In Slovakia, despite reforms having taken place in the last decade in citizenship and lifelong learning education systems, the quality of educational outcomes remains of significant concern. Student performance in basic skills and civic skills is weak and shows a high level of inequality, with low achievement strongly linked to socioeconomic background. Our members at SOLIDAR Foundation have highlighted the need to increase trans-sectorial partnerships by improving access and involvement of civil society organisations in public-private partnerships aimed at promoting civic and intercultural competences, in line with working with relevant stakeholders to respond to specific groups’ demands in tackling discrimination and media literacy through trainings, campaigns and toolkits. Furthermore, public authorities in Slovakia must increase transparency and share information on measures taken in the field of lifelong learning for civil society to study, analyse, evaluate and work with the former on validation of non-formal and informal learning.
1. Ensuring that people acquire civic and intercultural competences

Citizenship education in Slovakia is driven by comprehensive guidelines on the content and organisation through a policy manual for schools given by the Ministry of Education each year. The guidelines, which were substantially changed in 2015/2016, cover issues such as human rights, children’s rights, discrimination, national minorities and foreigners, and set out detailed directions and proposals for action. The Ministry also changed the national curricula in 2017 to ensure education can prevent and reduce racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, extremism and other forms of intolerance.

Figure 1: Student performance in basic skills

![Performance Chart]


Citizenship education is integrated into other subjects, and according to our members, the lack of training from senior or young educators and teachers in civic competences, followed by the minimum amounts of time given for teaching citizenship education means that the content is not satisfactory and could be further improved. In Slovakia, there is a low level of civic participation among young people, partly, as our members have stressed, due to citizenship education having been pushed to the margins of the curriculum and being narrowly interpreted. Student performance in basic skills and civic skills is weak and shows a high level of inequality, with low achievement strongly linked to socioeconomic background, while incentives are lacking (low pay, little training) for bringing in new motivated teachers.

Furthermore, our members have also indicated that non-formal education is supported only through smaller projects from civic associations with a low dissemination potential. This lack of reaching out to the wider public means that opportunities and building a greater network are missed too. However, our members are taking upon programs to promote social justice, such as training programs aimed at respecting basic human rights and freedoms of social services recipients and social workers. Our members have also noted the lack of sufficient resources to develop a whole school approach and have access or involvement in public-private partnerships aimed at promoting civic and intercultural competences and tackling hate speech or fake news.

However, in 2015 within the framework of a project supported by the Ministry of Education of Slovakia, the Government Office and the EEEA grants, the State Educational Institute in Bratislava created the material: “Methodology supporting inclusive education in schools”. A special phone line was created and currently is operated by the organization “People Against Racism” and offers help, monitors and controls police work.
Validation of NFIL

In Slovakia, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport has set up the National Qualifications Framework in the Slovak Republic to respond to the Council recommendation on the establishment of European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. As such the National Qualifications System contains 1,000 qualifications that have a defined qualification standard (knowledge, skills, competencies), evaluation standard and methodological guidelines. Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2011 and Action Plan for Lifelong Learning 2011 are the basic frameworks for validating the results of non-formal education in Slovakia. However, our members have stressed the lack of information given by public authorities on validation and evaluation of measures to verify the non-formal and informal learning, which brings further issues along cooperation between government, public authorities and civil society.

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

Media literacy in Slovakia is part of the National strategy since 2009 in the context of Lifelong Learning as part of the Conception of Media Literacy Education, which mostly aimed at increasing the media literacy of all ages while protecting specific groups prone to discrimination and hate speech.

For instance, in 2016 to commemorate the Holocaust memorial and victims of racial violence, the People Against Racism Association set up a campaign called “Stop the spread of hatred on the Internet”. The campaign originated in response to the radicalization of attitudes toward national, religious, and sexual groups in the online environment, and the growing popularity of conspiracy and “revolutionary” online communities.
However, our members have also stressed the need to enhance digital skills and media literacy among specific groups of adult population such as seniors from content and services that might be a problem or a threat but cannot be evaluated due to lack of adequate media literacy.

**Recommendations**

- Increase the level of participation among young people for citizenship education through increased time given for teaching and training.
- Develop sufficient resources to set a whole school approach to include all relevant stakeholders in projects.
- Improve civil society access and involvement in public-private partnerships aimed at promoting civic and intercultural competences.
- Respond to specific groups’ demands (youth and senior) in developing media literacy and critical thinking through training, campaigns and toolkits.
- Increase transparency of information availability on measures taken by public authorities for validation of non-formal and informal learning.
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.