

**CITIZENSHIP AND
LIFELONG LEARNING
MONITOR 2020**

POLAND





TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
INTRODUCTION	3
GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION	4
Terminology	4
Policy-making on GCE	4
The methodological approach to the topic	6
CSOs in policymaking.	8
DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP.	8
COVID-19 and education	8
Civil society promoting digital skills	9
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES	12
FUNDING	14
RECOMMENDATIONS	16

ABSTRACT

The following report represents one of nine national case studies feeding into the SOLIDAR Foundation's annual Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020. The purpose of the Monitor is to take stock of the developments at European and national level in terms of citizenship education policies and lifelong learning policies. The Polish report is focused on the general three main themes: global citizenship education, digital citizenship, and community partnerships for interculturality. It accounts for challenges, governmental approaches to them, and civil society approaches to them for each of the three themes. In a year in which learning has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become more apparent how essential global citizenship education is for the development of competences that prepare learners for global challenges and that prepare them to act responsible towards their fellows beyond any national border. However, the topic remains on the fringes of formal education in Poland, while the governmental focus on economic and social development as part of Agenda 2030 neglects global education. The

topic is being deprioritized, while civics education is also de-emphasized at a time when the Polish government has limited the rights of women and of the LGBTQI+ community. Therefore, beyond restricted rights, citizens are also vulnerable by not receiving adequate citizenship education to adapt to the 21st century society. The learning process was slowed down by unpreparedness for digital learning, with 15% of teachers only using digital tools in the classroom before the pandemic, and with many households lacking the capacity to engage in distance learning. During these moments the civil society has engaged citizens in innovative informal and non-formal learning actions, which have contributed to ensuring that all have equal opportunities to participate in society. This occurs despite the blatant opposition of the current Polish public authorities to CSOs, which needs to be addressed, as the pandemic has revealed that learning no longer occurs only in formal education, with a need for a lifelong and lifewide perspective that can be advanced only with a strong civil society.

INTRODUCTION

EU countries have had different toolkits at their disposal to cope with the COVID-19 situation. Poland is missing on the opportunity to develop effective strategies in education and other areas of social life. The coronavirus crisis has aggravated the existing problems and shown incapacity of its current government to collaborate with numerous social actors - local governments, experts, schools, NGOs. The right-wing ideology, based on national, religious imagery and traditional family models, often resorting to populist rhetoric downplays the women's rights and targets LGBTQI communities. The illiberal stance has trickled down to impact the civil

society at large¹, endangering the capacity of independent CSOs to provide support for intercultural education or global citizenship education. The skills developed by the previously mentioned types of education are of crucial importance in a fast-paced society, in which the green transition is a life-or-death emergency. Moreover, as the COVID-19 crisis has made apparent, digitalization will be intensified, and the situation in Poland is not encouraging. The number of citizens lacking basic digital skills, the outdated approach to online tools in education and the underinvestment in education, point towards Poland lagging behind.

1 Ojewska, Natalia (2020). Poland's culture war: LGBT people cornered by toxic politics are turning to civil disobedience. Euronews. Available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/10/06/poland-s-culture-war-lgbt-people-cornered-by-toxic-politics-are-turning-to-civil-disobedie>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

TERMINOLOGY

As the terminology is diverse, there is a need to clarify the Polish conceptualization of GCE. Global education is the term used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was defined in 2010-2011, as a result of a multi-stakeholder process which involved academics, NGOs, ministries and other educational institutions². The conceptualization is attuned to current needs, ensuring learners reflect on their lifestyles, and on how their choices have an impact across the globe. The definition used by the Polish government considers global interconnections, takes a Global South perspective, and sets as a goal contributing to the process of building a global society based on the principles of solidarity, equality and cooperation.

POLICY-MAKING ON GCE

To implement the above vision from an early age, global education was included to some extent in formal education in primary and secondary school as a cross-curricular theme but also integrated directly in some topics. It is included in the Civics class (known as 'Knowledge about society') and in the History and Geography classes³. However in primary schools the national curriculum covers only theoretical knowledge about UN organizations European Union and NATO, and the only educational standard referring to global challenges reads that the student "formulates opinions on chosen social problems of the modern world,

considers actions leading to improvement of living conditions of people around the world"⁴.

Though, on a theoretical level, it seems that Polish authorities commit to a nuanced version of global education that considers global implications of one's actions, its implementation is ineffective and reveals an incoherence in how the government approaches this topic. Our partners explained that global education is now minimally present in everyday formal education and it no longer is a priority for public authorities⁵. The incoherence is experienced across ministries as well, with some working more on the topic than others. This is reflected in Poland's [2017 Strategy for Responsible Development](#) which focused on economic and social development, but overlooked global education. Moreover, the OECD reports an imbalanced focus on the Polish approach to Agenda 2030, revealing an economic and entrepreneurial prioritization, inconsistent with learners' needs for making the green transition a reality⁶.

The 2017 education reform influenced global education's implementation, inducing its de-prioritization. The Civics class, within which global education is more prominent, was moved to the last academic year of primary school, when pupils focus on final exams, raising the potential for the topic to be neglected. For secondary education, Civics is an elective course for the final exam, however, only 6.6% of pupils actually chose it for the exam in the past year⁷. Beyond the inefficiency in promoting the

² http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/polska_pomoc/edukacja_globalna

³ Saleniec, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. CONCORD Europe. p.94. Available at: https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CONCORD_GCE_FundingReport_2018_online.pdf. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

⁴ Ministry of Education of Poland (2017). Civics core curriculum for pre-school education and for general education for primary schools, including students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, general education for the first-degree industry school, general education for a special school preparing for work and general education for post-secondary education. Available at: <https://podstawa-programowa.pl/Szkola-podstawowa-IV-VIII/Wiedza-o-spoleczenstwie>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

⁵ Saleniec, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. CONCORD Europe. p.95.

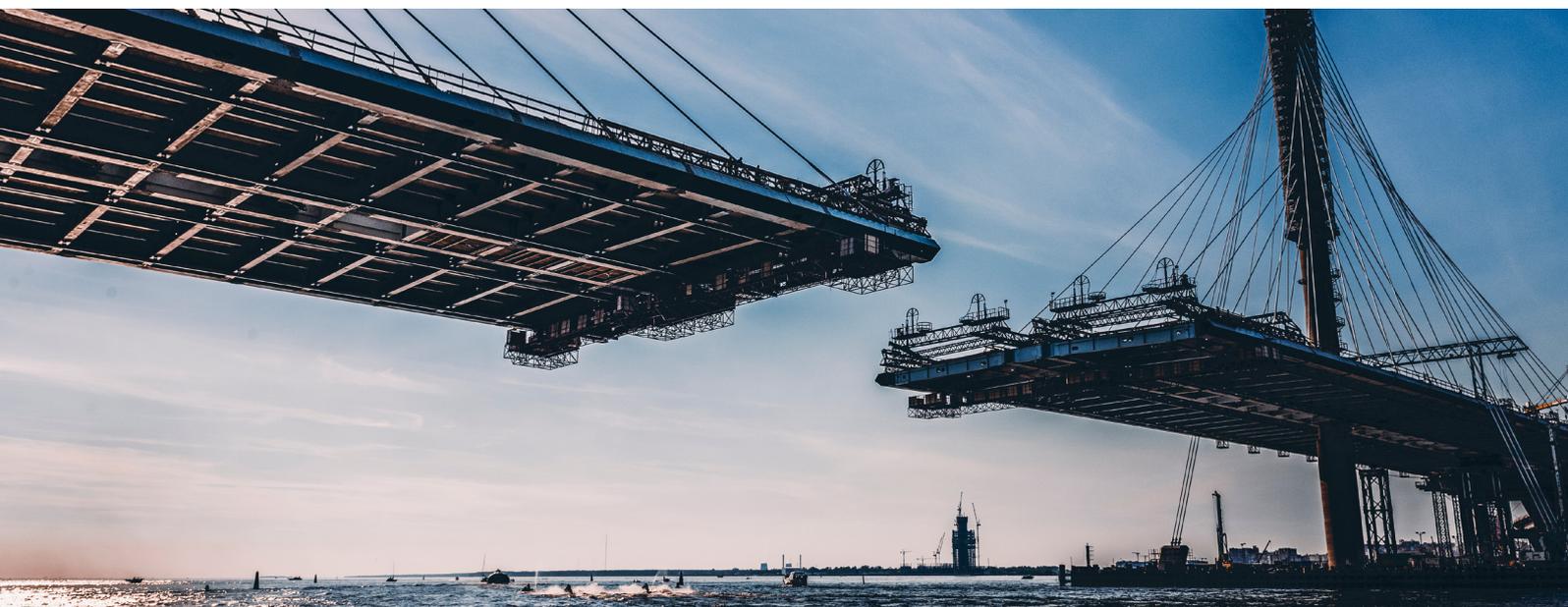
⁶ OECD (2017). Agenda Na Rzecz Zrównoważonego Rozwoju 2030: W Kierunku Pomyślnego Wdrożenia w Polsce. Better Policy Series. P.3. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/poland/Better-Policy-Series-Poland-Nov-2017-PL.pdf>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

⁷ Central Examination Board of Poland (2020). Civics Matriculation Exam 2020 Report. Available at : https://cke.gov.pl/images/_EGZAMIN_MATURALNY_OD_2015/Informacje_o_wynikach/2020/sprawozdanie/EM_Wos_sprawozdanie.pdf. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

topic, the curriculum has few indicators for the development of problem-solving skills, global literacy, creative skills, learning and collaborative skills, while the curriculum lacks a practical component for learners. The passive model of teaching cannot meet current societal needs, leaving learners in a difficulty to adapt to the green transition. Even more, the only active component in civics education took the form of educational projects but was discontinued with the 2017 education reform⁸. These essential skills have not been practiced sufficiently, and our partners report many difficulties for learners during the pandemic to deal with independent learning and critical thinking. The Polish authorities identified this lack of fostering creative and problem-solving skills already some years ago, launching new initiatives, such as [School for Innovator](#). The project, piloted in 25 schools, will promote more open and creative teaching and learning models, but it remains to be seen how it will be developed since the pandemic made its start harder.

In general, learning conditions in 34% of the schools evaluated after the reform's implementation have decreased⁹, pointing out a difficult environment in which to focus on in

which cross-curricular topics such as global education or climate change are easily neglected. Global education programmes existed in Poland, but the issue is that such initiatives often vanish when project funding finishes. This illustrates a tokenistic approach to global education, ensuring that the topic is robust on statement-level, but only superficial in action. The example of the project Sustainable Development Leaders, organized by the [Centre for Educational Development](#) - national teacher training body, is such an instance. As part of the [Multiannual Plan of Developmental Cooperation 2016-2020](#), this action provided training on global education matters for teachers and trainers. However, our partners highlighted that there has been no monitoring on how the training impacted teachers' and trainers' work, no initiative to include parts of this training in Initial Teacher Education or Continuous Professional Development for teachers, and no online record of this project. Similarly, a [Global Education Platform](#) was developed to raise awareness and share materials and training. However, just as with some other governmental programmes, it stopped being properly moderated, and since December 2019 there was no new content.



8 Ministry of Education of Poland (2017). Civics core curriculum for general education for general secondary schools, technical secondary schools and second-cycle industry schools. Available at: <https://podstawaprogramowa.pl/Liceum-technikum/Wiedza-o-spoleszenstwie>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

9 European Commission (2020). Country Report Poland 2020. 2020 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011. P.27. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0520&from=EN>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE TOPIC

The governmental programmes reveal temporary patches, given that current core curricula in Poland are very rigid and heavy¹⁰. The entire school experience is not conducive towards the development of transversal skills, competences for democratic culture and is underprepared for welcoming pupils with migrant backgrounds. Though Poland is a largely homogenous nation, all learners must be prepared for interacting with peers from the globalized world. The

approach for the topic depends on teachers, as they have the responsibility to implement it. Our partners report the fact that **many teachers and trainers require developing their competences on this topic, while also that many are reluctant to focus on this as global citizenship is not well entrenched in the Polish society. Teachers are skeptical that Polish education institutions favour innovation and contribute to developing learning skills or competences that help learners adapt to current societies**¹¹.



CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation partner, [School With Class](#), a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization that provides educational support for the development of competences required for active participation in a 21st century society has ran an ERASMUS+ project titled Added Value, in partnership with organisations from Spain, Netherlands, and Ireland. The project provided an a new method of teaching math in European primary schools, fostering a transversal and holistic approach, that would move away from a passive, knowledge-transmission model of education.

Over 200 teachers from 260 education institutions took part in the project, being prepared to focus on the practical component of math. Teachers were provided lesson plans that contextualized objectives related to math courses in practical dimensions such as: designing

a dream class, organizing a school trip, or baking muffins. The lessons plans included ideas about water shortages, plastic waste, and other global challenges. A design-thinking methodology was applied, to encourage pupils to propose solutions to organizing various practical activities while making use of mathematics. 97% of the teachers using this methodology were pleased with the materials provided and with the impact of the course on pupils' learning of math. The innovative project materials can be found [here](#) in the 4 languages (English, Dutch, Spanish, and Polish) in an open-source format. This project serves as an example of innovative approaches to education, based on real life examples that are needed to develop the needed competences to participate in society. Such tools can facilitate the inclusion of global education across the entire school curriculum.

10 European Commission (2020). Country Report Poland 2020. 2020 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011. P.28. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0520&from=EN>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

11 Klinger, Klara (2019). Polska szkoła zabija myślenie. Winny jest system i podstawa programowa. Forsal. Available at: <https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1405096,edukacja-polska-szkola-zabija-myslenie.html>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.



Source: School with Class Foundation

Like in other EU countries, Polish education actors adapted impressively during the pandemic. The recent developments are both the evidence of great learning potential of Polish teachers and youth, and of the importance of non-formal and informal education in people's lives. The need to structurally increase the involvement of such education providers in education policy-making and implementation is also more visible now. Our partners reveal that the whole-school approach is uncommon, which hampers the development of transversal competences associated with global education. However, there are ad-hoc successful initiatives developing and they should be acknowledged by public authorities and relied upon.



CASE STUDY

School with Class Foundation emerged in October 2015 from a highly successful Polish educational programme which has been running since 2002. The Foundation is managing the implementation of the various projects operating under this programme which is aimed at pupils aged 7-18, encouraging schools to introduce new methods of teaching and to collaborate with their social environment. The programme reached 9500 schools, 150 teachers and over 1 million pupils in Poland. It is based on 6 principles, which have 30 special tasks associated: **The school educates each student well; The school ensures fair assessment; The school teaches how to think and understand the world; The school promotes social awareness and engagement; The school helps the students develop self-confidence, creates a good atmosphere; The school prepares its students for the future.**

As of September 2010, their flagship project is '[A School with Class 2.0](#)', which focused on strategies and models of ICTs use for the development of key academic, citizenship and social skills necessary for young global citizens. More recently, the scope of the project has expanded into challenges defined by the schools, for which they then implemented the project's methodology. The goal of the project is to involve all actors within a school (teachers, headmasters, pupils, coordinators) to collaborate together on identifying the challenges of the schools and then to develop solutions. The process lasts for one year, and each school benefits from trainings, mentor support through an online platform, and best practices exchange to reform their teaching practices as well as the functioning of the whole school.

CSOS IN POLICYMAKING

The examples above benefit tremendously the education sector, but for the moment there are no taskforces in Poland for global education, with education stakeholders being largely excluded from policymaking on this topic since 2015 [Grupa Zagranica](#), a Polish platform of civil society organizations, engaged in development cooperation, democracy support, humanitarian aid and global education, highlighted the absence of education stakeholders from discussions regarding Agenda 2030, which led to their position not being heard and to global education falling out of the agenda¹². **There are**

no references to [SDG 4.7](#)¹³ in Poland's sustainability strategy. Our partners state that the current state of neglect for global education is unsustainable, and that curricular reforms must reprioritize the topic. The current subject-based teaching and passive learning approaches must be replaced with a focus on 21st century skills and competences which assist learners in understanding and dealing with complex phenomena such as climate crisis, inequalities, injustices, power structures, global political and economic conflicts, migrations, new social movements, women's rights or pandemics and their consequences.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

COVID-19 AND EDUCATION

In [our latest Monitor edition](#) we highlighted gaps in terms of digital infrastructure and skills across Europe. Though Poland was not analysed, it confronted similar issues, magnified by COVID-19. Even before, nearly 50% of Polish citizens (16-74) lacked basic digital skills - below the EU average¹⁴. Poland switched to remote learning on 25 March 2020 and reopened facilities for the youngest learners in May, while final examinations for school pupils were held as planned¹⁵. Though it must be appreciated how all education actors responded to the

health crisis, the deficiencies in the educational system that led to complications to online learning must be pointed out. Only 15% of Polish teachers engaged in some form of online teaching before the pandemic, clearly requiring more support for this¹⁶. Moreover, OECD data reveals that 35% of school heads believe that an effective online learning support platform was available - well below the OECD average of 54%¹⁷. Only 67% of school heads agreed that professional resources for teachers to learn how to use digital devices are available¹⁸, a number impacting many learners that will not benefit from sufficiently prepared teachers.

12 Grupa Zagranica (2018). Uwagi Grupy Zagranica: W Ramach Konsultacji Społecznych Projektu Raportu z Realizacji Celów Zrównoważonego Rozwoju w Polsce. Available at: https://zagranica.org.pl/sites/zagranica.org.pl/files/attachments/Rzeczniectwo/Stanowiska/grupa_zagranica_konsultacje_vnr_pl_27-42018.pdf. Last accessed : 5 January 2021.

13 By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

14 European Commission (2020). Country Report Poland 2020. P.25.

15 INFOR (2020). Koronawirus. Od 25 marca 2020 r. szkoły mają obowiązek zdalnego nauczania. Available at: <https://samorzad.infor.pl/sektor/zadania/oswiata/3633634,Koronawirus-Od-25-marca-2020-r-szkoly-maja-obowiazek-zdalnego-nauczania.html>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

16 Projekt Centrum Cyfrowego (2020). Distance Education During the Pandemic. Available at: <https://centrumcyfrowe.pl/edukacja-zdalna/#English>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

17 OECD (2020). School Education during COVID-19 – Were teachers and students ready?: Country Note Poland. P.2. Available at : <http://www.oecd.org/education/Poland-coronavirus-education-country-note.pdf>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

18 OECD (2020). School Education during COVID-19 – Were teachers and students ready?: Country Note Poland. P.2

The government provided educational material on the [National Integrated Educational Platform](#), operational since 2012, hosting 6800 free materials. It has launched [a new platform for lesson planning for distance learning](#) meant to help teachers during lockdown of schools. However, considering the ageing profession, that does not feel valued and is underpaid¹⁹, and the mass protests organized by teacher unions²⁰ in 2019 there seems to be little support to ease teachers' workload and to remunerate them accordingly. New platforms and the extra material made available often mean further work on teachers. This is counterproductive to ensuring that digital tools are used in class. 25% of 1200 pupils across Poland surveyed by the University of Warsaw lacked access to devices for remote learning²¹. The scope is far larger, with 7.1% of Polish households with pupils not accessing remote learning at all due to a lack of equipment, while 17.3% of similar households reported deficiencies in accessing online learning. The difference between rural and urban households is striking, with 30% of the rural ones reporting this, while 17.1% of the urban ones sharing the same concern²².

Moreover, the Ministry of Education has not changed its approach to support, with teachers reporting difficulties in providing the lessons due to lack of equipment, lack of digital skills, difficulties in managing work-life balance during COVID-19²³ and

the national authorities are creating more difficulties rather than supporting the education staff is exacerbated by the 2017 education reform which used many resources to dissolve lower secondary schools, dividing learners between primary and secondary education²⁴. This reorganization was costly compared to its outcomes and contributed to underinvestment in education. The Ministry of Education was highlighted as improperly managing the start of the new academic year, with a physical reopening, coupled with a system deemed slow to react in terms of transitioning to hybrid or online forms. Teacher unions expressed concerns as to the risks and disruptions to education that this would cause²⁵. As of 26 October 2020, the school system appears as open²⁶, but with the skyrocketing number of cases²⁷ and with education establishments transitioning online, it seems that initial concerns have been proven.

CIVIL SOCIETY PROMOTING DIGITAL SKILLS

CSOs have been supporting formal education, and learners in various non-formal and informal ways. The importance of the work performed by them cannot be understated, while acknowledging their exclusion from education policy-making and from funding opportunities. The work performed during the pandemic, should serve as an opportunity for public authorities

19 European Commission (2019). Education and Training Monitor 2019 Poland. Pp.3-6. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2019-poland_en.pdf. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

20 Deutsche Welle (2019). Polish teachers go on strike over wages in dispute with government. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/polish-teachers-go-on-strike-over-wages-in-dispute-with-government/a-48256125#:~:text=Pushing%20for%20a%20wage%20increase,%E2%82%AC180%20to%20%E2%82%AC240>. Last accessed : 5 January 2021.

21 Plebańska, Marlena; Szyller, Aleksandra and Sieńczewska, Małgorzata (2020). Raport – Edukacja Zdalna W Czasach COVID-19. University of Warsaw. Available at: https://files.librus.pl/articles/00pic/20/07/09/librus/a_nauczanie_zdalne_oczami_nauczycieli_i_uczniow_RAPORT.pdf. Last accessed : 5 January 2021.

22 Statistics Poland (2018). Household Budget Survey 2017. Available at: <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/living-conditions/living-conditions/household-budget-survey-in-2017,2,12.html>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

23 Grupa Pracuj (2020). Praca zdalna rodziców w obliczu pandemii. Available at: <http://media.pracuj.pl/95122-praca-zdalna-rodzicow-w-obliczu-pandemii-badanie-pracujpl>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

24 European Commission (2020). Country Report Poland 2020. Pp.27-28.

25 Kość, Wojciech (2020). Despite coronavirus fears, Poland goes all in on reopening schools. Politico Europe. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/despite-coronavirus-fears-poland-goes-all-in-on-re-opening-schools/>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

26 UNESCO (2020). Education: From disruption to recovery. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

27 Reuters (2020). Poland's daily coronavirus cases top 5,000 but schools stay open. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-poland-idUSKBN26V0DW>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

School with Class, reorganized their open source materials library to allow teachers to find tools needed for distance learning. They organized 20 webinars for teachers and school leaders, reaching approximately 100000 people, and discussing practical themes such as inclusion in distance learning, methods for online teaching/learning, teambuilding and communication.



Source: School with Class Foundation



CASE STUDY

CSOs, such as School with Class Foundation, have been quicker than governmental actors to provide tools tailored for COVID-19 times. In partnership with other Polish NGOs, School With Class [developed a chatbot](#), affectionately called Edzia, which provides teachers with answers to questions regarding remote education. The chatbot is based on IBM Watson Technology and is embedded on School with Class' [official website](#). The chatbot is an easy

to use resource that provides support, and reveals the flexibility and creativity of NGOs that recognize issues on the ground, and provide alternatives tailored on citizens' needs. This is further reinforcement about the importance of funding such organisations, and supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships, but of also structurally relying on them in the development of non-formal and informal education, in partnership with formal education.

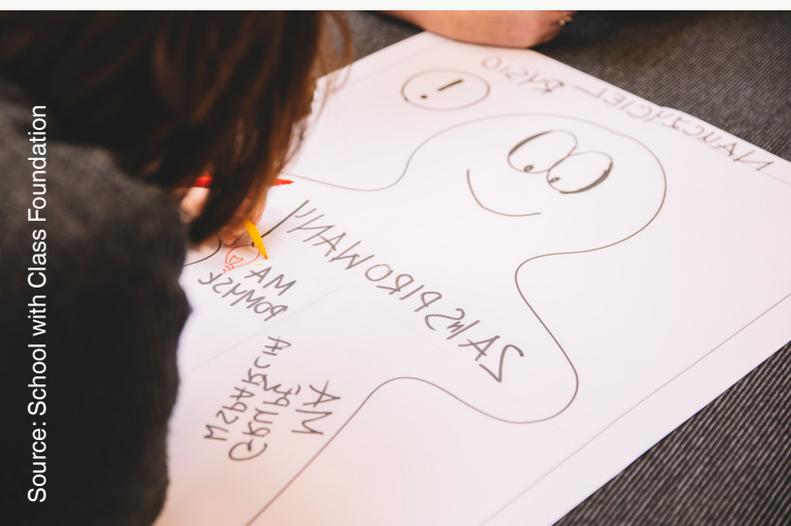
CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation partner, School with Class, is implementing Google's international programme, [Be Internet Awesome in Poland](#). The aim is preparing primary school children to be responsible citizens online. The development of such crucial skills is now more than ever needed, as it has been revealed the tremendous work needed to build competences for digital citizenship in Europe by our previous Monitor. The project takes different forms in each school and some examples can be observed below:

- ♦ [Let's be aware – let's share!](#) was a project run at the Catholic Primary School in Białystok. 14 pupils recorded videos about internet safety and presented them to the wider community, educating their peers about responsible behaviours online.

- ♦ How to be internet awesome? was a project implemented by Primary School no. 75 in Warsaw which had 9 pupils with various disabilities creating short movie scenes to show others that they should be aware of threats while using the internet, follow the rules of internet safety, ask others for help in strange or dangerous situations, protect their personal data, and control time while using the computer.

CSOs provide the tools for teachers to retrain and to adapt formal education to the practical requirements of the 21st century in a flexible manner which is less likely through large scale curricular reforms. For this reason, government authorities should open up to more partnerships with CSOs and to formalize processes of collaboration which would allow CSOs to provide the needed support to adapt the formal education to the ever-changing challenges in the current societies.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

The [Monitor's previous edition](#) focused on difficulties for providing intercultural learning in the absence of whole-school approaches and community partnerships. Mastering intercultural dialogue skills and thriving in societies where diversity is acknowledged and celebrated requires an immersion in an environment promoting peaceful co-existing and collaborating with peers from different backgrounds. Skills associated with this are essential in a globalized world, but even more so in a world where GCE must come at the forefront of any conversations to build the needed solidarity and empathy to work together towards fighting the climate emergency. As a result, this year's Monitor will look more at how CSOs and NGOs mobilise communities, engage in partnerships, and create an environment in which intercultural dialogue can be promoted in a lifelong and lifewide manner.

The Polish case study highlights numerous opportunities squandered by national authorities to prepare citizens to adapt to diverse and multicultural societies. An instance of this is the lack of governmental inclusion task forces which were dissolved in 2016, and though societies are increasingly polarized in Europe, they are deemed as non-important. This understanding of inclusion is representative for the Ministry of Education, which has removed, as of 2017, the requirement for the schools to undertake anti-discriminatory activities and this decision became a signal for the educational system that this is no longer a priority²⁸. Prior to 2015, our partners report the fact that the government was engaging education experts, and opening debates such as the ones that led to the elaboration of the [standards of antidiscrimination in education](#),

but since then, its current antagonistic position on the rights of sexual minorities expanded to intercultural education as well. The opposition to the LGBTQI community²⁹ is expanded to the CSOs sector at large, veering more towards an authoritarian ruling style which aims to control CSOs that receive foreign funding³⁰. This is not conducive to partnerships, to equal consideration of stakeholders and in general to the promotion of intercultural dialogue. The Polish way of living, reduced to a vision on monoculturalism, catholic values and traditional values, becomes a nationalistic exclusion tool that impacts the capacity for all people to access quality education and fulfil their potential based on their identity.

The same position cannot be associated with those local governments under control of other political parties than the ruling one. The local authorities in Warsaw, Gdansk, Wroclaw or Krakow have been far more supportive of inclusion topics and CSOs. Therefore, certain



Pawel Adamowicz, mayor of Gdansk, assassinated in a hate crime incident (source: New York Times)

28 INFOR (2017). Ministry of National Education Ordinance of August 11, 2017 on requirements for schools and institutions. Available at: https://www.infor.pl/akt-prawny/DZU.2017.166.0001611_rozporzadzenie-ministra-edukacji-narodowej-w-sprawie-wy-magan-wobec-szkol-i-placowek.html. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

29 Ojewska, Natalia (2020). Poland's culture war: LGBT people cornered by toxic politics are turning to civil disobedience.

30 Saleniece, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. P.95.

local authorities prove to be better partners for CSOs to operate on this topic. Even more, the national authorities are showing opposition to programmes set up by these local authorities. For example, the Office for Education in Warsaw initiated workshops for teachers in the project ‘Human rights friendly schools’, but immediately was under official scrutiny for the project potentially promoting values incompatible with the traditional view of the government. **Wrocław, Łódź, Kraków, Warsaw and other towns have been supporting and funding intercultural education in schools, showing an ad-hoc approach to this topic, in**

opposition to the official line of national authorities³¹. Therefore, cooperation on the topic is possible by allying with local authorities on a case-by-case basis depending on who is in power. Such a system is not conducive to ensuring all people have access to quality education and to combatting societal polarization.

CSOs have been also working in cooperation amongst them, creating a countermovement to national authorities and providing respite for those in need of intercultural education.

CASE STUDY

School with Class has been providing intercultural education through its ERASMUS+ project [Build European Solidarity for Today](#). Joined by SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners, [La Ligue de l'enseignement](#), [CIVES Fundacion](#), [Centre for Peace Studies](#) they have been implementing the project since 2016, with SOLIDAR Foundation member [ARCI](#) and the Slovenian organization [Humanitas](#) joining the project consortium in 2019. In the project, pupils are sending messages of solidarity and fraternity accompanied by photographs to various people in the world and waiting on replies back. The delivery messages occurs on the 21st of March, during the [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#). Prior

to this, pupils discuss with their teachers on topics of diversity and the different forms of discrimination, learn how to analyze images, have their curiosity and interest in others stimulated, develop critical thinking and imagination. This teaches them to speak openly and share their thoughts, analyze and confront their own prejudices. Before writing the postcard, students and their teachers discuss topics related to discrimination, migration, poverty, the growing lack of tolerance and different forms of marginalization. They learn to analyze and interpret modern photography, discover the various meanings behind images. Then they learn to express their thoughts and putdown on paper, thanks to participating in writing workshops.



31 Examples can be found here: <https://www.4kultury.pl/en/about-festival>

In Gdańsk a special intersectoral taskforce for integration of migrants was formed and created standards for local institutions to foster inclusion of “others”.

Our partners report that alliances established are hampered by the national government freezing progress on interculturality. Our partners, School with Class, have been building the capacity of members in Polish communities which contributes to their wish to further work on these topics and challenge the crippling position of the government. School with Class is mainly training teachers and educators, but

by developing various competences related to new methodologies in teaching, to including global education in formal education, to building up intercultural competences, the teachers are better equipped to adapt to the societal changes, and they are more keen on preparing their learners to adapt to the same circumstances.

FUNDING

Public expenditure on education overall in Poland, as part of the GDP, amounted to 4.9% in 2019, a significant decrease since 2009, when 5.4% was allocated for education. The amount, though still above the EU average, is insufficient given the current challenges, and cannot make up for the investment that was lost in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis³². Funding for GCE is generally coming from non-governmental bodies or via EU funding, as the national government is reluctant to fund this topic for the reasons discussed in the GCE section. Funding for the topic comes from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and has been decreasing in the recent years³³, again highlighting the fact that GCE is far from mainstreamed in Poland. The lack of available funding on GCE is linked with the low investment in education in general, which means even less willingness to focus on a topic that must be mainstreamed to adapt to the current structure of societies.

Regarding funding for digital education, this has been increasing in the recent years, but there seems to be no credible initiative to

increase the investment in light of COVID-19. The agile changes in funding for other sectors, especially given how some e-government procedures had to be adapted to cope with demands during lockdown, have not been replicated by the Ministry of Education or in general for funding related to education. The largest initiative for training teachers on distance teaching comes in fact from the Ministry of Digitalisation, while also relying on EU funding for this process, and it aims to train 75000 teachers starting with 2019 and until 2023³⁴. This represents around 15% of the teacher workforce, and represents the largest such initiative in Poland. This is clearly insufficient given our current conditions, and there is a need for further funding in education to be able to readapt many operations to digitalization. Upon discussions with government officials, our partners states that, for 2020, approximately 80 million euros were allocated for the government's Remote Schools initiative. This aimed to increase access to digital tools for schools, to provide 40000 tablets, while also having a component which encouraged private bodies to donate

32 European Commission (2019). Education and Training Monitor 2019 Poland. P.3.

33 Saleniec, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. P.31.

34 European Commission (2020). Digital Education at School in Europe. Eurydice report. P.56 . Available at : <https://op.europa.eu/publication-detail/-/publication/d7834ad0-ddac-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-105790537>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

digital equipment to schools without incurring taxation costs. Though such funding is welcome, it is insufficient for the entire education system, it cannot compensate the slow uptake in digital investment for education in the past years, it cannot compensate the cuts to education in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, and it does not even consider those learners in the rural areas that might have even more dire conditions linked to lack of access to a broadband internet connection. Regarding broadband connection, a fund was set to expand access to a fast internet connection to all Polish households by the end of 2020, but it is far from meeting this target, with only 66% of the household enjoying somewhat fast internet connection³⁵.

Intercultural dialogue and education are not prioritized by the government for the reasons mentioned above, while CSOs find themselves in a climate of reducing funding to be able to work on the topic. Our partners are pointing out the issue that far-right, nationalistic, religious and conservative organisations linked with the members of the ruling PiS have been receiving increased governmental funding through a new body created in 2017, the National Institute for Freedom, which was supposed to support the civil society in Poland³⁶. However, there is a risk that this funding becomes a clientelistic practice that serves to beef up the powers of organisations with a certain ideological profile, effectively stifling the civic space and the healthy opposition provided by the other CSOs.

35 European Commission (2020). Country Report Poland 2020. P.38.

36 Baczyński, Mateusz (2020). Miliony dla swoich. Tak PiS wspiera swoje organizacje, cz. 1. Available at : <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/pis-i-organizacje-pozarzadowe-partia-rzadzaca-przelewa-miliony-zl-dla-swoich/51d421f>. Last accessed: 5 January 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Develop a strategy for global citizenship education and engage in curricular reform to mainstream a topic currently needed.
- ◆ Increase investment in education and devise better training models for teachers on citizenship education and global citizenship education, while supporting more CSO involvement in formal education.
- ◆ Increase investment for closing digital infrastructure gaps, ensuring that every household with a school-aged learner has access to digital devices and broadband connection, while every household has access to fast broadband internet connection.
- ◆ Develop better training for digital skills development for teachers and trainers, ensuring that a usage of digital tools component is existent on any kind of ITE and CPD.
- ◆ Readapt curriculum for all topics to better mainstream the usage of digital tools in the classrooms even when there will be a return to in-person education.
- ◆ Create task forces on intercultural education and provide a platform for CSOs engaging in discussion on intercultural cooperation in education policy-making, but more broadly on inclusion related policy-making.
- ◆ Recognize that gender equality and LGBTQI* topics are not an ideology and every action aimed against them has broader implications on the capacity of Polish citizens to adequately participate in society.
- ◆ Promote the existing projects on the whole-school approach, overcome working in silos, and ensure that all education stakeholders can contribute to making the learning environment conducive towards developing global and transversal competences.
- ◆ Provide fair opportunities to access funds and other resources to all CSOs in Poland.

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