



## Teacher Education: The Common Mention on European Citizenship

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### Abstract

The Faculty of Education of the University of Córdoba (Spain) has designed and taken the lead for an international Project in the frame of the LLP Comenius Programme. The proposal herein is an outcome of the participation of its agents in two COMENIUS projects developed between 2004 and 2013:

- a. **ISTEPEC (2004-2007):** Intercultural Studies in Teacher Education to Promote European Citizenship. Ref: 119121-CP-1-2004-1-FR-COMENIUS-C21.
- b. **ELICIT (2010-2013):** European Literacy and Citizenship Education. Ref: 510621-LLP-1-2010-1-FR-COMENIUS-CMP.

The common line of these two projects is the development of the concept of European Citizenship in Teacher (both, pre-service and in-service) Training. The last of these, **ELICIT**, was devoted to the design of the desired competences (and its portfolio) on European Citizenship that European teachers should acquire.

This theoretical frame (designed by **ISTEPEC** first, and **ELICIT** then) must be put into practice as an initial step towards an ambitious and comprehensive goal: the practical frame of a network devoted to the acquisition and teaching of European Citizenship for teachers of Europe as both, initial training of teachers, and as lifelong learning for in-service teachers.

Our paper here will account for the project that a group of four European Universities (all of them as participating institutions in **ELICIT**: Córdoba, Stockholm, ESPE of Brittany and Kecskemét) have designed to run a course on European Citizenship (Sept. '14) which copes with the acquisition of such competences for teachers (initial training this year as the pilot course). The real strength of this course is the power of its inner design, because:

- a. It can be adapted (and adopted) by any European Higher Education Institution.
- b. It allows validation and recognition of students' competences acquired within participating institutions.
- c. It promotes international participation based on mobility (of students and teachers).
- d. It makes possible the recognition and use of the concept and feeling of European citizenship by European citizens.
- e. It ensures the way to allow European school teachers to develop (and teach) European citizenship to pupils at schools.

Such design, and the strength described above have been recognized by the European Commission evaluators on **ELICIT** Progress Report (June 2012), in whose 'Strong Points of the Overall Evaluation' they state this: "The conceptualization of the **ELICIT** Reference Framework is likely to be used in influencing policy levels. Here, additional work on a 'European Mention on Diplomas for Teachers' in teacher education qualifications could support dissemination and exploitation efforts. The Reference Framework was translated into nine languages, which is useful for dissemination into many educational contexts". (2012, p. 5)

### 1. Introduction

Teacher Education across Europe is one of the big challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The constructs universities use to train teachers, and the philosophy beneath them will definitely mark the future of Europe and how European citizens will face their own lives. Teacher Education (TE hereafter) has proved to be the keystone for substantial changes along history. The European Commission states the following regarding the teaching professions: "The demands made on teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators are increasing and changing. They are called on to play a key role in modernising education. To do that, they need to develop their own knowledge and skills. Initial education and continuous professional development of the highest quality, and access to support throughout their careers are both essential" ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/teacher-training\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/teacher-training_en.htm) last accessed 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2014).

With this philosophy in mind, the *University of Córdoba* has taken the lead of a project that, by definition and goals, is designed to constitute a model for future courses on this area. The course on *European Citizenship for TE* (whose starting date is Sept. 2014) is an outcome of the participation of four European universities in two COMENIUS projects developed between 2004 and 2013:

- a. **ISTEPEC (2004-2007):** *Intercultural Studies in Teacher Education to Promote European Citizenship*. Ref: 119121-CP-1-2004-1-FR-COMENIUS-C21.
- b. **ELICIT (2010-2013):** *European Literacy and Citizenship Education*. Ref: 510621-LLP-1-2010-1-FR-COMENIUS-CMP.

The common line of these two projects was the development of the *European Citizenship* concept for *Teacher Education*, being **ELICIT** finally devoted to the design of the appropriate frame of competences (and its portfolio) that all European teachers should acquire on European Citizenship. This theoretical frame is successfully put into practice as an initial step towards an ambitious and comprehensive goal: the establishment of a practical network devoted to the acquisition and teaching of European Citizenship for teachers of Europe as both, initial training of teachers and as lifelong learning for in-service teachers.

This paper explains the project that these four European Universities (all of them as participating institutions in ELICIT) have designed to run a real course on European Citizenship, which copes with the acquisition of core competences for teachers (initial training as a pilot course). The original design of this course facilitates the acquisition of core competences because the scheme under which students are integrated is international, multicultural and plurilingual, just as Europe itself is.

## 2. The rationale and design of the courses on European Citizenship for TE

*The University of Córdoba* (ES), the *ESPE of Bretagne Occidentale* (FR), the *University of Stockholm* (SE) and the *Kecskemét College* (HU) are the four responsible (and core) institutions in charge of designing and running the first courses on European Citizenship for teacher education. This course, that has implemented its first edition in September 2014, has 30 ECTS and the competences that it addresses to have been agreed under the umbrella of the two COMENIUS projects quoted above.

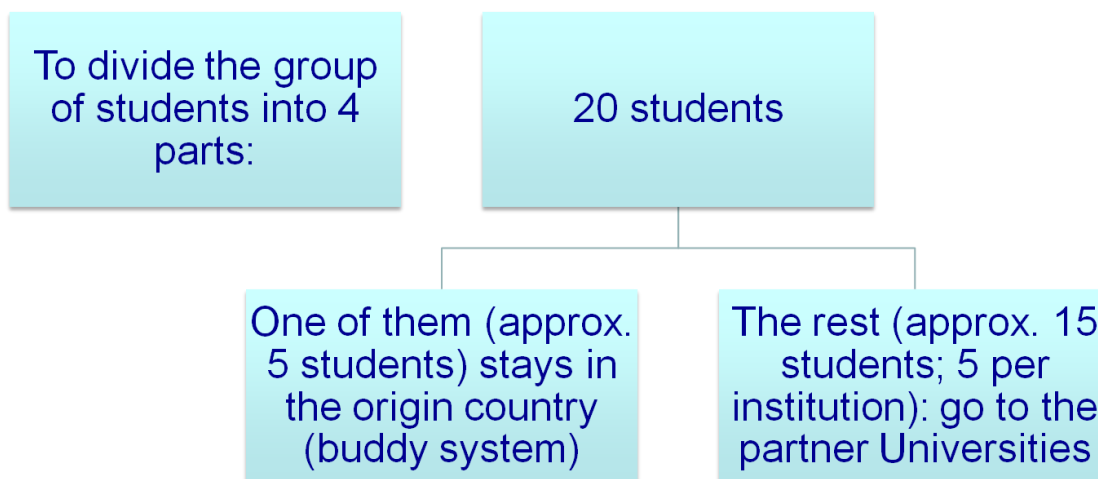
The real strength of this course is the power of its inner design, as:

- It can be adapted by any European Higher Education Institution.
- It allows validation and recognition of students' competences acquired in different institutions in an easy way (even automatically).
- It promotes international participation based on mobility (for both, students and teachers).
- It makes possible the recognition and use of both the concept and feeling of European citizenship by European citizens.
- It ensures the way to allow European school teachers to develop (and teach) European citizenship to pupils at schools.

The **design** of this course can be explained as follows:

A. Each **cohort of students** will be made with five students from each participating country. Thus, all groups will consist of (approximately) twenty international students in every classroom of all participating countries. The benefits this scheme brings into the classroom are, among others:

- Students and teachers can use ERASMUS+ programmes to fund their mobility, so there is no need to get extra-financial support for these courses.
- Students' own cultural background can be exploited as a teaching and learning resource itself.
- For each cohort, three fourths of participating students are incoming students, who must be 'culturally' adapted to the new country.
- Again, for each cohort, one fourth of participating students are national students, who will be in charge of helping incoming students with their cultural immersion in both the host country and host institution.



This scheme can change to adapt to the number of participating institutions. The teaching staff for these courses will be carefully selected by each institution (permanent and involved), so that they can manage courses and syllabuses appropriately.

Students will also be selected for each group, according to excellence levels of second-language competences, intercultural adaptation and academic records.

The duration of the course is one semester, and students will do thirty ECTS. The common topic line of all of them is to develop a course on 'European Citizenship' around ELICIT core competences. This means that what is common for all students are the competences they will develop, not the topic of the subjects. The validation of the courses is based, thus, on the acquisition of competences. The common language for all courses (in all countries) will be English, though national languages can be used for extra-curricular activities, which also are essential for the design of these courses.

B. The **implementation** of these courses follows the same basic scheme:

- To use the ELICIT competences as a core to allow exchange and mutual validation of credits among partners.
- To make student mobility among institutions an essential part of teacher training.
- To use the ERASMUS scheme to fund mobility (teachers' and students').
- To design a 30 ECTS course according to the institution's own strength and excellence.

Such design (and the strength described above) have been recognized by the European Commission evaluators on *ELICIT Progress Report* (June 2012), in whose 'Strong Points of the Overall Evaluation' they state that: "The conceptualization of the ELICIT Reference Framework is likely to be used in influencing policy levels. Here, additional work on a 'European Mention on Diplomas for Teachers' in teacher education qualifications could support dissemination and exploitation efforts. The Reference Framework was translated into nine languages, which is useful for dissemination into many educational contexts' (2012, p. 5).

Taking all this into consideration, our proposal facilitates the accomplishment of the original ERASMUS goals, stated by the European Commission: "Many studies show that a period spent abroad not only enriches students' lives in the academic and professional fields, but can also improve language learning, intercultural skills, self-reliance and self-awareness. Their experiences give students a better sense of what it means to be a European citizen. In addition, many employers highly value such a period abroad, which increases the students' employability and job prospects. Staff exchanges have similar beneficial effects, both for the people participating and for the home and host institutions." ('The added value of an ERASMUS experience': [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/erasmus\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/erasmus_en.htm) last accessed 26 Oct. 2012). So, this proposal improves the accomplishment of such objectives for teachers (teacher



education and in-service teachers), at the same time that it improves (by changing the mechanics) the real possibilities of the ERASMUS programme for those teachers.

C. The common **goals** that all courses must achieve are the following:

- To train teachers on *European Citizenship* within the frame of an academic setting, especially designed for a University Degree (teacher education) or a specialization course (for in-service teachers).
- To foster a system that facilitates a permanent exchange and network for lecturers and (future) teachers.
- To help schools integrate the concept of 'Europe' and 'European citizenship' in their daily-based curriculum.

D. The **strategic lines** of the courses can be summarized as follows:

- To make ELICIT a solid idea, integrated within the academic institutions' frames, and make it ready for a real future of continuation and expansion.
- To design a scheme which proves to be 'possible, easy and powerful', so that it can be expanded towards other Universities and/or other countries.
- To design and implement a basic structure which is easy to manage and develop.
- To run the process initially with the core partners (ES, FR, HU and SE) to pilot, test and improve the scheme.

### 3. Conclusions

The courses on *European Citizenship for Teacher Education* herein presented are the proof that the EHEA is feasible and powerful, if its inner philosophy is understood in the correct way. To sum up, these are the main principles that have guided our proposal (which fully agree to the main principles of the EHEA):

- Competences (designed by the ELICIT project in our case) must be used as a core to allow exchange and mutual validation of credits among partners.
- Student mobility among institutions must be an essential part of teacher training if we want future European teachers to be fully qualified for 21<sup>st</sup> century education.
- The ERASMUS scheme can fund mobility (teachers' and students'), so there is no need of further financial support.
- Modules are designed according to a semester-30 ECTS course, and they are adjusted to each institution's own strength and excellence.