

IGU CGE Geography Education Questionnaire

Country: Russia

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1. What is the aim of geography in primary education in your country?

Basic geography comes in curriculum as “Surrounding environment: human, nature, society”. The aim is to shape an integral picture of the world and an understanding of the man’s place in it, and to develop the experience of interaction with people, society and nature.

2. What is the aim of geography in secondary education in your country?

- **building a system of geographical knowledge** about the integral, diversified and dynamically changing World; about interconnection of nature, people and economy at all territorial levels; about geographical aspects of global problems of the Humanity and ways of their solving; about geographical research methods
- **developing the skills** of combining global, regional and local approach in describing and to analyzing natural, social, economic, and environmental processes and phenomena.
- **developing** cognitive interests, intellectual and creative abilities by the means of study the important geographical features and problems of the World, regions and of the main countries;
- **the education** of patriotism, tolerance, the respect of other peoples and their cultures, the care for the environment;
- **using** geographical knowledge, skills and information (including maps, GIS, Internet sites, statistics) in everyday activity;
- **understanding** the geographical specificity of large-scale regions of the World and of the main countries in the context of rapid globalization.

3. What is the average number of hours of geography teaching in primary education in your country?

Subject	Class	Age	Lessons (hours) per week
Surrounding environment: man, nature, society	I-IV	6-7 – 9-10	2

4. What is the average number of hours of geography teaching in secondary education in your country?

Subject	Class	Age	Lessons (hours) per week
Geography. Physical geography / Natural history (natural science)	V	10-11	1 or 2 (if school administration decides to integrate biology and geography)
Geography. Physical geography / Natural history (natural science)	VI	11-12	1 or 2 (if school administration decides to integrate biology and geography)
Geography: continents, nations and countries (Regional Geography)	VII	12-13	1
Geography of Russia	VIII	13-14	2
Geography of Russia	IX	14-15	2
Geography. Economic and social geography of the World	X	15-16	1
Geography. Economic and social geography of the World	XI	16-17	1

5. What are the most important themes in basic geography teaching in your country?

The curriculum includes two equal parts – “Man and Nature” and “Man and Society”. The study (or, better to say, the reasons of) of the seasons’ change (12 hrs), components of the environment (40 hrs), human being as part of nature (17 hrs). There is a number of themes about Russia in each part of the curriculum and at each class of primary school. One of them is named “Our country on the map and on the geographical globe” and gives a first representation about Russian territory, relief, climate, as well as about maps, and the terrestrial globe. The other themes devoted to Russia (“My Motherland”, “My native region is a part of the Motherland”, “My Motherland is Russia, Russian Federation”) give a representation about the social and political regime in Russia, and the culture of its peoples. There is a small theme devoted to another region of the world.

6. What are the most important themes in secondary geography teaching in your country?

Different elements of geosciences are learnt in the 5th and 6th classes. The main themes of the 5th class are “Collecting knowledge about the Earth”, “The Earth in the Universe”, “The geographical model of the Earth”, “Crust”. The most important topic

of the 6th class are “Atmosphere”, “Hydrosphere”, “Biosphere” and “Geographical sphere”¹.

The course “Geography: continents, nations and countries” includes the following themes: “Africa”, “Australia”, “Antarctica”, “Oceans”, “North America” and “Eurasia”. Pupils usually have more interest in studying less known, mysterious regions of the world, which explains this succession of continents.

The course “Geography of Russia. 8th Class” contains 4 main themes “Geographical location and the administrative-territorial system of Russia”, “Environment of Russia” (Geological structure and relief, Climate, Inland water and water resources, Soil and soil resources, Plant and animal life, Approaches to a natural division of territory), “Population of Russia” (Demographic setting, Urban and rural population, Urbanization, Migrations, Labour market, Peoples and Religions of Russia), “Economy of Russia” (What economy is, Industrial Structure of Economy, Natural resources, Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and fish industry).

The study of Russia’s economy continues in the 9th class (Fuel and energy complex, Metallurgy, Chemical industry, Timber industry, Mechanical engineering, Textile, shoes’, confection and food industry, Tertiary activities, including Transport, Research, Housing and municipal services, Tourism and Recreation), but about 60% of time is devoted to the study of Russia’s regional geography. There are two big sections in the regional part of this course: “The European part of Russia” (European North, North-West, Central Russia, North Caucasus, Volga region, Urals) and “The Asian part of Russia” (West Siberia, East Siberia, and Far East).

Most pupils study the course “Economic and social geography of the world” in the 10-11th classes. The first part of this course is called “General characteristic of the world” (“Political map of the World; Geography of natural resources. Environment’s control and environmental issues; Geography of the world population; Scientific-technical revolution and world economy, Geography of the key world branches of industry). The second part is entitled “Regional characteristic of the world” and comprises a study of a large region of the world (Foreign² Europe, Foreign³ Asia, Africa, North America, Latin America, Australia and Oceania) and of the most important countries (Germany, China, Japan, India, South Africa, United States, Canada, Brazil, Australia; almost all of them are members of G7 or BRICS). The last theme of the course is “Global problems of the World” (Environmental issues, International terrorism, North–South divide, Demographic issues and so on).

¹ The usual definition of geographical sphere (Географическая оболочка, Geograficheskaya obolochka) in Russian secondary geography teaching is “a sphere created as a result of interaction and interpenetration of hydrosphere, the top part of lithosphere, the lowest part of atmosphere and biosphere”.

^{2,3} Foreign part of Europe and Asia in Russian school geography is a part of Europe and Asia beyond the bounds of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

7. What is the position of geography in the upper levels of secondary education in your country?

If in the V-IX classes the number of geography lessons does not differ much from other disciplines, but the situation in the X and XI classes is not the same. Geography is not necessary for entering to a university, and therefore, the overwhelming majority of pupils study it only at the basic level (one hour per week). As a result, geography is losing on the number of lessons to social science, history and other disciplines necessary for continuing education in a university, In 2013 r. only 20 736 persons graduating from secondary schools selected geography for a final examination, which is incomparable with social science chosen by 481 990 persons, English (74 668 persons), physics (208 875 persons). At the same time, among those who opted for geography as a discipline of a final examination, the largest share of pupils could not get the necessary minimum of points (12,1%, compared to 11,0% of those who selected physics or history). The average number of points in geography was one of the lowest (the 11th among 14 school disciplines, which could be selected for a final examination).

8. What is the biggest problem for geography teaching in your country?

- The tendency to the decrease of the number of lessons;
- the appearance of competing disciplines (economy) and the attempts to integrate geography to other disciplines (Natural Science, the Surrounding World, Social Science, Russia in the World, etc.):
- problems with the teaching staff: in Russian regions there are not many people who would like to teach at secondary school, and moreover, geography is not prestigious. Because of that, rural schools prefer to integrate geography to other disciplines;
- they often believe that geography can be taught by anybody. This delusion is shared by many school administrations. Therefore, in the best case geography is taught by a teacher of history or biology, and in the worst case – by a teacher of gymnastics;
- last years most economic faculties and higher education institutes do not request an exam of geography, which to a large extent explains its problems.

9. Mention one or more good practices or very successful projects of geography teaching in your country

The project “Spheres” (<http://spheres.ru>) implemented by the largest Russian publisher specialized in school textbooks and pedagogical literature. Its objective is to create an environment, which could help to a pupil in a study of a discipline by various means. In the field of geography, they include a textbook, a special training writing-book, an examining and a practicum writing-book, an electronic application, electronic illustrated atlases and maps. Teacher can use thematic plans and a special website.

The project “Geographical replenishment” organized by the journal “Geography” in a form of the competition for the best innovative homework and the best innovative approach to its realization. As a result, teachers receive a

large selection of interesting and complicated homework devoted for advanced pupils.

The project “I am going to the lesson of geography”

(<http://geo.1september.ru/urok/>) organized by the journal “Geography”, The objective is to collect the materials sent by teachers and scholars for improving geographical education.

A series of movies “Lessons of Geography” sponsored by Russian Geographical Society

(<http://www.rgo.ru/ru/grant/cikl-obrazovatelyh-filmov-uroki-geografii>). Each film moves its audience to a region of Russia for discovering wonders of the nature: the lake of Baikal, the mountain of Elbrus, Yakutia, Karelia, Sochi., Solovetski archipelago in the White Sea, the island of Sakhalin, etc. They are presented by the real people, and not by professional actors: geography teacher at Moscow Lomonosov School Ivan Kolechkin (<http://ivankolechkin.ru/index.html>) and his pupils.

A series of animated movies “Multi-Russia”

(<http://www.multirussia.ru>) sponsored by Russian Geographical Society and taken in cooperation with geography teachers from different regions of the country, The main idea is in the creation of a movie about each region of Russia. The example of such movie about Altay territory can be found at http://multirussia.ru/index.php?p=show_film&fid=14.

The project “Geography of Omsk region” (<http://geo-omsk.ru/>) implemented by a community of geography teachers from this region for coordinating its study at school.

The School of Young Geographer (<http://www.younggeo.ru/>) at the Faculty of Geography of Moscow State University.

The main task is advanced study of geography and definition of research capacities of schoolchildren, their environmental education. A great number of research projects are realized by the pupils of this School.

10. Mention research projects in the field of geography teaching in your country.

The creation of the free school GIS “Panorama” (<http://www.int-edu.ru/object.php?m1=3&m2=285&id=1008>) and a number of projects in the field of digital education resources for studying geography at secondary school (see the Integral Collection of Digital Education Resources, <http://school-collection.edu.ru>).

The creation of a new federal state education standards and the programmes for primary and secondary schools, including geography. under the aegis of the Russian Academy of Education (<http://standart.edu.ru/>),

11. Mention publications or websites with information in English about geography teaching in your country.

Unfortunately, there are no such publications or sites with information in English.

12. Mention contact addresses for information about geography teaching in your country.

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