foreign languages: studying European languages and cultures; poems, songs, rhymes.

History & Social studies: ancient Roman and Moor cultures; heritage sites; childhood throughout the history.

(Visual) Arts: making links between styles, art disciplines and practices and their own work.

4.4 Children's own culture/children's point of view (Only Portugal)

In studies of foreign language, (i.e. English) Portugal mentions information of other EU cultures.

4.5 The content of EU knowledge in general (Only Austria, Finland, Poland, Portugal, England)



Science/Environmental studies, Social or Citizenship studies, Geography and/or Biology: Examples of Europe and home country; economic relationships; common Europe; human activity in Europe; European scientists.

Mother tongue: In Portugal the EU as a community of values is studied (ex. cultural heritage, literature); origins of words (Greek & Latin).

Foreign languages: studying European languages and cultures; equipping pupils to study and work abroad

History & Social studies: Europe and EU; political and administrative players at the municipal, national and EU levels; home country's participation in the EU; the legacies of Latin, Law and Roman empires.

(Visual) Arts: art, artists and architecture

Music: The lives of famous composers and musicians, musical tradition and typical instruments are studied; in Austria music culture and life of other countries.

Design & Technology (England): How events and individuals have shaped the world; food.

5 Concluding thoughts

In general, the contents of curricula are similar. Countries and cultures are studied in sciences, arts and history/social sciences. Finland and Poland are the only countries where religion is included in the statutory curricula. The depth of study mentioned in the curricula content varies depending on the country and the variety of subjects taught at school. The country-specific content and culture are studied on national, European, and global levels. At this point of the study it seems that children's culture can be seen mostly in the arts, history and language studies. Children's own culture is in the minority and is visible in arts studies, where creativity is encouraged. As mentioned earlier, most of the countries had no information about children's own culture in WaE and EU categories.

