



CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING MONITOR 2020

CIVIC COMPETENCES AND LIFELONG
LEARNING FOR THE GREEN AND
DIGITAL TRANSITIONS:
IS EUROPE READY?

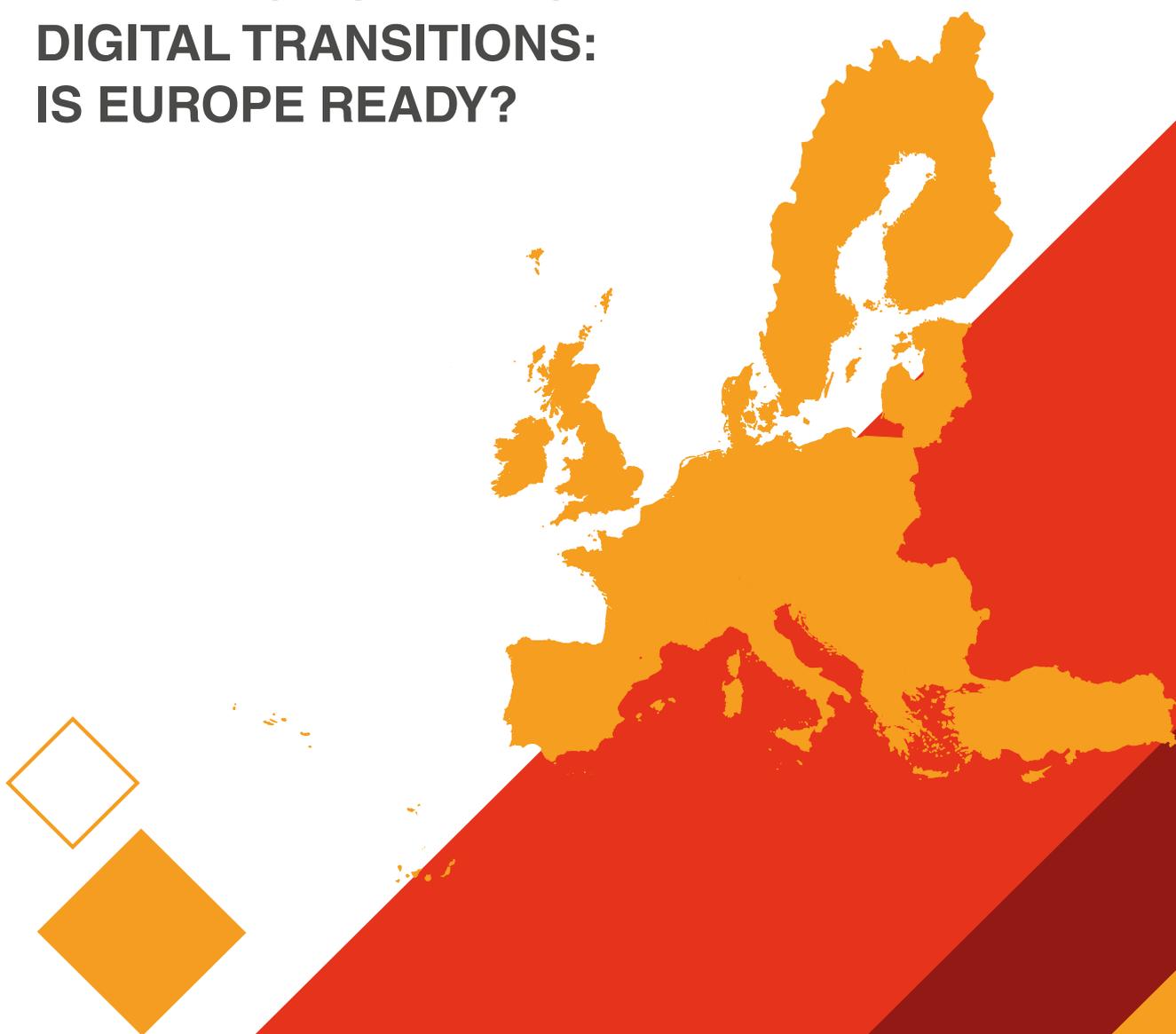


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ABSTRACT

The Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor is the SOLIDAR Foundation annual report on developments from national and European level regarding citizenship education and lifelong learning. The publication came amid heightened intercultural tensions, following a wave of terrorist attacks in the early 2010s. These tensions prompted the release of the [2015 Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education and to renew member states' commitment to promoting the EU identity and values](#).

The Monitor is based on three thematic areas from the 2015 Paris Declaration:

1. **Ensuring that people acquire civic and intercultural competencies.**
2. **Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly regarding internet and social media use.**
3. **Promoting intercultural dialogue.**

Structuring the data from case studies on nine countries – Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Poland, Estonia, Sweden, Italy, Spain and France – across the three themes, the report identifies trends in the way public authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) offer and support citizenship education. This year's edition was developed against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. Together, the two issues have made it clear that to achieve digital and green transitions, the global citizenship education (GCE) competences of all learners must be nurtured. In this context, GCE is not mainstreamed in formal education, while funding for it has increased but only incrementally and only in relation to GCE being provided as an extra

subject rather than a subject underpinning the entire lifelong learning process. For now, GCE is mostly limited to education for sustainable development. Many CSOs are promoting the topic far more actively than public authorities, providing a wide variety of expertise and of various projects of learning outside of formal education boundaries.

About 1.5 billion learners were affected by school closures caused by the pandemic, which has revealed the unpreparedness of educational systems and of learners to transition online. Not only was education impacted by the lack of digital skills and of digital resources, as this has led to an increase in the misinformation transmitted online regarding COVID-19, which has had dire impacts on the health situation of many citizens. Insufficient support in developing digital competencies and in closing digital infrastructure gaps prior to the pandemic have impacted the capacity of learners to adapt their lives in the current context. There is a need for public authorities to rethink their approach to digitalisation just as it is important for CSOs to boost their digital activism capacity considering that physical and digital citizenship are becoming enmeshed.

During the pandemic, solidarity within local communities was needed to support intercultural education and to strengthen the bonds between community members. Local partnerships have been explored in this report to consider how CSOs have been working with various stakeholders to deliver local projects that empower citizens to promote intercultural dialogue and adapt to a global 21st century society.

This report produces the evidence base for SOLIDAR Foundation and its members' advocacy strategy.

FOREWORD

For over two decades, lifelong learning has been a center piece of the social agenda of the European Union. It became a particularly forceful policy issue in 2021, when the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights started to be real. Our **Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020** presents all the necessary arguments to justify this policy focus, and also delivers recommendations for various European stakeholders.

European societies will soon have to rise from the recession triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. The recovery should lead to a new growth model, benefiting from the green and digital transitions. Our welfare states and investment policies also have to adapt to the conditions of the 21st century.

Based on data from nine European countries, the Monitor highlights the lack of sufficient support for investment in skills, and on average very slow improvement since the previous edition. The percentage of EU citizens with **basic digital skills** has increased only by 1% since 2019, while we are witnessing a lack of support for teachers in each type of education. **Underinvestment in education** has contributed to digital gaps which became even more obvious with regard to distance learning.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the damage done by COVID-19 beyond health conditions: there has been an intensification in xenophobic and nationalist rhetoric across Europe in 2020. Hence the fight to **promote intercultural and inclusive society** remains essential as before. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have to ensure that it is not the model of surveillance capitalism that is awaiting us.

Our readers would probably agree that **the role of civil society organisations is key** when it comes to promoting **lifelong learning**. They play an important part in mainstreaming the necessary skills, and they also play an indispensable role regarding the **inclusion of ethnic minorities**. They are perhaps the most essential players when it comes to developing the capacity of local communities to promote intercultural and inclusive societies.

Our recommendations are clear and simple. We need to promote various forms of collaboration between a wide range of education providers, including civil society organisations. We also need to protect decent **working conditions of teachers**. And we also need to invest in **training** of trainers and their institutions, and prioritize the **support to disadvantaged learners** for equitable chances.

In general, we have to work hand in hand to **set up avenues for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers to ensure a lifelong and life-wide learning approach to intercultural education, digital skills and global citizenship education. Very few of these elements are entirely new, but we need a genuinely new and all-European effort to succeed together.**

LÁSZLÓ ANDOR,
Secretary General (FEPS)



FEPS
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES



INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

The Monitor is SOLIDAR Foundation's study on European countries, taking stock of developments related to citizenship education and lifelong learning, to support its member organisations' work. Building on the previous reports, **the Monitor has the same fourfold objective** while its thematic focus evolved to build upon previous editions and to resonate with the ongoing social challenges:

- ◆ Collect data on European developments in global citizenship education (GCE) and citizenship education, and in the actions of Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) on these topics;
- ◆ Raise awareness of requirements for implementing GCE and of CSOs' needs pertinent to this, including necessary funding;
- ◆ Collate and disseminate best practices to facilitate cooperation and exchange of ideas that promote civic competencies across Europe;
- ◆ Support SOLIDAR Foundation's and its members' advocacy strategy for persuading EU decision-makers to act consistently with social investment via citizenship education and lifelong learning.

The 5th edition of the Monitor has a focus on the following countries studied in the year before: Serbia, Croatia, Italy and Spain. The new countries studied in this year, compared to the last, but who have been already evaluated in previous editions of the Monitor are: France, Sweden, Estonia, North Macedonia and Poland.

CONTEXT

The 5th edition of SOLIDAR Foundation's Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor remains grounded in the values promoted by the [2015 Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education](#). Namely, it promotes the work of SOLIDAR Foundation members on three of the Paris Declaration thematic areas:

- ◆ Ensuring that people acquire civic and intercultural competencies
- ◆ Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly regarding internet and social media use
- ◆ Promoting intercultural dialogue¹.

Though the objectives and values of the Paris Declaration remain essential for education, the context in which these competencies are transmitted changed significantly.

The European Commission adapted its upcoming plans around the concept of the twin transitions: green and digital². The urgency of addressing climate change underpins any endeavour given that an increase in the global temperature by 1.5 degrees Celsius would have devastating consequences³. Therefore, **civic competencies become an exercise in solidarity with all citizens, working together for challenges that require action from all**. The [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) have now been mainstreamed across Europe, as they are present across the European Semester⁴ and as the Agenda 2030

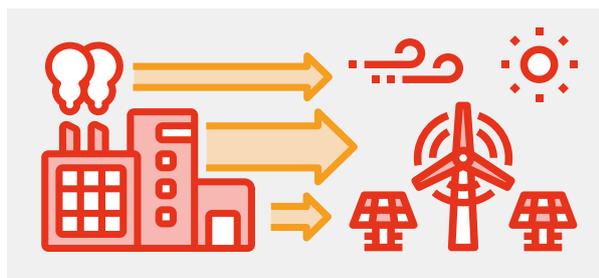
1 European Council (2015). Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. Informal meeting of European Union education ministers. Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

2 European Commission (2020). Making Europe's businesses future-ready: A new Industrial Strategy for a globally competitive, green and digital Europe. Press release, 10 March 2020. Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_416. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

3 IPCC (2018). Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.). Available at : https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15_Full_Report_High_Res.pdf. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

4 European Commission (2020). European Semester: Spring Package. Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/european-semester-timeline/eu-country-specific-recommendations_en. Last accessed: 31 January 2021.

informs the [European Green Deal](#). Previous Monitor editions explored citizenship education and democratic participation from a national perspective, or from a perspective that develops a European identity⁵. However, current global challenges are significantly difficult to tackle from a national perspective or in silos. The climate urgency requires concerted effort, and the way society is to be reorganised post-COVID-19 needs to develop around this.



Global citizenship education will therefore be the focus of this year's Monitor. To adapt to the green transition, and to make the [European Green Deal](#) a reality, there needs to be a paradigmatic shift in how citizenship education is provided. GCE can serve as the tool bringing about this change, and preparing citizens to adapt to the needs to switch to a greener economy. At the moment there is significant worry about skills obsolescence, particularly due to the trends of the green transition. On average, 14% of jobs in OECD countries could disappear due to automation, and the green transition will similarly impact certain sectors of employment. However, the low-carbon economy could yield as many as 30 million new jobs by 2030. This underscores the importance of preparing citizens to obtain the necessary skills to adapt to the 21st century. The challenge is that many adults are not engaged in learning, that adults with low levels of education are the ones less likely to engage in training, and that many adults do not see the need to engage in

such training. Public authorities need to provide more alignment of such training with the skills needed for the 21st century, they need to better invest in lifelong learning, and they need to acknowledge the importance of adequately preparing citizens⁶. GCE can prove to be a tool for reforming all types of learning, including adult learning, to meet the needs of the green transition.

As a result, the Monitor explores the current conceptualisation and standing of global citizenship education at the EU level and in the countries studied. This implies a look into the definitions employed by national and European authorities and by civil society organisations working on the topic, as well as a look into how it is mainstreamed in formal education – the curricular content, its presence in competence frameworks and teacher training, the implementation in education institutions. Moreover, the research will look into GCE's reference in national strategies/policies, into funding for GCE and into how GCE is approached by CSOs working on the ground. The Monitor will also consider how CSOs are engaged in policy-making on this topic.

Innovation has been advancing at an accelerated pace, with a wide variety of digital resources impacting how democratic participation is carried out and how education is performed. The COVID-19 outbreak hastened digitalisation worldwide while illuminating the European countries' unpreparedness to maintain access to the fundamental right of education to learners and the limited digital civic competencies that learners held⁷. The lack of digital skills has worked in tandem with inadequate competencies of media literacy to fuel what was called by the World Health Organisation (WHO) an 'infodemic' – an overabundance of information, some accurate and some not – that occurs

5 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019. Lucie Susova and Elisa Gambardella (eds.). SOLIDAR Foundation. Available at: https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/121/original/Citizenship_and_Lifelong_Learning_Monitor_2019_-_online.pdf?1587973552. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

6 Fernandes, Sofia and Kerneis, Klervi (2020). Towards an Individual Right to Adult Learning for All Europeans. The Jacques Delors Institute and The Foundation for European Progressive Studies. Available at: <https://www.feps-europe.eu/attachments/publications/lifelong%20learning%20-%20a4%20-%20def%201%20-%2088%20pages%20%204%20cover%20pp.pdf>. Last accessed: 4 February 2021.

7 European Parliament (2020). COVID-19: MEPs call for measures to close the digital gap in education. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20201016IPR89550/covid-19-meps-call-for-measures-to-close-the-digital-gap-in-education>. Last accessed: 31 January 2021.

during an epidemic⁸. At different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic people found it difficult to understand which were trustworthy sources of reporting, while social media has given voice to baseless conspiracy theories about the source of the disease, about the way the disease manifests, about potential ‘cures’ to the disease and about the vaccine, among many others. Media literacy and science literacy have been seen as the solutions to save more lives during the pandemic by ensuring that people can sift through the information that leads to irresponsible behaviour, in contradiction with indications from medical experts. People have to be empowered while they have access to social media to prevent the spread of misinformation and to be able to fight conspiracy theories⁹. The WHO has contributed to this by developing [its own guidelines for combating ‘infodemics’](#). This, of course, is just one aspect of how relevant education is, as a recent study by the University of Cambridge revealed that poor numerical literacy is linked to greater susceptibility to COVID-19 fake news¹⁰. An educated body of citizens is more capable of weathering crises and the public authorities must realise how essential civic competencies, on- and off-line, national and global, are and to prioritise them in their policy-making.

Furthermore, considering the vast inequalities in terms of digital skills attainment and access to digital infrastructure highlighted in the 2019 Monitor, more attention must be given to protecting human rights and preventing an unregulated expansion of technology for purely economic reasons, while also understanding how the findings of the previous Monitor impacted the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Civic and intercultural competences must be thought of in light of these developments,



and in light of global challenges and the digital society. The 2019 Monitor analysed digital citizenship from the perspective of the level of digital skills attainment and the digital resources that were available for citizens¹¹. However, considering the lack of preparation to switch to online learning during COVID-19, and considering 1.5 billion learners were affected by institutional closures during COVID-19¹², the current edition looks into **how CSOs and European countries delivered online learning and how to build up digitally active citizens**. The digital tools made available for people’s unexpected transition during COVID-19 implied increased interest in digitalisation, privacy and human rights concerns.

The Monitor will study funding during and after COVID-19 for digital education and for CSOs engaging in digital education activities, CSOs’ online lifelong learning activities and the barriers they experienced. Moreover, considering how the Brexit referendum result was put into question by online misuse of people’s data¹³, how cyber-bullying and misinformation online

8 WHO (2021). WHO Public Health Research Agenda for Managing Infodemics. Geneva: World Health Organisation. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240019508>. Last accessed: 4 February 2021.

9 Vraga, Emily; Tully, Melissa and Bode, Leticia (2020). Empowering Users to Respond to Misinformation about Covid-19. Media and Communication (Lisboa), 8(2), 475–479. Available at: https://iro.uiowa.edu/discovery/fulldisplay/al-ma9983941300002771/01IOWA_INST:ResearchRepository?tags=scholar. Last accessed: 4 February 2021.

10 Grover, Natalie (2020). Poor numerical literacy linked to greater susceptibility to Covid-19 fake news. The Guardian, 14 October 2020. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/14/poor-numerical-literacy-linked-to-greater-susceptibility-to-covid-19-fake-news>. Last accessed: 4 February 2021.

11 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019.

12 UNESCO (2020). Global Education Coalition: COVID-19 Education Response. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

13 BBC News UK (2020). Cambridge Analytica 'not involved' in Brexit referendum, says watchdog. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-54457407>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

are spreading, especially with the hastening of the post-truth society during the COVID-19 crisis¹⁴, there needs to be more attention paid to digital activism and to what citizens must do to be safe in the digital world. As the vile content put forward by the ‘White Lives Matter’ movement on social media is drowned out by online counteractions¹⁵, there must be a realisation that a digital community has to be built and digital activism has to be taught. The research will look into what the CSOs are doing on the topic of digital activism.

Last year’s edition also looked into the whole-school approach from the perspective of the education stakeholders outside of formal education that can contribute to a comprehensive intercultural learning experience for pupils¹⁶. This year’s edition will consider **how CSOs are building partnerships inside communities, and how their participation is necessary to promote intercultural education**. The study will highlight in what partnerships our members are engaged and how they use those partnerships to promote intercultural education at local, regional and national level. The research will take stock of their participation in national working groups, thematic platforms, stakeholder groups. It will consider the avenues that they use to engage in policymaking related to interculturalism. The research also follows what SOLIDAR Foundation members have been doing in terms of community organising and community-project implementation, considering the actions, strategies and resources they allocate to this, and accounting for their work in the community.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a mixed methodology that includes a survey applied on SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners, semi-structured interviews with the survey respondents, and desk research. The desk research relies on

primary sources such as national education curricula, national sustainable development/environment strategies and digital strategies/policy initiatives. It also relies on EU reports - the Education and Training Monitor, the European Semester Country Reports – and on EU data from the European Digital Media Observatory, the Digital Economy and Society Index, Eurydice and the Joint Research Centre, but also on data from UNESCO and OECD. The aim is to build cross-national comparisons on GCE’s status at national level, on participation in online learning during COVID-19, on access to digital tools and infrastructure, on investments in digitalisation and on CSOs’ participation in multi-stakeholder policy-making on GCE and digital learning.

The questionnaire collects data on GCE’s presence in national strategies, on the GCE curriculum in formal education, on the methodology of implementing GCE but also on the preparation of education professionals to implement GCE. It accounts for how education was provided during COVID-19 and for the digital resources existent in Europe to ensure distance learning. The questionnaire will collect data on the work of SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners in continuing their GCE and digital learning activities, as well as on the intercultural projects that they developed in local communities. The questionnaire looks into contingency plans developed for online learning during COVID-19 and, building on the 2019 Monitor edition, focusing on how the prior gaps in the attainment of [DigComp 2.1](#) competences worsened the impact of COVID-19. The questionnaire considers what CSOs have been doing to promote online learning, on the challenges and gaps that they experienced during the outbreak in terms of digital operations, and specifically on how they engaged in digital activism. Lastly, it maps current partnerships that members and partners built locally, nationally and at European level for the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

14 Shelton, Taylor (2020). A post-truth pandemic?. *Big Data & Society*, 1-6. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2053951720965612>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

15 BBC News UK (2020). K-pop fans drown out #WhiteLivesMatter hashtag. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52922035>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

16 Frank, Andrei (2020). *Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019*.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

MAIN FINDINGS ACROSS EUROPE

Global citizenship education is down-scaled in four of the studied countries while the upscaling occurring in two countries is too slow to meet the Agenda 2030 targets.

Global citizenship education is disproportionately focused on education for sustainable development or environmental education.

Global citizenship education is not mainstreamed in formal education and remains associated with external action rather than internal paradigmatic shifts.

Teachers are insufficiently supported to implement GCE; their working conditions are precarious, support staff is missing, training to include GCE is inadequate or missing, the whole-school approach is missing.

CSOs have been implementing ad-hoc collaborations to advance GCE in lifelong learning processes while filling in gaps from public authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase investment in GCE and ensure that ministries of education are also providing funding for GCE and establishing structural cooperation with other ministries for comprehensive funding schemes.

Mainstream GCE in formal education while implementing the whole-school approach to ensure that its cross-curricular nature will not frustrate its implementation.

Provide better training for teachers on GCE while also providing them the conditions and time to engage in training.

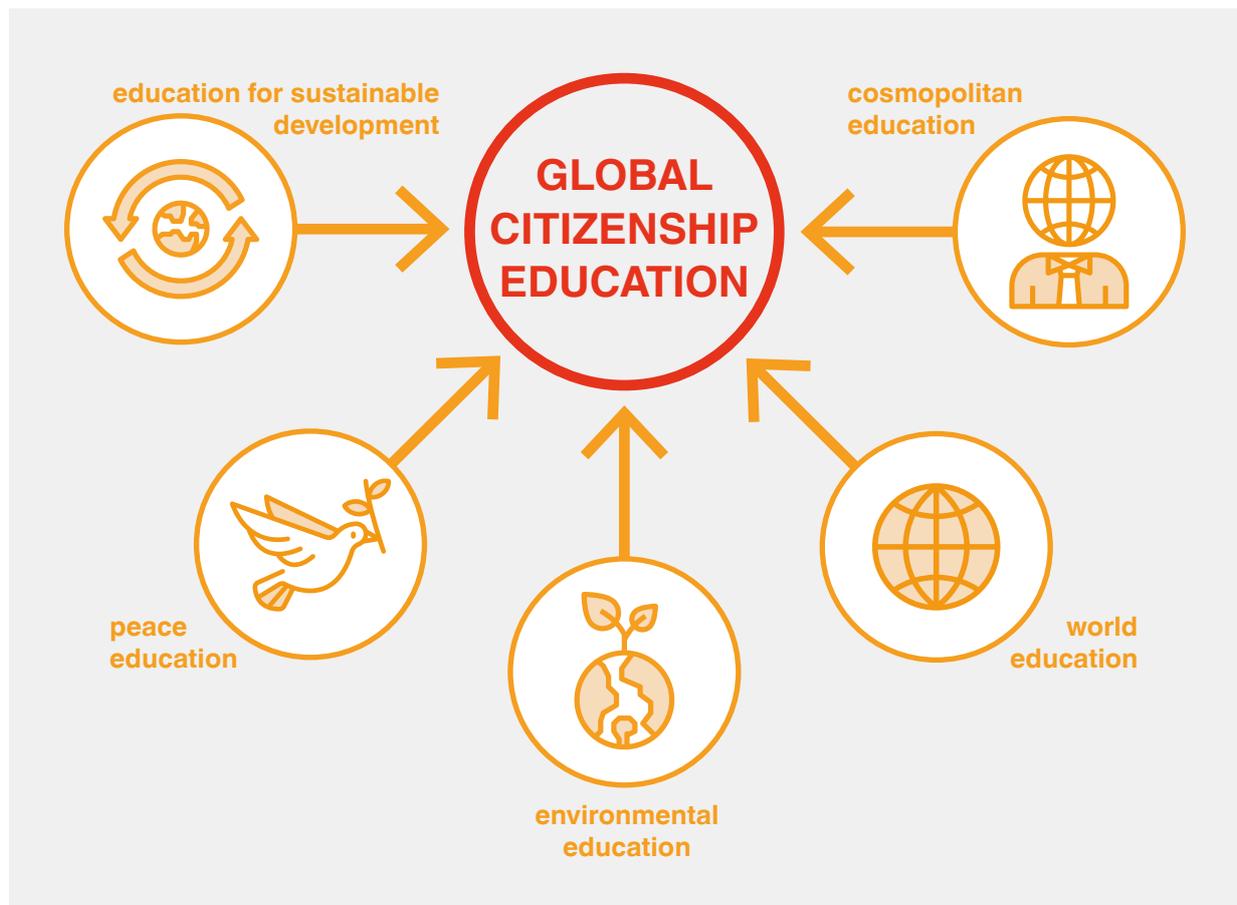
Ensure GCE is part of initial teacher training.

Set up avenues for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers to be able to develop the transversal skills needed for GCE in a lifelong and life-wide learning approach.

CONCEPTS

GCE is not a universally applied concept, having multiple conceptualizations across Europe, or having parts of it favoured more in some countries rather than others. Each national report annexed to this European overview explains the definitions used in each country. For this overview, definitions employed at EU and international level will be discussed but it is important to fully clarify the definition that SOLIDAR Foundation uses. According to SOLIDAR Foundation's recently published [Global Citizenship Education Policy Paper](#), the definition employed is the one put forward by Professor Vanessa Andreotti of the University of British Columbia. She understands GCE to be political education on a global scale. This prepares learners to develop a sense of belonging to the global community, and take an active role in society to contribute to a peaceful, just world in

which ecological resources are preserved. She explains that key challenges such as migration, climate change, digitalisation and peacekeeping are global in nature and cannot be tackled within a nation-state framework alone¹⁷. This is the global perspective that SOLIDAR Foundation uses and, based on this, perspectives from the EU and international level will be considered. The reason for this all-encompassing definition that also requires a paradigmatic shift to how education is being done is that the climate crisis requires an urgent and comprehensive response. **To ensure that people have the competencies to adapt to a green transition that tackles the climate crisis, but also that they claim ownership over this approach for saving the environment, there is a need to revamp education and lifelong learning**, conceptualising citizens' learning experiences in a global context and in a participatory and practical format.



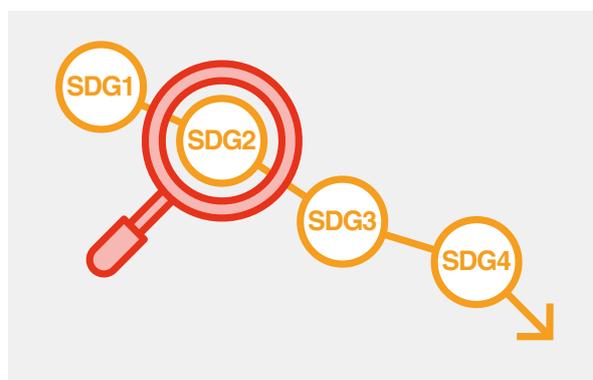
17 Frank, Andrei (2020). Global Citizenship Education. Elisa Gambardella (ed.). SOLIDAR Foundation Policy Paper. Available at : https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/148/original/GCE_Policy_Paper.pdf?1594110914. Last accessed" 30 January 2021.

For this reason, the citizenship education envisioned in the previous Monitor editions is no longer sufficient while the current national focus on GCE is insufficient and risks undermining any environmental policy, including the European Green Deal.

THE SITUATION IN EUROPE

Concepts of GCE were used as early as the 1970s by the EU and its precursors, but usually in connection with development education. It is from this work that the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme emerged¹⁸. This represents the main source of funding for GCE coming from the EU and it encompasses work that goes from education for sustainable development, to the impact of the colonial legacy on third countries, to democratic principles¹⁹. This is complemented by the work on European citizenship education that the EU also performs. However, the two strains of education are separated between the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (the former DG DEVCO) and the Directorate-General for Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), and lack sufficient connections among each other to ensure that a coherent vision of citizenship is being enacted. The funding for the DEAR programme is yet to be determined. However, the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) foresees a decrease of 10.6% in the funding for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) compared to the previous financial period. Moreover, the bulk of this funding will be dedicated to the geographic programming, investing outside of the EU while

only 6.36 billion EUR are foreseen for thematic programmes, under which the DEAR programme would find itself. These numbers also represent a decrease from the proposals made by the European Commission regarding the budget for NDICI. The leaders of the EU member states have failed to see the importance of global citizenship education during a global pandemic that has at many steps revealed an antiquated approach to civic competence building across Europe²⁰. This is problematic also because it seems that the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 and [Agenda 2030](#) have been taken more lightly by the so-called developed countries, including European ones, compared to countries from other continents. This assumption that the work of European countries on SDGs is almost done is not true, with no European country being on track to meet its targets on all 17 SDGs²¹. **The EU needs to shift its perspective on GCE internally, ensuring that it is not limited only to environmental education and that GCE and European citizenship education become more attuned to each other.** The upcoming European programming period will crucially define the ambitions of the EU in this sense.



18 Vilos, Caroline (2021). EU DEAR briefing 2020. European Union: Capacity4dev. Pp.3-6. Available at: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear/documents/eu-dear-briefing-2020>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

19 European Union (2020). DEAR: Development Education and Awareness Raising Programme. Available at: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

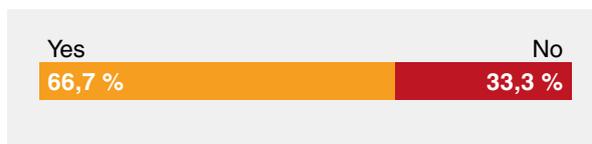
20 European Commission (2020). European Commission welcomes political agreement on future €79.5 billion for a new instrument to finance the EU external action and lead the global recovery through international partnerships. European Commission Press Corner. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2453. Last accessed: 9 February 2021.

21 SDSN and IEEP (2020). The 2020 Europe Sustainable Development Report: Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Institute for European Environmental Policy: Paris and Brussels. Available at: https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2020/europe_sustainable_development_report_2020.pdf. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

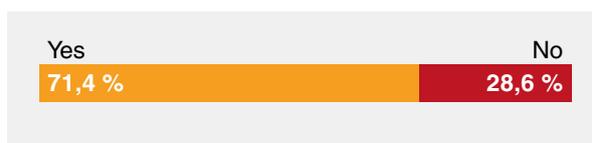
UNESCO's definition is more encompassing than the EU's, while stemming from the Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1974) and advancing SDG 4.7 – to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development by 2030. The UNESCO definition states that GCE aims to instil in learners the values, attitudes and behaviours that support responsible global citizenship: creativity, innovation and commitment to peace, human rights and sustainable development²².

Though the theoretical background to global citizenship education is robust and, at statement level, the international and supranational bodies have been promoting GCE, it is not becoming a reality at national level in Europe, with the different education stakeholders and the public authorities not internalising the importance of education as a building block for any reform for protecting the environment. There even seems to be an increase in unfavourable attitudes towards GCE in many European countries while the 2008-2009 economic crisis and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had and will have dire impacts on the resources available to implement GCE²³. From the graphs below it can be observed that most SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners identify that the national authorities use the term GCE and include it in sustainability strategies.

Members and partners reporting usage of the term 'global citizenship education' by national authorities



Members and partners reporting the existence of sustainable development policy documents in their country



But, 70% of the respondents to the survey claimed that formal education was not exploring the worldwide resonance of local/national issues, while over 80% of respondents explained that the whole-school approach was missing as a structural component of the way schools approach GCE. This reflects how **the national authorities are not putting into practice the actions needed to meet SDG 4.7.**

Members and partners reporting on formal citizenship education in their country exploring worldwide resonance of local/national issues



Members and partners reporting on GCE underpinning the whole-school approach in their countries



²² UNESCO (2020). Global citizenship education. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

²³ Vilos, Caroline (2021). EU DEAR briefing 2020. P.13.

The subject is a cross-curricular topic or is part of citizenship education, which can be a cross-curricular topic as well but it is more likely to be a stand-alone topic. The issue with this is that, out of the studied countries, only Italy instituted education for sustainable development, namely a part of GCE, as a mandatory topic, setting a clear goal in terms of academic hours committed across all subjects to approach this topic²⁴. In the absence of such regulations, SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners in Poland, Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia report that the topic is highly neglected²⁵. The most recent educational reform in Poland, from 2017, decreased the importance of citizenship education and eliminated the project-element that encompassed GCE²⁶. The citizenship education curriculum has not been updated since 2001 in Serbia²⁷, while the government seems to engage in a reduction of the freedom of NGOs and CSOs working on green topics, by cutting their funding and investing in governmental non-governmental organisations (GONGOs) which are crowding out the organically formed civil society and non-governmental organisations²⁸. A positive improvement comes from Spain, where the new organic law for education was passed at the end of 2020, effectively reforming citizenship education curriculum to include GCE. The new reform envisions training for teachers, goals for how to include a global perspective across all subjects and milestones to be met until 2025²⁹. However, the positive steps from Italy and Spain come a little too late while also are not sufficiently ambitious

considering the fast-approaching end of the Agenda 2030 and the climate crisis.



The reduced commitment to GCE from the side of national authorities is linked to insufficient funding for the building blocks that ensure GCE gets properly implemented.

The issues identified with the support provided to the teaching profession in the previous Monitor have continued. Teacher shortages and an ageing teaching profession is identified across the entire Europe, while the remuneration of teachers is below that of similarly well-educated professions and their workload continues to increase³⁰. A high percentage of the teaching working force is employed on temporary and precarious contracts in Italy and Spain with a high turnover of the teaching staff³¹. Moreover,

24 UNESCO's International Bureau for Education (2020). Is Italy the first country to require Climate Change Education in all schools?. Available at: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/news/italy-first-country-require-climate-change-education-all-schools>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

25 See national reports for Poland, Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia.

26 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-spoleczenstwie>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

27 Orlovic Lovren, Violeta et al. (2019). Sustainable Development: Between Global Policy and Teachers' Conceptions. In Quality of Education: Global Development Goals and Local Strategies, Violeta Orlovic Lovren, Jan Peeters and Natasa Matovic (eds). Pp.99-116. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335025470_Sustainable_Development_Between_Global_Policy_and_Teachers'_Conceptions. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

28 Gradjanske Inicijative (2020). The operating environment for civil society in Serbia is still far from EU standards. Press release, 9 October 2020. Available at: <https://www.gradjanske.org/okruzenje-za-delovanje-civilnog-drustva-i-dalje-daleko-od-eu-standarda/>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

29 Head of State of Spain (2020). Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación. Available at: https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2020-17264. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

30 European Commission (2020). Education and training monitor 2020: Teaching and learning in a digital age. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/92c621ce-2494-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-188974995>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

31 See the national reports for Italy and Spain.

teachers in Europe are not supported by specialised personnel that would facilitate the whole-school approach and encourage a holistic implementation of GCE. Estonia reports the lack of support staff members³² while 50% of the vacancies in education at the start of the previous academic year in Italy have not been covered³³. Teachers report a need for further training on cross-curricular competences and on GCE in Estonia and Poland³⁴. In this case, teachers have many incentives to avoid putting an extra effort on GCE given how many other tasks they have to consider and especially because, as a cross-curricular topic, it would require the cooperation of all education practitioners within an educational institution. However, this is reported as unfeasible given that the whole-school approach is not being structurally implemented in Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia based on SOLIDAR Foundation members' and partners' input³⁵.

Beyond this, any strategy on GCE has not been backed with sufficient investment in education, which still has not returned to pre-crisis levels. The investment in the educational systems of Estonia and Sweden has been slightly more encouraging and the well-praised model of education in those countries has been paying off in terms of ensuring that the learners have very high civic competencies³⁶. However, it must be noted that even in those countries, the focus on GCE is reduced to environmental education or to education for sustainable development, which raises questions for the future on whether their learners will be able to maintain the same level of competencies in a world that

becomes increasingly globalised³⁷. Another issue, beyond funding, that frustrates the implementation of GCE is the **ideological tensions existent in many of the studied countries**. In France, citizenship education teachers are worried after one of their own was murdered teaching concepts consistent with GCE. The polarisation in French society is not being mitigated by authorities, which has an impact on how GCE is approached next³⁸. The Polish authorities go one step further by fostering a nationalistic atmosphere in which the topic of GCE is seen as threatening to the values of family unity and Christianity that the ruling party is promoting³⁹. The Serbian context conforms to something similar, as mentioned above, while the Croatian SOLIDAR Foundation members report an increase in far-right sentiments which are not yet sufficiently dealt with by the authorities even if the CSOs have been raising alarms over the implications of this⁴⁰. Italy has gone through a coalition government that boasted far right Lega Nord ministers that were outright science-deniers, a situation inconsistent with any environmental policy that was developed⁴¹. Moreover, the political stability in Italy has been an issue in the past years, with governments being replaced or finding themselves in governance crises⁴² that only frustrate the long-term educational planning.

Under these circumstances, it is inspiring to consider that learners themselves have showed tremendous promise even in the context of lacking the pre-conditions to engage in GCE. Learners in Croatia, North Macedonia and Poland have showed significant

32 European Commission (2019). Education and Training Monitor 2019 Estonia. P.4. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2019-estonia_en.pdf. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

33 European Commission (2020). Country Report Italy 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.40. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0511&from=EN>. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

34 See the national reports for Estonia and Poland.

35 See the national reports from Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia.

36 See the national reports for Sweden and Estonia.

37 Ibid.

38 See the national report for France.

39 See the national report for Poland.

40 See the national reports for Serbia and Croatia.

41 Hodal, Kate (2019). Italy to put sustainability and climate at heart of learning in schools. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/nov/06/italy-to-school-students-in-sustainability-and-climate-crisis>. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

42 Taylor, Adam (2019). Why Italian governments so often end in collapse. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com%2fworld%2f2019%2f08%2f20%2fwwhy-italian-governments-so-often-end-collapse%2f. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

global competencies in the latest PISA 2018 test results, which is paradoxical given the little support GCE has in formal education. Learners in Serbia, finding themselves in the same situation, exhibit lower global competencies but an increased interest in being willing to learn more on the topic if they would have the opportunity. Learners in Italy and France reveal poor global competencies, which is highly worrying in societies that are becoming more and more intercultural and global. The competencies in Estonia and Sweden are reported as high, as mentioned above⁴³. Therefore, overall, the learners are showing significant promise on this topic, but the current paradoxical situation is not sustainable, and their skills will worsen with insufficient support allocated for GCE.

SOLIDAR FOUNDATION MEMBERS' ROLE IN GCE

In the context illustrated above, it has been inspiring to see how non-formal and informal education providers, specifically

the members and partners of SOLIDAR Foundation, have been compensating for these gaps in the provision of GCE and have continued to provide programmes that prepare learners for the 21st century in a lifelong and life-wide manner. The whole-school approach is being implemented, at least on an ad hoc basis, in schools that cooperate with other education stakeholders to meet learners' needs. Various examples of how this work is being performed in Croatia, Serbia and Poland can be found in the text-box below. Even if these represent best practices and must be adapted to the specificity of each context, it must be acknowledged that they need to be better supported to ensure that they are replicated across the entire territories. **It is important for all learners to have access to this type of education and it is important for public authorities to provide adequate financial support to these non-formal and informal education providers while ensuring that avenues of cooperation among all education stakeholders become the norm.**



43 OECD (2020). PISA 2018 Results Volume VI - Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/OECD/edu/pisa-2018-results-volume-vi-are-students-ready-to-thrive-in-an-interconnected-world>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

THE WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH FACILITATING GCE

CROATIAN CASE STUDY: ECO-SCHOOLS

The whole-school approach empowers learners to take part in designing the educational process. When this is linked with global citizenship education, they can develop their transversal competencies by participating in the school's effort for change. Such an example can be seen at the Pula Gymnasium, in Croatia's Istria region. [The school has been certified as an eco-school since 2001, including internationally in 2011.](#) This means there is an eco-board that develops environmentally friendly activities around the general curriculum. The board is composed of 56 pupils, underlining the point that change must come from within and pupils must be empowered to be actors of change, so that they become active citizens later on. The rest of the board is composed of teachers helping the pupils with this planning and ensuring that their planning would affect different courses and not just the generic civic education one. More can be read about their activities, ethos and curriculum in the Croatian national report.

SERBIAN CASE STUDY: A GREEN PLATFORM FOR ALL

The Green Initiative (GI) started relaunching its activities in 2020. SOLIDAR Foundation member IDC is a founding partner of this alliance and is leading the relaunch. The first main activity planned for the revamped GI will take place in 2021 and represent the development of a multimedia platform called Recycling Educational Center (REC) which will include and engage children, youth, adults and students of all ages and levels from a lifelong learning perspective. It aims to promote better planning and management of environmental protection with constant involvement

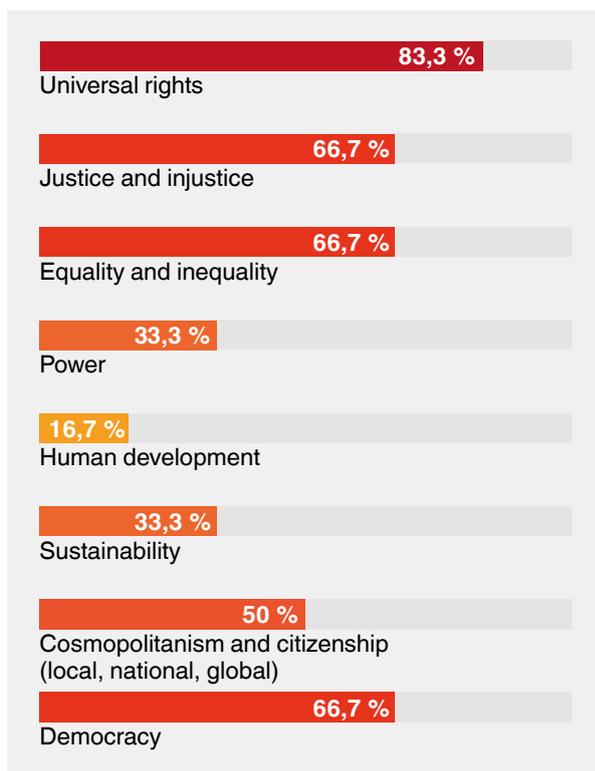
from all relevant stakeholders. It also aims to promote sustainable and efficient work by CSOs dealing with the environment, with greater participation from and support for citizens to increase public awareness and involvement in environmental reform processes, and to provide greater visibility for CSOs dealing with the environment. Such platforms serve as resources for all education stakeholders to collaborate.

POLISH CASE STUDY: THE WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH CHANGING THE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

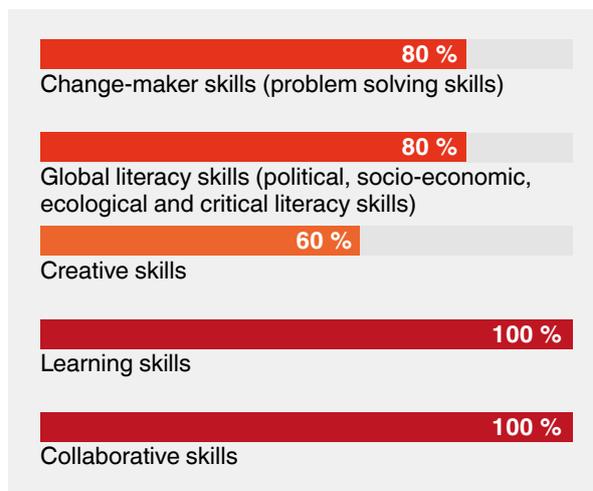
SOLIDAR Foundation partner School with Class Foundation emerged in October 2015 from a highly successful Polish educational programme which has been running since 2002. The Foundation is managing the implementation of the various projects operating under this programme aimed at pupils aged 7-18, encouraging schools to introduce new methods of teaching and to collaborate with their social environment. The programme reached 9,500 schools, 150 teachers and over 1 million pupils in Poland. Their flagship project, started in September 2010, is '[A School with Class 2.0](#)', which supports schools in tackling the challenges they define, by providing the schools with the project's methodology. The goal of the project is to get all actors within a school (teachers, headmasters, pupils, coordinators) to collaborate in identifying the school's challenges and develop solutions. The process lasts for one year, and each school benefits from training, mentor support through an online platform and best practices exchange to reform their teaching practices as well as the functioning of the whole school. More can be read about this in the Polish national report.

As GCE is not yet strongly represented on political agendas across Europe, SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners had difficulties in determining how to organise their work around the topic. There are moments when their work does not necessarily reflect a comprehensive vision of GCE, or one that trickled down through all their activities. Therefore, it is important to be reflective also on the way the third sector organisations have to adapt their work to the 21st century requirements. The graphs below show the topics covered by the programmes of these members and partners. It can be seen that **less than half of them work on developing creative skills, on human development, on power, on sustainability or on the prevention of extremism.**

Members and partners reporting the following topics as part of their GCE programmes



Members and partners reporting the following competence areas as part of their GCE programmes



These are significant gaps for achieving a comprehensive vision of GCE. However, for their experience overall with GCE topics, these organisations have to be recognised and involved in policy-making. This would also provide them with the resources to intensify their work on GCE. The graph below reveals how little influence the members and partners have over policy-making, operating on the fringes of the decision-making process, and many times having even their advocacy and research ignored.

An important reason for which the above situation has to be changed is because of **the expertise that these organisations have on the ground** when it comes to GCE. **They have identified the following topics as missing from the education curricula**, expressing important needs of the learners:

- ◆ Decent work in the globalised green and circular economy
- ◆ Diversity, discrimination, racism
- ◆ Feminism in the new society; sexual and gender identity
- ◆ Human mobility and migration

- ♦ Solidarity, social justice and democratic participation
- ♦ Social and ecological costs of the postcolonial, imperialistic way of living⁴⁴

They expressed the importance of multi-stakeholder collaborations and of providing teachers with the needed tools to implement GCE, but even more importantly, some have already provided a vision of how GCE can be implemented, providing a blueprint based on their work that simplifies the work of public authorities⁴⁵. The case study below accounts for this vision, but it is time for the decision-makers at national and European level to understand that there is no more time when it comes to the current

global challenges, and that action in tackling this involves providing every learner with the skillset to manage this situation. **The eager young learners who have already proved their desire to learn in the latest PISA test results have also taken to the street in the most recent climate protests.** They are aware of the challenges ahead and they want coherent, comprehensive actions that unite all policy fields in devising a crosscutting strategy to save the environment. This also implies aligning the policies of other departments with the ones for education.



CASE STUDY: A STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

SOLIDAR Foundation member [Solidarité Laïque](#) is a federation of 50 organisations across different sectors: public teaching, popular education and social and solidarity economy, working in 20 countries to promote education as a fundamental right. It has developed [a report](#) on the situation of education for sustainable development in France that includes methodologies to include education for sustainable development in a way that develops the learners' transversal competencies and ensures that they turn the academic content they are subjected to into reality in their daily lives.

Though education for sustainable development is just part of GCE and more mainstreamed across Europe, many learners do not even have access to it. Therefore, the lessons learned from here can be expanded to other GCE topics in time. [Solidarité Laïque](#) encourages a hands-on approach to teaching based on projects, while accounting for the realities of the diverse student body. Peer-mentoring and interdisciplinarity are key elements that need to be fostered in order for the rest of their educational model to function. More about this tried-and-tested methodology can be found in [Solidarité Laïque's report](#).

⁴⁴ Frank, Andrei (2020). Global citizenship education.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

MAIN FINDINGS ACROSS EUROPE

Underinvestment in education has contributed to digital gaps.

18% of teachers in Europe required more training on ICT before the pandemic.

Setbacks of up to 10 points in PISA test results could occur due to lack of resources, skills and preparedness to engage in distance learning.

EU discrepancy in access to digital resources as well as regional discrepancies within EU states lead to inequity in education.

The percentage of EU citizens with basic digital skills has increased only by 1% from the previous edition, reaching 58%.

A rise in surveillance capitalism experienced in light of COVID-19.

CSOs are not yet sufficiently prepared for digital activism.

CSOs have provided digital support for teachers, providing a lifelong and life-wide perspective to learning and closing the gaps left open by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CSOs have provided digital alternatives to mainstreamed options that promote surveillance capitalism.

CSO activism prevented governmental abuses in the digital environment during the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Close digital infrastructure gaps by increasing investment in the digitalisation of education institutions.

Provide better training on ICT inclusion in the classroom for teachers, ensuring also that ICT is implemented in the classroom and monitoring this process.

Ensure access to digital resources is a public good, which implies also increased investment to ensure that all households have access to ultrafast broadband connection.

Adapt the formal education curriculum to ensure that ICT usage and ICT skills are better represented across all topics.

Prevent the private interests from impacting the educational process and especially ensure that surveillance capitalism is not a common occurrence in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

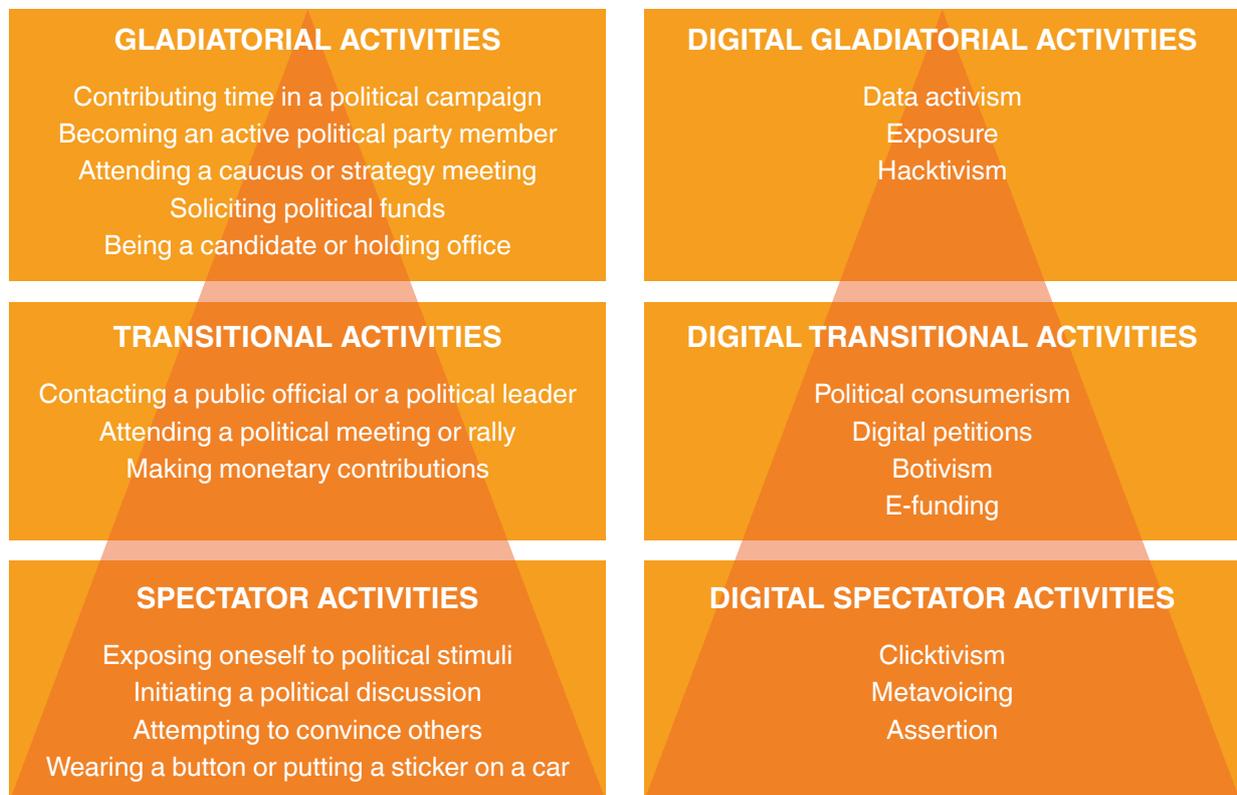
Introduce new technology in education only after adequate research has been done over its impact and only if it is in the best interest of learners.

Set up avenues for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers as this can ensure better support in developing digital skills, accessing digital infrastructure and ensuring equity in society by having additional support for disadvantaged groups.

CONCEPTS

Relying on the same definition of digital citizenship as in the previous edition, set out by the Council of Europe⁴⁶, the research delves into understanding whether the European citizens had access to the digital resources and digital knowledge to continue their societal participation and lifelong learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, **an additional component to last year’s research will reflect on transitions that occur in how SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners continue their work in light of a hastened process of digitalisation.** Therefore,

the last part of this chapter will categorise our members and partners that have contributed to this report under a taxonomy for digital activism developed by Jordana George and Dorothy Leidner⁴⁷, while using inputs from the work of Mary Joyce⁴⁸. George and Leidner relied on an extensive literature review to classify the different levels of engagement of a social movement, which they then transitioned into a similar pyramid of levels in which the physical actions of engagement were replicated in the online context. Milbrath’s hierarchy of political participation laid at the basis of their classification of physical actions as they designed their hierarchy of digital activism⁴⁹.



Milbrath's classification

George and Leidner's classification

46 Frau-Meigs, Divina; O'Neill, Brian; Soriani, Alessandro and Tome, Vitor (2017). Digital Citizenship Education: Overview and new perspectives. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-187117-gbr-2511-digital-citizenship-literature-review-8432-web-1/168077bc6a>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

47 George, Jordana and Leidner, Dorothy (2019). From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism. Information and Organisation, 29 (3). Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1471772717303470>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

48 Joyce, Mary (2010). Digital Activism Decoded: The New Mechanics of Change. Available at: <https://murdoch.is/papers/digiact10all.pdf>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

49 George, Jordana and Lediner, Dorothy (2019). From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism. Pp.5-6.

Sections of our survey were inspired by the political activities they identified, checking if SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners were engaging here, so we could categorise them and see how well they were adjusting to a changed approach to activism. Members and partners were questioned on whether or not they performed some of the following online activities: liking, upvoting, following, sharing, retweeting, reposting, commenting, content creating, e-petitioning, botivism, e-funding and promoting greater individual power of data (activities in open government data, data rescue, civic data hacking, data philanthropy)⁵⁰. The results will be revealed in the third section of this chapter, after a discussion on the COVID-19 experiences. These are pre-conditions for engaging in digital activism, as presented at length in Joyce's Digital Activism Decoded collection. Economic factors, societal norms and political factors are identified as the main influences that can limit or boost digital activism⁵¹. The COVID-19 experience has clearly impacted the factors for engaging in digital activism.

As Joyce admits, though it is hard to evaluate the impact of digital activism and to understand exactly how the aforementioned factors are limiting the possibility to engage in digital activism, there is a need to consider these aspects given how much of the regular civil society activities have been transferred online⁵², due to societal developments as well as COVID-19. Though much of the evidence in this field is anecdotal and of the best-practice variety, it must be acknowledged that, many times, the work of SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners is hard to be evaluated in a way that quantifies its positive impacts. The work of preparing citizens to be active participants in their

community hinges on a mixture of factors and pre-conditions while each could have a different weight based on each individual. Therefore, the best-practice approach remains essential even in this context to adequately understand how participation can be boosted even when many mundane activities are switched to the online context.

THE STATE OF ONLINE LEARNING IN TIMES OF COVID-19

Eight of the studied countries closed their educational institutions at different times in March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic moved into Europe in February-March. By the end of the month they were all in lockdown⁵³. Sweden is the only exception. Most of its educational institutions, especially from the secondary level and below, remained open until December 2020, when secondary education schools were closed due to the second wave of the pandemic⁵⁴. Countries approached the second wave in different ways, as some reopened in May while some only in September, and then took different approaches to targeted closures in case of the emergence of COVID-19 cases in the institutions. However, towards the end of 2020 many educational institutions were yet again closed⁵⁵.

Some 1.5 billion learners worldwide were affected by the closure of the education institutions⁵⁶. Research from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre anticipated that a loss of approximately 1.6 hours per week of schooling in the academic year 2019-2020 - caused by the move to online learning - translates to a

50 Ibid. Pp.7-11.

51 Joyce, Mary (2010). Introduction: How to Think About Digital Activism. In Digital Activism Decoded: The New Mechanics of Change, Mary Joyce (ed.). Available at: <https://murdoch.is/papers/digiact10all.pdf>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

52 Ibid.

53 CEDEFOP (2020). EU countries respond to the effect of coronavirus on their education systems. Available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/eu-countries-respond-effect-coronavirus-their-education-systems>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

54 Wyatt, Tim (2020). Covid: No-lockdown Sweden to shut secondary schools for a month to combat second wave. The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sweden-covid-schools-closed-lockdown-b1766304.html>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

55 See the national reports.

56 UNESCO (2020). Global Education Coalition: COVID-19 Education Response.



decrease by 10 points in PISA and similar tests results⁵⁷. This is damning, considering that **over 22% of EU learners miss basic skills in reading, mathematics and science**, which is significantly above the ET2020 goal of 15% or below⁵⁸. The digital divide presented in the Monitor's previous edition⁵⁹ has also impacted learners, with some simply lacking the skills or infrastructure to continue distance learning, losing precious months in their educational process, while being further left behind compared to their peers. This is a damaging outlook for the future of social cohesion in Europe. Since 2017, the increase in the percentage of individuals with at least basic digital skills in Europe has increased by 1 percentage point, reaching 58% for 2019⁶⁰. The majority of

these individuals do not have skills beyond basic, just as the COVID-19 pandemic moved all activities online. It is undeniable that the pandemic has forced people to improve their skills. This has been reflected in the European Commission's findings from their consultations on the new Digital Education Action Plan, in which people's testimonies revealed increased confidence in their ICT skills⁶¹. However, much of this work was done without adequate support from the public authorities before the pandemic, done by those that had the resources to engage in distance learning and not be left behind and also done for certain skills without the individuals being fully aware of the implications of certain actions that they performed online.

The differences across countries must be considered, as the number of citizens with at least basic digital skills was only 41% in Croatia, 41.5% in Italy and 50% in Poland. Estonia and Sweden boasted numbers significantly above the EU average⁶². **The danger here is the development of a two-stream Europe in which some learners had the chance to continue their education while others were stunted. The access to these skills depends on the infrastructure in place.** While digital technologies are a common fixture in Sweden and Estonia, they are certainly not the case in any of the other studied countries. Estonia ranks third on the DESI, recently finishing an infrastructure development project in which all education institutions were equipped with the needed tools for the pandemic⁶³. The Nordic countries have also been at the forefront of publishing digital resources – which they have been using for years - for the other European countries to access⁶⁴. Sweden has been engaging

57 Di Pietro, Giorgio; Biagi, Federico; Dinis Mota Da Costa, Patricia; Karpinski, Zbigniew and Mazza, Jacopo (2020). The Likely Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Reflections based on the Existing Literature and Recent International Datasets. Joint Research Centre Technical Report. Available at : https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC121071/jrc121071.pdf?mc_cid=ecbb7c6ba9&mc_eid=26e959399a. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

58 European Commission (2020). Education and training monitor 2020: Teaching and learning in a digital age. P.12.

59 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019.

60 Eurostat (2021). Individuals' level of digital skills. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/isoc_sk_dskl_i/default/table?lang=en. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

61 European Commission (2020). Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. Pp.5-7. Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/deap-communication-sept2020_en.pdf. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

62 See the national reports for Croatia, Italy, Poland, Estonia and Sweden.

63 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Estonia. P.4. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8d1877f8-2495-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-171316210>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

64 See the national report for Estonia.

in online learning for its Northern communities for a few years due to teacher shortages, being prepared on this aspect⁶⁵. Not the same can be said by the other countries studied, as France has fewer digitally equipped classrooms than the EU average⁶⁶, Spain ranks below the OECD average when discussing the existence of a digital platform in its schools⁶⁷, while in Italy the speed of the internet connection in education institutions is below the EU average⁶⁸. **Underinvestment in preparing education institutions for online learning is not only limited to the infrastructure, but also to the support provided to teachers to be able to adapt to this transition.** Some 18% of teachers across Europe reported in 2018 a high-level need to receive training in ICT. Of the countries studied, only Estonia and Sweden had an average above 50% of the teachers frequently allowing students to use ICT for projects in the classroom⁶⁹. Yet even Estonia and Sweden, where investment in digital infrastructure has been made⁷⁰, experience the challenge of teachers' unpreparedness, as the teaching profession is not empowered to adapt to the 21st century society requirements. **It is often the CSOs that provide support for teachers.** The extra preparation and resources they



provide have ensured that formal education can continue and that non-formal and informal learning processes are connected to the formal experience. The lockdown has made it abundantly clear that the learning process is one that occurs in a lifelong and life-wide manner, and all education providers must nurture a relationship of collaboration that puts the learners at the centre of the educational process. Below are some examples of the work that SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners have performed together with teachers during the pandemic.

65 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Sweden. P.8. Available at : <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b0e2c2dd-2495-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-171316235>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

66 European Commission (2020). Country Report France 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.56. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0509&from=EN>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

67 OECD (2020). School Education during COVID-19: Were teachers and students ready? – Country Note Spain. Pp.1-2. Available at : <http://www.oecd.org/education/Spain-coronavirus-education-country-note.pdf>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

68 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Italy. P.4. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c952f293-2497-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1>. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

69 European Commission (2020). Education and training monitor 2020: Teaching and learning in a digital age. Pp.34-35.

70 See the national reports for Estonia and Sweden.

CSOS SUPPORTING TEACHERS DURING THE PANDEMIC

SPANISH CASE STUDY: READAPTING TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING ONLINE

SOLIDAR Foundation member [La Liga Española de la Educación](#) identified the need to support teachers through their entire careers, including in their initial teacher education. Therefore, [La Liga](#) is implementing a project titled [Classrooms with a Taste of Earth: Learn while enjoying the orchard](#), which aims to provide students training to be teachers at the University of Valladolid with courses on implementing an ESD perspective in their classrooms. The course is not meant to develop digital skills for the students, but in light of the pandemic, teachers had to be supported online to continue developing the skills needed for their teaching career. As the pandemic started, the course was rethought to continue online, while the students each had seedbeds in their households, continuing the practical component from home. The programme provided constant alternatives to recreate the physical context of the activities from their home while engaging in digital learning. The commitment of La Liga and the University of Valladolid will ensure that future teachers are not left behind due to the lockdown. More can be read about this in the Spanish national report.

POLISH CASE STUDY: A FRIENDLY HELP FROM EDZIA

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 recognise 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.

The learners themselves experienced hardships as many lacked digital devices, internet connection or appropriate studying conditions during teleworking. **France, Italy, Serbia and Poland all experienced rural-urban gaps**, whether on access to distance learning, access to a computer in the household or access to fast broadband connection in the household⁷¹. Inequality was also experienced in socio-economic terms in Spain, France and Italy, with a significant difference in Spain where an impoverished household was 20 times less likely than a well-off one to own a computer⁷². The gap in France was of approximately 10 percentage points between first and second generation migrant learners having a computer in the household⁷³. Only 74.3% of the households in Serbia had a computer before the pandemic⁷⁴. These numbers reveal how some of the most disadvantaged in society were further left behind, not being able to access the fundamental right that can close social cohesion gaps: quality education.



The national authorities in the studied countries have engaged in activities to mitigate the crisis. All have released regulations on managing the pandemic, on assessment online and on distance learning in general. For some of those lacking devices, classes were provided via TV channels, while all governments collected the online resources for teachers on a national digital platform⁷⁵. Education institutions received resources to acquire further devices to be handed out on loan, and, for those with difficulties in accessing internet connections, the Croatian government provided SIM cards with data for 10% of the learners⁷⁶, while in Spain 20,000 SIM cards were made available for learners⁷⁷. The support that teachers received in terms of access to online tools and platforms was significant in March, however, this opened up concerns regarding people's privacy. In the absence of adequate digital skills, it was complicated to consider how people would be protecting their data from the GAFAM group (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft) that was providing most of these tools. **Surveillance capitalism became an even greater danger than it was before, as everyone was forced to use these technologies**⁷⁸. SOLIDAR Foundation member CEMEA acknowledged these dangers and provided competing resources that would not collect the data of the users. More can be read about this in the case study below.

71 See the national reports for France, Italy, Spain and Poland.

72 UNICEF Spain (2020). La brecha digital impacta en la educación. Available at: <https://www.unicef.es/educa/blog/covid-19-brecha-educativa>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

73 Di Pietro, Giorgio, et al. (2020). The Likely Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Reflections based on the Existing Literature and Recent International Datasets. Pp.25-26.

74 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2020). Devices available in households. Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/270101?languageCode=en-US>. Last Accessed: 6 January 2021; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2020). Households having a computer, internet connection and broadband internet connection, by regions. Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/270105?languageCode=en-US>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

75 See the national reports.

76 Centre for Peace Studies (2020). Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications: Croatia. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Pp.5-6. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/croatia-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

77 Ministry of Education and Professional Formation of Spain (2020). El Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, Telefónica, Cisco e IBM facilitan la continuidad educativa de los estudiantes de Bachillerato y FP. Available at: <http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/prensa/actualidad/2020/03/20200330-tarjetasdatos.html>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

78 Klein, Naomi (2020). How big tech plans to profit from the pandemic. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/may/13/naomi-klein-how-big-tech-plans-to-profit-from-coronavirus-pandemic>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

FRENCH CASE STUDY: AN ALTERNATIVE TO KEEP CONTROL OVER YOUR DATA

SOLIDAR Foundation member [CE-MÉA](#) has provided an alternative free licence platform to support distance learning without collecting data on users and commodifying them. The [Zourit platform](#) contains digital tools similar to what Google offers through GSuite. This digital space for teachers contains a mailbox, a pad for collaborative

work, video-conferencing and hosting capacities and a cloud for storage. For the moment, 20 schools in France are operating with the Zourit platform, and [CEMÉA](#) is expanding its efforts to ensure that more educational institutions can be protected from the tech giants while still empowered to continue digital education.

The European Commission's recently updated [Digital Education Action Plan](#) identifies these infrastructure gaps and insists on closing them as well as providing frameworks for digital literacy and on various measures to boost digital skills attainment, including a European Council recommendation on the topic⁷⁹. However, as presented in the previous Monitor, national governments have to increase their efforts in adapting the curriculum⁸⁰. It is insufficient to insert digital tools in the current system. Sweden has recently undergone a syllabi revision for digital competencies⁸¹, and all national governments need to do this, ensuring also that digital tools are integrated in the daily work of the learners, but in a way that is consistent with their needs. This needs to become a priority on the national agendas as **access to digital resources has become a fundamental right in our current societies**. Without this, learners are unable to exert their rights in society.

SOLIDAR FOUNDATION MEMBERS' AND PARTNERS' WORK DURING THE PANDEMIC AND THEIR DIGITAL ACTIVISM

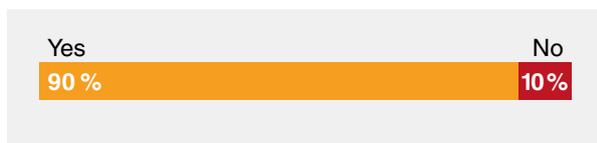
The pandemic has taken a toll on the work of non-formal and informal education providers as well. They had to adapt their work to the online context, even more so than before, while some SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners could no longer reach their beneficiaries due to their inability to access digital ways of communication. This raises the question of how such organisations have to adapt to be able to serve their beneficiaries to the best of their ability. **Some 90% of the respondents to our survey confirmed that they continued to provide online learning even during the pandemic while 90% identified as the biggest barrier 'the possibility to reorganise all of their current activities online'**.

79 European Commission (2020). Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/deap-communication-sept2020_en.pdf. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

80 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019.

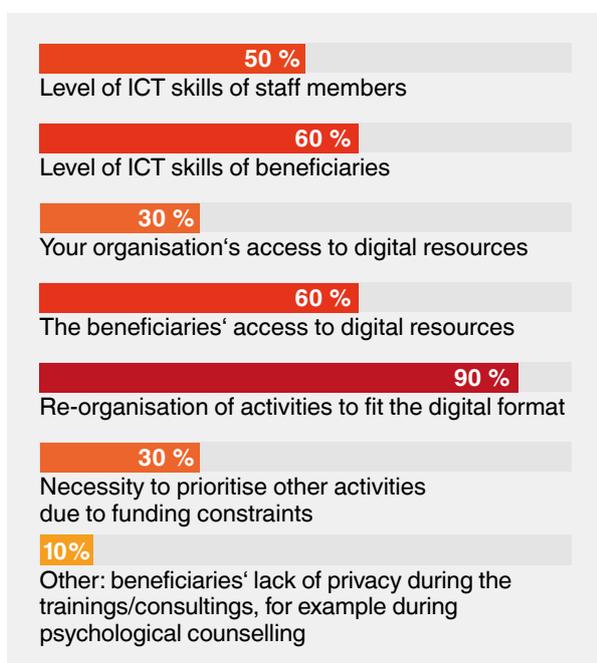
81 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Sweden. P.8. Available at : <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b0e2c2dd-2495-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-171316235>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

Members and partners reporting engagement in providing online learning during the pandemic



Most respondents also identified the lack of digital skills for themselves and for their beneficiaries as barriers to continue their work. The reason the reorganisation was so hard in no way depends on whether or not our members promote a certain viewpoint related to digital skills as the graph below shows that all members are engaged with this topic, and aware of it, in different degrees, some actually influencing national policy-making. The reasons seem to be mostly connected to how much they relied on digital ways of performing some activities in their day-to-day operations before the pandemic.

Members and partners reporting the barriers experienced while providing online learning during the pandemic



The graphs below account for their usual engagement with digital tools prior to the pandemic. When looking at information provided by our members, they engage in sufficient activities to be classified, based on George and Leidner's taxonomy, as digital spectators⁸². **Clicktivism and metavoicing are significantly common activities amongst SOLIDAR Foundation's members and partners** as they refer to resharing, retweeting, reposting and commenting on posts of others, as well as to following and liking these actors. When it comes to assertion actions, or content creation, which still belongs to the digital spectator category, the respondents to our survey had more scattered responses. E-newsletters, social media storytelling and videos distributed online were created by 60% of the respondents. Podcasts and blog posts had a smaller following, but some were creative enough to use online learning scenarios. As the pyramid of George and Leidner advances⁸³, SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners are no longer as consistent as before.

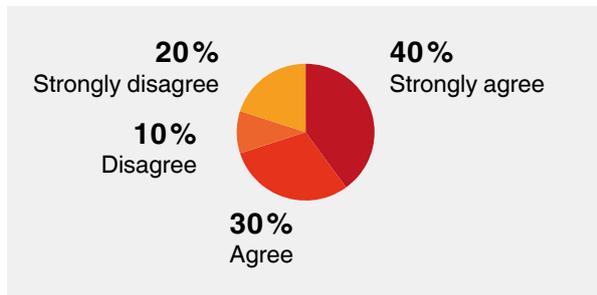
Member and partners reporting the type of digital content that they create



⁸² George, Jordana and Leidner, Dorothy (2019). From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism.

⁸³ Ibid.

Members and partners reporting their willingness to re-share social media content to associate its view with certain other organisations



Members and partners reporting on their means of communication with beneficiaries, citizens, other stakeholders



70% of members engage in e-petitioning and other e-governance procedures, meeting the threshold of digital petitions, but only 10% of members engage in botivism – making use of robots or Artificial Intelligence (AI) for social media activism.

Members and partners reporting on their participation in e-government procedures



No respondent resorted to e-funding. When pushing forward on the pyramid, to the digital gladiatorial activities, members and partners did not engage in leaking confidential information that they gained access to or in hacking activities in the name of social justice. However, some members and partners engaged in data activism, the last pillar of the final building block in George and Leidner’s pyramid⁸⁴. 30% of respondents participate in digital activism and train their staff members for this purpose. This mostly amounts to raising awareness for people to reclaim their data from GAFAM, to providing tools with open licences and to providing data that the governments might erase or try to obscure. Any other gladiatorial action would require a digital skillset that the respondents of this survey lacked. Digitally enabled distributed campaigns have been a crosscutting action through the pyramid of digital political participation⁸⁵, and 40% of the respondents have engaged in this. One of the respondents, ARCI from Italy, even organised such a campaign. More information on it can be found below.

84 George, Jordana and Leidner, Dorothy (2019). From clicktivism to hacktivism: Understanding digital activism.
85 Ibid.

ITALIAN CASE STUDY: ONLINE CAMPAIGNING TO BUILD SOLIDARITY DURING THE PANDEMIC

SOLIDAR Foundation member [ARCI](#) implemented a national campaign as the COVID-19 pandemic caused Italy to go into a lockdown in March 2020, called [Resistenza Virale](#). The campaign was meant as an act of civic responsibility, to encourage citizens to respect the governmental indications in order to mitigate the impact of the virus. However, it was also meant as a means of solidarity with all Italian citizens during these trying times. As the physical activities in ARCI clubs were interrupted, [ARCI](#) moved its work online. Culture emotions and curiosity were spread in the online realm, revealing how successfully CSOs have adapted their support for the population online.

The campaign put forward [online tools](#) that people could use during this pandemic. [It has also organised a multitude of events such as screenings, book readings, concerts, opera and theatre performances, skills development workshops and classes](#) for the young people online, contributing as much as possible to ensure that people did not lose the human connections they established in their community during the pandemic. The campaign had its own hashtag, was promoted in various formats by all the ARCI clubs and united people in developing avenues for accessing culture and lifelong learning. [ARCI](#) has fed this process by providing resources and more partners joining the campaigning.

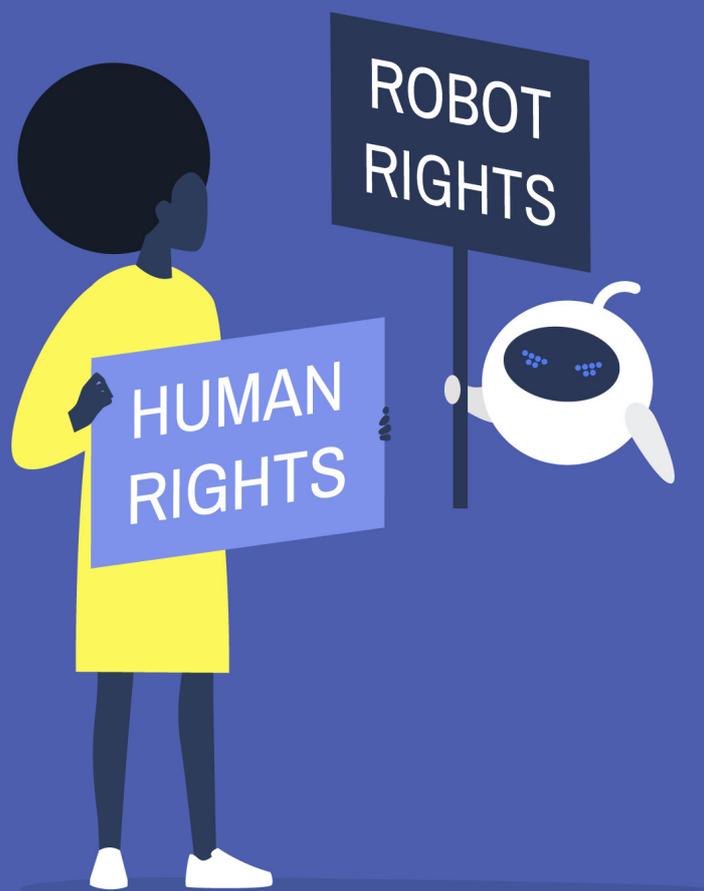
The public authorities began using digitalisation in their favour, such as the most recent case in which the Croatian government had tried to record people's movements via their phones, justifying it as a COVID-19 prevention measure. However, SOLIDAR Foundation member, [Centre for Peace Studies](#), **has**

run a strong digital and physical campaign against this measure, preventing it from becoming a reality⁸⁶. Such instances become more common, while the business interests regarding surveillance capitalism but also regarding the widespread usage of AI in education make it clear that the voices of CSOs

86 Centre for Peace Studies (2020). [REAKCIJA 44 UDRUGE] Praćenje svakog mobitela u zemlji nije mjera zaštite od koronavirusa nego nepotrebno kršenje ljudskih prava!. Available at: <https://www.cms.hr/hr/izjave-za-javnost/reakcija-44-udruga-pracenje-svakog-mobitela-u-zemlji-nije-mjera-zastite-od-koronavirusa-nego-nepotrebno-krsenje-ljudskih-prava>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.; Centre for Peace Studies (2020). #Ostanidoma i piši Saboru. Available at: <https://www.cms.hr/hr/ljudska-sigurnost/ostanidoma-i-pisi-saboru>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

must be heard, as they are aware of the implications of these changes on citizens' privacy. The European Commission's [White Paper on AI](#) and its [Digital Education Action Plan](#) are both promoting widespread use of AI in education as well as the development of the skills of citizens to work with this. This priority seems less in the interest of the learners who need to master more basic digital skills first and who also are yet unprepared to understand how AI works. The most recent cases of discrimination related to AI, including the one regarding the UK pupils' results in the GCSEs⁸⁷, show that **there is not yet enough knowledge on AI to deploy it in an ethically safe manner.**

COVID-19 has hastened the reliance on digital tools without a proper understanding of its implications, and with many business interests trumping the best interest of citizens. Therefore, CSOs have to engage more in digital activism and develop the skills to represent the interests of their beneficiaries. They also need to be involved in policy-making and not excluded for lacking technical knowledge on the topic. The CSOs and citizens will be the ones on which AI and other digital tools will be implemented, and, therefore, need a seat at the decision-making table even in the absence of advanced digital knowledge⁸⁸.



87 Pagnamenta, Robin (2020). The A-levels fiasco has revealed the socially toxic consequences of algorithmic bias. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2020/08/17/a-levels-fiasco-has-revealed-socially-toxic-consequences-algorithmic/>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

88 Frank, Andrei (2020). Position Paper on Artificial Intelligence. Elisa Gambardella (ed.). SOLIDAR Foundation. Available at : https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/142/original/SOLIDAR_Foundation_AI_Position_Paper.pdf?1592215657. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

MAIN FINDINGS ACROSS EUROPE

There has been an intensification in xenophobic and nationalist rhetoric across Europe as a result of COVID-19.

Ethnic minorities have been at increased health risk regarding COVID-19 compared to ethnic majorities in Europe.

Migrant background learners continue to have higher rates of early school leaving and lower rates of academic achievement compared to their native peers.

Informal and non-formal education providers, and CSOs, have contributed significantly, especially during the pandemic, towards developing the capacity of local communities to promote intercultural and inclusive societies.

CSOs have been more successful at building capacity in countries in which they have developed more partnerships with public authorities and other stakeholders.

Funding for CSOs protecting the civic space and communities is in danger due to economic aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Scale up the fight against discrimination and ensure the strength of the civil society sector in this challenge by supporting it financially and in legal frameworks.

Set up avenues for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers to ensure a lifelong and life-wide learning approach to intercultural education while also ensuring that disadvantaged learners are supported and formal education gaps are closed.

Ensure the collaboration of CSOs and public authorities in the implementation of community projects on the topic of intercultural education.

Set up more taskforces on inclusion and ensure that diverse education stakeholders are present on them as well as in the monitoring mechanisms for such policies and funding.

Ensure that CSOs remain financially supported even post-COVID-19.

CONCEPTS

The Monitor's previous edition studied intercultural dialogue from the perspective of the whole-school approach, considering the collaboration between formal education providers on the one hand and informal and non-formal education providers on the other hand⁸⁹. This approach is essential, but it serves as a narrowed look over how intercultural dialogue is promoted. As part of the everyday life and as a requirement to be integrated in a globalised 21st century society, citizens engage with these themes on an everyday basis in a wide variety of contexts. Therefore, a lifelong and life-wide approach is needed, which implies the need for CSOs to build partnerships outside of formal education as well as to foster a culture of dialogue among the diverse inhabitants of local communities. The approach in this report is to look at the bottom-up effort of project implementation in communities, spearheaded by CSOs, to see **how building up the inhabitants' competencies leads to a promotion of intercultural education**. The work done by CSOs in communities does not happen in a vacuum, and requires a significant amount of **partnership**. Therefore, this chapter will also consider the networks, working groups, alliances in which SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners find themselves, to see how this type of cooperation ensures the sharing of best practices and contributes to building up intercultural tolerance and collaboration across a wider span of communities.

THE STATE OF PARTNERSHIPS FOR INTERCULTURALISM IN EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Intercultural education is effective only as long as people actualise it on a daily basis and internalise the fact that all people are equal and diversity should be respected and even cherished. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that many times references to intercultural education are not translated in the way the current societies are organised. Cognitive shortcuts were made immediately after the outbreak of COVID-19, with many Asian-descent or Asian inhabitants in European countries affected by COVID-19 being the target of hate crimes. The blaming of an entire ethnic group not only reveals a high degree of racism for misidentifying a wide variety of people as Chinese but it also reveals racist scapegoating instances. Former US President Donald Trump also instigated such actions by using terms such as the 'China virus' and the 'Chinese flu', feeding into conspiracy theories that the virus originated in a laboratory⁹⁰. Fear-mongering has always fuelled racism. However, a society with a strong intercultural education background would not have been so susceptible to such xenophobic tendencies, relying on cognitive shortcuts that have made the life of some people a living hell beyond the fact that the pandemic was already ravaging their lives.

34%

**of the critically ill
COVID-19 patients
belonged to an ethnic
minority in the UK**



89 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019.

90 Brzozowski, Alexandra (2020). Media reporting on COVID-19 set pace for discrimination. EURACTIV. Available at : <https://www.euractiv.com/section/non-discrimination/news/media-reporting-on-covid-19-set-pace-for-discrimination/>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

The fact that the intercultural education background in Europe and North America is not as strong as it is claimed to be is also revealed by the fact that 34% of the critically ill COVID-19 patients belonged to an ethnic minority in the UK⁹¹. The US was also affected by such disproportionate impacts on ethnic minorities⁹². There is little evidence that genetic factors cause this, but social conditions put them at greater risk during pandemics. **Ethnic minorities are more likely to work in frontline and essential roles, who could not afford to work from home during the pandemic, and to live in more crowded conditions⁹³. Ethnic minorities in today's societies are in more precarious conditions than the ethnic majority, which reveals structural inequality.** This structural inequality and racism was

epitomised during last summer's Black Lives Matter protests following the gruesome murder of George Floyd at the hand of US police officers. Floyd is one of many victims of police brutality in the US, in a system where Black people are disproportionately targeted for police checks, convicted for low-level crimes and harassed by public authorities⁹⁴. The long history of racism, xenophobia, slavery that has plagued the European and North American continent is not yet reckoned with, and it still perpetuates inequalities.

Europe replicates such tendencies as well, with gaps in higher education attainment among native EU citizens, foreign EU citizens and non-EU citizens. Pupils with a migrant background have systematically lower academic results



91 Mundasad, Smitha (2020). Black people 'twice as likely to catch coronavirus'. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-54907473>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

92 US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). COVID-19 Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>. Last accessed: 31 January 2021.

93 Mundasad, Smitha (2020). Black people 'twice as likely to catch coronavirus'.

94 Edwards, Frank, et al. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race-ethnicity, and sex. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 116 (34): 16793-16798. Available at: <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/116/34/16793.full.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3x5zDPNumwvdwHRe32NT3fh6FAAuFecVEpjRgTkZxojP4NftTXaSGNsZ8>. Last accessed: 31 January 2021.; Barber, Sharrelle (2020). Death by racism. The Lancet Infectious Diseases, 20(8), 903. Available at: <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1473-3099%2820%2930567-3>. Last accessed: 31 January 2021.

than their native peers across all of Europe. **Pupils born abroad have an underachievement rate of above 50% in Greece, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.** Out of the countries studied in this Monitor, Sweden has the highest gap among native pupils and migrant background pupils when it comes to the results in reading for PISA tests. Germany is the top country in Europe in terms of the underachievement in reading gap between native and migrant background learners (40 percentage points)⁹⁵. Estonia was one of the most equitable countries in the world, however, its Russian-medium learners showed significantly lower scores on language skills, basic skills and civic competencies compared to the learners living in Estonian-mediums⁹⁶. Migrant background learners in Italy are three times more likely to leave school early compared to their native counterparts⁹⁷. The rate of early school leaving and test scores among migrant background learners have not improved since the previous edition of the Monitor⁹⁸ and reveal a precarious preparation for migrant background learners, making it more difficult to participate in society to a full extent afterwards.

Such inequity breeds right-wing extremism and social tensions. The national report on France best reveals such tensions, with gang violence and youth radicalisation. Youth with migrant backgrounds have struggled with worse study conditions during the pandemic and are underperforming as a result. The situation escalated with Samuel Paty's murder for using caricatures of Islamic symbols and religious figures in his civic education classes. The public authorities' reaction, to double down on the principle of secularism in education in light of these religious tensions, is not

the right solution to address the social unrest. **The education system must be readapted for the fact that multiple denominations and ethnicities are now part of the student body,** beyond the simple banning of religious symbols in public institutions. A strong



response to such hate crimes is needed, but it should in no way replace an educational effort to ensure that all citizens can be part of the society, contributing and thriving regardless of their background⁹⁹. Extremist tensions have been identified in Croatia and Sweden as well, with attitudes towards migrants becoming more and more intolerant since 2015. Instances of terrorist attacks, such as a far-right lone gunman's attack on a government building in Croatia¹⁰⁰ and the Quran burning in Sweden¹⁰¹ have been mushrooming across Europe. This context is exacerbated by the presence of far-right parties in government coalitions in the recent years, such as Lega Nord in Italy, EKRE in Estonia or by far-right populist parties gaining ground in France and Sweden. Arguably, the PiS ruling party of Poland is using an authoritarian approach that veers more towards

95 European Commission (2020). Education and training monitor 2020: Teaching and learning in a digital age. Pp.55-65.

96 See the national report for Estonia.

97 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Italy. P.8. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c952f293-2497-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1>. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

98 European Commission (2020). Education and training monitor 2020: Teaching and learning in a digital age. Pp.38-44.

99 See the national report in France.

100 CroatiaWeek (2020). St. Mark's Square in Zagreb sealed off, police investigation underway after shooting. Available at: <https://www.croatiaweek.com/st-marks-square-in-zagreb-sealed-off-police-investigation-underway-after-shooting/>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

101 CIVICUS Monitor (2020). Quran Burning Sparks Protests in Malmö. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/10/14/quran-burning-sparks-protests-malmo/>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.; Deutsche Welle (2020). Malmö: Violence erupts after anti-Muslim activity. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/malmo-violence-erupts-after-anti-muslim-activity/a-54748905>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

far-right with its current policies against women, against the LGBTQI+ community and simply against any CSOs that are seen as a threat to the conservative values of Poland¹⁰². These actors are fuelling the powder keg on which many European countries sit, creating an ‘us-versus-them’ narrative that chips away at any effort for intercultural education.

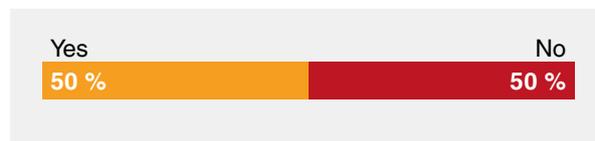
In this context, the non-formal and informal learning providers, with other CSOs, are leading the charge to promote a counter-narrative that embraces diversity and fills in the gaps that the formal education sector does not in terms of the integration of migrant background learners. The following section will consider how the CSOs have been collaborating and will present best practices that, if replicated and shared widely, can build up intercultural dialogue.

SOLIDAR FOUNDATION MEMBERS’ AND PARTNERS’ WORK TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION VIA A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

The previous Monitor edition identified that the whole-school approach had a more ad-hoc nature across Europe, not being structurally implemented¹⁰³. This was reconfirmed by SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners as 90% of the survey respondents were not engaged in the whole-school processes even if they provided education for learners outside of the formal setting. Therefore, the value of partnerships set up with other CSOs and stakeholders in the effort to establish community-based projects could prove to be a better avenue for promoting intercultural education. Half of the survey respondents report being part of national taskforces for inclusion, revealing a well-placed position in their national contexts for engaging with the topic and for being

recognised as valuable actors for promoting it. When considering partnerships outside such national taskforces, the number engaged in them increases to 80% of survey respondents.

Members and partners reporting being members of national taskforces on inclusion



Members and partners reporting partnerships with national, regional and local organisations, outside of taskforces, for the purpose of inclusion



Partners who belonged to multiple national alliances and taskforces were also more likely to be engaged in policy-making and have a greater capacity to influence the political agenda. This has been the case in Spain, with [La Liga Española de la Educación](#) greatly influencing the new education law while also cooperating with public authorities in implementing local projects. SOLIDAR Foundation member [Community Development Institute](#) (CDI) has also been developing projects to develop the capacity of lawmakers in North Macedonia to support national minorities, in light of their collaboration with public authorities and their presence in various networks. More can be read below about [CDI’s](#) initiative.

102 See the national report for Poland.

103 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019.

NORTH MACEDONIAN CASE STUDY: EMPOWERING PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TO PROMOTE INCLUSION

SOLIDAR Foundation member [CDI](#) has implemented a series of projects, titled [Bona Mente](#), aimed at building the capacity of elected officials joining the newly created [Committees for Inter-Community Relations \(CICRs\)](#). The CICRs are meant to provide ethnic minorities with greater representation power in the national Assembly and in local politics. Various iterations of the project were implemented in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012 and 2014. Though the projects each slightly differed, the overall aim of this long-term approach to project funding was to support the development of the multiethnic society by strengthening the capacity of the CICRs at municipal level in terms of the implemented actions, implicitly ensuring the effective and equitable representation of the minority groups with regard to local policies. As the projects advanced, the capacity of CICRs to engage with the municipal councils on policy-making

increased, while the number of participants of small minorities within CICRs increased.

Training workshops were provided to build the capacity of CICRs and to help newly elected and established CICRs navigate the policy-making process and effectively perform their function. The project activities were complemented by study visits, including cross-borders ones to Serbia, to understand best practices on the engagement of minorities in local politics. A documentary was also developed to account for the efforts of CSOs in building up a fairly recent political body's capacity to support minorities in a formalised way. CSOs have collaborated with the CICRs in setting up local funds that were accessible for community members, empowering individuals to improve their communities. More can be read about this long-term initiative in the North Macedonian national report.

Partners and members in Croatia, Serbia, Italy and France are also involved in national networks and governmental working groups combating xenophobia or being the organisations implementing local projects supported by the public authorities¹⁰⁴. SOLIDAR Foundation member [Initiative for Development and Cooperation \(IDC\)](#) is part of the [IRIS Network](#) which brings together national networks of CSOs from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, connecting 200 member organisations that provide different types of social services to different vulnerable

groups: people with disability, children and youth at risk, women victims of family violence, refugees, asylum seekers, etc. IRIS aims to strengthen the role of not-for-profit social service providers throughout South Eastern Europe and to ensure that these organisations are recognised as equal partners by the public sector. Such an alliance is essential for sharing of practices, for building up common practices and for tackling issues that do not have roots only in one country or another. Intercultural education must be promoted beyond one's states borders, as the current globalised society

104 See the national reports for Croatia, Serbia, Italy and France.

implies cross-borders exchanges and intercultural dialogue across borders. IRIS Network develops common projects such as the [Balkan Media Caravan](#) that aimed to prepare journalists in the member countries to report sensitively on migration topics, being respectful towards migrants and refugees. More about the project can be read in the national report for Serbia. Such approaches, however, have to be backed by a comprehensive approach on the ground, ensuring that all CSOs are promoting intercultural education within local communities. The idea is to have a bottom-up approach

in which citizens are empowered within their communities with the tools and knowledge to promote intercultural education. By preparing the communities as building blocks, the networks and alliances of CSOs gain strength to advocate about the topic on national level and tackle the spread of far-right extremism in national politics. SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners are providing a wide variety of programmes in communities to boost intercultural competencies. Below, more can be read on such work done in Serbia, Spain and Croatia.



BUILDING INTERCULTURAL SAFE SPACES AND EDUCATING THE POPULATION

SERBIAN CASE STUDY: INTEGRATION AND RE-INTEGRATION AS A CONSTANT PROCESS

SOLIDAR Foundation member [IDC](#) is running a project titled [Reintegrate – Support to sustainable \(re\)integration of returnees in Serbia](#). The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and runs from 2019 to December 2021. The project's implementation is supported by ASB Serbia and is done in partnership with the [Regional Development Agency of Sandzak](#) and the [Muslim Humanitarian Society 'Merhamet – Sandzak'](#), with support from the [City of Novi Pazar](#), the [Municipality of Sjenica](#) and the [Municipality of Tutin](#).

The project sets up three Good Neighbourhood Clubs, which act as community centres. The beneficiaries are local families and families of returnees, in an effort to build up solidarity between the two. Activities organised in the clubs range from educational and creative workshops for children to excursions around the community, helping them get to know their surroundings but also to provide an understanding of environmental sustainability in their community. The workshops focus on themes such as Serbian language development, culture mediation, youth activism, digital communication, children's rights, sexual education, respect for others, peer mediation (empathy, emotional management, set life goals, self-respect), the Serbian legal system and ecological understanding. More can be read about this in the Serbian national report.

CROATIAN CASE STUDY: CITIZEN RESPONSIBILITY EDUCATION

SOLIDAR Foundation member [CPS](#)' flagship 22-year old programme is titled [Peace Studies](#). It is a six-month-long non-formal education programme for 'restless' citizens who want to be committed to non-violent social change by developing critical thinking, understanding and transforming conflicts in society, dealing with structural violence, promoting human rights, diversity and anti-discrimination policies. The programme connects theory and practice, combines lectures, workshops, mentored work - various methods with the aim of understanding and deconstructing causes of social injustice, developing critical thinking skills and approaches to resist direct and structural violence, oppression and exclusion. Course leaders and guest lecturers come from academia and practice and are all active in social change and experienced in different methods of participatory learning.

The courses approach themes such as human rights, migration, global society and economic justice and feminism, among others, providing an exceptionally well-rounded approach to the transversal skills needed to adapt to and thrive in the 21st century societies. This course provides amazing resources to develop a mindset guided by intercultural dialogue and to be open to constant learning that can only serve as a tool for adapting to any upcoming transition in the current societies. Community-based projects must empower local individuals who need to claim ownership over these projects if their aim is to be met. Educating the local community through the principles of PS is the foundation for

molding active citizens. Such non-formal courses are a testament to the importance of CSOs in European communities - through their forward-looking approach to the digital and green transition as well as their democratic participation. Read more about this in the Croatian national report.

SPANISH CASE STUDY: INTERCULTURAL NETWORKS AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

SOLIDAR Foundation member [La Liga](#) is running an [Integral Network for Intercultural Spaces](#) in partnership with entities such as educational centres, associations, local authorities in the neighbourhoods of San Cristóbal de los Ángeles in Madrid, in Alcalá de Henares and in the township of Puente Tocinos in Murcia. The project creates an environment for sports activities, for cultural activities, for language learning, for psychological and social support and environmentally-themed events, among many others. It fosters the celebration of multiculturalism and sustainability in Spanish neighbourhoods, building up on the need in many communities to have such centres where they would be able to congregate with their peers. This reveals the power of community-based projects and the importance of supporting people's education in their own neighbourhood and in a lifelong and life-wide manner. The model reveals how intercultural education and GCE can be continued outside of formal education, contributing to their constant presence in people's lives for the purpose of changing the paradigmatic thinking on intercultural dialogue and GCE.

It is invaluable to continue to upscale the work of these CSOs to ensure that citizens are prepared to thrive in a global 21st century society. For this reasons, public authorities should intensify connections with these organisations,

increase public investment in them and ensure that all the other education stakeholders are given opportunities to collaborate with the CSOs.

FUNDING

GENERAL FUNDING IN EDUCATION

Investment in education as a percentage of public investment remained steady across Europe in the past years, at 9.9%, though with wide variances among EU member states. **The growth in the private education sector, the increase in public subsidies provided to private education institutions and the new interference of private interests in education via the digital tools provided during the distance learning period have all contributed to a reduction in public investment in education in some places**¹⁰⁵.

The lack of resources to ensure a smooth transition to distance learning can also be blamed on underinvestment in education, especially so after the 2008 economic crisis. However, post-COVID-19, the education systems might again find themselves in austerity, which decreases public investment¹⁰⁶. The short-term vision for education is one of the main reasons for all the other structural challenges that education confronts, be it teacher shortages, a lack of support for teachers, a shortage of education support staff, a mismatch of skills for learners, etc. The spending on education as a percentage of the GDP has decreased, as the EU average in 2018 is slightly below the 2015 level, currently at 4.6%. The countries found to be relatively successful in handling the online transition, namely Estonia and Sweden, have been investing 6.2% and 5.9%, respectively, of their GDPs in education. As the sum decreased, Poland's



investment of 5% proved to be insufficient given the challenges. Similarly, for Spain and Italy lower investment rates only contributed to the wide regional gaps in terms of access to resources in education and in terms of academic achievement¹⁰⁷. **The problem is, though, that almost all countries experienced an increase in the number of learners as well as an increase in teacher shortages and an ageing teaching profession. Even if investment remains stable, with these challenges ahead, it is no longer sufficient to maintain the same standards of educational success.** If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, investment in education cannot be decreased further. It has to be significantly increased if there is any chance of developing the skills needed for learners to adapt to the twin transitions of the 21st century and to a globalised society.

105 European Commission (2020). Education and training monitor 2020: Teaching and learning in a digital age. Pp.96-98.

106 The World Bank (2020). The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Changed World. Available at : <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/08/the-global-economic-outlook-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-a-changed-world>. Last accessed: 31 January 2021.

107 Ibid.

GCE FUNDING

GCE funding increased from 2017 to 2018 in Sweden, Spain, Estonia and France, while decreasing for Poland. A significant increase of over 100% in Spain is encouraging, especially as the new education law calls for even more attention paid to GCE¹⁰⁸. It is difficult to establish how much of the education budget is allocated to GCE, as the above increases refer to funding disbursed by the ministries of foreign affairs or by the development agencies of the countries. The impression is that **GCE continues to be viewed through the lens of raising awareness of specific challenges**, maybe even narrowing it down to sustainable development or even referring to it from the perspective of development cooperation. This is a dangerous approach given the new skills that European learners need in light of the EU-promoted twin transitions and of the societal changes experienced due to globalisation and the digitalisation process. The global challenges can only be tackled when the GCE mindset is fully transferred into the paradigm of viewing education in the European countries. Until GCE is mainstreamed in all types of education and the entire educational budget is used to reframe education in this way, the learners will miss out on developing the global competencies needed to adapt to the way societies are organised at the moment.

DIGITAL EDUCATION FUNDING AND COVID-19

As investment in education has not returned to pre-crisis levels, and as more challenges emerged requiring further investment, it is clear that investment in digitalisation has also lagged. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed this, with the private sector having to step in to provide the digital tools that should already have been available in educational institutions.

Beyond the schools having the necessary digital infrastructure and teachers being prepared to operate with ICT in the classroom, there must be investment to ensure that access to the internet is treated as a public good, as was made clear in last year's Monitor for Denmark and the UK. None of the studied countries had 100% coverage of ultrafast broadband connection for households, and some were far from achieving this for fast broadband connection¹⁰⁹. **The lack of devices in many households and the unequal access to such devices based on socio-economic or migrant background factors is worrying.** COVID-19 has led to increases in investment destined for boosting digital infrastructure or for expanding the coverage of internet connectivity. The Croatian government put forward an extra 4 million-plus EUR for this reason. Estonia provided an addi-



tional 15 million EUR for the broadband connection expansion project. Italy made 3 billion EUR available for learners and their families to mitigate different COVID-19 aspects. Poland put 80 million EUR into the Remote Schools Initiative. More can be read in each national case study about the situation but the trend is the same: **a patchwork solution to mitigate the devastating impacts of the health crisis.** This funding was needed in this context, but there now needs to be a strategy in place for determining how to increase investment in the long-run, thinking beyond the COVID-19 crisis as well. The European Commission's [Digital Education Action Plan](#) encourages increased investment, just as the EU budget for education programmes was increased for

108 Global Education Network Europe (2020). The State of Global Education in Europe 2019. Available at : <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f6decace4ff425352eddb4a/t/5fc40cf96457125654ba5954/1606683902082/SOGE-2019-web-version+%282%29.pdf>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

109 See the national reports.

2021-2027¹¹⁰. However, it must be noted that heads of states in Europe have been engaged in a lengthy negotiation of the EU budget, which has, in many steps along the way, seen the education budget significantly lower than the final sum. This is worrisome for the national priorities, as the governments will have to increase their own education budget and not fall into the trap of austerity if this sector is to provide the necessary skills for learners.

FUNDING FOR THE SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

It is complicated to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on funding for civil society organisations, but the economic crisis expected in the aftermath of the pandemic is surely going to impact them. Some instances can be already seen in North Macedonia and Serbia. **Public investment in CSOs was slashed by 525,000 EUR in North Macedonia¹¹¹, while**

the Serbian government is investing in artificially created NGOs - so called governmental non-governmental organisations - to create the impression of a healthy civil society that in fact is only a loudspeaker for governmental decisions¹¹². SOLIDAR Foundation partner [ABE](#) reports that the Swedish government has maintained funding for CSOs at pre-pandemic levels, even if activities have moved online. For the moment no trend can be identified, but it is important to continue **advocating for investment in non-formal and informal education providers given the significant work they have done on the ground in supporting people during the pandemic, providing online learning and even combating the abuses of power that some governments have attempted.** It is important to recognise their vital importance during this crisis and to reward it post-COVID-19 rather than slashing their funding in the name of austerity.

110 European Council (2020). Erasmus+ 2021 2027: Council reaches a provisional agreement with the European Parliament. Press Release, 11 December 2020. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/11/erasmus-2021-2027-council-reaches-a-provisional-agreement-with-the-european-parliament/>. Last accessed: 30 January 2021.

111 CIVICUS Monitor (2020). Funding Cuts and No Economic Assistance for CSOs during COVID-19. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/06/15/funding-cuts-and-no-economic-assistance-csos-during-covid-19/>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

112 Gradjanske Inicijative (2020). The operating environment for civil society in Serbia is still far from EU standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

- ◆ Provide better training on ICT inclusion in the classroom for teachers, ensuring that ICT is implemented in the classroom and monitoring the process.
- ◆ Make access to digital resources a public good, which also implies increased investment to ensure that all households have access to ultrafast broadband connection.
- ◆ Adapt the formal education curriculum to ensure that ICT usage and ICT skills are better represented across all topics.
- ◆ Only introduce new technology for education after adequate research on its impacts has been done, and only if it is in the best interest of learners.
- ◆ Prevent private interests from impacting the educational process, and especially curtail surveillance capitalism in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ◆ Set up avenues for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers as this can ensure better support in developing digital skills, accessing digital infrastructure and ensuring equity in society by having additional support for disadvantaged groups.



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

- ◆ Mainstream GCE in formal education while implementing the whole-school approach to ensure that its cross-curricular nature will not frustrate its implementation.
- ◆ Provide better training for teachers on GCE and the conditions and time to engage in training.
- ◆ Ensure GCE is part of initial teacher training.
- ◆ Set up avenues for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers to be able to develop the transversal skills needed for GCE in a lifelong and life-wide learning approach.



INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

- ◆ Set up more taskforces on inclusion and ensure that diverse education stakeholders are included in them, as well as in the monitoring mechanisms for such policies and funding.
- ◆ Set up avenues for cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal education providers to ensure a lifelong and life-wide learning approach to intercultural education, while also ensuring that disadvantaged learners are supported and formal education gaps are closed.
- ◆ Ensure collaboration between CSOs and public authorities in the implementation of community projects on intercultural education.
- ◆ Scale up the fight against discrimination and ensure the strength of the civil society sector in this challenge by supporting it financially and in legal frameworks.



FUNDING

- ◆ Increase investment in GCE, and ensure that ministries of education are also funding GCE and establishing structural cooperation with other ministries for comprehensive funding schemes.
- ◆ Close digital infrastructure gaps by increasing investment in the digitalisation of education institutions.
- ◆ Ensure that CSOs remain financially supported even post-COVID-19.



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