



DEVELOPMENT AND PRELIMINARY VALIDATION OF THE ACTIVE CITIZEN COMPASS QUESTIONNAIRE: THE DUTCH–FLEMISH AND GREEK VERSIONS

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Abstract/Izvleček

This study aimed to develop a questionnaire for assessing teachers' practices, teaching knowledge, and school practices related to active citizenship in a cross-national study. The first draft of the Active Citizen Compass (ACC) questionnaire in English was examined by an expert panel. The questionnaire was translated into Dutch and Greek, and tested for ambiguity, clarity, and user friendliness. Thereafter, the Dutch-Flemish and Greek versions were pilot tested on 54 teachers from Flanders and 63 teachers from Greece. Reliability and validity evidence indicates the ACC scales in Dutch and Greek are a reliable and valid measure of active citizenship in schools.

Keywords:

active citizenship;
questionnaire; validation;
teachers; schools.

Razvoj in predhodna validacija vprašalnika o aktivnem državljanstvu: nizozemsko-flamska in grška različica

Namen študije je bil razviti vprašalnik za ocenjevanje učiteljevih praks, pedagoškega znanja in šolskih praks, povezanih z aktivnim državljanstvom, v meddržavni študiji. Prvi osnutek vprašalnika o aktivnem državljanstvu (angl. Active Citizen Compass – ACC) v angleščini je pregledala skupina strokovnjakov. Vprašalnik je bil preveden v nizozemščino in grščino ter preizkušen glede dvoumnosti, jasnosti in prijaznosti do uporabnika. Nato sta bili nizozemsko-flamska in grška različica pilotno testirani pri 54 učiteljih iz Flandrije in 63 učiteljih iz Grčije. Podatki o zanesljivosti in veljavnosti kažejo, da sta lestvici ACC v nizozemščini in grščini zanesljivo in veljavno merilo aktivnega državljanstva v šolah.

Ključne besede:

aktivno državljanstvo,
vprašalnik, validacija,
učitelji, šole.

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Introduction

The contribution of schools and teachers to preparing students to deal effectively with the challenges in their lives, to be aware of their responsibilities as future citizens, and to participate actively in their own environment and society cannot be underestimated. In the European Union, the educational policies of the last two decades have set out as a basic priority for European education systems to prepare students to be responsible for tomorrow's societal life as important future stakeholders and get engaged in civic life by respecting the common European values (Chiou, 2025; Navarro-Medina, and de-Alba-Fernandez, 2015; Paesen et al., 2025; Reynolds et al., 2019; Saleminezhad et al., 2025; Veugeliers, 2015). In the light of these policies, EU member states have proceeded to educational reforms to orient their national curricula toward the promotion of active citizenship in schools by adopting various approaches, such as the incorporation of an autonomous lesson on citizenship education, cross-curricular learning activities and projects, or/and learning material as part of various lessons (Eurydice, 2012). Despite the differentiation in national curricula with respect to the approaches adopted, which can be attributed to the diverse educational philosophy or ethnical and cultural diversity across Europe, literature review shows as a systematic commonality among the different curricula their priority to prepare students to be active citizens in a rapidly changing society. Thus, modern European curricula, aligned with the basic principles of European educational policies, target the development of students' competences to be ready to care about, take action in and reflect on issues affecting their lives at different levels (Kerr, 2002; Navarro-Medina and de-Alba-Fernandez, 2015). In other words, they prepare them for assuming active roles on a local, national, and international level.

Besides the school curricula, a wide range of educational and research projects, along with cross-national synergies between multiple educational and research institutions, have been supported financially by the European Commission to conduct research on the status of active citizenship in European education systems and to contribute to the design of teacher training and learning material on related issues. Among them, the Active Citizen Compass (n.d.) project, supported in 2023 by the Erasmus+ Programme in Key Action 2 (European Commission, 2023), aims to promote active citizenship in secondary education schools in six countries: Belgium (Flanders), Czechia, Greece, Spain, The Netherlands, and Turkey. It comprises a wide cooperation synergy among Higher Education Institutions and secondary education

schools from each partner country. Particularly, it aims to support Active Citizenship (AC) in secondary schools by promoting the design of school policies on active citizenship, and to prepare students to be active citizens through a variety of developmentally appropriate learning material and assessment activities.

For research purposes, a questionnaire capable of assessing the extent to which active citizenship is applied in school environments should be designed. The questionnaire should be developed to assess a. teachers' practices and specific teaching knowledge related to active citizenship, and b. schools' active citizenship policies. It would be used as the basic research instrument in a wider cross-national study implemented in secondary education schools in the six partner countries. The research will contribute to the needs analysis with regard to active citizenship in partner schools. Based on the needs analysis, the ACC partners will design and test learning materials related to active citizenship in schools and will contribute to the development of school policies oriented to active citizenship. This paper aims to present the development procedure and the preliminary validation of the Active Citizen Compass - ACC questionnaire in Dutch and Greek within the framework of the Active Citizen Compass project.

The study will address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do translation-related discrepancies affect the reliability and validity of the Dutch-Flemish version of the Active Citizen Compass (ACC) questionnaire?
2. To what extent do translation-related discrepancies affect the reliability and validity of the Greek version of the Active Citizen Compass (ACC) questionnaire?

Methods and Results

For the construction of a new questionnaire assessing the active citizenship status in schools, specific steps were followed to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument. The procedure for the questionnaire's development went through three phases, as described in detail below.

Phase A: Pre-pilot phase

Step 1: Literature review and preparation of the questionnaire's scope and construct
Initially, meetings took place between all ACC partners to discuss the precise scope of the questionnaire along with the goal and the specific aims of the Active Citizen Compass project.

It was decided that the ACC questionnaire should be adequate to assess the extent to which active citizenship is applied in schools both in classrooms by teachers and within the school as a system. Thus, it should contain sufficient and appropriate items to measure the teachers' specific knowledge and teaching practices, and school policies related to this issue. Additionally, the first phase consisted of the literature review on the development process of a questionnaire and the active citizenship related research. A four-member team from the ACC project studied attentively literature on the development of questionnaires and the steps that should be followed to ensure the validation of the instrument. The same team studied literature reviews and existing questionnaires on active citizenship and active citizenship education. Relevant data and material were downloaded in a common shared place for all members to have equal access.

The four-member team, based on the scope of the questionnaire and related literature, decided its structure. More particularly, the questionnaire should have two main sections:

- a. The first section includes questions related to sociodemographic and academic information of participants, as well as information about their school.
- b. The second section should include two main scales. The first scale should focus on active citizenship in teachers' own classes and teaching, and the second scale should include questions about active citizenship at a school system level.

Step 2: Selection of the items of the ACC questionnaire (ACC in English)

In the second step of the development process, the four-member team, following the decisions of step 1, and based on the literature review and the aims of the ACC project, generated a pool of 63 items.

It was decided that the face, the content, and the construct validity should be checked for validation reasons. Face validity refers to how appropriate the items seem to experts and respondents (Krabbe, 2017), and although it may affect the validity of the instrument, it is not considered a very important aspect of it (Golijani-Moghaddam et. al., 2013). Content validity refers to "the ability of a test to represent the domain of tasks it is designed to measure" (Sireci, 1998, p. 104) and is considered essential evidence to support the validity of a measurement tool such as a questionnaire for research (Yusoff, 2019).

To ensure the face and content validity of the ACC questionnaire, the first draft of the questionnaire was sent to a panel of 15 experts from ACC partners to ensure that it was accurate, clear, easy to understand, free of bias, and related to the concept of active citizenship to be assessed. Following experts' suggestions, the first draft of the ACC questionnaire in English included 70 items. A second round of evaluation by experts took place, and the ACC questionnaire in English was pre-finalised with the following structure.

The first section included 8 closed-ended questions about teachers' socio-demographic information and 5 questions about their school. The second part of the ACC questionnaire included two 6-point Likert scales (0=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) and seven subscales as follows.

A. The scale "Active Citizenship in your own classes and teaching", which is divided into four subscales:

- A1. Teaching pupils to participate in their own environment
- A2. Teaching pupils to participate in society
- A3. Teaching pupils to actively influence society
- A4. Teaching specific knowledge related to active citizenship.

B. The scale "Active Citizenship at your school", which is separated into three subscales:

- B1. Teaching pupils to participate in their own environment
- B2. Teaching pupils to participate in society
- B3. Teaching pupils to actively influence society.

Step 3: Translation and pre-pilot testing of the ACC questionnaire in Dutch and Greek

Soon after the ACC questionnaire in English was finalised, it was translated into Dutch and Greek by experts proficient in English and Dutch, and in English and Greek, forward and backwards for the cross-national study. The first draft of the Dutch-Flemish and the Greek version was checked for its user-friendliness, comprehensibility, or potential confusions by five Flemish and five Greek teachers of secondary education. Following their suggestions and comments, the ACC partners from the two countries finalised the draft of the ACC questionnaires in Dutch and Greek by correcting wording and converting four 6-likert items related to parent and student councils to trichotomous questions.

Phase B: Pilot testing of the ACC questionnaire in Dutch and Greek

The pilot testing phase lasted from April to May 2024. The Dutch-Flemish version of the questionnaire was distributed to secondary education schools in Flanders and the Greek version to Greek schools via email and social media. Teachers were informed about the purpose of the survey, and the confidentiality, and they were asked to voluntarily participate. No email addresses were required, while it was clarified that their anonymity would be ensured, and the data used exclusively for research purposes. In total, 54 teachers from Flanders (83.3% women and 16.7% men) and 63 teachers from Greece (76.2% women and 23.8% men) participated in this study voluntarily.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research results. In the development process of the ACC questionnaire, internal reliability was estimated. Internal consistency reflects the extent to which the items on the questionnaire are inter-correlated or whether they consistently measure the same construct and are estimated by coefficient alpha, commonly known as Cronbach alpha.

Table 1 shows the coefficient alphas for the ACC scales and subscales for the Flemish participants. Similarly, Table 2 presents the coefficient alphas for the ACC scales and subscales for the Greek participants. In sum, the reliability evidence indicates that ACC scales for both the Dutch-Flemish and Greek versions are a highly reliable measure of active citizenship.

Table 1

ACC Scales - Internal Consistency – Cronbach Alpha.

| Flanders | | | |
|---|------|---|------|
| In your own classes and teaching Subscales | .954 | At your school Subscales | .897 |
| Teaching pupils to participate in their own environment | .915 | Teaching pupils to participate in the own environment | .805 |
| Teaching pupils to participate in society | .872 | Teaching pupils to participate in society | .825 |
| Teaching pupils to actively influence society | .862 | Teaching pupils to actively influence society | .839 |
| Teaching specific knowledge related to active citizenship | .920 | | |

Table 2
ACC Scales - Internal Consistency – Cronbach Alpha.

| Greece | | | |
|---|------|---|------|
| In your own classes and teaching | .952 | At your school | .949 |
| Subscales | | Subscales | |
| Teaching pupils to participate in their own environment | .963 | Teaching pupils to participate in their own environment | .902 |
| Teaching pupils to participate in society | .882 | Teaching pupils to participate in society | .914 |
| Teaching pupils to actively influence society | .889 | Teaching pupils to actively influence society | .903 |

Validity

The validity of a questionnaire refers to the extent that questionnaire measures what it has been designed to measure. In the pilot testing phase, two types of validity were estimated: content and the construct validity.

The content validity was evaluated by estimating the item-total score correlations. In this way, we checked how well individual items were aligned with the construct where they were placed. Salvia and Ysseldyke (2000) posited that items that do not correlate at least .25 to 30 with the total score, likely do not belong to the domain in which they have been placed.

Table 3 and Table 4 present the items - total correlations for the scales “Active Citizenship in your own classes and teaching” and “Active Citizenship at your school.” Items 1, 4, and 16 of the Scale “Active Citizenship in your own classes and teaching” were correlated less than .25 for the Dutch-Flemish version. None of the items were correlated less than .487 for the Greek version of the ACC scale “Active Citizenship in your own classes and teaching”.

In regard to the ACC Scale “Active Citizenship at your school”, none of the items were correlated less than .382 for the Dutch-Flemish version. Similarly, all items of the same scale were correlated more than .529 for the Greek version.

Table 3

Scale "Active Citizenship in your own classes and teaching". Item –Total score correlations.

| | Item-Total Correlation (r) | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------|
| | Flanders | Greece |
| 1. I actively pay attention to a supportive atmosphere in the classroom. | .175 | .665** |
| 2. I actively encourage my pupils to show empathy. | .485** | .734** |
| 3. I actively facilitate that everybody in the class feels comfortable. | .298* | .692** |
| 4. I actively facilitate that everyone in the class participates. | .187 | .678** |
| 5. If there is a problem in the group, I support my pupils to find a solution themselves. | .339* | .732** |
| 6. I encourage my pupils to make it up again in case of an argument. | .525** | .840** |
| 7. I encourage my pupils to stand up for themselves without hurting others. | .504** | .587** |
| 8. I actively pay attention to the prevention of bullying during my classes. | .536** | .733* |
| 9. I actively pay attention to the prevention of online bullying during my classes. | .671** | .779** |
| 10. I make sure my pupils don't take pictures or film each other without consent. | .347* | .618** |
| 11. I encourage my pupils to think carefully before sharing their opinion on social media. | .682** | .753** |
| 12. I encourage my pupils to respond respectfully on social media | .622** | .759** |
| 13. I actively intervene and discuss the consequences of sharing nude photos (with and without consent). | .695** | .653** |
| 14. I actively consider my pupils' and their parents' budget when deciding on schoolbooks or activities. | .406** | .703** |
| 15. I discuss financial considerations with my pupils if needed. | .305* | .487** |
| 16. I make sure my pupils collect their waste when we are on an excursion or outside the classroom. | .232 | .677** |
| 17. I encourage my pupils to keep the classroom clean. | .446** | .740** |
| 18. I actively pay attention to the diversity in my classroom and integrate this into my didactic approach. | .724** | .758** |
| 19. I actively pay attention to the diversity in my classroom and integrate this into the content of my teaching. | .685** | .788** |
| 20. I actively pay attention to the diversity in my classroom and adjust the content of my teaching to the needs of all pupils. | .553** | .706** |
| 21. I practise shared decision making with my pupils and teach them its importance. | .561** | .731** |
| 22. I encourage and integrate open conversations about the world during my classes. | .684** | .679** |
| 23. I encourage and integrate open conversations about societal issues during my classes. | .727** | .762** |
| 24. If students think differently, I show genuine interest in their opinion and let them express their opinion. I expect the same from the students. | .644** | .718** |
| 25. I pay attention to or highlight other cultures during my classes regularly. | .652** | .620** |
| 26. I pay attention to multilingualism in my classes regularly. | .414** | .581** |
| 27. I integrate news media items in my classes regularly. | .643** | .653** |

| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 28. I pay attention to environmental challenges and climate change in my classes regularly. | .497** | .771** |
| 29. I pay attention to politics in my classes regularly. | .577** | .515* |
| 30. I organize charity activities with my classes. | .439** | .626** |
| 31. I encourage students to consider the influence of advertising when buying things. | .705** | .667** |
| 32. I encourage my students to consider the circumstances in which products were made when buying things. | .655** | .765** |
| 33. I encourage my students to consider buying second-hand. | .638** | .673** |
| 34. I encourage my students to consider climate change when traveling (locally and abroad). | .487** | .780** |
| 35. I encourage my pupils to consider climate change when choosing their food. | .581** | .763** |
| 36. I encourage my pupils to stay informed on politics, both local and European or global. | .583** | .667** |
| 37. I choose green travel options when planning excursions for my classes. | .307* | .599** |
| 38. I teach about ‘fake news’. | .588** | .673** |
| 39. I teach about safe social media and cyber security. | .572** | .768** |
| 40. I teach about climate change. | .549** | .688** |
| 41. I teach about politics and democracy | .509** | .692** |
| 42. I teach about the protection of the environment. | .575** | .823** |
| 43. I teach about voluntarism. | .666** | .664** |
| 44. I teach about social inclusion. | .774** | .756** |
| 45. I teach about poverty. | .727** | .730** |
| 46. I teach about fair trade | .641** | .640** |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4

Scale “Active Citizenship at your school”. Item – Total score correlations.

| | Item-Total Correlation (t) | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------|
| | Flanders | Greece |
| 54. Our school (or the government) has a plan to facilitate payment of school costs for families with budget issues. | .577** | .668* |
| 55. Our school gives pupils an active voice in decisions on rules and regulations. | .561** | .529** |
| 56. Our school gives pupils an active voice in decisions on activities and on the learning plan. | .540** | .794** |
| 57. Our school encourages pupils to propose activities or changes to create a better school environment. | .550** | .728** |
| 58. Our school works together with the local community to create a safe traffic situation around school. | .503** | .754** |
| 59. Our school works together with the local community to know what the community considers important. | .660** | .765** |
| 60. Our school encourages coming to school by bike, on foot, or by public transportation. | .489** | .672** |
| 61. Our school pays attention to events from different cultures or religions. | .624** | .703** |

| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 62. Our school has a policy on actively promoting or engaging with multilingualism. | .597** | .765** |
| 63. Our school provides access to (digital) newspapers at school. | .446** | .657** |
| 64. Our school encourages consumption of locally produced or sustainable food in the school context. | .662** | .756** |
| 65. Our school organizes charity activities with others on a regular basis. | .382** | .710** |
| 66. Our school gives pupils an active voice in decisions on charity activities on a regular basis. | .612** | .838** |
| 67. Our school encourages pupils to take initiative to organize charity events on a regular basis. | .456** | .830** |
| 68. Our school allows pupils to participate in demonstrations that support a good cause on a regular basis. | .439** | .603** |
| 69. Our school encourages pupils to participate in demonstrations that support a good cause on a regular basis. | .448** | .648** |
| 70. Our school allows pupils to participate in human rights actions on a regular basis. | .602** | .614** |
| 71. Our school encourages pupils to participate in human rights actions on a regular basis. | .650** | .695** |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

We also evaluated construct validity by estimating the internal structure validity (Chiou, 2016; Merrell, 2002). Evidence was obtained by estimating the relationships among the total score of scales and the total score of their subscales and computing bivariate Pearson. Table 5 presents the intercorrelations among total scores of scale 1 and its subscales, and Table 6 presents the intercorrelations among total scores of scale 2 and its subscales. All correlations were found positive at a statistically significant degree and higher than .25, apart from the correlation between subscale 1 and 2 of the scale “Active Citizenship at your school,” which was estimated at .225, approximating .25.

Table 5

Intercorrelations among total scores of scale A and its subscales.

| | Flanders | | | | Greece | | | |
|---------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | A1 | A2 | A3 | A4 | A1 | A2 | A3 | A4 |
| A1. | | | | | | | | |
| A2. | .484** | | | | .755** | | | |
| A3. | .506** | .606** | | | .703** | .766** | | |
| A4. | .359** | .778** | .693** | | .705** | .755** | .808** | |
| Scale A | .810** | .813** | .823** | .806** | .921** | .882** | .887** | .893** |
| Total | | | | | | | | |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 6
Intercorrelations among total scores of scales 2 and its subscales.

| Flanders | Greece | | |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | B1 | B2 | B3 |
| B1 | | | |
| B1 | .638** | | |
| B1 | .225 | .465** | |
| Scale B - Total | .763** | .898** | .715** |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Phase C: Finalisation of the ACC questionnaire in Dutch and Greek.

Following the pilot testing and the results about its psychometric characteristics, the ACC questionnaire was finalised without further alteration. Thus, the final version in Dutch and Greek has the following structure: the first section includes 8 closed-ended questions about teachers' socio-demographic and academic information and 5 questions about their school. The second part of the ACC questionnaire includes two 6-point Likert scales with 71 total items (0=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree), and four trichotomous questions. The scales and their subscales are presented briefly as follows:

A) The scale "Active Citizenship in your own classes and teaching", which is separate into four subscales:

A1. Teaching pupils to participate in their own environment (21 items)

A2. Teaching pupils to participate in society (8 items)

A3. Teaching pupils to actively influence society (8 items)

A4. Teaching specific knowledge related to active citizenship (9 items)

B) The scale "Active Citizenship at your school", which is separated into three subscales:

B1. Teaching pupils to participate in the own environment (8 items)

B2. Teaching pupils to participate in society (10 items)

B3. Teaching pupils to actively influence society (7 items).

Conclusion

The ACC questionnaire in Dutch and Greek was designed to assess teachers' practices and specific teaching knowledge related to active citizenship as well as their schools' relevant policies. Both versions of the questionnaire demonstrated high internal reliability for the two main scales and their subscales.

The development procedure and the results analysis indicate that overall, the Dutch-Flemish and Greek ACC questionnaires have satisfactory face, content, and internal construct validity. In the Dutch-Flemish version, three items in scale 1 were correlated less than .25 and two subscales of scale 2 intercorrelated at .225, approximating .25, a result which can potentially be attributed to translation issues. We suggest that both questionnaires can be used without significant concerns for investigating active citizenship status in secondary education schools in Flanders and Greece. Nonetheless, further investigation in the cross-national research will provide us with additional evidence about the behaviour of these three items. In our opinion, the questionnaires can also be used in primary education without significant concerns, considering that the items are focused on exploring teachers' knowledge and practices as well as their schools' policies relevant to active citizenship without making direct reference to secondary education. Based on the focus of future research, the two scales could also be used separately.

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