

HOW THE „GEOGRAPHY OF EUROPE” SUBJECT IS STUDIED IN NEW EDUCATIONAL REALITIES – FOLLOWING THE BULGARIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL MODEL

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Abstract

The present article introduces how the „Geography of Europe” subject is studied in new educational realities – following the Bulgarian secondary school model. The report introduces the new syllabus project and the specific place and role, the significance and educational content, structure and activities of the „Geography of Europe” subject or the Bulgarian view on the „Geography of Europe” subject in secondary school. The concept and content analysis introduce the advantages and disadvantages of the new syllabus project in the part of the „Geography of Europe” subject.

Key words: school geographic education, Geography of Europe, syllabuses, curriculums, conceptual and content-analysis.

Resumo

O presente artigo aborda a forma como o tema “Geografia da Europa” é estudado em novas realidades educacionais - seguindo o modelo da escola secundária búlgara. O artigo introduz o novo projeto de plano de estudos e o lugar e papel específicos da geografia, o significado e o conteúdo educacional, a estrutura e as atividades da disciplina “Geografia da Europa” ou ainda a visão búlgara sobre a disciplina “Geografia da Europa” no ensino secundário. O conceito e a análise de conteúdo evidenciam as vantagens e desvantagens do novo projeto de plano de estudos no tema “Geografia da Europa”.

Palavras-chave: educação geográfica escolar, Geografia da Europa, planos de estudos, currículos, análise conceptual e de conteúdo.

1. Introduction - The new educational realities in the Republic of Bulgaria

„The wise man adjusts to the
circumstances as the water changes its
shape to the vessel in which it is poured.”
Chinese proverb

Since the school year of 2016 new educational realities have been introduced in the Republic of Bulgaria – laws, regulations, curricula and syllabuses. The education reform was initiated with the introduction of the new Pre-school and school education Act and its regulations that define the school frame of geographical education. The education reform poses many questions and makes an attempt

to find answers for the place and role, the significance and content of school geographic education and its development at school against the background of the unified state education policy. Changes and new realities in geographic education are a circumstance that defines a new learning environment with adapted educational phenomenons, processes and objects.

The reform proves that education is a national priority with a new conceptual frame representing a process of education, upbringing and socialization. The new principled education basis covers school geographic education as well, which is oriented towards students' interest and motivation, towards age and social changes in life, as well as towards the ability to put the adopted competencies in practice. The preservation and development of Bulgarian educational tradition, the preservation of the cultural variety, humanism and tolerance are part of the principles in accordance to which geographic education is applied.

2. „Geography of Europe” in VII-th grade

In accordance to the syllabus, the „*Geography of Europe*” school subject is studied in VIII-th grade in the modern realities of school geographic education (the „*Geography of Europe*” school subject is planned to be studied in VII-th grade during the next school years). The educational content in IX-th grade includes teaching material on „*Regional Geography*” in which studying the regional part of the European continent is realized through the problem-civilization approach. The educational content on „Regional geography of Europe” is oriented towards studying geographical location, natural and societal characteristics, countries typical of the region. From the school year 2017/2018, *Geography of Europe* is introduced in the VII-th grade and the article only follows the training for the European continent.

The new conditions define the study of *Geography of Europe* in the class that completes primary education – VII-th grade. Namely in this class the study of the geographic content of *Europe* is provided.

2.1. The State Educational Standard

The State Educational Standard (DOS) for the teaching plan regulates in VII-th grade the total number of school weeks for one school year - 36, in which geography is studied with 2 hours per week and 72 hours per year. The curriculum identifies 12 major topics for studies *Geography of Europe* within the framework in 1/3 of the school time. By teaching plan and curriculums, the *Geography of continents and countries* is studied in V-th and VI-th grades, where geography is studied with 51 teaching hours per year. In the first high school stage, the *Geography of continents and countries* is studied as one of the main topics in IX-th grade - 36 or 72 teaching hours per year, according to the framework teaching plan. [5]

General education preparation is done through the study of 20 general education school

subjects, like one of them is *Geography and economics*. Geography places the foundation of the social and civic competences to acquire „*the key competence learning skills, which includes understanding the personal needs in the school process and discovering the opportunities and abilities for overcome learning difficulties, both individually and in groups. Critical thinking, handing with problems, decision-making, initiative, creativity, taking responsibility, teamwork are competencies acquired in studying geography.*” [6] An important responsibility of the school subject of *Geography and economics* is the building of the ability to take personal responsibility for a stability future.

Acquired general education preparation during the all geographic school training envelopment several groups of key competences:

- ↳ competencies in the field of Bulgarian language;
- ↳ communication skills in foreign languages;
- ↳ mathematical competence and basic competences in the field of natural sciences and technologies;
- ↳ digital competence;
- ↳ learning skills;
- ↳ social and civic competences;
- ↳ initiative and entrepreneurship;
- ↳ cultural competence and skills for expression through creativity;
- ↳ skills for support of sustainable development and for a healthy lifestyle and sport. [6]

The competency groups are interdependent and represent a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Acquiring of these competences leads to a more complete personal development of the individual throughout life, to building an active civic position and participation in social life, as well as to his/her suitability for realization on the labor market. [6]

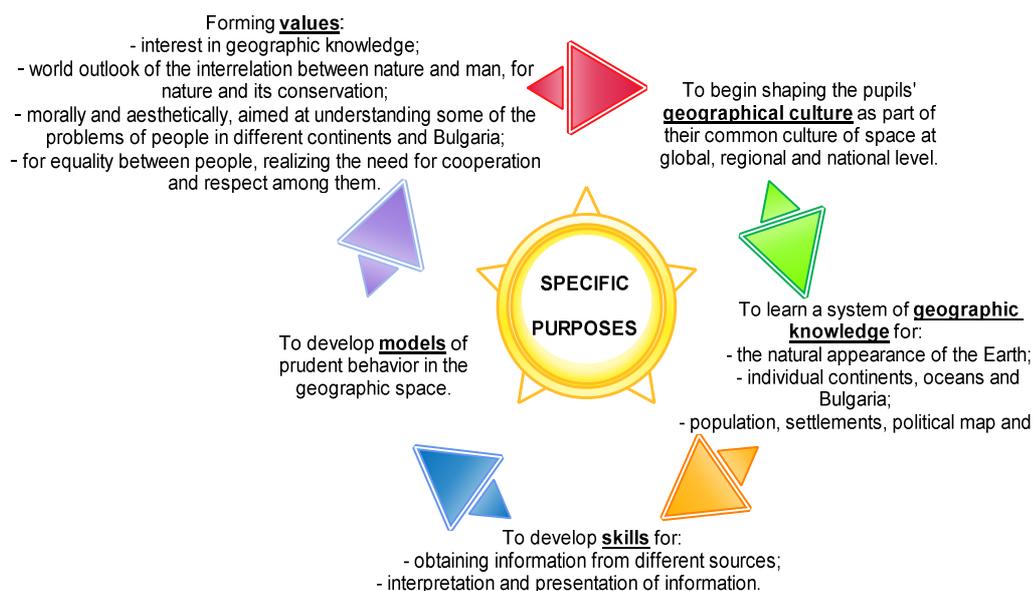


Figure 1- Projections of the specific purposes in the end of the basic „Geography and economics” degree.

As a set of requirements for learning outcomes in *Geography and economics*, the DOS determines the competencies - knowledge, skills and attitudes which are expected as a result of geographic learning at the end of each stage of the respective level of education.

The structure of DOS in *Geography and economics* includes:

- ⊙ degree and stage of education;
- ⊙ specific purposes of training for the school subject at the relevant stage;
- ⊙ regions areas of competences, expected results from the training (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and their relation to individual key competences. [6]

In its structure, the DOS for main degree at secondary education includes the specific purposes covering the entire learning process from V-th to VII-th grade (Fig. 1) as well as the requirements for the *Geography and economics* learning results. A framework of specific purposes that may be relevant indirectly to training of *Geography of Europe* is built without including a directly mapped purpose for *Geography of the continents and countries*. The specific purposes are students-oriented as projections of geography culture, knowledges and skills, values and behavioral patterns in the end of primary stage education.

Ordinance № 5 on general education preparation presents the requirements for the learning results of the school subject *Geography and economics*. At the end of the basic degree are defined the expected results for knowledge, skills and attitudes - a total of 4, which are geographically algorithmic and in close interdependence with the key competencies and in fulfillment of the purposes of the Bulgarian school for training, education and socialization of the students as well as providing conditions for completing a stage and/or acquiring a degree (figure 2). [4, 6]

The strategic purpose of studying *Geography of Europe* in the VII-th grade of DOS is to develop basic knowledges of the geographical location and continental borders of the continent and selected countries, exploring the continent, the peculiarities of nature, the political map, the population, the economy in the continents and in selected countries (complex character). The strategic purpose is designed in three target aspects - educational, educative and developing.

The lack of links to the expected learning results with the key competences - 2, 4 and 7 is unreasonable. In studying the *Geography of Europe* on the subject *Countries in Europe* requires presentation of a selected country in *Europe* through various forms - text, poster, presentation. The theme requires extracting parts of the whole and determining the interrelations between them in characterizing the modern economy and the territorial distribution of major economic activities in *Europe*, as well as understanding the importance of economic integration, the realization of thought trips. Competencies are also needed when collecting, processing and presenting geographic information for countries in *Europe*, comparing the geographical situation of *Europe* and *Asia*.

Two active verbs are defined in the DOS, defining the expected results in teaching *Geography of Europe* - **defines** (1 count) and **characterizes** (3 counts). The reproductive orientation of the expected results is predominant.

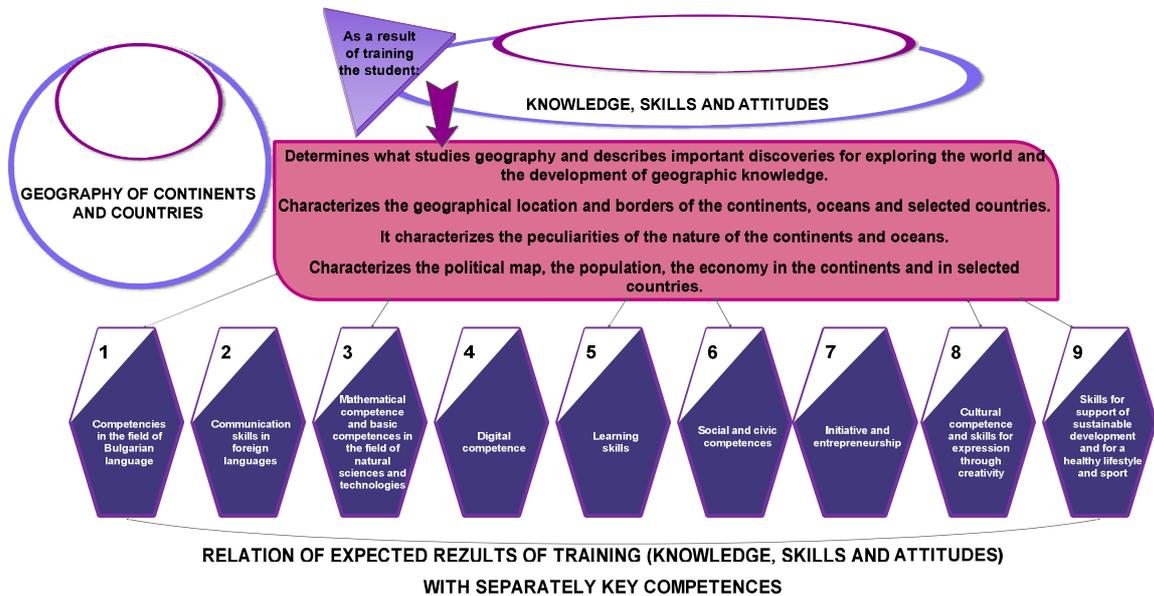


Figure 2 - Macroframe of the expected results in geography and economy at the end of the basic level of education by field of competency „Geography of continents and countries” by DO

2.2. The curriculum for the VII-th grade

The training for acquiring general education preparation in *Geography and economics* is accomplished by curricula in which students' competencies are specified as the expected results of the training for the relevant class. [6]

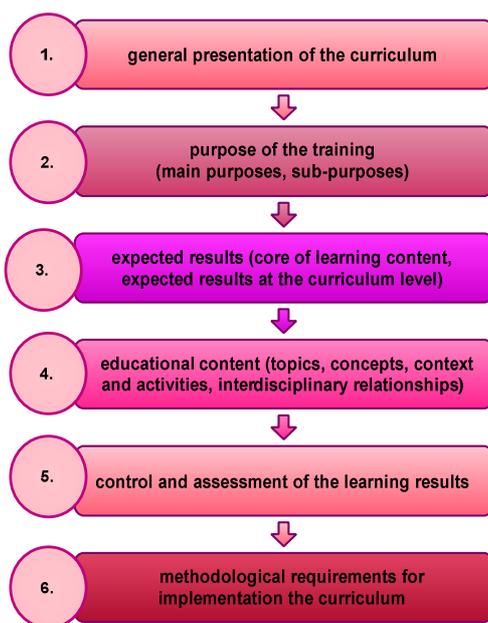


Figure 3 - Structure of the curriculum on „Geography and economics” in VIII-th grade for the school year 2016/2017

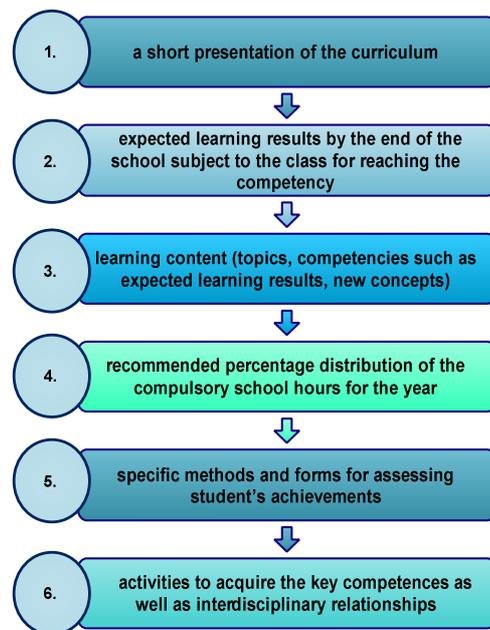


Figure 4 - Structure of the curriculum on „Geography and economics” in VII-th grade for the school year 2017/2018

The curriculum for the VII-th grade is approved by *Order № РД 09-1093/25.01.2017* and enters into force from the school year 2017/2018. The main purpose of the curriculum is „*aimed at mastering the basic knowledge, skills and acquiring key competences related to Europe, the Balkan Peninsula and Bulgaria*”. [9] The macro-frame covering the *Europe - Balkan Peninsula - Bulgaria*, as well as the overall structure of the course in its regional essence, is preserved. Although that the subject of the Balkan Peninsula is part of the main theme of *Geography of continents and countries*, it is not a focus of research in this article.

The curriculum on *Geography and economics* in VII-th grade has a structure that differs from the applied in Bulgarian school (figures 3 and 4). There are many general steps in the structure and the content part of the two curriculum, but the new curriculum has the following features: integrated with the European reference educational framework and the requirements of international geography training documents; only the main purpose of geographic training is presented; the expected learning results for achieving general education preparation at the end of the class by competency fields – for knowledge, skills and attitudes are contained; the content is decomposed into three components - topics, competences such as expected learning results and new concepts; no context and activities for school content; recommended percentage distribution of compulsory school hours for the school year; specific methods and forms of student assessment; comprehensive framework for activities to acquire key competences; presents interdisciplinary relationships by key competences are presented.

The curriculum consists of three areas of competences - *Geography of the continents and countries*, *Geography of Bulgaria* and *Geographical Information*, each of which has the expected results for knowledge, skills and attitudes from training to achieve general education at the end of the class (figure 5).

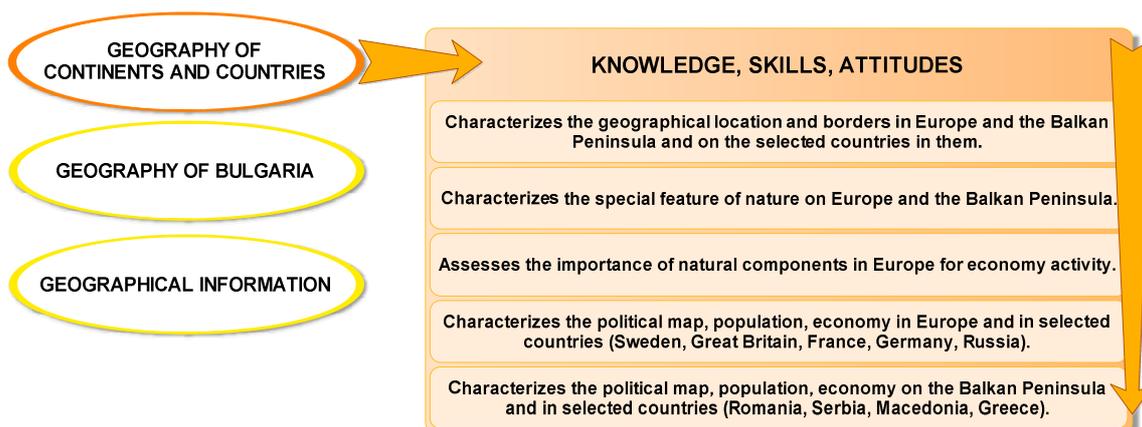


Figure 5- Expected learning results by area of competence „Geography of continents and countries” – VII-th grade

The training includes the **characterization** of geographical location and borders, peculiarities of nature, political map, population and economy of Europe, selected countries or specific countries -

Sweden, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia. The active verb **assessment** is applied in the context of assessing the importance of natural components in Europe for economic activity. A small part of the learning content by topic is a bearer as an expected result of productivity.

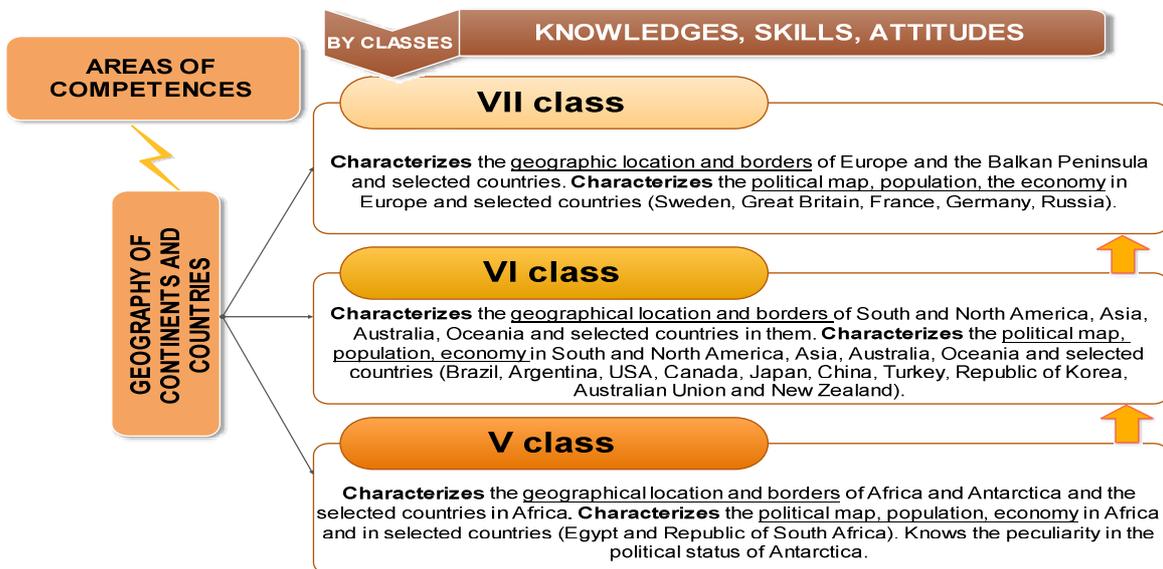


Figure 6- Expected learning results to achieve general education preparation at the end of V-th, VI-th and VII-th grade by field of competence „Geography of continents and countries”

Of the five expected results, four are specifically geared to the *Geography of Europe*. The fifth expected result can be indirectly related to the study of *Europe* because it includes countries from the Balkan Peninsula as part of the European continent.

In studying the expected learning results by *Geography of continents and countries* from the V-th, VI-th and VII-th grade, we present the presence of a one-dimensional model in the characterization of the continent: geography location and borders, political map, population, economy, countries, representatives the continent (figure 6). For each class there are different number of suggested countries for study - in the V-th grade are offered 2 countries, in the VI-th grade - 10 countries, in the VII-th grade - 5 countries. Five European countries - *Sweden, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia* - have been identified in the study of *Geography of Europe*.

Altogether, 11 new concepts are as the main structural component of Europe's geographic content. New concepts on the subject make up 30% of the total number of new concepts in the curriculum. Compared to the other topics on the Balkan Peninsula and Bulgaria, the new concepts as a quantitative indicator are on the second place after the concepts of *Geography of Bulgaria*. The new concepts of geography of the continents and the countries by classes are divided by the following total number of curricula: V-th grade - 15, VI-th grade - 24 and VII-th grade - 11. Explain is the smallest number of new concepts in VII-th grade in *Geography of continents and countries* because it is the end of the educational stage and degree of geographic training and in the previous two classes are placed a bigger number and by meaningful fundamental concepts such as supporting points of

knowledge and a strict logical structure in studying the continents of *Africa, Antarctica, South America, North America, Asia, Australia* and *Oceania* as well as in the oceans of the Earth.

The single concepts in the curriculum on the training on *Geography of Europe* are a total of 11, compared with 33 in the 2016/2017 academic year. This shows a strong minimization of the number of the new concepts that are predominantly in the field of natural geography.

A total of five topics in the training on *Geography of Europe* do not include new by curriculum concepts: *Geography location, borders, size and coasts of Europe, Useful minerals, Water, Political map* and *Countries in Europe* (figure 7). It is necessary to include more concepts of regional geography, which are key to its study.

The curriculum defines the sequence of topics on the main theme, clearly outlining the algorithm and developing the basic knowledge of continent characterization on algorithm V-th and VI-th grade.

The rule of studying the continent *Europe* follows the example of studying the continent like *Africa, South America, North America* and *Asia*. The line of procedural design of geographic training is respected in the curriculum. Europe's Geography study rule justifies the selection of the school content from the previous two classes, with the content and its vertical links in the V-th and VI-th grades guaranteeing a general knowledge of the rule, structure and content of the VII-th grade as a construct. The didactic supports of V-th and VI-th grade content are systematized concentrically and linearly, or a mixed model is applied that is most commonly used in European countries.

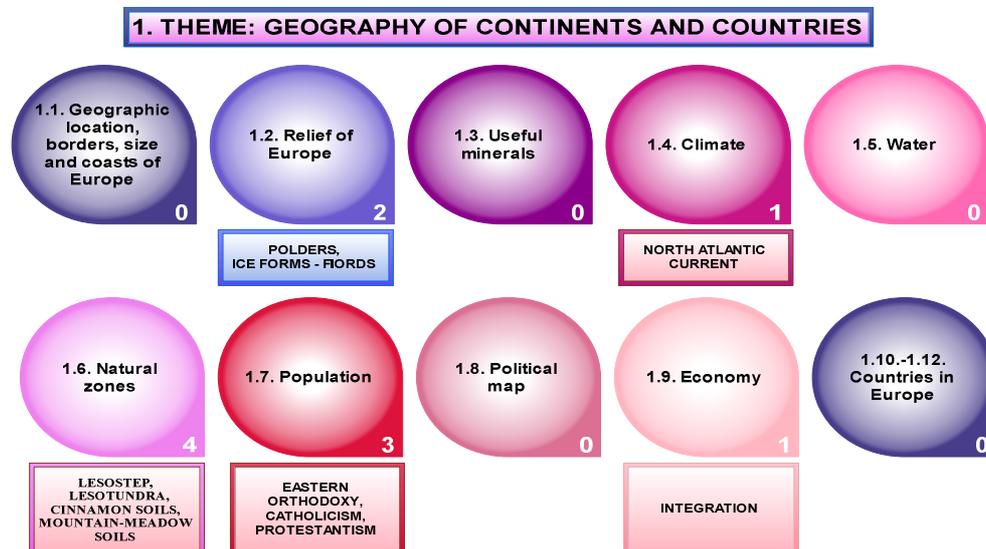


Figure 7- Structuring the curricular content by thematic units and the new concepts in „Geography of Europe” training [9]

The content of the curriculum in the VII-th grade in Geography studies in Europe is orientated ontho-didactic to draw the cognitive potential of students who have basic geographic knowledge and skills from the studied continents - *Africa, Antarctica, South America, North America, Asia, Australia, Oceania* in the previous two classes. Students have a built algorithmic knowledge system for

continents and countries characterization and can apply these skills in the VII-th grade in a new situation and to study the continent of *Europe*.

A leading content line in the study of individual topics can be grouping on the basis of active verbs and attaining competencies as expected learning results. A total of 16 active verbs were used, applied in total 33 times (Table 1).

Table 1- Quantitative dimensions (in absolute terms and relative share) of active verbs and their manifestation by competences as expected results of geography training in *Europe* in VII-th grade (by curriculum)

№	EXPECTED RESULTS (ACTIVE VERBS)	ABSOLUTE TERMS (БРОЙ)	RELATIVE SHARE (%)	COMPETENCES AS EXPECTED RESULTS OF TRAINING
1.	DETERMINES	1	3	- geographical location, size and borders of Europe.
2.	COMPARE	1	3	- geographical location of Europe and Asia on the map.
3.	ASSESSES IMPORTANCE	3	9	- geographical location and coasts; - relief for the development of Europe's economy; - useful minerals as an economic resource.
4.	APPLIES	4	12	- on the contour map the names of: the peninsulas - Scandinavian, Pyrenean, Apenninean and Balkan; the islands - Iceland, British, Sardinia, Sicily, Corsica and Crete; the bays - Botanical and Biscay; the seas - North, Norwegian, Barents, Baltic and White; strait - La Manche; - on the contour map the names of the studied relief forms: Pyrenees, Apennines, Alps, Urals, Carpathians, Caucasus, Scandinavian mountains, Eastern European plain, Pricaspian, Central European, Middle Danubian, Lower Danube and Padan lowlands; - on the contour map studied climate belts and areas; - on the contour map studied rivers and lakes.
5.	CHARACTERIZES	9	28	- the relief of Europe; - climatic elements and their territorial manifestation; - climatic belts and the mountain climatic region in Europe (including a climatogram); - Europe's waters - the main water catchment area, outflow and no outflow areas; - rivers (Volga, Danube, Rhine, Po) with the help of hydrogram and lakes (Ladoga, Geneva, Balaton); - the natural zones and the mountain area in Europe; - the population of Europe (number, distribution, racial and religious composition, language groups, lifestyle and culture); - the modern economy and the territorial distribution of the main economic activities in Europe; - the countries Sweden, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia by a rule.
6.	KNOWS	1	3	- typical useful minerals of Europe and their territorial distribution.
7.	EXPLAINS	1	3	- factors that influence the climate elements in Europe.
8.	ASSESS	1	3	- water as a condition of life and a factor for economic activity.
9.	COMPOSES	1	3	- route to a mentally journey into the natural zones of Europe.
10.	PRESENTS	2	6	- the natural zones and the mountain area in Europe in different forms (text, poster, presentation); - a selected country in Europe in different forms (text, poster, presentation).
11.	EXPRESSES OPINION	1	3	- the need to protect the nature of the continent.
12.	GIVE EXAMPLES	2	6	- for typical problems of the population - aging, migrations; - for tolerance and mutual respect among the people.
13.	DESCRIBES	2	6	- coasts on the map; - the modern political map of Europe.
14.	GROUPS	2	6	- countries in Europe by geographic location, size, number of population and a form of management; - countries by territorial sign: countries in Northern, Western, Middle, Southern and Eastern Europe.
15.	PRODUCES	1	3	- political map of Europe on a contour map.
16.	CHOOSES	1	3	- the importance of economic integration for the economic development of Europe.
		33	100	

The highest frequency of application is the active verb **characterized** (9 times), which covers the characteristics of relief, climate, water, natural zones, population, economy and countries. Students can use the lessons learned in new and specific situations - rules, principles, facts, methods, theories designed to study the new continent *Europe*. The continent of *Europe* is studied through the unification and the interconnections between the general and the regional part based on the system of *nature - society - economy*.

The most applicable in the curriculum by themes are the active verbs on conceptual knowledge (Table 2). Through active verbs of understanding and application, students form knowledge, skills and attitudes between the different parts of the overall structure in the algorithm for the continent, assisting the knowledge of the unified whole - *Geography of Europe*. The active verbs are used for understanding - it *explains, gives examples and understands*, and for application - *draws, characterizes, compiles, presents, produces*. [1, 2] These active verbs provide the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills to other circumstances, new situations and problem solving or finding procedures. Through them, the planning of the actions, the transformation of the theoretical foundations into practical projection is realized.

Presenting the natural zones and countries requires presentation skills through text, poster or presentation. Students are aimed at developing skills for independent work; working, collecting, receiving, processing, interpolating and presenting the information from different sources; work with ICT and the Internet; developing competences and learning skills; digital competences; competence in the field of Bulgarian language; skills for expression through creativity; initiative; generation and selection of alternatives, etc.

The active verb **applying** has been applied 4 times by developing the cartographic knowledge, skills and competencies of V-th and VI-th grade students as a conceptual idea of a multilayered process. The basic requirements to the students are united around the contour map work and the applying on the map of the names of peninsulas, islands, bays, seas, streams; the names of the studied forms of relief - mountains, plains, lowlands; application of studied climatic belts and areas of rivers and lakes.

The active verbs for the formation of cartographic skills are relevant to the three phases of their formation. [3] In studying the continent, *Europe* requires the perception of token symbols, verbal and numerical interpretations, as well as the reproduction of the objective reality. Phase unity has been achieved by applying over the contour map of objects and their name, making a political map of *Europe* on a contour map; drawing up a mental journey route in the natural zones of *Europe*; characterizes rivers (Volga, Danube, Rhine, Po) with the help of hydrogram and lakes (Ladoga, Geneva, Balaton); characterizes climatic belts and the mountainous climatic region in *Europe* (including a climatogram), etc. The application of these active verbs increases the practical and applied character of geography in the VII-th grade of the primary education stage. Relevant to development of cartographic culture and literacy is the comparison of *Europe* and *Asia* on the map.

Table 2- Allocation of active verbs to define competences such as the expected learning outcomes of Geography of Europe [by curriculum]

ACTIVE VERBS - THEME: „GEOGRAPHY OF CONTINENTS AND COUNTRIES” (EUROPE)	LEVELS OF ASSIMILATE					
	FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE	CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE		PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE	METACOGNITIVAL KNOWLEDGE	
	KNOWLEDGE	UNDERSTANDING	APPLICATION	ANALYSIS	SYSTEMATIZATION	EVALUATION
1.1. Geographic location, borders, size and coasts of Europe	FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE describes	CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE	KNOWLEDGE applies	PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE compares	METACOGNITIVAL	KNOWLEDGE assesses importance
1.2. Relief of Europe	KNOWLEDGE	UNDERSTANDING	APPLICATION applies	ANALYSIS	SYSTEMATIZATION	EVALUATION importance
1.3. Useful Minerals	knows					assesses importance
1.4. Climate	determines describes	explains	characterizes applies	compares		assesses importance
1.5. Water			characterizes applies			assesses importance
1.6. Natural zones			characterizes applies			importance assesses opinion
1.7. Population		give examples explains	characterizes applies			
1.8. Political map	describes		produces			groups
1.9. Economy		understands	characterizes			assess
1.10.-1.12. Countries in Europe			applies characterizes presents composes			groups expresses opinion
1.7. Population		give examples	characterizes			
1.8. Political map	describes		produces			groups
1.9. Economy		understands	characterizes			
1.10.-1.12. Countries in Europe			characterizes presents			groups

An essential moment in training for *Europe* is to **give examples** related of population issues and mutual respect and tolerance among people, such as projections of education law and the main purposes of school education. [4] The examples given below for a theme of *Population* are also a reflection of the DOS's specific purposes of forming a moral-aesthetic values aimed at understanding some people's problems, realizing the need for cooperation and respect among them. [6]

The other group of active verbs with a bigger frequency of application are from the field of metacognitive knowledge and **groups, assessing** and evaluate the meaning, **expresses opinion**. Active verbs were introduced with purpose to develop personal strategic knowledge about attitudes and values for realization geographic tasks - assessing the importance of geographic location and coasts, the relief for the development of Europe's economy, the mineral resources as an economic resource, and water as a condition of life and a factor for economic activity.

Three are the main aspects of active verbs in training for countries in *Europe*: **grouping countries on a territorial basis, characterizing a country as a rule** and **representing a country** through different forms (text, poster, presentation) - figure 8.

Countries in *Europe* are studied on a regional-typological principle. The curriculum identifies the grouping and learning of the countries to be territorial - *Northern, Western, Middle Southern* and *Eastern Europe*. There are clearly defined the countries which have to be studied as a rule - a total of

6 countries. An opportunity is provided for students to represent a selected country in a different form.



Figure 8 - Competencies as expected results in learning the countries in Europe [by curriculum]

A new element in the structure of the curriculum in the Bulgarian school is the recommended percentage distribution of compulsory school hours. In the VII-th grade, in learning the *Geography of Europe*, learning hours for new knowledge, exercises (activities), summary and control work are applicable in the new realities (figure 9).

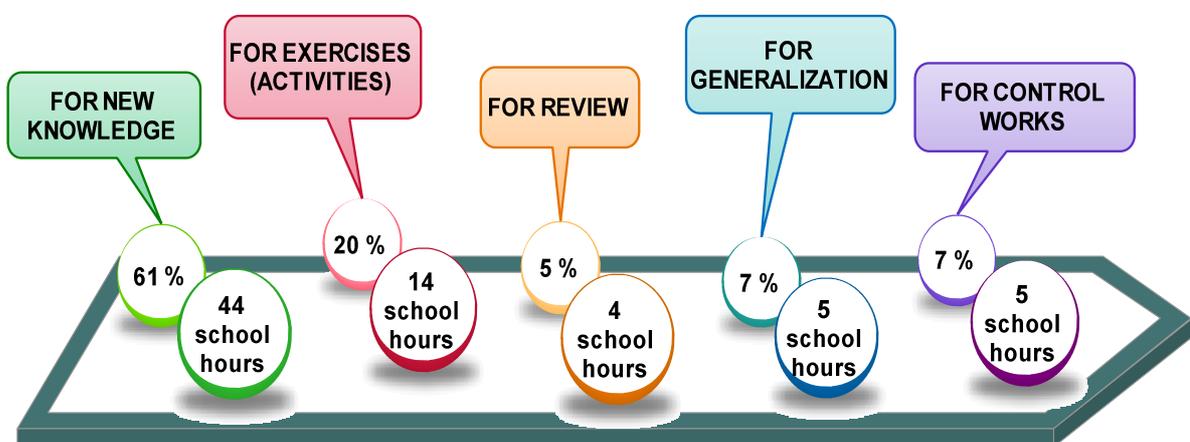


Figure 9 - Recommended percentage of compulsory school hours – VII-th grade [by curriculum]

The study of *Geography of Europe* in the VII-th grade is constructed on the basis of expanded vertical links of V-th and VI-th grade, which develop students' knowledge, skills and attitudes at the graduating regional course (figure 10). Curricula ensure consistency and interconnection of structural components. [7, 8, 9]

A new moment in the curriculum on *Geography and economics* in the VII-th grade is the

additional clarifications on the necessary conditions for achieving the geographic training purposes in learning geography in conducting **study trips**. The opportunities that should be given to the students during the excursion are clearly regulated (figure 11).

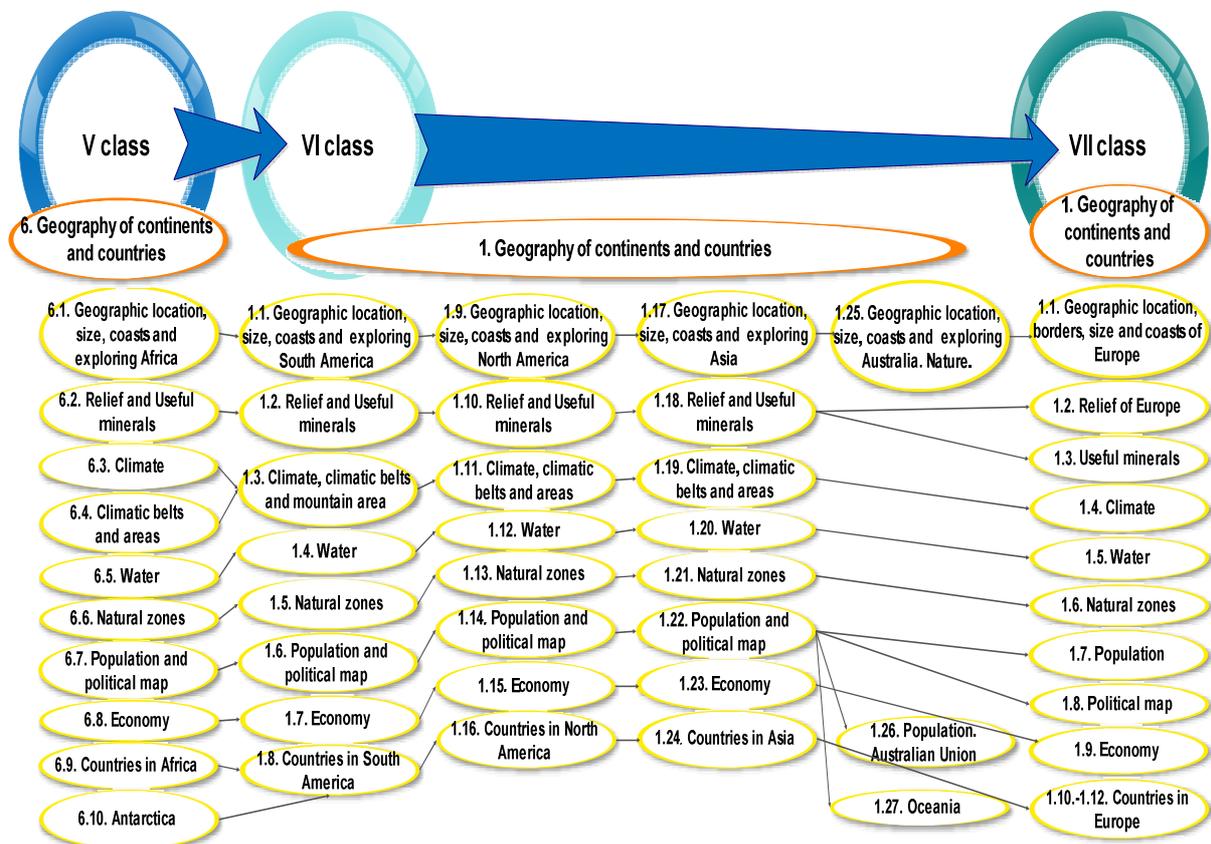


Figure 10 - Vertical-links model for „Geography of Europe” – VII-th grade [by curricula]

The new realities in the teaching *Geography of Europe* are defined **activities to acquire key competencies** (figure 12). General education preparation activities are identified in accordance with the key competency groups of the European reference framework. Through the specific activities in the curriculum on the individual key competences, interdependence is achieved by forming a unified „set of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the individual's of the person development throughout life, for building an active civic position and participation in social life, as well as its suitability for realization on the labor market.” [6]

General education preparation is carried out by learning 20 school subjects in the nine groups of key competencies. The activities in the geography curriculum in the VII-th grade are set at the level of key competency in geography, as part of the group of social and civic competencies are in a total of six groups. Two groups are not included in the curriculum - *language communication* and *initiative and entrepreneurship*, notwithstanding the presence of indicators for their presence in the curriculum,

namely in the teaching *Geography of Europe*. Activities are inductively connected with geographic content and contribute for building others key competences specified in the respective curriculum for the VII-th grade. In total, activities can be grouped into two groups - *general* and *specific*, predominantly those in the second group:

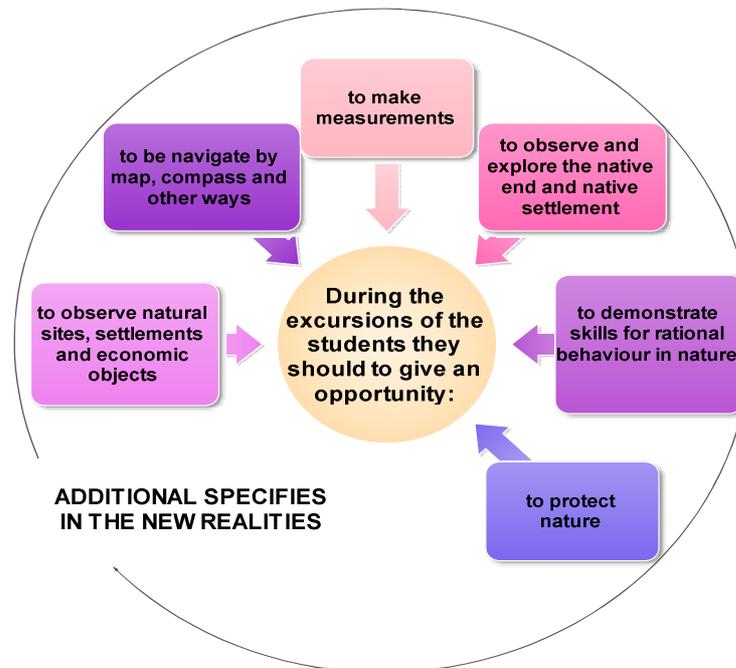


Figure 11 - Achieving the purposes of „Geography and economics” training through excursions

- ✎ **common** - indicates and proves with examples; expresses generalizes conclusions; knows basic concepts, regularities, processes and phenomena; collects systematically, organizes and describes data and presents them in various ways (charts, tables, maps, boards, etc.); uses information technology for searching, collecting, presenting and exchanging information; self observing and supervising classmates, exercising self-control in didactic and/or communicative tasks, and learning to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, their own learning styles; gathers, selects, retrieves information from various sources; works with all the elements of the textbook; compiles a short plan; knows rules for prudent behavior in various life situations and during a natural disaster; points to examples of tolerance and mutual respect among people; understands the need to protect the environment;
- ✎ **specific** - naming, defining, describing, explaining, comparing, grouping, characterizing (describing and explaining essential features and peculiarities) geographical objects, processes and phenomena; compiles in a certain capacity of answer to a geographic question and text of a mental journey; expresses opinions on geographic questions; read a

geographic map, compare and analyze a climatogram, a hydrogram, a column and a circle diagram; compare, group, define the meaning, characterize (as a rule) geographic objects, processes and phenomena, summarize, provide evidence-based answers; expresses opinions on geographic questions; drawing routes and geographic objects on a contour map; oriented in nature using a map and a compass; observe natural objects and phenomena; calculates distances and average density; defines geographic coordinates; observe and study the native end and native settlement; understands the notion of economic integration; compares representative countries in *Europe*; points to major environmental issues; describes protected areas in Bulgaria. [1]

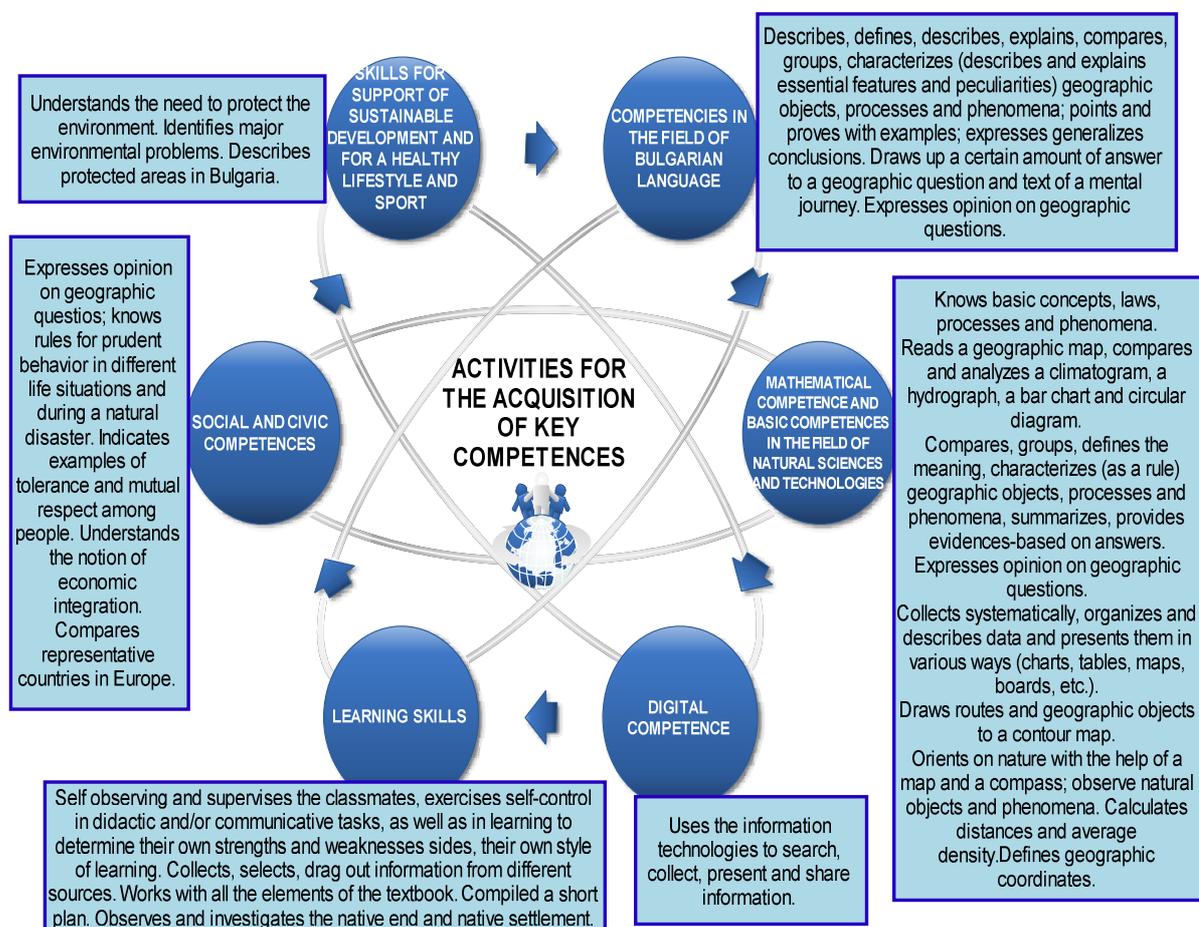


Figure 12 - Activities for the acquisition of key competences in „Geography and economics” in VII-th grade

The main focus of the curriculum for the VII-th grade in the system process of learning is the student, the purpose and the content imply expression of personal opinion, assertion of a reasoned position and relation to geographic questions. The curriculum provides an up-to-date model for shaping and perceiving geographic knowledge in a system by identifying its own strengths and weaknesses, its own learning style. The formation of social competences, a value system and the

stimulation of analytical and critical thinking are the focus around which a psychological-didactical foundation is created for the development of the modern personality of the student.

New accents in the teaching of geography in VII-th grade are:

- ☞ uses the information technology;
- ☞ self observing classmates, exercise self-control in didactic and/or communicative tasks;
- ☞ learning with purpose to identify the personal strengths and weaknesses of individual learning style;
- ☞ works with all the elements into the textbook;
- ☞ observe and study the native end and native settlement;
- ☞ expresses opinions on geographic questions. [9]

New content accents are placed on the level of pupils' age specificities, and this learning content has so far been studied in VIII-th grade. At the level of geographic literacy by curriculum, it is combined in a total of three years of training compared to existing curricula in which geographic literacy is allocated for formation in four school years. The reduction of the educational stage as a geography study period reflects on the overall on the teaching of geography, on the formation of geographical literacy and culture.

The interdisciplinary relationships under the new curriculum have been significantly increased such as number and content with a specific content framework on key competencies. For each interdisciplinary relationships, the name of the school subject matter and its activities through which it can be realized is defined (figure 13).

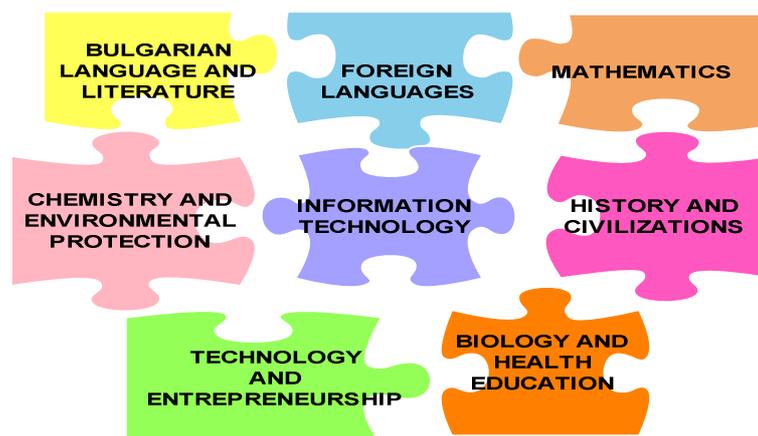


Figure 13 - Interdisciplinary relationships in „Geography and economics” – VII-th grade [by curriculum]

The interdisciplinary relationships consist of a total of eight school subjects and are divided into key competencies - *Competencies in the field of Bulgarian language; Communicating in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in natural sciences and technologies; Digital competence; Learning skills; Social and civic competences; Initiative and entrepreneurship;*

Skills for support sustainable development and a healthy lifestyle and sport. The basic skills that pupils aim at developing interdisciplinary relationships are skills for: working with different types of text; searching, finding and processing information on specific topics in the global network; prepares multimedia presentations, reports and messages using word processing programs; skills for working with a terminological dictionary and using the basic concepts; skills for linguistic and digital literacy; mapping skills; skills to work with different types of maps in *Europe*; skills to work in team; carries out marketing research and produces promotional materials for company presentations; skills to build diagrams and interpret data. [9]

The interdisciplinary relationships presented aim at developing the reading technique and written culture of the students, enriching the language culture; expanding and deepening intercultural competences; building understanding of norms of behavior, ways of interacting national cultural identity and European identity; understanding the importance of equality, security and tolerance in the public life of the country by forming attitudes to coexistence of people from different religious and cultural communities.

An important moment is accentuating preparation and participation in discussions on geographic questions, as well as building attitudes towards initiative, activity, independence and innovation in private and public life. Another aspect of the realization of the interdisciplinary relationships is the environmental education and training of the students, focusing on the use of knowledge about environmental pollution, illustrating examples of negative consequences for the nature from unreasonable human activity, as well as realizing the necessity of preserving and conservation biodiversity.

The new *Geography and economy* curriculum, which will be in force since 2017/2018 school year, contains information for the *specific methods and forms for assessing pupils's achievements*. In fact, there is no specific for the methods and forms of assessment like these are contained in the current curricula. Only the ratio in the form of a term and annual assessment is regulated (figure 14).

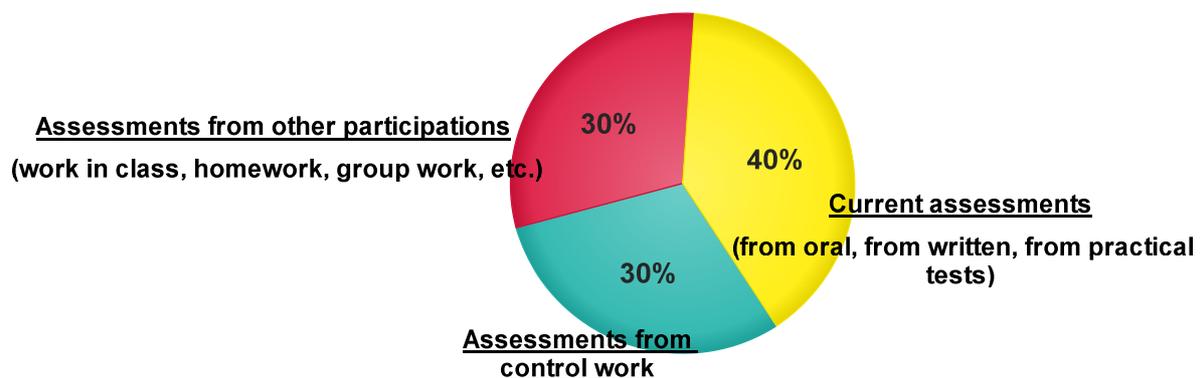


Figure 14 - Correlation of the formation of a term and an annual assessment – VII-th grade [by curriculum]

Upon completion of the basic education, it is conditional conclusion of the formation of the foundations of the geographic culture is also posed to the pupils in the lower secondary education

stage as part of the general culture of understanding and reasonable activity in the geographical area at the regional, national and local level is established.

3. Conclusion

The article introduces the new curriculum project and the specific place and role, knowledge and learning content, structure and activities of *Geography of Europe* or the Bulgarian view of the *Geography of Europe* in the secondary school. Through conceptual and content-analysis are presents the advantages and disadvantages of the new curriculum project in its part - *Geography of Europe*. The study of the continent of *Europe* in the new educational conditions is chronologically compared with its current study and current curriculums.

From the analysis of the regional projection of V, VI and VII-th grade, we conclude that the regional courses predominate in the geographic education of the base secondary stage. The study of the continent *Europe* (including the Balkan Peninsula) is the last in the VII-th grade, which ends the regional part.

The *Geography of Europe* is studied by a mechanical pattern known to the students from the previous two classes in which the other continents and countries are studied. This didactic concept can have the opposite effect in studying the rules and the unity in studying the continent and the country, leading to the stereotyping of the structure of the school content.

The study of *Geography of Europe* in the new realities is designed on normative documents, world educational trends, public needs, and a combination of traditional and innovative models for geographic education.

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9. Uchebna programa po geografiya i iekonomika za VII klas (obshtoobrazovatelната podgotovka).