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Fearing youth, fostering democracy: conceptions of children and young people's *good* citizenship and citizenship education in European policy (1976 – 2021)

Eveline Meylemans, Lieselot De Wilde and Lieve Bradt

Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

ABSTRACT

Discussions on citizenship always reflect broader political debates on the desired moral fabrics of a society. Evolving from a merely national subject, questions on children and young people's citizenship and citizenship education have over the past decades gained interest in European policy. Through a thematical-rhetorical analysis of European policy documents, this article engages in the European moral-political discussion on *good* citizenship and citizenship education for children and young people. The study shows that European conceptions of good citizenship and citizenship education fluctuate over time, responding to major societal crises. Focusing on the future of European society, European policy seems to project contemporary societal concerns onto children and young people's desired forms of citizenship, endorsing the idea of children as *citizens-in-the-making*. Overall, European policy adopts a highly depoliticised perspective to citizenship that risks constricting, rather than enabling, the actual democratic citizenship of children and young people.

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Introduction: a citizenship crisis beyond borders

Over the past few decades, the question of children and young people's status as democratic European citizens has gained interest as a subject of political debate and research.[1] This interest in young people's citizenship is grounded in concerns regarding young people's perceived social and political alienation, which have resonated loudly among (inter)national political organisations and schools and resulted in an enhanced interest in European citizenship education.[2] The need

CONTACT Eveline Meylemans Eveline.Meylemans@UGent.be Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy, Ghent University, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

[1]Gert Biesta, Robert Lawy and Narcie Kelly, 'Understanding Young People's Citizenship Learning in Everyday Life: The Role of Contexts, Relationships and Dispositions', *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 4, no. 1 (2009): 5–24; Emmanuel Sigalas and Isabelle De Coster, 'Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017', *Euridyce Report, Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union*, 2017, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6b50c5b0-d651-11e7-a506-01aa75ed71a1/language-en; Concepción Naval, Murray Print and Ruud Veldhuis, 'Education for Democratic Citizenship in the New Europe: Context and Reform', *European Journal of Education* 37, no. 2 (2002): 107–28.

[2]Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey, *Changing Citizenship* (London: McGraw-Hill Education, 2005); Andrew Peterson et al., *The Palgrave International Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Social Justice* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51507-0; Sigalas and De Coster, 'Citizenship Education'; Wiel Veugelers and Isolde de Groot, 'Theory and Practice of Citizenship Education', in *Education for Democratic Intercultural Citizenship*, ed. Wiel Veugelers (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 14–41.

for citizenship education is, and always has been, grounded in concerns over the future of society,[3] deriving from concerns over social integration and social cohesion in general and the political participation and understandings of young people in particular.[4] Children and young people have particularly been targeted as the perceived future of society and therefore most in need of citizenship education to prepare them to be(come) knowledgeable and engaged citizens who act thoughtfully in their political, social, cultural and economic lives.[5] As such, this focus on citizenship education as a response to an alleged democratic deficit among young people is not new.[6] The European approach to this debate, however, is a more recent phenomenon.[7] Modern-age discussions on *good* and *desirable* citizenship classically evolve from the context of the nation-state.[8] Over the past decades, shifts in politics and globalisation have generated a rescaling in citizenship discussions transcending the nation-state, negotiating citizenship through broader political allegiances.[9] Accordingly, Faas points out that European institutions have become a major supranational player in education.[10] Today, educational policies together with curricular development and general youth policy on national or local levels in most European countries increasingly encompass supranational approaches to citizenship and citizenship education, as initiated by diverse political and organisational European bodies.[11] European policy discussions encompass all aspects and levels of the national policy domains regarding *education* and *youth* on formal, non-formal and informal levels: from educational content and standards to teacher training from primary to higher education to quality standards and practical guides for youth work.[12] Vice versa, European policy is informed by its nation-states through various intergovernmental initiatives.

[3]Robert Lawy and Gert Biesta, 'Citizenship-as-Practice: The Educational Implications of an Inclusive and Relational Understanding of Citizenship', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 54, no. 1 (February 2006): 34–50; Derek Heater, *A History of Education for Citizenship* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2004).

[4]Terence McLaughlin, 'Citizenship Education in England: The Crick Report and Beyond', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 34, no. 4 (2000): 541–70.

[5]Gert Biesta, *Learning Democracy in School and Society: Education, Lifelong Learning, and the Politics of Citizenship* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011); Naval, 'Education for Democratic Citizenship'; Hessel Nieuwelink, Paul Dekker, Femke Geijsel, Geert ten Dam, Peter Thijssen, Jessy Siongers, Jeroen Van Laer, Jacques Haers and Sara Mels, 'Experiences with Democracy and Collective Decision-Making in Everyday Life', *Political Engagement of the Young in Europe: Youth in the Crucible* (London: Routledge, 2016), 174–98.

[6]Also see Margot Joris and Orhan Agirdag, 'In Search of Good Citizenship Education: A Normative Analysis of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)', *European Journal of Education* 54, no. 2 (2019): 287–98.

[7]Gustavo E. Fischman and Eric Haas, 'Moving Beyond Idealistically Narrow Discourses in Citizenship Education', *Policy Futures in Education* 12, no. 3 (March 2014): 387–402.

[8]Heater, *History of Education for Citizenship*.

[9]Kirsi Pauliina Kallio and Katharyne Mitchell, 'Introduction to the Special Issue on Transnational Lived Citizenship', *Global Networks* 16, no. 3 (March 2016): 259–67; Avril Keating, 'Educating Europe's Citizens: Moving from National to Post-National Models of Educating for European Citizenship', *Citizenship Studies* 13, no. 2 (2009): 135–51; Veugelers and de Groot, 'Theory and Practice of Citizenship Education'.

[10]Daniel Faas, 'The Nation, Europe, and Migration: A Comparison of Geography, History, and Citizenship Education Curricula in Greece, Germany, and England', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 43, no. 4 (August 2011): 471–92.

[11]Faas, 'The Nation, Europe, and Migration'; Deborah Michaels and Stevick Doyle, 'Europeanization in the "other" Europe: Writing the Nation into "Europe" Education in Slovakia and Estonia', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 2 (March 2009): 225–45; Naval et al., 'Education for Democratic Citizenship'; Olga Bombardell and Marto Codato, 'Country Report: Civic and Citizenship Education in Italy: Thousands of Fragmented Activities Looking for a Systematization', *Journal of Social Science Education* 1, no. 2 (2017), 74–81; Stavroula Philippou, Avril Keating and Debora Hinderliter Ortloff, 'Citizenship Education Curricula: Comparing the Multiple Meanings of Supra-National Citizenship in Europe and Beyond', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 291–9.

[12]Keating, 'Nationalizing the Post-National'.

Interpretations of what constitutes *good* citizenship and citizenship education have varied over time and place, because conceptions of citizenship, and accordingly citizenship education, do not present themselves in a neutral vacuum. As Biesta[13] argues, these conceptions always reflect particular ideological ideas and moral-political positions that are inevitably linked to occupant political and social realities. Mouffe asserts that citizenship implies 'a type of political identity' that continuously needs to be constructed: 'since there will always be competing interpretations of the democratic principles of equality and liberty, there will therefore be competing interpretations of democratic citizenship'.[14] As such, the vigorous European debate on children's and young people's citizenship and citizenship education also entails political[15] questions on *good* European citizenship and the place of children and young people in European society. Although the concept of citizenship and the idea of citizenship education have been extensively investigated from historical, political, social and educational perspectives, the European dimension to citizenship and citizenship education has been only sketchily referred to in previous research. The existing body of research on citizenship and citizenship education remains mainly confined to national understandings of citizenship and citizenship education.[16] In order to fully grasp the European conceptions of *good* citizenship and citizenship education for children and young people, we argue that it is important to deepen our historical understanding of European ideas on citizenship and citizenship education. This study therefore focuses on how the concept of citizenship and the idea of citizenship education are historically constructed through European policy documents, mediated by social, political and economic realities. Methodologically this article draws on a historical rhetorical analysis of 26 official European policy documents in the field of *Youth* and *Education* starting from 1976, when the first ideas on citizenship in relation to young people arise, until 2021.

Children and young people targeted as pupils of democracy

Calls for citizenship education have always derived from societal questions on rights and responsibilities of people living together in communities, thus viewing citizenship as a concept that could 'bind' society.[17] Especially in times of societal crises, calls for citizenship education increase, out of the need to educate the people in the values of democracy such as social justice and human rights to the people.[18] The very first theories of citizenship and citizenship education emerged

[13]Gert Biesta, 'Good Education in an Age of Measurement: On the Need to Reconnect with the Question of Purpose in Education', *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 21, no. 2 (2009): 33–46.
[14]Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 125.
[15]Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005).
[16]For example, Jakob Evertsson, 'History, Nation and School Inspections: The Introduction of Citizenship Education in Elementary Schools in Late Nineteenth-Century Sweden', *History of Education* 44, no. 3 (February 2015): 259–73; Jenny Keating, 'Approaches to Citizenship Teaching in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: The Experience of the London County Council', *History of Education* 40, no. 6 (October 2009): 761–78; Pamela Munn and Margaret Arnott, 'Citizenship in Scottish Schools: The Evolution of Education for Citizenship from the Late Twentieth Century to the Present', *History of Education* 38, no. 3 (May 2009): 437–54.
[17]François Audigier, 'Teaching About Society, Passing on Values', *European Education* 31, no. 1 (December 2014): 99.
[18]Ibid.

in the context of developing societies in the Archaic Age, where people were encouraged to rise above the *individual* and learn to act in the capacity of being a *citizen* 'to suit the constitution of the state'.[19] Individuals were seen as in need of education to acquire the alleged necessary knowledge and skills to properly function in society for the greater good of protecting and sustaining that society.[20] Scholars situate the grounds for contemporary theories on citizenship and citizenship education against the background of the emergence of the modern nation-state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[21] which came together with the development of democracy, republicanism and nationalism.[22] As Heater argues, these new forms of governing required a political involvement of a substantial part of a state's population. As such, mass education of children and young people became necessary 'not so much for the sake of the individual, but for the sake of society and the state – for its renovation or for its strength or for its stability'.[23] National education systems thus became a 'massive engine of integration' into the society of the nation-state.[24] This large-scale installation of national school institutions for children and young people has, in its turn, contributed to the demarcation of childhood as a separate sphere providing 'an ordered temporal passage from child to adult status'.[25] Romantic notions of childhood made their appearance, conceptualising children as 'not-yet' and thus enhancing the idea of children as a fresh and frail *tabula rasa*, which consequently made them the perfect target for teaching democracy and civic virtues.[26] Childhood researchers in this vein attribute the re-discovering of childhood in the modern period to the institutionalisation of (mass) education and the concomitant view of children as *future* citizens.[27] In addition, various problems of how to regulate citizens were also made parallel with how to raise the 'next generation' of citizens.[28] It was in this turn of events that the link between youth, a healthy democracy and citizenship education has been established and has been further elaborated upon ever since. As a British Ministry of Education Pamphlet of 1949 commented,

> There are forward-looking minds in every section of the teaching profession ready to reinterpret the old and simple virtues of humility, service, restraint and respect for personality. If schools can encourage qualities of this kind in their pupils, we may fulfil the conditions of a healthy democratic society.[29]

[19]Aristotle, as quoted in Heater, *History of Education for Citizenship*, 171.
[20]Dawn Oliver and Derek Heater, *The Foundations of Citizenship* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994).
[21]John Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society: The Institutional Origins of Mass Schooling in Sweden* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 2014); Andy Green, *Education, Globalisation and the Nation State* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997); Oliver and Heater, *Foundations Citizenship*; Asemin Nuhoglu Soysal and David Strang, 'Construction of the First Mass Education Systems in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Sociology of Education* 62, no. 4 (1989): 277–88.
[22]Heater, *History of Education for Citizenship*.
[23]Ibid., 64.
[24]Green, *Education, Globalisation and Nation-State*, 134.
[25]Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout, *Theorising Childhood* (New York: Polity Press, 1998), 4.
[26]Pauline Phemister, *John Locke: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[27]Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).
[28]Denise Meredyth and Deborah Tyler, *Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity* (Queensland: Griffith University, 1993).
[29]Ministry of Education, *Citizens Growing up at Home, in School and After* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1949), 4.

Debating youth, contesting citizenship

Scholars discern two major approaches to citizenship education in policy and practice, differing in their discourses on youth and society.[30] First, there are discourses viewing citizenship as an outcome of an educational trajectory, wherein youths are predominantly seen as 'citizens in the making' and citizenship is foremost seen as an adult matter.[31] A second approach emphasises the continuous character of 'citizenship-as-practice', engaging with citizenship as an ongoing learning process for both children and adults.[32] Within this approach, scholars also critique that the underlying ideologies and social and/or political values that inevitably shape citizenship education are rarely contested in research.[33] They emphasise the fact that the discussion on citizenship and citizenship education always entails broader concerns regarding social cohesion and integration in society.[34] As Biesta argues, there are different answers to the question as to what *good* citizenship education is and what it should aim for, depending on what model of *good* citizenship is envisioned.[35] Questions of citizenship and citizenship education are therefore inherently political.[36]

Over the past decades, national debates on citizenship and citizenship education directed to children and young people have been scrutinised by a large body of research, unpacking general citizenship discourses,[37] focusing on specific curricular development or approaches to civic education in specific educational settings at certain moments in time,[38] and conducting comparative studies between national programmes for citizenship education.[39] These studies first show that theories of citizenship education have been developed over the years to tackle crises within nation-states, embedded in the general idea that moral reform through education could 'mould the citizens of the future'.[40] Second, previous research has

[30]Biesta, *Learning Democracy in School*.
[31]Thomas Marshal, *Citizenship and Social Class and other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 25.
[32]See Gert Biesta and Robert Lawy, 'From Teaching Citizenship to Learning Democracy: Overcoming Individualism in Research, Policy and Practice', *Cambridge Journal of Education* 36 (2006): 63–79.
[33]Biesta, *Democracy in School and Society*; Gert Biesta, Maria De Bie and Danny Wildemeersch, eds., *Civic Learning, Democratic Citizenship and the Public Sphere* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014).
[34]Biesta, *Democracy in School and Society*; Maria Bouverne-De Bie, Rudi Roose, Filip Coussée and Lieve Bradt, 'Learning Democracy in Social Work', in Biesta et al., *Civic Learning, Democratic Citizenship and the Public Sphere*, 43–54; Sigalas and De Coster, *Citizenship Education at School*.
[35]Gert Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2010).
[36]Engaging with Mouffe's theory describing politics as 'the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence'. See Chantal Mouffe, 'Post-Marxism: Democracy and Identity', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13, no. 3 (1995): 259–65.
[37]For example, Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon, eds., *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, c.1870–1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[38]For example, Munn and Arnott, 'Citizenship in Scottish Schools'; Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey, 'Citizenship Education and National Identities in France and England: Inclusive or Exclusive?', *Oxford Review of Education* 27, no. 2 (2001): 287–305; Hamish Ross and Pamela Munn, 'Representing Self-in-Society: Education for Citizenship and the Social-Subjects Curriculum in Scotland', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 40, no. 2 (2008): 251–75; Judith Torney-Purta, John Schwille and Jo-Ann Amadeo, eds., *Civic Education across Countries: Twenty-Four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project* (1999), https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED431705; David Scott and Helen Lawson, eds., *Citizenship Education and the Curriculum: International Perspectives On Curriculum Studies, 1530–5465* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2002).
[39]Avril Keating, Debora Hinderliter Ortloff and Stavroula Philippou, 'Citizenship Education Curricula: The Changes and Challenges Presented by Global and European Integration', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 145–58; David Kerr, 'Citizenship Education in the Curriculum: An International Review', *School Field* 10, no. 3/4 (1999): 5–32; Judith Torney-Purta, Rainer Lehmann, Hans Oswald and Wolfram Shulz, *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-Eight Countries* (Amsterdam: IEA, 2001).
[40]Susannah Wright, 'Citizenship, Moral Education and the English Elementary School', in Brockliss and Sheldon, *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building*, 21.

shown how education in schools, and increasingly also in youth work, has been increasingly put forward as a *primary steward of democracy* for youth, with the purpose of equipping them with suitable citizenship knowledge and skills in order to preserve democratic nations.[41] In conclusion, our current understanding of children and young people's citizenship and citizenship education has thus inextricably been linked to the nation-state. As Green remarks, national school systems have historically strived at fostering 'the civic identity and national consciousness which would bind each to the state and reconcile each to the other'.[42] However, the new European impetus[43] to citizenship might challenge our understanding of citizenship and citizenship education as it inevitably draws on different, transnational and intergovernmental, conceptions of society and politics.[44] The question thus arises as to what social and/or political assumptions are ascribed to the European understanding of children's and young people's *good* citizenship and how this is historically constructed. As such, this study aims to unpack the political debate of *good* citizenship and citizenship education in a European context.

Different notions of European citizenship in changing societal contexts

This study draws on the analysis of 26 European policy documents[45] in the domains of Youth or Education.[46] These 26 documents were selected based on their relevance for the research question: all documents in European policy between 1976 and 2021 that addressed the topic of citizenship in the domain of Youth or Education, directly or by referring to the societal position of young people, were included in the research design. Of the 26 selected documents, 19 are produced by the Council of Europe,[47] four by the European Union,[48] one by the European Community[49] and two by the European Commission.[50] Our thematical-rhetorical analysis combines an inductive approach, examining *what*

[41]Walter Parker, *Teaching Democracy: Unity and Diversity in Public Life* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003), xv.
[42]Green, *Education and State Formation*, 134.
[43]Of course, as Dale reasons, these European policy efforts remain 'qualitatively distinct from Member States' national education systems, in terms of their scope, mandate, capacity and governance'. Nonetheless they possibly produce different discourses on children's and young people's citizenship that are unexplored. See Roger Dale, 'Studying Globalisation and Europeanisation in Education: Lisbon, the Open Method of Coordination and Beyond', in *Globalisation and Europeanisation in Education*, ed. Roger Dale and Susan Robertson (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2009), 121–40.
[44]European Commission, *Erasmus+. Strategic Partnerships*, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/strategic-partnerships-field-education-training-and-youth_en (accessed August 21, 2020).
[45]For a detailed overview, see Table 1. The analysed documents will be referred to as indicated in Table 1.
[46]Youth and Education policy is primary the responsibility of nation-states. Articles 165 and 166 of the 1957 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union are the basis for EU action in the domain of Youth but any harmonisation of Member States' legislation on Youth is explicitly excluded. The 1957 Treaty of Rome recognised vocational training as a field of Community action. In 1992, Education was formally acknowledged as an area of EU competence through the Maastricht Treaty.
[47]The Council of Europe is an international organisation, currently including 46 member states, of which 27 are members of the European Union. Recommendations are not binding on member States. However, the Statute permits the Committee of Ministers to ask member governments 'to inform it of the action taken by them' in regard to recommendations: https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/home.
[48]The European Union is a political and economic union of 27 member states.
[49]The European Community was an economic organisation that was incorporated in the European Union, as an economic entity by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, with the EU becoming the legal successor to the Community.
[50]The European Commission is the executive branch of the European Union.

Table 1. Overview of the policy documents analysed

In-text ref.	Document reference	URL
A	Council of Europe, *Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education, Meeting within the Council, of 9 February 1976 Comprising an Action Programme in the Field of Education, Official Journal of the European Communities*, 9 February 1976, No C38/1	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A41976X0219
B	European Communities, *An Education Policy for Europe* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1982) ISBN: 92–825-3166-X	http://aei.pitt.edu/14209/1/EUR%2DDOC%2D1982%2D4.PDF
C	Council of Europe, *First Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Strasbourg, 17–19 December 1985*, MJN-1(85) 6, December 1985	https://rm.coe.int/16807072d8
D	Council of Europe, *Second Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Oslo, 11–12 April 1988*, MJN-2(88) 9, April 1988	https://rm.coe.int/16807072d9
E	Council of Europe, *Third Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Lisbon, 20–21 September 1990, Youth Mobility in Europe*, MJN-3(90), September 1990	https://rm.coe.int/16806fcf13
F	Council of Europe, *4th Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Vienna, 13–15 April 1993*, CM(93) 97, April 1993	https://rm.coe.int/09000016804c089e
G	Council of Europe, *Informal meeting of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Luxembourg, 3 and 4 May 1995*, MJN-INF(95) 1, September 1995	https://rm.coe.int/16807072f0
H	Council of Europe, *5th Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Bucharest, 27–29 April 1998, Report*, CM(98) 104, April 1998	https://rm.coe.int/09000016804e8e31
I	Council of Europe, *Resolution(98) 6 On the Youth Policy of the Council of Europe*, Res (98) 6, April 1998	https://rm.coe.int/native/09000016804e22e9
J	European Commission, *European Commission White Paper: A New Impetus for European Youth*, COM (2001) 681, November 2001	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ac11055
K	Council of Europe, *6th Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Thessaloniki, Greece, 7–9 November 2002*, CM(2002) 192, December 2002	https://rm.coe.int/09000016805e13f9
L	Council of Europe, *Resolution Res(2003)7 on the Youth Policy of the Council of Europe*, Res(2003)7, October, 2003	https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=Res(2003)7
M	Council of Europe, *7th Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth: Budapest, Hungary, 23–24 September 2005: 'Human dignity and social cohesion: youth policy responses to violence'*, MJN-7(2005)3 rev	https://rm.coe.int/16807072e6
N	Council of Europe, *A European Framework for Youth Policy* (Council of Europe Publishing: 2005)	https://rm.coe.int/european-framework-for-youth-policy-eng/16809096b6
O	Council of Europe, *8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth: Kyiv, Ukraine: 10–11 October 2008: 'The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020'*, MJN-8(2008)4	https://rm.coe.int/1680702429
P	Council of Europe, *Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, Meeting within the Council of 22 May 2008 on the Participation of Young People with Fewer Opportunities*, 2008/C 141/01	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42008X0607(01)&from=EN
Q	European Union, *Council Resolution European Cooperation in the Youth Field*, (2009/C 311/01)	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219(01)&from=EN

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

In-text ref.	Document reference	URL
R	Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education – Adopted in the Framework of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers*, 2010	https://rm.coe.int/16803034e5
S	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, *Towards a European Framework Convention on Youth Rights*, Recommendation 1978 (2011), 2011	https://pace.coe.int/pdf/56bad34b4ca1f8d34bfcf455850daaa6be6d0ce462ac30c9f14047135cf6e97b/recommendation%201978.pdf
T	European Union, *Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, Meeting within the Council, on Encouraging New and Effective Forms of Participation of All Young People in Democratic Life in Europe*, 2011/C 169/01	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2011:169:FULL&from=SK
U	Council of Europe, Recommendation *CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Participation of Children and Young People under the Age of 18*, 2012	https://rm.coe.int/168046c478
V	Council of Europe, *9th Conference of Ministers for Youth*, CM(2012)152	https://rm.coe.int/16807072ef
W	European Union, *Informal Meeting of European Union Education Ministers: Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination through Education*, 2015	https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf.
X	European Commission, *Strategic Plan 2016–2020 DG Education and Culture*, Ares(2016)1,294,281, 2016	https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-eac_march2016_en.pdf.
Y	European Union, *Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting within the Council on a Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027* (2018/C 456/01)	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL&from=EN.
Z	Council of Europe, *Resolution CM/Res(2020)2 on the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030*, 2020	https://rm.coe.int/0900001680998935

Table 1 presents an overview of the data that support the findings of this study. All policy documents are accessible through the URL. PDF versions of the data are also available on request from the corresponding author, Eveline Meylemans.

understandings of *good* citizenship and citizenship education European policy documents have described and produced since 1976, with a deductive approach, examining the social and political contexts wherein the official documents were published to unveil *how* these understandings of citizenship and citizenship education are constructed. Through our analysis we identified five time periods in which different social, political and/or economic contexts driven by major (European) societal events and crises have influenced European constructions of children and young people's *good* citizenship and citizenship education. In what follows, we therefore inductively describe our results split into five different time periods. In each time period we will elaborate on European rationales in relation to the idea of *good* citizenship and citizenship education by analysing how reoccurring key concepts, such as 'citizenship', 'participation', 'education' and 'democracy', are re-constructed in these policy documents, based on occurring societal realities.

Young people perceived as ignorant: emerging thoughts on youth and citizenship

Although the concept of citizenship was not yet listed verbatim in policy documents (1976–1989) of the young European Union, the connection between 'learning about Europe and European values' and 'young people' was established as one of the main educational goals in a 1976 Resolution on Education.[51] The Resolution is set out as a result of many previous policy meetings on the education of children of migrant workers and on education of children in general.[52] This Resolution adopted by the Council of Europe comprised actions in the field of Education, among which was promoting closer relations between education programmes in Europe and fostering a European dimension in those learning programmes. The link between young people and education relating to Europe becomes clearer when, in 1982, the Commission of the European Communities overtly elaborates upon the so-called 'European idea' in an educational context:

> At school the evocation of the European idea in textbooks, the study of contemporary European history, the learning of foreign languages and visits abroad while at school or as a student are all factors which determine the future attitude of the adult citizen towards the Community and the European idea.[53]

This quote illustrates how the Council of Europe not only links the (European) education of young people directly to their future citizenship, but also connects citizenship education to the context of formal education.

With the organisation of the first of nine European Conferences of Ministers (1985–2012) responsible for Youth in 1985, the concept of citizenship further emerges in European youth policy documents. Between 1985 and 2012 Ministerial conferences were considered important instruments of intergovernmental cooperation by the Council of Europe, bringing together youth ministers of the member states as well as different organisations and bodies involved in

[51] A.
[52] Ibid.
[53] B, 6.

youth issues.[54] The objectives of these nine European Ministerial Youth Conferences were to discuss topical policy issues regarding young people and European society and to develop orientations for the Council of Europe's youth policy. Not only the content of these conferences but also their intent, to develop youth policy orientations based on societal developments, shows that the attention paid to young people in European society increases and will pave the way for talk about their desired form of citizenship. Our analysis shows that the first two ministerial conferences, in 1985 and 1987, both discuss the importance of young people's behaviour in relation to (future) European society and in this way contribute to the visibility of young people in society. However, the notions of 'citizenship' and 'citizen' are used only once in these first two reports. The first time the notion of citizenship is used in the ministerial conferences is in the regular section where the Ministers lay down the 'principles' they agreed upon:

> The capacity of young people to find new solutions to the problems which face them, their participation at all levels of society and their search for new future prospects require their involvement in the decision-making process on those issues which concern them and the democratic recognition of their full citizenship (right to education and training, to work, to be informed, protection of health and the environment).[55]

The notion of citizenship here has a rather passive feature in relation to young people: it is something that European policy(makers) still need to recognise. Subsequently, when the concept of 'citizen' is used in the regular recommendations section in the documents, it is in the same context of 'recognising'. The Ministers of Youth urge European policy to 'recognise their [young people's] status as citizens as to rule out discrimination of all kinds'.[56] 'Citizenship' and the status of a citizen is presented both times as a stepping-stone to young people's participation in society. In the course of this period, we see that 'good citizenship' of young people actually coincides with 'participation':

> The participation of young people in influencing the conditions of their own lives is crucial. Participation is more than involvement in institutions and decision making. Participation is a pattern of how one lives in a democracy; it is relevant to work, housing, leisure, education and social relations. Participation is also a question of young people's rights and obligations in shaping the future society.[57]

As the quotation illustrates, young people's participation is defined as a broad area of individual and societal behaviours that do not only impact on young people's personal lives, but also on European society as a whole. Many concerns regarding the (future) participation of young people are specifically related to the internationally rapidly changing society in terms of new technologies, the extended role of media and the internationalisation of the job market:

> The Europe of the year 2000 will even more than today be marked by the existence of a large European market. The cultural, social, economic and political reality of most European countries will be determined by its degree of competitiveness within Europe. If young people

[54]Council of Europe, 'Ministerial Conferences', https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/ministerial-conferences (accessed July 28, 2021).
[55]C, 14.
[56]C, 16.
[57]D, 5.

> are to cope with this development they need to be acquainted with new technologies, to learn languages and to develop social and cultural understanding.[58]

In this vein, the contemporary state of youth is often displayed through notions of 'non-participation' in school or employment. As a contrast, the notion of 'participation' is often linked with the notions of 'active' and 'responsibility'.[59] Young immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities are even more portrayed as groups of young people who are inadequately participating in society.[60] Accordingly, we see how the participating young person is defined as an ideal citizen – taking up responsibility not only actively for his/her own life, but also for the social, political and economic development of society:

> The fullest participation of young people in society is essential to democracy at local, national and international levels. This is why the theme 'participation' needs to be put into perspective of the changes in society when approaching the year 2000.[61]

The ministerial conferences at that time focus on education settings to foster young people's participation in society. They entail the presumption that young people will not spontaneously participate in society and thus need to learn how to participate. The Ministers of Youth literally point out the shortcomings of the formal education setting to fulfil the task of educating young people to participate in society. They state that 'provision within the formal education system alone is not sufficient'[62] and show a great deal of interest in youth work to fulfil the task of educating young people to participate in society: 'Promote through informal education means a climate which encourages a growing participation in decision-making by young people'.[63] Youth work is furthermore recognised as an 'active example of democratic involvement by and with young people'.[64] In this way, the origins of supranational efforts to promote European citizenship education among young people can be traced back to the late 1970s. Throughout the discussions we see a first expansion of places where young people should learn how to behave in society – although the documents only three times refer shallowly to citizenship or citizenship education, as a means to obtain the objective of participation. In conclusion, this first identified time period consists of different, rather cursory, references to young people's citizenship in different policy domains. The notion 'citizenship' is used and referred to, yet policymakers do not thoroughly elaborate upon the meaning of citizenship in relation to young people.

Towards a European citizenship without frontiers? Hankering for young people to form a Union

> With the recent developments and changes in Central and Eastern Europe, a whole area of division and ideological confrontation had ended and a new dimension of cooperation

[58]D, 4.
[59]C, 14.
[60]C, 19; D, 4, 6, 7.
[61]C, 14.
[62]D, 4.
[63]C, 16.
[64]Ibid.

> based on the principles of pluralistic democracy and the respect for human rights has begun.[65]

Our data show that in the 1990s the borders of European society changed fundamentally in social, political, physical and economic terms. The most prominent societal events causing a new impetus to European conceptions of citizenship in this time period are the collapse of the Soviet regime and the signing of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, affording 'Citizenship of the European Union' to all member states' inhabitants. The Maastricht Treaty thus legally introduces the term 'European Citizenship'. Subsequently, in 1993 the *Single Market* is completed with the *four freedoms*, allowing unrestricted movement of *goods*, *services, capital* and *people* throughout the European Union. Nevertheless, these features are not explicitly referred to in the policy documents in this time period but are described in general terms, as the above citation illustrates. Only the 1995 report of the informal meeting of the Ministers of Youth literally refers to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina 'where people are losing their faith in European associations and the principles of a European society'.[66] The Ministers of Youth link the societal events to the social behaviour of young people, for example stating that they are 'aware that some small groups of young people express their frustration, especially on account of social and economic problems, through violence, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and nationalism'.[67] We also see the societal events hint at European conceptions of young people's *good* citizenship in more subtle ways, when discussing the concept of citizenship. As such, our analysis indicates that between 1990 and 2001, in contrast to the previous period, the concept of citizenship is literally used and elaborated upon in the policy documents. We see that the concept of participation is replaced by the concept of citizenship in describing young people's (desired) role and behaviour in European society. At the third Ministerial Conference in 1993, for example, the European Ministers of Youth advocate for a European youth policy that makes 'young people aware of their responsibilities as European citizens in the context of the values promoted by the Council of Europe, such as cultural diversity, democracy, solidarity and tolerance'.[68] In addition, the fifth ministerial conference in 1998 is organised uniquely around the theme *Young People as Active Citizens in a Future Europe*. These developments illustrate how citizenship is put forward as the cornerstone of European youth policy where the previous key concept of 'participation' is approached as part of 'citizenship':[69] 'enhanced participation will make a contribution to developing young people's education and citizenship'.[70] Participation is thus presented as a means to obtain the objective of (*good*) citizenship. We notice that the concept 'citizenship' is often accompanied by the adjectives 'active', 'responsible' and 'democratic'. The difference between 'citizenship' and 'active/responsible/democratic citizenship' is not clarified, nor is the difference between these concepts explained. However, the adjectives emphasise specific expectations towards the citizenship of young people at that time, indicating they were

[65]E.
[66]G, 1, 31.
[67]F, 16.
[68]Ibid, 17.
[69]See, e.g., I, 1–2.
[70]J, 16.

behaving as the opposite of 'responsible', 'active' or 'democratic' citizens. Additionally, citizenship is recurrently linked to the terms 'cultural diversity', 'democracy', 'solidarity' and 'tolerance'. Policy papers repeatedly refer to the latter concepts as '(fundamental) European values'[71] that young people should learn and act upon:

> We need to put in place the right conditions to enable young people in Europe to see themselves and behave more as supportive, responsible, active and tolerant citizens in plural societies.[72]

Again, young people are presented as not behaving supportively, responsibly, actively or tolerantly at that time. Although the concerns regarding citizenship are expressed towards all young people, our analysis indicates that special attention is paid to the situation of economically marginalised youth in contrast to the previous time period.[73] Moreover, the policy documents increasingly pay attention to the impact of social tensions and societal conflict on young people[74] and repeatedly link ideas on social integration and cohesion to ideas on citizenship.[75] The European policymakers delegate themselves the task of 'creating a spirit of solidarity among young people in Europe'[76] and citizenship education is presented as a means to reach that goal. Fostering active citizenship thus represents one of the major challenges, not only for the present but also for the future of our societies.[77] In this time period, 'citizenship education' is consistently put forward as a priority theme for European youth policy.[78] The papers literally stress the 'essential' need 'to develop education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the participation of young people in civil society'.[79] To develop citizenship education, the Ministers of Youth consider it a task of European youth policy 'to define all the knowledge and skills to become and remain an active citizen'.[80] This is a remarkable passage in the documents, as young people are often presented as not possessing the desired citizenship skills or behaviours, but, at the same time, what these desired citizenship skills ought to be is yet to be defined. Also remarkable is that, in contrast to the previous time period, not 'participation' but 'citizenship' is now linked to the idea of 'rights and responsibilities'.[81] A specific description of citizenship education is, however, not to be found in the documents. Nevertheless, ideas on citizenship education are time and again linked to 'democratic learning', 'intercultural learning' and fostering 'political commitment'.[82]

Regarding the contexts where citizenship ought to be educated, we see a remarkably increased focus on 'youth mobility programmes' as part of non-formal learning environments. A specific resolution of the Council of Europe, for example, is dedicated to the promotion of European youth mobility, defining it as 'an essential means by which to

[71]See, e.g., F, 17, 32; Council of Europe, I, 1; J, 13, 21, 53.
[72]J, 11.
[73]See, e.g., E, 24; F, 11, 14; G 1, 5.
[74]See, e.g., F, 15; G, 1, 3.
[75]See, e.g., F, 7, 15, 16; G, 1, 6; H, 104, 4; J, 16, 31.
[76]F, 18.
[77]J.
[78]See, e.g., G, 1, 4, 7; H, 4; I, 1.
[79]H, 7.
[80]Ibid.
[81]D, 5.
[82]See, e.g., G, 1, 5.

encourage personal enrichment and individual autonomy, as well as to promote peace and understanding between people, combat xenophobia and racism, and create awareness of a European cultural identity'.[83] Furthermore, youth mobility is described as 'a vital factor in intercultural learning and in combating racism',[84] which are the same features that are attributed to 'citizenship education'.

European notions of citizenship in a war on terror

> Violence, wars and terrorism are unacceptable in societies based on pluralist democracy and the respect for human rights. To this end, we call upon the international community and in particular the Council of Europe to make even stronger efforts to prepare young people to live an active democratic citizenship and to work against every extreme action or propaganda.[85]

Our analysis shows that the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent societal contexts have had a significant impact on the interpretation and use of the concept 'citizenship' in youth policy in Europe. The idea of *good* citizenship in this period is often linked with the notions of 'non-violence', 'peace',[86] 'identity'[87] and 'European values',[88] which are frequently referred to as 'human rights'.[89] The outspoken and recurring references to 'human rights' are new in relation to the previously discussed time periods. Our analysis shows that the policy documents present 'human rights' as the cornerstone of both citizenship and citizenship education and the foundation of European society.[90] Conversely, terms such as 'violence', 'conflict' and 'terrorism' are consistently discussed as opposing European society and its values.[91] The need for young people to be(come) 'active citizens' is hence substantiated in the context of encouraging them 'to be active in the process of bringing about a closer European unity based on the principles and values of pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law'.[92]

> Citizenship skills are not inborn, they must be learned. Neglecting citizenship training has serious consequences on the future of democracy.[93]

'Citizenship' in this time period is continuously presented as something that young people need to 'learn'[94] or need to be 'encouraged to',[95] 'empowered to'[96] or 'prepared to' learn.[97] It is, not 'citizenship', as was previously the case, but 'learning and exercising citizenship skills' that is presented as the core objective of youth policy.[98] All young

[83]I, 1.
[84]H, 7.
[85]K, 2.
[86]See M, 3, 5; N, *8*.
[87]See N, 15, 29; K, 2.
[88]See L, 1; K, 2; N, 7, 14, 15, 19.
[89]See K, 2; L, 1; N, 8.
[90]See K, 2; L, 1; M, 3; N, 8.
[91]See K, 1; L, 2; M, 3.
[92]L,1.
[93]N, 19.
[94]Ibid., 3, 14, 18, 28.
[95]L, 1.
[96]See, e.g., K, 1; L; N, 2, 48.
[97]K, 2, 20.
[98]N, 8.

people of a certain age group in Europe are seen as learners of citizenship, but special attention goes to young people from 'disadvantaged and minority groups'[99] and 'young people in conflict areas'.[100]

The differentiation in the age groups of young people is a notable change in contrast with the previous time periods. The 2005 Framework for Youth policy for the first time discusses to which ages European policy refers when making policy for 'young people'.[101] The Framework draws a clear distinction between 'childhood' (age 0–11), 'early adolescence' (age 12–18), 'adolescence' (age 18–24) and 'post-adolescence' (age 25+).[102] The group of early adolescents is spoken of as having 'the ideal age for elementary citizenship education and participation'.[103] The group of adolescents is targeted for 'institutional participation and citizenship action'.[104] Children under the age of 12 are thus not included in the European idea of citizenship, or in the practice for citizenship education. They are discussed as a group for European youth policy to provide 'care' for.[105]

The policy documents show a considerable amount of interest in the translation of citizenship skills in diverse values and competences. We see that citizenship objectives for formal, non-formal and informal education are presented under the heading of education for 'human rights' or 'active citizenship'. For instance, the documents describe that 'human rights education' for young people should focus on 'the fight against racism, intolerance and all forms of discrimination; the development of social cohesion; the fight against social exclusion of young people (and) the fight against violence in everyday life'.[106] In 2005, the first European Framework for Youth Policy sums up 'competencies of active citizens' that young people should learn:

- taking responsibilities, understanding solidarity and committing oneself to social and ethical values (ethical competencies);
- expressing and developing identities and ideas (expression competencies);
- learning communication skills, working with others/team work, etc. (relation competencies);
- developing self-confidence, empathy and a critical attitude (cognitive competencies).[107]

The defined competences of an 'active citizen' are thus situated on the personal, political and societal level. Again, a considerable amount of attention goes to non-formal learning settings: (voluntary) youth organisations are considered to be the best learning environment for young people to meet all citizenship competences: 'non-formal learning is not only related to personal development, active citizenship and life management skills but also to skills which promote social integration, like employability'.[108] New in this time period is that policy papers explicitly recognise the importance of encounters between young people, referring to the importance of peer-to-peer contact in learning and

[99]See, e.g., K, 3; L, 1; N, 6, 8.
[100]See, e.g., K, 2; N, *3*.
[101]N, 7–10.
[102]N, 10.
[103]Ibid., 9.
[104]Ibid., 10.
[105]Ibid, 9–10.
[106]L, 3.
[107]N, 14.
[108]Ibid., 30.

exercising citizenship.[109] The 2005 Framework for European Youth Policy states that this is because 'the top-down delivery of educational messages to young people has not always been very effective' and 'young people seem to take messages more seriously when they are not "told", but instead have the possibility to discuss the messages with peers and draw their own conclusions'.[110] Therefore, the 'specific approaches of youth work' are seen as 'utterly important for citizenship education specifically associated to the development of violence prevention strategies and programmes for young people'.[111]

Young people at the margins of economy: European notions of citizenship hit by a financial crisis

Between 2008 and 2014, we identify an overall economic approach in the ways that the concept of citizenship is used and especially in the ways that policy documents express their moral concerns on the place of young people in society. The economic shift in thinking about youth citizenship is closely linked to the financial crisis at that time, even though only two policy documents in this time period referred to the crisis explicitly.[112]

From 2008 onwards, we observe a striking decrease in of the use of the concept of 'citizenship' in general policy documents. Rather than the concept 'citizenship', the concept of '(active) participation' is used again. In this time period the Council of Europe also publishes two resolutions[113] directly focusing on the participation of young people and one recommendation[114] concerned with the participation of children and young people under the age of 12. This recommendation is the only document where the age of the targeted youth group is explicitly stated.

> The very cohesion of our societies is endangered by the fact that a considerable number of young people in Europe lack opportunities to actively participate in education, employment and society; therefore, empowering every young person to fulfil his or her potential and to participate actively in community life is essential for the sound and sustainable development of societies. . ..[115]

As the above quotation illustrates, a recurring element throughout the 2008–2013 policy documents is the direct link between participation in 'education' and 'employment' to the (future) development of society. Even though this was also the case in the previous delineated period between 1976 and 1989, the concepts of 'citizenship' and 'participation' are now also linked to the concept of 'youth rights', defined as 'those rights which enable young people to successfully make the transition between childhood and adulthood, to become informed, independent, autonomous, responsible and committed citizens at local, national and international levels'.[116] Again, 'youth rights' are in the same vein as 'citizenship' and 'participation', and not only seen as important for young people's personal lives. They also aim for certain predefined societal prospects, as is equally stated in the policy documents:

[109]See, e.g., L, 3; N, 19, 30.
[110]N, 21.
[111]See, e.g., L, 1; M, 4; N, 7.
[112]See, e.g., Q, 1; U, 7.
[113]See P; T.
[114]U.
[115]T, 2.
[116]S, 4.

> Ensuring young people's access to their rights is a means of ensuring both cohesive, sustainable societies and is an investment in the future of European construction.[117]

The 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'competences' that young people need 'to play a full part in all aspects of society'[118] are frequently linked to 'employment' and 'work' in the policy documents.[119] Besides, the policy documents also continue to pay close attention to the effectuation of citizenship education in all member states: specifically, in 2010 the Council of Europe publishes a charter on 'Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education'. Overall, we see much emphasis on the education of 'rights' (discussed as 'human rights', 'youth rights' and 'children's rights') in the policy around citizenship education. Our analysis furthermore indicates that there is no special focus on the context in which young people should learn citizenship (skills): formal, non-formal and informal education settings are all equally discussed. Notwithstanding, the policy documents pay a great deal of attention to citizenship education and the participation of young people with 'fewer opportunities'.[120] A clear definition of what 'fewer opportunities' entails is not provided. Given the overall economic approach in the policy documents, our analysis indicates that a vague term like 'fewer opportunities' should also be understood in economic terms.

Passing on values: (moral) notions of citizenship for building a strong Europe

> As Ministers responsible for education and as European Commissioner, we have a special duty to ensure that the humanist and civic values we share are safeguarded and passed on to future generations.[121]

The above quotation is part of the reasoning around the 2015 'Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values' and is illustrative for the overall reasoning around the need for citizenship and citizenship education in this time period. Our analysis shows that from 2015 onwards the concept of 'citizenship' appears more commonly in policy documents. 'Citizenship' is often connected to 'European values' and 'European society'.[122] European values are explicitly named as 'respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights'.[123] The concept of citizenship is also frequently linked to the idea of participation in society.[124] In addition, the concept 'future' frequently occurs when policy documents reason around the need for 'citizenship' and the importance of the so-called corresponding 'European values'.[125] Likewise, the importance of citizenship for future society is a frequently used legitimisation of the need for citizenship education.[126] Our analysis points out that there is a great emphasis on educating young people in (current) European values to ensure their sense

[117]Ibid.
[118]O, 3.
[119]See, e.g., O, 1; Q, 2; T, 4, 5.
[120]See, e.g., P, 1, 2; T, 4, 5; U, 6; V, 9.
[121]W, 2.
[122]See, e.g., W, 2, 4; X, 36; Z, 4, 10, 13, 18.
[123]W, 2.
[124]See, e.g., W, 3; Y, 10, 13.
[125]See, e.g., W, 2; Y, 36.
[126]Ibid.

of belonging to the European society[127] as well as to perpetuate a strong democratic European society.[128] Subsequently, the objectives of citizenship education in this time period can be summarised through the following quotation:

> [To] encourage and equip young people with the necessary resources to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change inspired by EU values and a European identity.[129]

The policy documents overall stress the importance of citizenship education that reaches all young people in adequate ways, paying attention to different and innovative ways of learning citizenship. The documents stress the importance of non-formal education in this:

> Education remains a key for active citizenship, inclusive society and employability. That is why we need to enlarge our vision about education for the 21st century, focusing more on transferable skills, student-centered [*sic*] learning and non-formal education to achieve a truly equal and universal access to quality learning.[130]

New in this time period is the attention paid to culture as an (additional) context, next to formal education and youth work, to promote and learn citizenship among young people.[131]

European policy discourses on *good* citizenship: children and young people as citizens in the making

Based on an analysis of 26 European policy documents in the fields of Youth and Education, this study examined historical understandings of the concept of citizenship and the idea of citizenship education in European policy from 1976 until 2021. By going beyond the dominant national understandings of citizenship, this study has deepened our understanding of European discourses to children and young people's citizenship and citizenship education unveiling the social and political-moral understandings that European policy ascribes to children's and young people's *good* citizenship. The study shows how different societal realties in European society time and again influence the European moral imperative in terms of what *good* citizenship of children and young people should consist of. In line with historical motivations for policy attention to citizenship and citizenship education, European policy equally projects its fears around social cohesion and integration in the future society onto children and young people by elaborating on their future citizenship and accordingly approaching them as *citizens in the making*.

Despite the limited political sphere in which the analysed European policy documents are produced, the documents show a distinct agreement on the purpose of *good* citizenship education. The concept of citizenship is continuously constructed as *a means to a pre-defined end*. This end seems to be the safeguarding of the prevailing social order in the future, as in each time period contemporary society is presented as an ideal that is

[127]See, e.g., W, 3; European Union, Y, 10.
[128]See, e.g., W, 2; X, 4, 13, 18.
[129]Y, 4.
[130]F, 17.
[131]X, 5.

threatened by the *undemocratic behaviour* of young people. The citizenship education of young people is here formulated as a solution to (re)affirm social inclusion and cohesion in the future European society. By focusing on the future of society, however, younger children are actually excluded from the concept of citizenship and the practice of citizenship education. This echoes both implicitly and explicitly throughout the policy documents analysed. As to the first, it is remarkable that the term 'child' is hardly used in the documents. As our analysis shows, the documents employ the term 'young people' when discussing the citizenship and citizenship education of minors. In addition, young people's citizenship is discussed in each time period in terms of the adult future of young people. Likewise, the means of citizenship education are defined through skills and competences, i.e. political knowledge and engagement as well as (economic) autonomy, that young people will need as future citizens. More explicitly, in the 2005 Framework for European Youth Policy, children under the age of 12 are not only excluded from the concept of citizenship, but also from learning it. For these reasons, European policy's image of youth, and especially of younger children, can be seen as what James refers to as 'the cultural experience of the denial of the full social personhood which adulthood will bring'.[132] By assuming that young people lack competences and by explicitly excluding younger children from the idea of citizenship altogether,[133] we argue that European policy applies a 'deficit model of citizenship'[134] to young people. In endorsing the idea that young people are 'citizens in the making',[135] European policy produces a future concept for young people's citizenship, dismissing their citizenship 'here and now'.[136]

The idea of future *good* citizenship is continuously associated with the 'participation' of young people in existing European society. Here we can observe that European policy on citizenship and citizenship education and the idea of participation becomes more holistic through the years. This not only echoes content-wise, in the more comprehensive definitions that are applied to young people's *good* citizenship, but is also reflected in the suggested contexts in which citizenship education and participation should take place. Where in 1976 learning citizenship is intrinsically linked to the setting of formal education, this idea evolves throughout the years, also including informal and non-formal youth work, international youth work and cultural contexts. The European core conception of young people's citizenship, however, does not change. If we were to elide the specificity of the given societal discussions, the same conceptions of *good* citizenship appear in every debate, albeit elaborated upon in different societal contexts.

Engaging in societal discussion, the documents unavoidably capture the 'political question'[137] on *good* citizenship in the context of a European society. However, we found that conceptions of young people's citizenship and ideas on their citizenship education are highly depoliticised. Although the documents claim to react to societal events, they contain very few explicit references to contemporary societal issues and they

[132]Allisson James, 'Talking of Children and Youth: Language, Socialisation and Culture', in *Youth Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Vered Amit and Helena Wulff (London: Routledge, 1995), 43–62.
[133]See, e.g., N, 10; V, 2; Y, 4.
[134]Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey, 'Learning for Cosmopolitan Citizenship: Theoretical Debates and Young People's Experiences', *Educational Review* 55, no. 4 (2003): 243–54.
[135]Marshal, *Citizenship and Social Class.*
[136]Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2013), 7.
[137]Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*; Mouffe, *On the Political.*

scarcely discuss the contemporary European social, political and economic situations – referred to by Mouffe[138] as 'the political' – that they allegedly assert to build their policy upon. Major political events such as the collapse of the Soviet Union or the global financial crisis of 2008 are only sketchily referred to in the policy documents. The only exception to this tendency is the time period of the terrorist attacks, which, as our analysis showed, shaped the content of the 2001–2007 policy on citizenship. Here, the European policymakers not only explicitly discuss the societal events; they also clearly express their position towards terrorism. They repeatedly condemn terrorism as being opposed to European society and expectations regarding citizenship and citizenship education. Drawing from our analysis, we would argue that the policy documents address major societal issues only when there is no space for political or ethical debate needed – one could argue that the condemnation of terrorist attacks presents itself as an apodictic political consensus among European policymakers. Hereto we need to take into account that both supranational and intergovernmental European policy papers commonly prove to be 'lowest common denominator' texts.[139] As more controversial or challenging statements on political situation might provoke dissent, European texts likely ensue through a bargaining style of decision-making, striving for consensus. In the joint discourse they do produce, European policy documents on citizenship and citizenship education silence 'the political' when purportedly discussing it. Why, for instance, do they address the importance of peace, solidarity and cultural understanding as aspects of citizenship education without referring to ongoing wars in Europe or to the rise of the far right? Another remarkable element here is that none of the policy documents refer to the international establishment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. Following Mouffe's reasoning that democracy is an inevitably open-ended process allowing debate and discussion on the premises of the democratic order and its institutions,[140] we argue that European policy documents essentially exclude democratic elements from the citizenship education of children and young people by downgrading the political aspect of citizenship through silencing major societal events.

As such, in dismissing the contemporary democracy for children and young people and directing them instead to (their) future democracy, European policy risks impeding children and young people's actual status as democratic citizens. European policy's moral-political imperative regarding the *good* citizenship of children and young people is seen to be committed to the construction of the *good* future society, with children and young people as *good* future citizens.

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[138]Mouffe, *On the Political*.
[139]See, for example, Gary Marks, Liesbet Hooghe and Kermint Blank. 'European Integration from the 1980s: State-Centric v. Multi-level Governance', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, no. 3 (1996): 341–78, and Erik Jones, Daniel Keleman and Sophie Meunier, 'Failing Forward? The Euro Crisis and the Incomplete Nature of European Integration', *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 7 (2016): 1010–34.
[140]Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*; Mouffe, *On the Political*.

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Notes on contributors

Eveline Meylemans is a PhD student at the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at Ghent University. She focuses on historical conceptions of citizenship in childhood studies. Her research interests include children in/and society, child-driven research methodologies and child policy. https://twitter.com/EvelineMeyl, https://www.linkedin.com/in/eveline-meylemans/.

Lieselot De Wilde specialises in the history and philosophy of education. She gained a PhD in Educational Sciences, focusing on government interventions in the parent–child relationship during the twentieth century, in 2015. Her publications currently deal with childhood studies, foster care and the politics of apology. She has been a tenured professor since 2019 at the Department of Social Work & Social Pedagogy, at Ghent University, Belgium. https://www.linkedin.com/in/lieselot-de-wilde-39358a30/

Lieve Bradt is Professor of Social Pedagogy at the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy, Ghent University in Belgium. She is also the coordinator of the Youth Research Platform, an interdisciplinary and interuniversity policy-oriented research centre subsidised by the Flemish government. Her research focuses primarily on processes of inclusion and exclusion of young people in relation to education and leisure, and on the social-pedagogical mandate of social work practices. https://www.linkedin.com/in/lieve-bradt-4b212166/.

ORCID

Eveline Meylemans http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0644-1301
Lieselot De Wilde http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4703-477X
Lieve Bradt http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4882-7675