



# How Slovenia deals with the European Dimension in Geography Education

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In Slovenia, reference to the European dimension is made within the overarching general aims of the curricula.



- promoting a sense of belonging to Europe and of involvement
- appears in subjects focused on citizenship and in several others

... our education service has a duty to encourage and assist young people to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes which enable them to live and work confidently and effectively as fully participating members of the European society.



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There is no agreed definition of the European dimension in terms of pedagogic objectives ...

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... a variety of strategies and objectives to be adopted by teachers, schools and other institutions involved in the education of young people.

# Geography Teaching in Slovenia

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- decisive changes
- the limitation of links of Slovenian didactics with international achievements
- the danger of losing the autonomy
- the European orientation of Slovenian school geography
- an increasing Euro-scepticism and a fear of different degrees of influence
- to modernize school curricula

# Geography educators should

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- make an attempt to concentrate on content and methodologies of the formally taught curriculum on the one hand and on the “hidden” or “informal” curriculum on the other hand.



# European Dimension and Geography Teaching

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- according to the research from 1998 Slovenian geography teachers were not well acquainted with the idea of European dimension;
- the situation hasn't changed much since then;
- the idea is declared and stated more often, but it still has a character of a formal idea;

## **The analysis of Slovenian geography curriculum proves that it already encourages students:**

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- to develop an awareness of the cultural similarities and differences of European countries and regions,
- to understand the physical, regional, environmental and human features of Europe,
- to develop a sense of European identity through learning about their roles and responsibilities as active European citizens,
- to have an awareness of and respect for common European values, interests and concerns such as human rights, democracy, fundamental freedoms, tolerance, pluralism and environmental protection.

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Slovenian geography teachers are also well aware that everyday actualisation is of key importance in the teaching process, particularly because they are convinced that people develop such an image of countries and their population as created by:

- public opinion and mass culture,
- presented by schools, scientific institutions and teachers and
- developed by an individual from his/her direct experiences.

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- What kind of identity, regarding the European citizenship, will pupils and students develop as the result of our education?
  - What will be the effect of a division of Europe into smaller, stereotypically described geographical units or regions?
  - Does a regional approach with a division of Europe into smaller units develop a notion of European Dimension in geography teaching?

**During the process of their teachers-to-be education four broad categories should be stressed, developed, discussed and implemented into the study:**

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1. **knowledge**: to know about the Europe they belong to;
2. **understanding**: to be able to interpret their “knowledge” about Europe;
3. **skills**: linguistic, general communicative, personal, cultural and social ones;
4. **attitudes**: tolerance; absence of prejudice; positive but critical attitudes towards other peoples and cultures; respect for different ways of life, beliefs, opinions and ideas; and a willingness to engage in productive contact with others.

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*“... accelerated change, intense compression of time and space, cultural diversity, technological complexity, national insecurity and scientific uncertainty, the task of finding solutions to society’s unsolved and insoluble problems in increasingly being left to the teachers.”*

Hargreaves (1994)

*“... perhaps as geographers who believe in our discipline, we are so keen to be at the forefront of educational progress in all matters, social and environmental, that we have lost our sense of direction. It seems that every time we see a problem in society which may be amendable to solution through the school curriculum, we warmly embrace it into geography:”*

Lidstone (1997)

## In Slovenia

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- we are still at the initial stage of liberalisation of geography teaching in terms of teacher's creativity and initiative to design their own curricula or at least adjust them to student's needs
- the quality education of teachers-to-be, who should regard the lists of competences as their own aims
- a competent geography teacher should be focused at lifelong process of self education and professionalism



## **Developing important concepts of geography in education needs:**

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- considerable cooperation between subject experts, researchers and authors from different countries,
- an arrangement about the methodology,
- a modernisation of syllabi and educational aims,
- a modernisation of textbooks and other teaching aids,
- interesting contents, new knowledge, experience and methods with real and applicable value.

## Slovenia should focus toward

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... strengthening a sense of European identity among the whole population (and not only among young people) and tend toward the basic values of European civilisation.

- How to prepare young people to take part in the economic and social development of the community and in making concrete progress towards European Union?
- How to make young people aware of the advantages which the Union represents, but also of the challenges it involves?

