North Macedonia has developed its citizenship education as a compulsory separate subject and is setting up its new curriculum along several subjects prone to understanding and applying active participation from students in civic education, deemed satisfactory to our members. However, our members at SOLIDAR Foundation have called on greater support for achieving media literacy and critical thinking as essential for bridging the gap with active citizenry as North Macedonia is prone to fake news and disinformation in the past years. Furthermore, the need to develop support across local government and civil society organisations for understanding and going through the process of EU funding schemes when building partnership projects can greater help civic society use tools to achieve and maintain inclusive education in the context of historical discrimination along the ethnic divide that has excluded and/or marginalized many.
1. Ensuring that people acquire civic and intercultural competences

Citizenship education in North Macedonia is provided as a compulsory separate subject and is also brought as part of interdisciplinary subjects along with health and global citizenship education. In June 2018 the Minister for Education and Science adopted a new curriculum for citizenship education for VIII grade in primary education¹. The training program being organized during October 2018, the methods that will be applied in teaching citizenship education in the North Macedonian schools is expected to contribute to development of the students' emotional awareness and fundamental human values, their integrity, dignity, equal rights, and to strengthen students sense for justice, tolerance and responsibility, while preparing them for life in a democratic civic society. Furthermore, our members stressed the need to also raise awareness and build the capacities of teachers, school services and management.

The new curriculum contains several basic chapters, such as Civic Identity – building the notion of individuals as citizens; Cooperation and relationship with Civic Sector; the Citizen and the Society; Religion, Art and Media in the Civic Society; the Citizen and the State; the Citizen and the World². According to our members, the content applied for citizenship education is satisfactory as it covers a wide range of subjects and satisfy the three levels from Bloom’s taxonomy in (1) remembering, (2) understanding and (3) applying ³.

In North Macedonia, existing partnerships are put in place between public authorities and civil society organisations to promote civic and intercultural competences, such as the partnership for inclusive education with the Nansen Dialogue Center⁴. The school is the only one of its kind in North Macedonia, and a ground breaking initiative in what was a deeply divided community⁵. Our members also called on widening perspectives of the meaning of inclusive education when building partnerships.

Furthermore, the Nansen Dialogue Network gathers politicians, journalists, teachers, parents, and pupils for dialogue about their own conflict, exploring potential solutions and opening possibilities for institutional change, where the situation is no longer seen through ethnic or mono-cultural lenses, but with a view to joint understanding that benefits all. However, our members have highlighted the need for allocating funds by the state and local municipal budget, along with an active involvement of all stakeholders when joining a partnership. Our members also highlighted the need to have improved cooperation and collaboration between governments and CSOs when systematically

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¹. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-school-education-42_en
². Ibid
⁵. See https://ndc.org.mk/ and https://nmie.org/
approaching through detailed analysis the impact of citizenship educational curriculum in the long term.

Validation of NFIL

In North Macedonia the setting up of a national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning is a national priority and is in preparation until its introduction in 2020. The government’s action of the VET Strategy 2020 is seen as an important step in increasing the attractiveness and relevance of vocational education and training, through optimization of public providers, development of competence-based curricula in line with the needs of the business sector, development of a system for validation of prior learning and enhancement of the social dialogue.

Our members organisations are highly involved in various aspects of the preparations, through participation in consultations initiated by the state institutions in charge for VNFIL and working groups to name a few. For instance, Community Development Institute (CDI) is working to become one of the actors in this process as soon as implementation begins for the national system. Namely, CDI works to become authorised provider in the VNFIL process and to work on the promotion of VNFIL and also to implement Phases 1 and 2 (Identification and Documentation) of validation of knowledge, skills and competences of candidates.

Our members have stressed that although preparation and setting up of the national system have been going on for the past two years, the need to have coordinated action among all actors is vital to have a full function validation system for non-formal and informal learning. Focus should thus be on setting up clear division among the various actors and providers of VNFIL, as well as promoting the benefits stemming from VNFIL for learners and society. Moreover, accountability mechanisms should be used for resolving shortcomings and

enhancing procedures for the introduction of new initiatives, as well as greater efforts in identifying a model for early career guidance in schools.

2. Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly regarding the use of the internet and social media

North Macedonia has no Strategy for Media literacy and safe use of new media yet, as it is the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services is responsible for development and promotion of media literacy and safe use of new media⁶. However, several ongoing project are implemented by civil society organizations with the goals of encouraging a culture of critical thinking through educating the general public about the harmful effects of media manipulations on democracy and European values. North Macedonia is particularly known for having a “fake news” industry⁷ which is also to be seen in the context of an ongoing campaign to intimidate civil society organisations⁸.

An example of partnerships is the News and Digital Literacy Project – *Where Fake News Fails*, an EU-funded project launched by the Macedonian Institute for Media in partnership with the Institute for Communication Studies, the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers and the Media Diversity Institute⁹. The aim of the project is to improve effectiveness, responsibility and ethics of civil society and journalists in using the right of freedom of opinion and expression through promotion of news and digital literacy. The project aims at contributing the knowledge of CSOs to effectively counteract fake news and unethical media reporting and will help social media users

Recommendations

- Develop support for CSOs when applying for additional EU funding
- Increase capacities within ministries and local government units when working with CSOs when it comes to understanding how the EU funding scheme works
- Raise awareness and build greater capacity for teachers, school services and management for citizenship education
- Widening what inclusive education means when building partnerships projects, along with an active involvement of stakeholders when joining such partnerships
- Better and further allocate funds by the state and local municipal budget
- Improve cooperation and collaboration between governments and CSOs and systematically approach citizenship education impact through detailed analysis and evaluation
- Coordinate action between stakeholders involved in the future implementation of the national system for the validation of non-formal and informal education
- Further use accountability mechanisms for resolving shortcomings and enhancing procedures
- Establishment of cooperation and networking between different advocates for advocacy of media literature at the local and national level; educational and business sectors.
- Increase the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media to deal with media manipulations (including hate speech) by improving media literacy in collaboration with state institutions.

CASE STUDY

Teaching online users through an E-learning guide

The Community Development Institute (CDI) is a sustainable civil society organization that works on building a democratic and multiethnic society through strengthening the capacities of individuals, organizations, and institutions. The CDI’s experience is based on 18 years work within the community, addressing citizens’ problems and needs and helping in overcoming challenges. Under the framework of the Erasmus+ Project named “LL@L - Life Long at Learning”, CDI along with other partners contributes to the development of Adult Education staff giving them the possibilities to enhance their skills in e-learning and e-learning promotion. This project contributes to the development of Adult Education staff giving them the possibilities to enhance their skills in e-learning and e-learning promotion. The main objective of the project is the promotion of the use of ICT in the adult learning focusing on ICT tools for distance learning, on the basis of exchanging good practices between the partners and in response to the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme, Key Action 2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, strategic partnership for adult education.
This Monitor is a contribution to further examine the relationship between citizenship and lifelong learning experiences and policy outcomes in and outside of the classroom in various European countries. Mapping the different approaches that SOLIDAR Foundation members have taken in promoting EU values in relation to citizenship education and lifelong learning for greater democratic participation of citizens, the outcomes will be disseminated towards European and national policy-makers and offers an array of best practices to collect, use and transfer among networks. The SOLIDAR Education and Lifelong Learning Forum will further work on the topic and develop a long term sustainable advocacy strategy for CSOs towards national and EU-wide authorities to influence the debate and revision of national curricula and education systems.

Through its member and partner organizations, SOLIDAR Foundation engages citizens in EU decision making processes, empowers people through lifelong learning and VET, and voices their concerns to the EU institutions by carrying out active lobbying, project management and coordination, policy monitoring, research and awareness-raising.

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With contributions from SOLIDAR Foundation member CDI & partners