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**References: 2002-D-56**

**Orig.: FR**

**Version: EN**

## **Non-denominational Ethics syllabus (Primary)**

**Approved by the Board of Governors on 22 and 23 May in Nice**

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**Will enter onto application in September 2002**

**Syllabus of the**

**NON-DENOMINATIONAL ETHICS**

**course for the primary**

*Non multa sed multum.*

Further to the mandate given by the Board of Inspectors, a working group was formed to revise the syllabus of the NON-DENOMINATIONAL ETHICS course dating from 1978 (78-D-66) and to link it up with the new syllabus for the secondary (1998-D-22).

The members of the working group were:

Mrs Yvette VERGRACHT, Belgian Inspector, chair of the working group;

Mr Dimitri SFINGOPOLOUS, Director of the ES, Mol;

Mr Aldo MARCHESINI, Deputy Director of the ES, Varese;

Mrs Carla GIULETTI, Staff Committee representative, ES, Brussels 2;

Mr Robert GOBERT, teacher, ES, Luxembourg.

The working group thought that revision of the 1978 syllabus would not be sufficient and decided to start designing a new syllabus.

It met on 18 January 2000, 27 March 2000, 25 and 26 May 2000 and 7 December 2001 to write the new document, based on surveys and meetings organized in the schools.

It is now pleased to submit the document to the Board of Governors.

## Preamble

Compared with the other subjects forming the primary cycle curriculum, the *non-denominational ethics* course has three characteristics:

- As the course does not exist in all European Union countries, parents in certain sections to whom this option is offered have had no personal experience of it during their own schooling. The teachers in these sections who will be responsible for teaching it will never have done so in their own countries prior to their secondment. For many people, therefore, the non-denominational ethics course is specific to the European Schools.

This implies, for the parents, the need for information which will enable them to make their choice from among the different options.

This also implies, for the teachers, that this framework document must provide sufficient latitude for the spirit, atmosphere, objectives and didactics to be discovered and that it must give examples allowing everyone quickly to reach the expected level of efficiency, the aim being to achieve harmonization within the school and across the schools.

- As the subject is pupils themselves, the *non-denominational ethics* course is more an area than a course as such. The teacher is not the adult who teaches pupils who learn. The teacher becomes the group leader who initiates discussion and reflection so that everyone learns to choose attitudes and personal rules by which to live one's life.

This implies that the non-denominational ethics syllabus is underpinned solely by universal values which will be applied to increasingly wide areas and groups, to increasingly less routine problem situations.

- As the *non-denominational ethics* course implies the absence of dogma, some teachers may well feel ill at ease in relation to their philosophical or religious convictions.

This implies that teaching the *non-denomination ethics* course is a matter of personal choice and commitment.

### However ...

- As only a proportion of the pupils in the class take the *non-denomination* course it cannot be the place where any problems arising in this class are discussed and resolved.

- As the *non-denominational ethics* course is based on choice of attitudes towards life situations, care will be taken never to encroach upon private life and to use external examples to allow the children themselves to make the connection with their real-life personal experience.

- As choosing the *non-denominational ethics* course is tantamount to a philosophical option, its non-dogmatic approach does not rule out seeking information about religions and comparison with other thought movements.

# 1. General principles

In this *non-denominational ethics* course, where the status of pupil and child, of teacher-instructor and of activity leader merge, the pedagogical area must be conducive to:

- reflection on situations experienced or alluded to;
- considered expression of one's own opinions and attentive and respectful listening to the opinions of others;
- discovery of positive behaviours and of values;
- translation of values into principles guiding behaviours, attitudes and words;
- the practice of democracy and measures to ensure respect for the rights of every living being;
- participation in humanitarian and ecological operations connected with current events;
- awareness of belonging to communities of life and thought;
- discovery of the meaning of festivals, their rituals and their symbolism;
- curiosity about traditions and beliefs in other communities and cultures;
- formation of the personality through everything which gives meaning to life.

With the non-denominational ethics course, the child therefore engages in a never-ending personal search, free of any dogmatism, for:

- his/her place and role in the family, group and society;
- values and principles which will guide his/her acts, thoughts, life choices;
- answers to existential questions about which he/she will wonder throughout his/her life.

Only through a graphic presentation can the range of parameters taken into consideration be envisioned.

The CUBE below, inspired by Guilford's cube, shows how the course is underpinned by the urges driving the behaviour of every human being:

the desire to be BE                      the desire to HAVE    the desire to DO                      the desire to SAY

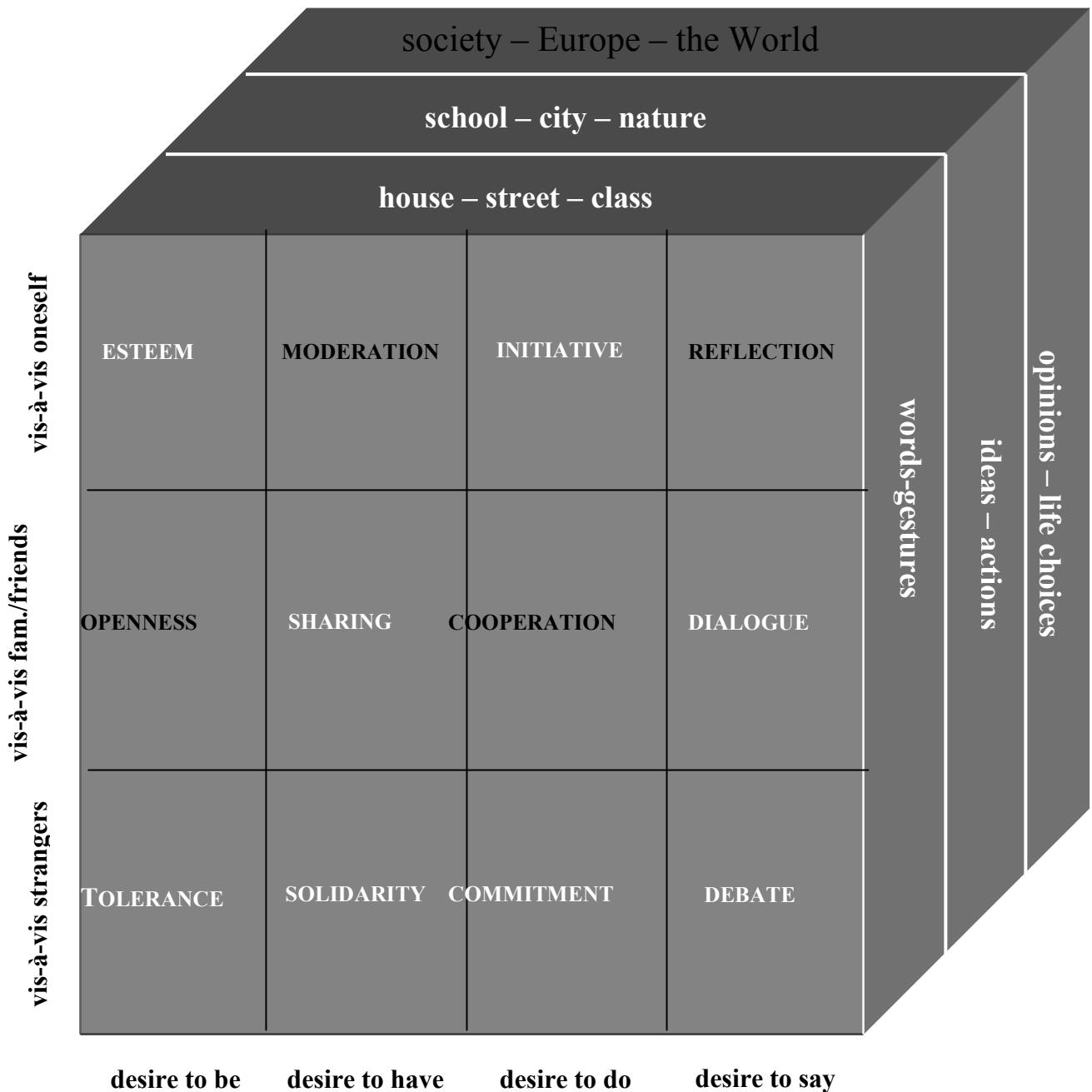
so that they develop positively, gradually evolving from primary egocentrism to increasingly generous forms of behaviour towards the people with whom one first comes into contact (words, gestures), then towards society in general (ideas, actions), thus forging one's personality (opinions, life choices).

This opening up is driven by the taking into consideration, for problem situations, of increasingly wide social groups:

- house, street, class (everyday overall view);
- school, city, nature (concrete view of units to be composed);
- society, Europe, the World (abstract and fragmentary view to be built up).

This graphic representation allows twelve attitudes to be identified which will form the general structure of the *non-denominational ethics* course for each of the five years of primary education.

What will remain to be done is to choose problem situations in social fields and degrees of complexity in line with the children’s maturity at each year group level.



## 2. Methodological approach

Based on the principles set out above, the pedagogical sequences should inductively:

- start from concrete situations presented using the widest variety of aids;
- isolate the problem situation which is the subject of the sequence;
- open up a discussion area;
- evolve a principle;
- seek out other comparable situations, imagine different scenarios;
- provide an opportunity to put into the practice the principles evolved.

*Didactically, three phases are involved:*

### ► a CONTEXTUALIZATION phase

From among a wide variety of triggers, the teacher leading the group will be able to choose how to stimulate interest, discussion, reflection, the choice of an attitude:

#### **EXPERIENCED**

Celebration in preparation  
 Conflict situation  
 Group choice  
 Organisation of playtime  
 Game involving cooperation  
 Questionable game or collection  
 Solidarity operation  
 World ... day  
 ...  
 + suggestions box to indicate subjects to be dealt with.

#### **SEEN AND HEARD**

Educational cartoon  
 Children's TV news  
 Excerpt from a film on video  
 Questionable advertising  
 Sexist or racist joke  
 Visit to an exhibition  
 Reception of a guest  
 Presentation by one or two pupils on ...  
 ...

#### **READ**

Story in pictures  
 Questionable poster  
 Tale - Fable  
 Proverb - Slogan  
 Children's newspaper  
 Special report or feature in a magazine  
 Press cutting  
 ...

### ► an ANALYSIS phase

## Presentation in diagram form, debate, survey or project

*allow identification of*

**a principle, a right, a value.**

### ► a FINALIZATION phase

Through a wide variety of representations, the group will be able translate what it has understood:

#### **INDIVIDUAL RECORD (for oneself)**

Drawings with captions  
 Reconstructed summary  
 Poem chosen and copied out  
 Search for documents  
 Sticking of examples  
 Comic strip created  
 Near or opposite account  
 ...

#### **EXHIBITIONS (for passers-by)**

Collage – Fresco/mural  
 Informative sign  
 Streamer with slogan  
 Petition  
 Poster + pamphlet  
 'Monument' in praise of ...  
 Photo story  
 ...

#### **PERFORMANCES (for an audience)**

Playlets  
 Puppet theatre  
 Role playing  
 Mime show  
 Pastiche songs  
 Poetry recital  
 Slide show  
 ...

It is in these forms of communication that the child will encounter these principles, rights and values respected or flouted in everyday life. He will have learned how to read the World and respond and act.

This requires each teacher to produce programming which can be based on daily life, local events, annual celebrations and current events.

Care will, however, be taken to ensure that the themes covered by the ethics course are not mixed up with those which might notably be addressed as part of the *Discovery of the World* course. Nor is it a civics course in the strict sense, although the concept of citizenship crops up in some of the themes tackled.

A didactic approach based on problem situations makes it possible

- to escape the ‘ethics lesson’ where, with the adoption of an oversimplistic Manichaeian attitude, behaviours are dictated by the adult;
- to open up discussion within the group;
- to stimulate personal reflection;
- to associate situations to come and well-considered choices of attitude.

**In the ethics course,**

**the APPROACH is as important**

**as the SUBJECT.**

### **3. Contents**

The pages which follow suggest subjects to be addressed with each year group.



# Year 1

The subjects proposed below should be presented in the form of problem situations.

The teacher is free to find other subjects which fit into the same boxes of the matrix.

At least a dozen will be selected each year and developed into didactic units as proposed in the previous section.

	<b>at home</b>	<b>in the street</b>	<b>at school</b>
Material needs	Playing indoors.	Playing outdoors.	Sharing equipment.
Emotional needs	Finding help.	Talking to neighbours.	Finding friends.
Safety	Being aware of the dangers of the home.	Being aware of the dangers of the street.	Using classroom equipment.
Health	Eating everything.	Eating outside.	Putting everything in one's mouth.
Respect for life	Caring for a pet.	Having plants around one's home.	Sensing others' wants and needs.
Respect for others	Showing one's affection.	Accepting that people in the neighbourhood are different.	Listening to the other pupils in the class.

## Year 2

The subjects proposed below should be presented in the form of problem situations.

The teacher is free to find other subjects which fit into the same boxes of the matrix.

At least a dozen will be selected each year and developed into didactic units as proposed in the previous section

	at home	in the street	at school
Material needs	Working at home.	Appreciating public amenities.	Exchanging objects.
Emotional needs	Expressing one's joys and sorrows.	Knowing which doorbell to ring in the neighbourhood.	Working in a group.
Safety	Staying at home alone.	Anticipating the dangers of the street.	Recognizing dangerous behaviour in the classroom.
Health	Accepting the rules of life: sitting at the table to eat, going to bed, etc.	Choosing what to wear to go out.	Opening the classroom windows.
Respect for life	Leaving pets during the holidays.	Finding an animal in the street.	Having plants in the classroom.
Respect for others	Choosing when and how to say... .	Sensing the limits of a game.	Recognizing one's wrongs.

## Year 3

The subjects proposed below should be presented in the form of problem situations.

The teacher is free to find other subjects which fit into the same boxes of the matrix.

At least a dozen will be selected each year and developed into didactic units as proposed in the previous section.

	at school	in the town/city	in the country
Material needs	Lending one another equipment.	Using public transport.	Combating wastage of natural resources.
Emotional needs	Resolving conflicts.	Taking advantage of the leisure possibilities offered by clubs.	Discovering the sense of well-being which nature brings.
Safety	Understanding the school rules and accepting them.	Abiding by traffic rules : pedestrians, cyclists, etc.	Being aware of the hidden dangers of nature.
Health	Making better use of playtime.	Taking advantage of the green areas in towns/cities.	Mapping out a fitness trail.
Respect for life	Behaving responsibly.	Understanding the need for zoos, circuses and dolphinariums.	Understanding the role of hunting and fishing before / now, here / elsewhere.
Respect for others	Respecting what other people do and say.	Responding positively to social and cultural differences.	Understanding the work of people who defend nature and the countryside.

# Year 4

The subjects proposed below should be presented in the form of problem situations.

The teacher is free to find other subjects which fit into the same boxes of the matrix.

At least a dozen will be selected each year and developed into didactic units as proposed in the previous section.

	at school	in the town/city	in the country
Material needs	Sharing the space available in the playground, corridors, etc.	Distinguishing between public and private services.	Preserving natural resources.
Emotional needs	Being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses.	Knowing places where one feels at ease.	Comparing how peoples celebrate the changing seasons.
Safety	Suggesting measures to improve safety in the school.	Understanding and appreciating the work of the security services.	Gauging one's ability and desire to live in the country.
Health	Using the school's health services advisedly.	Knowing how to call on the health services of the town/city, the country.	Finding out how the countryside can be used to benefit people's health.
Respect for life	Taking a position on the use of animals for ...	Taking a stance on the presence of animals in the town/city: dogs, pigeons.	Taking part in an action for the protection of endangered species.
Respect for others	Discovering the children's rights charter.		Understanding the degree of civilization of certain ethnic groups.

## Year 5

The subjects proposed below should be presented in the form of problem situations.

The teacher is free to find other subjects which fit into the same boxes of the matrix.

At least a dozen will be selected each year and developed into didactic units as proposed in the previous section.

	<b>in society</b>	<b>in Europe (EU)</b>	<b>on a world scale</b>
Material needs	Defining one's attitude towards the consumer society.	Working out the main ideas which bring together the EU member countries.	Finding wealth-sharing policies.
Emotional needs	Judging the importance of having a family, friends at any age.	Appreciating the good fortune of living in peacetime.	Taking part in a cooperation and development action.
Safety	Understanding the mechanisms of solidarity: insurance, unemployment.	Finding examples of what the EU has accomplished in terms of legislation on the manufacture of food, toys, devices, medication, etc.	Assessing the action of international humanitarian organizations on an event highlighted in the news.
Health	Showing vigilance towards dependency risks (video games, TV, drugs)		
Respect for life	Judging the means deployed to help the disabled.	Seeking how to reconcile respect for life and traditions.	Comparing views of life and death in other societies.
Respect for others	Denouncing racist and sexist behaviour.	Describing the workings of a democratic society.	Illustrating the principles of the Declaration of Human Rights.

## 4. Assessment.

Once the parents' choice has been made, the *non-denominational ethics* course forms part of these pupils' curriculum at the European School. Assessment therefore has to be conducted.

The competences listed below, geared to the syllabus, will help you to observe the commitment of each pupil in:

### Year 1

- shows by his/her attitude that he/she is at ease in the group
- observes the world around him/her and starts to ask himself/herself questions
- identifies positive and negative behaviour patterns in the stories presented

### Year 2

- listens to others attentively and respectfully
- understands the rules of everyday life
- listens to stories and makes a connection with his/her life

### Year 3

- is capable of putting himself/herself in someone else's place
- understands the reasons for respect for life
- finds the hidden meaning in stories, images, characters
- understands the importance of festivals and traditions

### Year 4

- takes part in exchanges tolerantly and constructively
- refers to standards and values to assess behaviours
- understands how celebrations commemorate a community's key moments
- starts to ask himself/herself fundamental questions about life

### Year 5

- recognizes everyone's right to freedom of speech, action,
- analyses current events in terms of standards and values
- analyses the deeper meaning of the texts presented
- is capable of recognizing his/her own responsibility for his/her actions.