

Civics in the core curriculum of the general education



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National Curriculum Reform in Poland

In December 2008 the Polish Parliament approved the introduction of the National Curriculum reform, which was co-financed with European Funds. It aims to increase the quality of education and build the Knowledge-Based Society in Poland. This is a strategic goal of the Council of Europe set in Lisbon for the entire EU in March 2000.

The reform implementation will start in September 2009 and it will take 8 years before the whole system is transformed.

National Curriculum Reform in Poland

School Year	New Curriculum				
	Primary	Junior High	High School – different types		
			Comprehe nsive	Technical	Vocational

The foundations of the National Curriculum reform include the following:

- compulsory pre-school education for 5-year-olds introduced,
- pre-school education swiftly followed by school education,
- lowered schooling age (6-year-olds start primary education),
- 6-year post-primary education combined into one system,
- minimum 4 years of post-primary school for a complete general education,
- wide selection of advanced subjects for High School students,
- Junior High School Leaving Exam – continued with the additional foreign language exam,
- compulsory subjects for High School Leaving Exam – Polish, Mathematics (since 2009/2010), one foreign language at the basic level plus the subjects selected by students (at least one at the advanced level).

Civics - why do we teach it?

- Practical knowledge
- Civic abilities
- Civic attitudes

It provides:

- Better understanding of the public life
- Ability of its assessment (but without imposing points of views!)
- Awakening the public activities of young people
- Efficient, but legal actions (also in ones school and the local community!)

As the outcome the civic education should form:

- Students independency
- Responsibility
- Readiness to act

- Students know the ‘map’ of the social and political organizations and know, how to use it efficiently;
- Know, how to react in particular places and public situations; are able to take appropriate actions in cooperation with the others;
- Are able to determine, who should deal with particular matter and whose help can be used;
- Know their rights and obligations.

Necessity to exercise abilities and actions in real environment (recommended) and in artificially created one: because about 20% of the content of teaching and abilities (in gymnasium) and 10% (in senior schools) is performed as students projects!

General requirements of the successive teaching stages

- I. Usage and creation of information
- II. Identification and problem solving
- III. Cooperation in public matters
- IV. Knowledge of the democratic rules and procedures
- V. Knowledge of the Polish political system
- VI. General requirements corresponding with the specific teaching stage:
(stage III - market economy, IV basic - human rights, IV expanded - interdependences in the modern world)

General and detailed requirements (example)

III educational stage

General requirements:

II. Recognition and problem solving

Student recognizes problems of the closest surrounding and searches for the solutions

Detailed requirements:

- 5) develops - individually or in a team - students project, related to the school community in relation to the solution of one of the problems of the school or local community (eg. as volunteer).

Substantial division of particular problems

„basic course” (stage III and stage IV - expended scope):

- 31 topic modules in gymnasium and in 6th grade of the senior school, which create 5 „big” substantial sections;
- „expended course” (IV stage - expended scope): 4 „big” sections (without economy and entrepreneurship), together 45 modules.

Number of subject modules within big „sections”:

- Life in the society (respectively 9 and 14)
- Public life and public institutions (9 and 14)
- Law and Human Rights (6 and 10)
- Selected global topics (5 and 7)
- Economy and entrepreneurship (8 in gymnasium).

In gymnasium, realization of one requirement may take about 0,5-1 lecturing hour, medium module - on the average - 2 hours.

In senior schools - basic range: about 1,25 hour for the requirements and 5 hours for each module; extended scope 0,75 hour for the requirements and 3 hours for the topic module.

Social issues in classes 4 - 6

1. Reflecting on oneself and on social surrounding.
2. Small homeland.
3. Homeland.
4. State.
5. Society.
6. European Community.
7. Problems of the mankind.

Educational goals - general requirements:

I. Creation and usage of information

Student finds and uses information on public life; expresses his / her opinions on selected public issues and justifies them; is open to different views.

II. Recognition and problem solving

Student recognizes problems of the closest surrounding and searches for solutions.

III. Cooperation in public issues

Student cooperates with others - plans, shares tasks and meets them.

III educational stage - gymnasium

IV. Knowledge of democratic rules and procedures

Student understands democratic rules and procedures and uses them in school's life as well as elsewhere; recognizes the cases of breaches of the democratic norms and evaluates their consequences; explains the meaning of the individual and collective citizens actions.

V. Knowledge of the basis of the Polish political system

Student describes modus operandi of the authorities; uses his / hers knowledge on democratic rules and Polish political system to interpret and evaluate events of the public life.

VI. Understands the rules of the market economy

Student understands business processes and principals of the economic rationality in everyday life; analyzes possibilities of further education and professional career.

Issues related to the detailed requirements

1. Basic life skills in a group.
2. Social life.
3. Modern Polish society.
4. To be a citizen.
5. Citizens participation in a public life.
6. Mass media.
7. Voters and elections.
8. Nation and national minorities.
9. Patriotism today.
10. State and democratic authorities.
11. Poland as a Constitutional Democracy.
12. Electoral and party system.
13. The Polish Legislature.
14. The Executive.
15. The Judiciary.

16. Local government and its significance.
17. Commune as a community of inhabitants.
18. Local government of the District and Voivodship.
19. Polish relations with other states.
21. Poland in the European Union.
22. International cooperation and conflicts.
23. Problems of the modern world.
24. Work and entrepreneurship.
25. Market economy.
26. Households.
27. Money and banks.
28. State economy.
29. Entrepreneurship and economic activity.
30. Choice of the school and profession.
31. Ethics in the economy.

1. Basic life skills in a group. Student:
 - 1) Describes and applies rules of communication and cooperation in a group
(eg. participates in a discussion, meeting or in a common activity);
 - 2) Names and applies basic methods of the community;
 - 3) Names and applies basic methods of the problem solving within a group and in between groups;
 - 4) Explains, based on the examples, how to keep a distance in relation to the unaccepted group behaviors or how to oppose them.

9. Patriotism today. Student:

- 1) Explains, what connects a man with a great and small homeland, and uses personal example to describe them,
- 2) Explains, relating to the chosen examples, what, in his / her opinion, patriotism means; compares it to nationalism, chauvinism and cosmopolitanism,
- 3) Points out, relating to the Holocaust, to what consequences can nationalism lead to;
- 4) Considers, in what way, stereotypes and prejudices can hinder relations between nations,
- 5) Justifies that it is possible to be a Pole, and at the same time, European and the member of the world community.

10. State and democratic authority. Student:

- 1) Names basic characteristics and functions of a state; explains, what are the state authorities;
- 2) Points out the differences in the situation of the citizen in a democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian system;
- 3) Explains the rules: majority, pluralism, and respecting the law of the minorities in a democratic state;
- 4) Names the most important democratic traditions (antique, European, American and Polish);
- 5) Compares participatory democracy with the representative democracy;
- 6) Explains, what are Human Rights and justifies their importance in the modern democracy;
- 7) Considers and describes, based on the examples, advantages and weaknesses of democracy.

Thematic modules:

1. Young citizen in the public offices
2. Law and courts
3. Security
4. Education and work in Poland and in the European Union
5. Human Rights
6. Protection of rights and freedoms

Topics, related to the detailed requirements

1. Communal life and its' rules.
2. Socialization and social control.
3. Social group.
4. Social structure.
5. Social change.
6. Nation, homeland and national minorities.
7. National and social processes in the modern world.
8. Culture and cultural pluralism.
9. Modern outlook conflicts.
10. Education in the 21st century.
11. Citizen and citizenship.
12. Civic society.
13. Public opinion.
14. Mass media.
15. Democracy - rules and procedures.

Topics, related to the detailed requirements

16. Politics, ideologies, doctrines and political programs.
17. Party systems.
18. State.
19. Models of the systems in a democratic states.
20. Legislature in a democratic state.
21. Executive in a democratic state.
22. Modern democracy in Poland and in the world - problems and dangers.
23. Polish Constitution.
24. Polish Parliament.
25. Polish President.
26. Polish Prime Ministry.
27. Control organs of the state, law protection and public trust.
28. Local Government in Poland.
29. Law.
30. Polish Legal System.
31. Courts and Tribunals.

Topics, related to the detailed requirements

32. Civil and Domestic Relations Law.
33. Criminal Law.
34. Administrative Law.
35. Citizen before the law.
36. Human Rights.
37. Human Rights protection in Poland.
38. Global and European systems of the Human Rights protection.
39. Polish Foreign Policy.
40. Global scope of the International Relations.
41. Globalization of the modern world.
42. Security and cooperation systems.
43. European Integration.
44. Europe amongst the super powers.
45. Poland in the European Union.

Remarks, related to the teaching of civics in gymnasium and senior schools

During civics classes, the school forms, among the students, attitudes mentioned below:

- 1. Engagement in citizens actions.**
Engages in social and citizens actions.
- 2. Social sensitivity.**
Sees injustice and reacts to it.
- 3. Responsibility.**
Takes responsible actions in his / her community, acts constructively in the conflict situations.
- 4. Sense of a bond.**
*Feels a bond with the local, national, European and global community.
Understands what open civic patriotism means.*
- 5. Tolerance.**
Respects the law of others to different opinions, ways of acting, customs and views, under the condition that they do not impose a threat to other people. Opposes the signs of discrimination.

School and teachers should provide such condition that the students will:

1. Have access to the different informational sources and points of views;
2. Use gained information and civic abilities in every day life;
3. Learn planning and realizing students team projects;
4. Participate in discussions and debates in the school and class forums and in the other social situations;
5. Work on solving selected problems of their surroundings and wider communities;
6. Have real influence on the selected areas of the school life, amongst others, within the students council;

Remarks, related to the teaching of civics

7. Participate in the life of the local community;
8. Establish contacts and cooperation with the social organizations and public institutions;
9. Participate in civic campaigns and actions, as well as, use different forms of communication in public matters;
10. Build their sense of self esteem and authorship in the social life as well as trust towards the others.

Thank you for your attention!

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