

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

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Policy Framework

Denmark does not have a designated national strategy on social and civic competences. Social and civic competences are an integrated component of the Danish education acts, the national curriculum and non-formal general adult education.

The framework of reference for social and civic competences in formal education:

- Act on Primary and Lower Secondary Education (lov om folkeskolen, [LBK nr 1396 af 28/09/2020](#)) (ISCED 1-2)
- Act on General Upper Secondary Education (lov om de gymnasiale uddannelser, [LBK nr 1428 af 28/09/2020](#)) (ISCED 3)

- Act on Vocational Upper Secondary Education (lov om erhvervsuddannelser, [LBK nr 51 af 22/01/2020](#))(IVET)
- Ministerial order on VET (bekendtgørelse om erhvervsuddannelser, [BEK nr 1619 af 27/12/2019](#))
- Ministerial order on core subjects in VET, appendix 17 and 23 (Bekendtgørelse om grundfag, erhvervsfag og erhvervsrettet andetsprogsdansk i erhvervsuddannelserne, [BEK nr 692 af 26/02/2020](#))

In formal education, the target group is children and youth in primary (ISCED 1), lower (ISCED 2), and upper secondary (ISCED 3) education.

The legal framework in non-formal education:

- Act on Receipts from the national lottery and football pools (Udlodningsloven, [LOV nr 1532 af 19/12/2017](#))
- The Act on Social Services, § 18 (Lov om social service, [LBK nr 1287 af 28/08/2020](#))
- The Act on Non-Formal General Adult Education (Folkeoplysningsloven, [LBK nr 1115 af 31/08/2018](#))

Non-formal general adult education targets all people living in Denmark, including minorities.

Furthermore, social and civic competences are one of the [supplementary requirements](#) for citizens from countries outside the EU/EEA countries and Switzerland when they apply for a permanent residence permit.

When it comes to integration and residence permits for non-Danish citizens, the framework of reference for social and civic competences is the Act on Integration (Integrationsloven, [LBK nr 1127 af 11/10/2017](#)).

Target groups: non-Danish citizens from third countries who wish to apply for a permanent residence permit.

Formal learning

In general and vocational upper secondary education programmes, social and civic competences are integrated into other compulsory subjects as well as being a cross-curricular theme.

General upper secondary education

The Act on General Upper Secondary Education (Lov om de gymnasiale uddannelser) establishes the objectives of the four general upper secondary education programmes ([stx](#), [hxx](#), [htx](#) and [hf](#)). [Hf](#) is a two-year general upper education programme, the rest are three-year education programmes.

The act determines that the education programmes and the very culture at the education institutions must prepare the students for living in a participatory democracy and the responsibility, rights and duties that this entails. Both the teaching and the everyday processes at the institution must be based on freedom, equal status, respect and democracy. The students thereby achieve the qualifications to participate actively in a democratic society.

In the Act on General Upper Secondary Education Programmes, the preamble highlights the importance of social and civic competences. Section 1, subsection 4 states that: ‘education programmes and the general

education culture at the education institutions must prepare the students for participatory democracy, co-responsibility, and rights and obligations in a society based on freedom and democracy. The teaching and life at the education institutions must be built on intellectual freedom, equal status and democracy and strengthen the students' knowledge of and respect for basic constitutional and human rights, including gender equality. Thereby, the students must achieve competences for active participation in a democratic society and an understanding of the opportunities for contributing to development and change, individually and in unison.'

Furthermore, citizenship education is integrated in the subject Social Sciences (samfundsfag). Social Sciences at c-level is obligatory for all students in [stx](#), [hhx](#) and [htx](#). The teaching time is 75 lessons of 60 minutes in a school year, but the school decides how to allocate the lessons.

One of the core themes of the subject is 'political participation, rights and duties in a democratic society and gender equality'. During this theme, students learn about different ways to engage in politics, the decision-making process and how to influence it. Furthermore, the students gain knowledge of citizenship and its rights and duties. At the final examination, the student must be able to use knowledge from the core themes to explain and discuss societal problems.

In [Hf](#), the subject Social Science is obligatory at c-level and is integrated in the subject group Culture and Society. The objective of the subject is general education, and the teaching should prepare the pupil to make autonomous decisions and participate actively in a modern, multi-cultural, democratic society. One of the core themes in social science c-level is: 'The political rights and duties in a democratic society, political decision-making and participation, equal rights and gender equality.' At the final examination, the student must be able to use knowledge from the core themes to explain and discuss societal problems.

Vocational education

[The Act on Vocational Education](#) (Erhvervsuddannelsesloven) establishes the objectives of the vocational education programmes at upper secondary level.

In section 1, subsection 3 states that vocational education programmes must contribute to developing the students' interest in and ability to participate actively in a democratic society.

In the ministerial order (bekendtgørelse om erhvervsuddannelser), for the vocational education programmes, the objectives of the vocational programmes are specified in section 1, subsection 2. Vocational education programmes must contribute to the development of the pupil's ability for vocational and social problem solving, the ability to take initiative, be flexible and develop a sense of quality, as well as basic skills.

Furthermore, the development of civic competences is integrated in two subjects:

- Society and Health
- Social Sciences

Society and Health is taught in the first year vocational basic course for students enrolled within the first 12 months after they have finished compulsory school. The students learn about societal matters that are important to the student's future working life and to citizens in a democratic society. The student must gain the competences to live as an active and responsible citizen.

There is no information on the exact number of lessons, since the ministerial order on core subjects in

vocational education and training (VET), appendix 17 and 23 (Bekendtgørelse om grundfag, erhvervsfag og erhvervsrettet andetsprogsdansk i erhvervsuddannelserne) only provides guidelines regarding the number of lessons.

The objective of the subject Social Sciences is to further develop the student's competences to participate in society as an active, responsible, and dynamic citizen. The students must advance their ability to understand, communicate and participate in society's decision-making processes.

The subject is taught on the media graphic designer education and the pedagogical assistant education.

There is no information on the exact number of lessons, since the ministerial order only provides guidelines regarding the number of lessons.

Non-formal and informal learning

Participative structures within formal education settings

As described in [section 5.3](#), pupils in primary, lower secondary, as well as pupils in general and vocational upper secondary education programmes have the right to establish pupil councils.

The legal framework for pupil councils are statutory instruments and acts by the Ministry of Children and Education. (See [section 5.3](#))

In higher education programmes, students can also unite in student associations. (See [section 5.3](#))

Furthermore, the Act on Universities (Universitetsloven, [LBK nr 778 af 07/08/2019](#)) obliges principals at the Danish universities to include students in:

- Study boards
- Academic councils
- The university board

The principal of the university must set up study boards ([studienævn](#)) with equal student and teacher representatives. Students elect student representatives, and fellow teachers elect teacher representatives. Often, each education programme has its own study board. The study board is responsible for the planning, completion and development of the education and teaching.

Furthermore, the principal must set up academic councils with student representation. Student representatives are elected among fellow students. The academic councils make statements about academic affairs, for instance research funding and strategic affairs.

Lastly, students are represented in the universities' boards. The student representatives are elected among fellow students. The boards are the highest authority of the universities.

Top-level programmes aimed at training school staff and pupils

Denmark does not have a national top-level programme aimed at training school staff and pupils to enhance

their skills to participate in decision-making structures.

Instead:

- Research projects focus on the field of pupils' participation in school democracy, some of which are publicly financed. These research projects often evolve new techniques or teaching materials tested in selected classes. Some of the projects explore the upgrading of skills and competences of the teachers. For instance:
- In 2013-2015, the (then) Ministry of Education, the University of Aarhus and [DSE](#) (see [section 5.3](#)) conducted a [research project on pupil involvement](#).
- Denmark's evaluation institute (EVA) [explores and develops](#) the quality of day-care centres, schools and educational programmes.
- The Centre for Youth Research (Center for ungdomsforskning – CeFU) [explores young people's lives](#) and youth in Denmark.
- Free teaching material is provided by several public actors, for instance:
- The Centre for Teaching Materials (Center for undervisningsmidler – CFU).
- The Danish National Repository of Learning Resources ([Materialeplatformen](#)).
- The Pedagogical Learning Centre ([Pædagogisk læringscenter](#)).
- EMU is the common portal for the educational world in Denmark. Via EMU, teachers, students, parents, and others with an interest in schools and training have access to a vast amount of resources and information relating to education.
- [DR school](#). DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) is Denmark's oldest and largest electronic media enterprise. The corporation was founded in 1925 as a public service organisation. DR is an independent, licence-financed public institution comprising television, radio, and online services.

Measures to encourage student participation in the local community and wider society

There is no part of the national curriculum that obliges pupils in upper secondary education to take part in activities serving the local community.

With the school reform of 2013, the primary and lower secondary schools ([folkeskole](#)) are obliged to establish partnerships with the local community.

The legal framework is the Act on Primary and Lower Secondary Education (Lov om folkeskole).

The initiative is called the Open School.

The objective of the Open School is to increase the social cohesion locally and to enhance the pupils' knowledge of society and local associational life, which may also include youth organisations. Activities are linked to the national curriculum but may take place outside the school institution. Pupils are not obliged to participate in activities serving the local community out of school hours.

Furthermore, municipal primary and lower secondary education institutions (Folkeskole) are obliged to enter into partnerships with [municipal music schools](#) and with [municipal youth schools](#).

The municipal council regulates the objectives and scope of the partnerships.

EVA has conducted an [analysis of the cooperation](#):

In 2018, a national campaign, Democracy Under Development, run by the Ministry of Children and Education focuses on community, democracy and citizenship. The campaign aims to enhance pupils' democratic competences and critical thinking. The campaign provides a series of free education materials targeted at different education levels, from primary to upper secondary. One of the initiatives, Leave a Mark, seeks to strengthen the pupils' active citizenship by encouraging the pupils to participate in their local community. Students are not obliged to serve the local community.

[The teaching materials are free.](#)

Lastly, in the project Volunteer (closed down in 2018), young persons enrolled in general and vocational upper secondary education were eligible for a volunteer certificate if they volunteered a minimum of 20 hours. [The project was closed down 1 January 2018.](#)

The initiative was cross-sectoral. The former Ministry of Education, the former Ministry for Children and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Culture were the responsible authorities.

Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences

There are no national programmes encouraging or supporting education projects related to the promotion of civic and social competences.

However, there is a national legal framework for supporting non-formal learning on civic and social competences. The legal framework is the Act on Non-Formal General Adult Education (Folkeoplysningsloven, [LBK nr 1115 af 31/08/2018](#)), the Act on Social Services, § 18 (Lov om social service, [LBK nr. 1287 af 28/08/2020](#)) and the Act on Non-Formal General Adult Education (Folkeoplysningsloven, [LBK nr 1115 af 31/08/2018](#)). (See [section 2.1](#)).

The very objective of non-formal general adult education ([folkeoplysning](#)) is to strengthen the individual's ability and desire to take responsibility for his/her own life and to play an active and engaged part in society. In section 7 of the Act on Non-Formal General Adult Education (Folkeoplysningsloven), the objective is to advance democratic understanding and active citizenship.

In 2014, [the Ministry of Culture](#) launched a national vision for non-formal general adult education ([folkeoplysning](#)).

The aim of the vision is to develop and re-think non-formal general adult education into the contemporary society in order to meet present challenges, appeal to new generations and continue to make people meet, learn and become active and engaged citizens through working in common. Society is changing and the globalization and increased competition put pressure on democracy.

According to the vision from 2014, a central aspect of the non-formal general adult education ([folkeoplysning](#)) is the protection of minorities, since the overall objective of the non-formal general adult education project is to fight for everyone's right to him/herself define in which direction society should develop.

Through the Act on Non-Formal General Adult Education, minorities have the right to establish associations and unite around common values and interests.

The financial support of non-formal general adult education ([folkeoplysning](#)) is described in [section 2.1](#).

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

There is no national system of quality assurance of non-formal learning. Instead, funds, ministries, associations and municipalities have their own quality criteria depending on the type of funding they provide.

Municipalities fund non-formal learning according to the Act on Non-Formal General Adult Education ([folkeoplysningsloven](#)). According to the act, associations receiving funding are obliged to formulate a yearly report to the municipal council on their non-formal learning activities. Furthermore, associations must present their accounts to document that the use of funding comply with the law. Furthermore, if the associations do not comply with the law, municipalities may claim the funding reimbursed.

Associations may receive funding for the operating of the association or funding for a specific project, for instance development.

Funding for operating is based on the number of members and the association must report membership.

The funding of specific projects is based on applications with project descriptions, objectives and targets. Associations must report on the status of the project, typically in the middle and at the end of the project. If the association does not fulfil the objectives established in the application, the funding can be withdrawn.

As a rule, the quality criteria never focus on the content of the activities. The core value in non-formal general adult education ([folkeoplysning](#)) is to gather people around common interests. Associations, folk high school, youth clubs, etc. are eligible for public financial support when they meet certain criteria established in the law, for instance having a democratic structure, offering educational or civic activities.

Youth organisations receiving funding from the Danish Youth Council (DUF) are obliged to comply with:

- The ministerial order on presentation of account and audit of support for youth initiatives (Bekendtgørelse om regnskabsaflæggelse for og revision af tilskud til støtte af ungdomsformål, [BEK nr 1753 af 21/12/2006](#))
- The executive order on management support of national children and youth organisations and guidelines for initiative support (Bekendtgørelse om ydelse af driftstilskud til landsdækkende børne- og ungdomsorganisationer samt retningslinjer for initiativstøtte, [BEK nr 495 af 29/05/2016](#))

Educators' support

Educators have the opportunity to find inspiration from public and private actors, such as:

[EMU](#) is a portal that gathers the most relevant educational material, services and resources available on the Internet.

EMU is focused on content in the Danish language and on the needs of pupils, students and teachers in Denmark.

The portal is a unique constellation of virtual entries targeted at specific user groups such as teachers and pupils in primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary school, vocational education and teacher training colleges. In each entry, you will find themes on different topics, educational sequences, resources, best practice, news and much more.

On EMU, teachers can find teaching material on social and civic competences.

EMU is initiated by the Danish Ministry of Children and Education and managed by the National Agency for IT and Learning.

Centre for Teaching Materials, ([Center for undervisningsmidler, CFU](#)):

[CFU](#) supports teachers in primary and lower secondary, general and vocational upper secondary and adult education. CFU provides teaching materials (books, films, digital material) and inspiration for teaching sessions/courses – both for specific courses and cross-curricular themes. CFU also provides courses for teachers and has pedagogical consultants that can guide teachers.

Pedagogical Learning Centre (Pædagogisk læringscenter). [Every public school must have a pedagogical learning centre](#) that supports teachers with learning processes and informs about teaching materials. It is the centres' task to help teachers plan, execute and evaluate teaching sessions.

Institute for Human Rights ([Institut for menneskerettigheder](#)). Among other things, this independent state institute provides teaching material about democracy and human rights for primary, lower and upper secondary schools and university colleges.

The Danish parliament ([Folketinget](#)) provides teaching materials and events for pupils in lower secondary education programmes. (See [section 5.4](#) and [section 5.8](#))

Folkeskolen and [Folkeskolen.dk](#). The Danish Union of Teachers runs a periodical and a website for teachers in primary and lower secondary education institutions. In the periodical and on the website, they can find inspiration in professional networks, inspiring events, and participate in debates.

Gymnasieskolen and [Gymnasieskolen.dk](#): The Danish National Union of Upper Secondary School Teachers runs a periodical and a website for teachers in general upper secondary education programmes. At Gymnasieskolen, teachers can read about teaching, didactics, and participate in debate.

[DR School](#): DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) is an independent, licence-financed public institution comprising television, radio, and online services. DR School is a website for Danish primary and lower secondary education. The website provides TV, radio, and pictures from DR's archives. The material is organised in themes, with assignments that can be used by teachers. The assignments have been made in cooperation with teachers and subject advisors from the Ministry of Education.

Networks and events

Falihos is an association for teachers in history and social science in primary and lower secondary education institutions. Falihos provides teaching materials, reviews of teaching material and inspiration for teaching courses.

FALS: FALS is an association for teachers in social science in general upper secondary education programmes. The association provides courses and teaching materials.

[The researcher–practitioner network](#) is a network for vocational upper secondary education programmes. Members are researchers and teachers. The network provides knowledge sharing among its members.

The Danish Learning Festival ([Danmarks læringsfestival](#)): The Danish Learning Festival is an annual event for the education community. The Festival consists of an exhibition as well as a conference with an overall theme. The conference focuses on practical experiences, political initiatives, research results and the increased use of IT in education.

The festival is an opportunity to be inspired, updated and to participate in debates whether you are a teacher, consultant, student teacher, educator, and/or principal. The Danish Learning Festival brings together more than 8000 professionals from the world of education to take part in the conference, exhibition, knowledge sharing, networking, etc.