

References: 2001-D-202

Orig.: FR

Version: EN

# Non-denominational Ethics (Primary) syllabus

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**Teaching Committee (Nursery and Primary)**

Meeting on 14 March 2001 - Centre Borschette

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 and 25 and 26 May 2000 to write the new document, based on surveys and meetings organised in the schools.

It is now pleased to submit the document to you for analysis.

page 1

## 1. Introduction

*De ce "il" du début de ma vie  
J'en fis un "je" qui devint "moi"  
Un peu égoïste et prétentieux  
Je crus qu'il n'y avait que ce "moi je"  
Mais ce "moi" ! J'en fais quoi ?  
C'est alors que je découvris  
Qu'il y avait "nous" et "vous" aussi  
Et puis des "ils" et puis des "eux"  
Bien intéressants pour les jeux  
On me dit aujourd'hui*

*Que j'aurai à comprendre  
Qu'il y a "toi" et "lui" et "elle"  
Qu'ils ne seront jamais "moi"  
Et qu'il me faudra toute la vie  
Pour apprendre avec "eux"  
A devenir "SOI"*

Group poem  
in *Projet Ecrire* - ACCES publications

Overall, the educational role of primary school could be described as the job of giving every child the ability to observe the world and to see things from three perspectives.

Can this be considered as true (scientific perspective), as beautiful (aesthetic perspective), as fair (ethical perspective)?

As ethics is a reflection on a moral code, the NON-DENOMINATIONAL ETHICS course can be defined as a pedagogical area where a particular group, formed on the basis of a parental option, is offered a range of activities and approaches and opportunities for reflection which, in a climate of empathy, respect and practice of democracy, lead to this ethical perspective.

page 2

## 2. General principles

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.

To do so, this course must accompany the child in the development of his/her personality and, in a values-based spiral way, offer a progression going:

- from taking responsibility for himself/herself to actions to help others;
- from experience of everyday life to information about international current events;
- from free expression within the group to well-formed opinions and life choices.

### 3. Methodological approach

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

- reflection on situations experienced or alluded to;
- considered expression of one's own opinion 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 each 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 a meaning to life.

To that end, the pedagogical sequences should inductively:

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

page 4

...

**In the ethics course the APPROACH is as important as the SUBJECT**

#### 4. Programming of didactic units

By adhering, without constraint, to a progression based on three observation fields

years 1/2:	directly perceptible reality:	class - family - street
years 3/4:	reality to be composed mentally:	school - city - nature
year 5:	reality to be imagined through the media:	society - Europe - the World

and by considering the four blocks adopted for the target (p. 9 et seq.), 12 main themes for each year are obtained.

This enables 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 be addressed as part of environmental studies (the three perspectives, page 1). Nor is it a civics course in the strict sense, although the concept of citizenship crops up in some of the themes tackled.

In view of the differences in the initial training of each teacher and of some seconded teachers' lack of prior experience of teaching a non-denominational ethics course, a syllabus layout for each school year is given below.

The themes are presented in a contextualised dimension, so that the ethics course is rooted in real life. The formulation in question form opens up the discussion area. A pair of keywords, reflecting the opposition between two attitudes and underpinning the debate, emerges from the situations mentioned.

class

### Example in year 1:

	<b>individual</b>	<b>group</b>	
material	Why is there personal equipment in the schoolbags and equipment common to the class, to the whole school?		This duality has been formulated, by way of an example, in the year 1 matrix. It will easily be perceived by the reader in the situations suggested for the subsequent years.
needs			

desire to have

page 6

It is of course possible for each teacher to start from another problem situation structured around the same opposition and developing an equivalent attitude.

This enables each teacher progressively to personalise his/her course, through box by box substitution, whilst also safeguarding the internal consistency of this syllabus.

These 5 matrices form a structure allowing:

- avoidance of repetition from year to year;
- variation of the methodological approaches preceding and succeeding the subject of the lesson;
- coverage of as wide as possible a spectrum for formation of the personality;
- following of a progression corresponding to the children's comprehension abilities.

It is therefore each teacher's responsibility to incorporate these proposals in space and in time in order to build up programming which guarantees:

- coverage of the four blocks forming the frame of reference below;
- taking into account of the three observations fields proposed;
- structuring of the three stages: contextualisation - decontextualisation - recontextualisation;
- increased visibility of what is produced individually and in groups;
- organisation of assessment of individual competencies.

The five matrices below guarantee the consistency and harmonisation of the approach to the ethics course in all sections of the European Schools as a whole.

Consequently, the table of contents of an ethics textbook which might be used in the context of the course cannot be substituted for this syllabus.

The teachers in a language section who are responsible for teaching the ethics course are invited to collaborate in order to:

- build up together harmonious, consistent, non-redundant programming;
- exchange tools and working methods;



- ensure that the ethics course is publicised on the display boards in the corridors;
- devise and use common assessment tools.

The teachers in charge of primary year 5 are requested to scrutinise the equivalent syllabus for the secondary and to meet their colleague(s) who teach(es) the ethic course in order to coordinate their action.

page 7

## 5. Contents

In most of the syllabuses, programming and textbooks analysed, the series of fundamental requirements shown in this target are to be found. An approach highlighting interdependence enables everyone to be made aware of their responsibilities within a pluralist society and a world considered as a whole. By following a progression linked with widening of the field of perception of realities (upper surface of the cube), it is possible to offer a flexible distribution covering primary schooling.

In the proposals, year by year, these fundamental needs are grouped in pairs (see pages 9-13).

When programming, for one year group or two combined year groups, it will be important to strike a harmonious balance in the selection, taking into consideration the four blocks thus formed.

#### 4. The ethics teacher's palette

page 8

	<b>class</b>	<b>family</b>	<b>street</b>
<b>material needs</b>	<b>individual group</b> Why is there personal equipment in the schoolbags and equipment common to the class, to the whole school?	<b>useful futile</b> A family is ruined by a fire which destroys their house. The local authority lends them an empty flat. What do they also need?	<b>private common space</b> What can you and your family do to make your street more attractive for passers-by?
<b>emotional needs</b>	<b>freedom constraint</b> Why can one sometimes choose one's place and sometimes not?	<b>private shared life</b> How can tasks be shared out so that each member of the family meets everyone every day?	<b>private social life</b> Which activities are organised so that the people who live in the area can meet and get to know one another?
<b>safety</b>	<b>dis- order</b> What is the purpose of lining up?	<b>authority responsibility</b> There are probably objects at home which your parents do not allow you to touch. Are there reasons why?	<b>perceptiveness heedlessness</b> Which is the most dangerous place on your way to school?
<b>health</b>	<b>facility rigour</b> Where can you wash your hands in the school? When must you do so? Is it always possible?	<b>discipline self-discipline</b> What time is your bedtime? Is there a good reason? Do you go to bed willingly?	<b>lack of foresight foresight</b> ...takes his/her little sister for a walk in the pram. Should he/she be given advice?
<b>justice</b>	<b>force consensus</b> Are objects exchanged between pupils in your class? Are there any agreed rules among you?	<b>im- partiality</b> Is it always possible to be fair parents? How can they be helped to be fair?	<b>in- justice</b> You see a beggar, a tramp, a homeless person in the street. What do you think?
<b>peace</b>	<b>conformity difference</b> "Leave me alone" Is this an expression you use? Do other people use it to you sometimes? Why?	<b>objectivity subjectivity</b> Do your parents sometimes argue because of you? What do you do in that case?	<b>respect aggressiveness</b> Are pedestrians and motorists "at war"?
<b>respect for life</b>	<b>instinct reflection</b> A wasp comes into the classroom during a lesson. How do you react?	<b>whim responsibility</b> You wanted a pet. Who looks after it normally? And during the holidays?	<b>in- dependence</b> Do you help birds to get through the winter? Does this need to be done all year round?
<b>respect for others</b>	<b>in- tolerance</b> Are we all the same or different?	<b>open closed mind</b> Have you been to parties at the homes of friends from other countries? What do you remember about them?	<b>mono- multicultural</b> In town, people wearing non-European clothes are sometimes seen? How do you react?

	<b>class</b>	<b>family</b>	<b>street</b>
<b>material needs</b>	Why is there personal equipment in the schoolbags and equipment common to the class, to the whole school?	A family is ruined by a fire which destroys their house. The local authority lends them an empty flat. What do they also need?	What can you and your family do to make your street more attractive for passers-by?
<b>emotional needs</b>	Why can one sometimes choose one's place and sometimes not?	How can tasks be shared out so that each member of the family meets everyone every day?	Which activities are organised so that the people who live in the area can meet and get to know one another?
<b>safety</b>	What is the purpose of lining up?	There are probably objects at home which your parents do not allow you to touch. Are there reasons why?	Which is the most dangerous place on your way to school?
<b>health</b>	Where can you wash your hands in the school? When must you do so? Is it always possible?	What time is your bedtime? Is there a good reason? Do you go to bed willingly?	...takes his/her little sister for a walk in the pram. Should he/she be given advice?
<b>justice</b>	Are objects exchanged between pupils in your class? Are there any agreed rules among you?	Is it always possible to be fair parents? How can they be helped to be fair?	You see a beggar, a tramp, a homeless person in the street. What do you think?
<b>peace</b>	"Leave me alone" Is this an expression you use? Do other people use it to you sometimes? Why?	Do your parents sometimes argue because of you? What do you do in that case?	Are pedestrians and motorists "at war"?
<b>respect for life</b>	A wasp comes into the classroom during a lesson. How do you react?	You wanted a pet. Who looks after it normally? And during the holidays?	Do you help birds to get through the winter? Does this need to be done all year round?
<b>respect for others</b>	Are we all the same or different?	Have you been to parties at the homes of friends from other countries? What do you remember about them?	In town, people wearing non-European clothes are sometimes seen? How do you react?

	<b>class</b>	<b>family</b>	<b>street</b>
<b>material needs</b>	Lending and borrowing. Is it something you like to do?	When you want something, your parents sometimes say YES, sometimes NO. Why?	Is it possible to go shopping on foot in the area where you live? Is it a problem?

emotional needs	Friends cannot be bought. Even so, some people try to do so at school. How do they go about it?	If your parents told you that you were going to have a little sister (natural or adopted), how would you react?	People in local areas used to know one another and talk to one another. Was it better?
safety	Which class rules are based on a concern for safety?	At your age, there are more deaths in the home than in traffic accidents. What are the hidden dangers?	How can the street be shared so that everyone has a place in it?
health	A pupil in the class has to wear spectacles or a brace, which he/she does not like. What should be done?	There are more and more places where smoking is banned. What are the rules in your home?	In Japan, pedestrians wear masks in the street. Is there a need for such extreme measures?
justice	A classmate is punished for something which he/she did not do. How do you react?	Should all secrets be kept?	In some local areas, all the houses are identical. Is it better?
peace	During break, one gang wants to attack another. How do you react?	The K... parents (film) sometime argue. Is it normal? Does it mean that they are going to separate?	On the way to school, are there places or people of which or of whom you are afraid?
respect for life	Should one become vegetarian out of respect for animals?	Each family forms a chain, in which you are one link. How can it be broken?	Are there too many dogs and cats in towns and cities?
respect for others	Some pupils do not eat what is on the menu in the canteen. Should they not be forced to eat everything?	You receive a penpal of your class. He/she may perhaps practise a religion. How will you know? What will you do?	With whom would you agree to share a building? Who would you not like to see move into the building?

Proposals for year 3

page 11

	class	city	nature
material needs	How much do the clothes which you are wearing today cost? How do you take care of them?	Many adults say: my car makes me free. Are they right to think this?	How can the choice of your school stationery have an influence on nature?
emotional needs	Courtesy is a sport in which everyone wins. How is it played? With whom?	At the European School, friends in the same class do not live in the same area. Is it a problem?	Does an animal have to live in your home for it to be your friend?
safety	Where are the dangerous places in the school? What can be done to remove them?	Are there places in the local area where you are not allowed to go on your own?	What is meant by the expression: battling with the forces of nature?

health	At school, you learn what needs to be done for your health. Do you do it?	You witness an accident. You dial the emergency services number (...). What happens? Who will pay?	When is it said that nature is sick? Who can treat it?
justice	Do all pupils have the same chance at school?	Are graffiti on city walls a form of expression? Can it be tolerated?	Is the polluter pays principle a good idea? How is it applied?
peace	What does being at peace with oneself mean?	Should there be more or fewer policemen in cities?	Does nature belong to mankind or mankind to nature?
respect for life	... has brought tadpoles into class. Is it a good idea?	There will be increasing numbers of centenarians. Are we ready to accept this "fourth age"?	Should hunting, fishing, mushroom picking, etc., be banned?
respect for others	Do you know where the other pupils in your class are during the ethics lesson?	Do the festivals around which our calendar is organised have the same significance for all?	There are customs which feature animals. Do you think they are stupid? Should they be done away with?

	<b>class</b>	<b>city</b>	<b>nature</b>
material needs	Do fashion and advertising influence what you buy?	How does the city pay for all the facilities which it makes available to us?	What is the meaning of the slogan: We are borrowing the Earth from our children?
emotional needs	It is said that sport provides good training and is instructive. What is learned?	In cities, all services are becoming automatic, without intermediaries. Is this freedom or slavery?	Are ecologists poets or enlightened people?
safety	If you were a victim of bullying to extort money, etc., at school, how would you react?	Is following rules and regulations quite simply a question of obeying?	Is nature still a play area?
health	Some vaccinations and controls are compulsory. Is a family entitled to refuse them?	Has the city planned all the facilities required for the mobility and integration of the physically disabled?	For centuries, nature enabled human beings to treat themselves? Can it still do so?
justice	When may a teacher appear unjust?	Are there places where following the highway code appears stupid to you?	Should zoos, dolphinariums, the presence of animals in circuses, etc., be banned?
peace	Are there games, collections, fashions or badges which should be banned at school?	Should cameras be installed everywhere to ensure safety in cities?	One sometimes reads that nature is taking its revenge on mankind. Is it really true?
respect for life	May a teacher dissect an animal to show it to his/her pupils?	Should pigeons, which foul buildings and statues in cities, be removed?	Might blood and organ donations be made compulsory?
respect for others	Are there times and activities when boys and girls should be separated?	In the city or the region there are different places of worship. What happens there? What are the differences?	Who - mankind or nature - has created differences?

	<b>society</b>	<b>Europe</b>	<b>the World</b>
material needs	You hear people talk about the Third World and the Fourth World. Where is it?	Is the Euro a tool or a symbol?	Humanitarian alert in ... How has this happened? What can be done?
emotional needs	Birth parents or adoptive parents? Who should care for little ...?	What does being a good European mean?	Where are Children's Rights not yet respected?
safety	What is the purpose of the insurance which our parents have to or may take out?	The Europe sign is seen on many packagings. Is this significant or important?	Why would people have us believe that it is extraterrestrials who threaten our planet?
health	One day, you will come face to face with tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Will you be able to recognise them and deal with them?	Why is the ... crisis, the ... epidemic, ... pollution a problem on a Europe-wide scale?	Many NGOs launch appeals to collect money. What guides your choice?
justice	What is the purpose of prison? Is it needed? Are there other better solutions?	Why is there is a need for a European Court of Justice in Luxembourg? An International Tribunal in The Hague?	What do the "Made in Dignity" products offered by Oxfam Shops represent?
peace	Many countries have done away with military service? Is it a good idea?	There has been peace in Europe for over 50 years. To what is this due?	How to choose between UN Peacekeepers and NATO strikes?
respect for life	Should the testing of medicines and cosmetics on animals be banned?	Can laws prevent someone from living or dying?	Scientists are now capable of manipulating the elements of life. Should they be left free to do what they want?
respect for others	How many different pieces does your friendship puzzle have so far?	Europe has been built on the principle on democracy. How is this apparent?	Why was the idea of superiority long used as a thought model?



## 6. Assessment

As the objective of the ethics course is not to award a mark for reproduction of knowledge or the correct performance of tasks set, assessment will essentially involve observing the pupil during activities and, through his/her contributions, questions and suggestions, following and monitoring his/her progress in relation to the stages described in the above syllabus.

Three levels of input, based more on the frequency of observations than on their level, should be used: rarely - sometimes - often.

It is therefore necessary to take account of the competencies set for each year group when programming, in order to choose themes and approaches which enable the pupils to demonstrate the competencies envisaged several times and the teacher to decide unambiguously on the level of attainment.

It should also be noted that the teacher of the ethics course will be consulted when collecting information about each of his/her pupils for the production of each progress report.

