

**CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG
LEARNING MONITOR 2019**

GERMANY





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ABSTRACT

The following report represents one of eight national case studies feeding into the SOLIDAR Foundation's annual Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019. The purpose of the Monitor is to take stock of the developments at European and national level in terms of citizenship education policies and lifelong learning policies. The German report is focused on the general three main themes: digital citizenship, citizenship education and intercultural dialogue. It accounts for challenges, governmental approaches to them, and civil society approaches to them for each of the three themes. The German case reveals the difficulties of a federal system when it comes to implementing citizenship education and promoting digital skills. The report looks into the Brandenburg region, though mentioning the national overview. The country boasts a digital innovator status at EU level, but unexpectedly has only 68% of its population re-

porting a level of basic digital skills. The most recent digital education reforms are focused more on developing digital infrastructure in schools, rather than focusing on soft skills that learners should develop. The unequal way of implementing citizenship education proves to be dangerous for inequality gaps, while teacher shortages and teachers feeling undervalued run the risk of eroding the fragile citizenship education promotion. The country confronted with many migrants and refugees settling during the most recent migration, but has been relatively successful at including them in formal education, while funding for CSOs working on intercultural dialogue and citizenship education has increased. The situation is encouraging, though more attention should be paid to the fact that SOLIDAR Foundation members report a difficulty in adapting citizenship education and digital education curricula to present societal challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Citizenship education and lifelong learning fall under the competences of the states of the federal republic of Germany, called Länder, since the administration of all levels of education but also the co-right to legislate on education matters resides with the Länder. Consequently, Germany has effectively 16 educational systems with various approaches to education, and to citizenship education specifically¹. This report shall look into the overarching federal strategy concerning digitalization in education and the acquisition of civic competence in formal, non-formal and informal settings, and will then proceed to analyse its manifestation in the specific Land of Brandenburg, together with the peculiarities of this Land. SOLIDAR Foundation members report digital skills and digital infrastructure gaps across Germany, while Germany is flagged as lagging behind in terms of development of digital skills acquisition, especially in the context of its status as one of Europe's leaders in innovation². Our members point out the rise in nationalistic feelings in Germany, combined with a series of terrorist attacks, such as the anti-Semitic incident in Halle³, though they do clarify that the attention to citizenship education is prioritized given the arising tensions.



1 Eurydice (2020). Germany Overview [online]. Eurydice. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/germany_en. Last accessed: 11 February 2020.

2 European Commission (2019). Country Report Germany 2019. Accompanying the document: 2019 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. Pp. 40, 46. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-germany_en.pdf. Last accessed: 19 November 2019

3 BBC (2019). German Halle gunman admits far-right synagogue attack. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50011898>. Last accessed: 19 November 2019.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Germany lags behind in providing broadband connection as only 54% of the rural areas have coverage. This can be correlated with the fact that **only 68% of German citizens possessed above average digital skills in 2017⁴, a striking number for a country reported as a lead innovator within Europe.** The e-Government services have been implemented in a fragmented way⁵. All these digital inadequacies have been reflected in education. ICT education is unevenly implemented across regions, digital infrastructure needs are more acute in certain regions, while there is an increasing teacher shortage within an aging profession – 13.7% of teachers are above the age of 60⁶. This situation leads to **many teachers not being adequately prepared to integrate digital tools in schools and to adapt their methodology to digital realities, especially since they report inadequate training in digital skills⁷.** The inequality in resources dedicated to Länder is likely to lead to inequalities in opportunities across the German population, preventing citizens to fully engage in society when technological developments require adaptability and a lifelong learning perspective.

The federal level response to this is embodied by their [Digital Strategy 2025](#), which lays out as objectives for education adopting a lifelong perspective. However, digital education is framed only in terms of adapting workers to the labour market, disregarding the essential impact of this type of education on their personal development and on their capacity to genuinely participate in society as active citizens. The provision of hard skills, as the strategy looks specifically into programming, data

analysis skills, data protection and data security, neglects the impact that the virtual realm has on the social aspects of citizens lives. The strategy does not attempt to define or use digital citizenship, it does not talk of citizen responsibilities online, and it does not consider any risks of digitalization. The implementation of the strategy manifests in the education sector with the [DigitalPakt für Schule](#) initiative, which specifically targets school digital infrastructure. This agreement among the Federal level and the Länder, signed in March 2019, earmarks 5 billion euros of federal investment in digital infrastructure in schools, while the Länder commit to contribute with 10% of the funds invested by the federal level at the end of a five-year-plan. The German strategy of closing the gap in terms of material resources neglects to focus on how the resources will be used, as media development plans and digital school plans are not a compulsory fixture of the funding⁹. These have been developed in certain Länder, but receiving investment does not depend on them. Länder remain responsible of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Continuous Professional Development (CPD), revising the curricula, acquiring and maintaining the needed software¹⁰, but SOLIDAR Foundation members report that this is dependent on regional differences and on individual teachers. The regions lagging behind in terms of digital skills seem less likely to develop a digital strategy, **while teachers' feelings of not being valued accordingly and of having an increasingly hard-to-manage workload¹¹ lead many to not take any new responsibilities.** It remains to be seen the actual results of this initiative, as it is still too early to judge.

4 European Commission. Country Report Germany 2019

5 Ibid.

6 European Commission (2019). Education and Training Monitor 2019. P. 19. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2019-education-and-training-monitor.pdf>. Last accessed: 19 November 2019.

7 European Commission. Education and Training Monitor 2019.

8 European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor Germany 2018. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2018-germany_en.pdf. Last accessed: 19 November 2019.

9 European Commission. Country Report Germany 2019

10 Ibid.

11 European Commission. Education and Training Monitor 2019.

Digital competences are taught in a cross-curricular manner and based on a national definition of digital competence, even if aligned with The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens¹², addressing topics such as the protection of environment, protecting health and well-being by reducing risks linked to overuse of digital technologies, and identifying digital gaps¹³. The latter one is part of the problem solving competences of DigComp 2.0, and it refers to learners' abilities to reflect on what they need to improve, on where they experience difficulties and also to help others improve their digital competences. This element is missing from many national curricula across the EU, while Germany prioritizes this at both primary and secondary level of education¹⁴. Evidently, this requires teachers capable of addressing these topics, and it can be seen that the digital competences are included in the teacher competence framework¹⁵.

Our members report that attention given to cross-curricular topics is done on an ad-hoc basis, depending on each teacher, while in the year 2018/2019 a systemic review of the digital education strategies was similarly done only in a few Länder¹⁶. The discrepancy among Länder is a serious problem that perpetuates inequality of opportunity in Germany and encourages social fragmentation. The divide between Eastern and Western Germany, and between urban and rural areas in terms of access to digital resources and in terms of aiding the slower-developed to catch up is a recurrent issue, that cannot be fixed with the **non-targeted investment** that Germany has made available via its DigitalPakt für Schule.

CSOs, including SOLIDAR Foundation members are currently filling the gaps, especially as 64% of German youngsters report spending more than two hours a day on social media¹⁷, with very lax restrictions on the content they come in touch with. Guidance on how to protect themselves from dangers online and on how to be citizens online is needed.

12 Vuorikari, Riina; Punie, Yves; Carretero, Stephanie and Van den Brande, Lieve (2016). DigComp 2.0: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. European Commission, JRC Science for Policy Report. Available at: https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC101254/jrc101254_digcomp%202.0%20the%20digital%20competence%20framework%20for%20citizens.%20update%20phase%201.pdf. Last accessed: 19 November 2019.

13 European Commission (2019). Digital Education at School in Europe. Eurydice Report. Pp.: 35, 44. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/en_digital_education_n.pdf. Last accessed: 19 November 2019).

14 European Commission. Digital Education at School in Europe.

15 Ibid. Pp.: 49-52.

16 European Commission. Digital Education at School in Europe.

17 SMART Project (2019). Research about the use of Social Media by Youth in Italy, Germany, Spain, Norway, Lithuania and Best Practice Example from the Partner of Each Country.

CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member [Internationaler Bund \(IB\)](#), one of the largest service providers for youth, social and educational work in Europe, with over 700 branches and facilities in more than 300 locations in the world, has been eagerly focused on this topic. IB provides citizenship education as well as intercultural dialogue trainings, being focused on developing the learners' competences in a way that maximizes their involvement in society, while ensuring youngsters can be responsible on social media. IB's Brandenburg Nordost branch currently coordinates a 20-month Erasmus+ funded project entitled [SMART: Social Media Responsibility Training](#), for which it partners with organisations from Italy, Lithuania, Spain, and Norway in researching social media use in those countries, in rais-

ing awareness on the dangers of social media, in training 30 youth workers into social media responsibility and in producing a best practice guideline for disseminating strategies to teach social media responsibility in schools. The best practice guideline developed in this project, which is foreseen to conclude in March 2020, contains various workshops and trainings that have been designed to make learners aware of the data that they offer access to via social media, of the implication of spending too much time on social media for their health, and on how to connect with peers beyond virtual screens. IB complements the work done through such projects with digital skills courses offered to its clients, aiming to bridge the acquisition of harder skills with softer skills.



ib

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Citizenship education is a separate subject in the German curriculum, but SOLIDAR Foundation members report that it adopts a civics education model, transmitting knowledge related to a country's history and geography, to the system of government and constitution, as opposed to developing long lasting competences needed to fully participate as an active citizen in society. The legacy of the Second World War is felt in the curriculum's focus on anti-radicalisation, anti-bullying, intercultural dialogue, human rights, democracy, history politics¹⁸ while the European dimension is contained within the curriculum of political education – citizenship education – while also being included across other subjects since the 2008 revision of the [Europabildung in der Schule](#) governmental strategy. However, civic competences also have a cross-curricular dimension in the German education system.

The work done by Länder is supplemented from the federal level by the [Federal Agency for Civic Education](#), which provides training for teachers on civic competences, provides teaching materials for citizenship education classes, training for local journalists on citizenship topics. Though citizenship education is well-established within the German education system, SOLIDAR Foundation members report

that the curriculum is not sufficiently adapted to societal developments. They underline the fact that the impact of digitalization on citizenship and democracy is not yet approached in formal education, while there is a clear trend of more people being radicalized online through deep web forums. The recent Halle terrorist attack bolstered a perpetrator that has been operating on the fringes of the internet in the build-up of his atrocity¹⁹. SOLIDAR Foundation members report increased financial support from the state in dealing with topics of online radicalization and hate speech, but for now there is no clear national strategy that would link citizenship education with the impacts of digitalization on citizens' daily life. In light of the constant changes related to digitalization, the formal education alone cannot keep the pace, which implies a need to rely on and support non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) as a way to keep citizens up to date. Reforms in formal education must be complemented by constant investment in NFIL as well as a robust system of the recognition of competences and qualifications obtained via such learning processes.

The funding that the government offers is excessively bureaucratized, leading to long-term procedures to access such investments, which is unsustainable for smaller CSOs.

CASE STUDY

One example would be the [Demokratie Leben](#) programme, a federal programme that earmarked 115.5 million euros in 2019 as investments in activities that promote a diverse, non-violent and democratic society. An example of a large scale project funded through Demokratie

Leben, are the 170 social workers trained to be Respekt Coaches. [IB trainers in the Bünden and Merzig branches have been prepared to be such coaches](#), which entails coming into schools to train youngsters to avoid radicalization and to promote intercultural dialogue.



¹⁸ European Commission. Education and Training Monitor Germany 2018.

¹⁹ BBC. German Halle gunman admits far-right synagogue attack.

CASE STUDY

IB continues to promote in an ad-hoc manner citizenship education, as each of the courses that they provide to learners have a component related to civic competences. Learners mandatorily go through this component before claiming their qualification. The civic component varies from study group to study group and from year to year but it appears in the shape of European weeks, in which learners participate

in meetings with national and European members of the parliament, organize cooking classes in which they cook food from various parts of the world, participate in community activities. The mandatory component makes it clear how regardless of the competences one tries to obtain, there must be an awareness of their civic responsibilities to fully participate in society.



ib

Media literacy has been neglected as there has been an increased focus on combatting hate speech and radicalization. The governmental strategy [Medienbildung in der Schule](#) has not been updated since 2012 with SOLIDAR Foundation members reporting that this topic has been, indeed, neglected. News literacy is hardly a part of ITE and the usage of online and social media are not approached in the school curriculum²⁰.

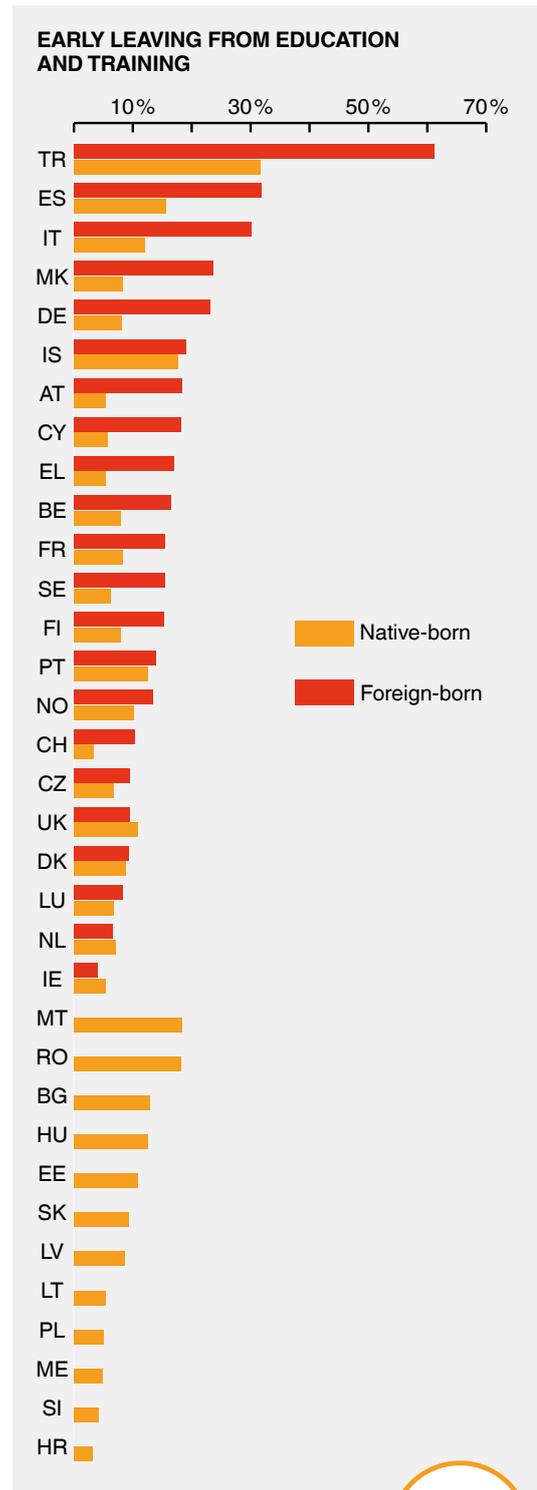
Though citizenship education is better established than digital citizenship education, it remains dependent on each region and on organisations' capacities to obtain funding. SOLIDAR Foundation member, IB, reports sufficient capacities to go through the strenuous procedures to apply for local and federal funding, but for smaller organizations this can pose serious threats to their operational capacities. As a result, citizenship education remains unevenly handled and unadapted to the current digital realities.

²⁰ European Commission. Education and Training Monitor Germany 2018

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The early leaving from education and training (ELET) rate in Germany (as % of the population aged 18-24) stands at 10.3% in 2018, in line with the European average, on a steady decrease since the 2009 rate of 11.1%, but slightly increasing since 2017, when it was 10.1%. The youth NEETs rate places Germany as a best performer in Europe. Adult participation in education (as % of population aged 25-64) is below the EU average, finding itself at 8.2%, even decreasing from the 8.4% rate of the previous year²¹. Crudely, this reveals a learner-centred approach to education, as efforts are made to limit learners dropping out of education. However, Germany does not collect national data on ELET against a student register, revealing a less comprehensive strategy to tackle such issues²². More can still be done on this matter, especially since adult education participation is disappointing.

As a migrant destination country, Germany experienced a diversification of its school population that required the acquisition of competences related to intercultural understanding. Germany has been relatively successful at integrating migrants and refugee in education though it still needs to do more on the aspect of placing pupils with a migrant background more evenly across classes, to prevent further exacerbating the gap among natives and migrants²³. In Brandenburg, intercultural education is a cross-curricular topic, while teacher competence frameworks include competences on teaching children with a migrant background and CPD courses are offered to raise teachers' awareness of migrants' needs. **Teachers are encouraged to cooperate with local organisations in Brandenburg, ensuring that synergies are created to meet learners' socio-emotional needs.** Furthermore, the curriculum contains a cross-curricular language awareness competence in Brandenburg, effectively ensuring



²¹ Data from European Commission. Education and Training Monitor 2016-2019.

²² Eurydice on reforms

²³ European Commission. Country Report Germany 2019.

that learners can compare technical words across various languages²⁴ to gain insight into other languages and to be assisted to move at the same academic pace with natives. However, the ELET rate for pupils with migrant background is more than double the one of natives²⁵.

Regional disparities exist because of the wide variety of approaches among Länder. There is no overarching effort to provide psycho-social support to migrant pupils, and this has been done voluntarily so by certain Länder, but not in all²⁶.

CASE STUDY

IB Brandenburg Nordost has designed, together with partners from the UK, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Greece, [Compass](#), an online app that provides multiway translation for the key phrases migrants and refugees need when arriving in Europe. The early contact language issues have been reported as a main impediment to facilitate the welcoming of migrants and refugees, therefore, IB and its partners have run research on topics most needed for migrants upon their arrival in Europe, and have provided a user-friendly app in

13 different languages, some not even covered by Google's translation tools. The Compass was piloted with 200 migrants, adapted, and since the finalization of the project, in the summer of 2019, it has currently been accessed 11000 times. IB reports that external organisations have made use of this tool, especially on the island of Lampedusa. The tool is available for usage even as the project has concluded. The project partners are currently working on ensuring that the app can also be accessed offline.



Source: IB

24 European Commission (2019). Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures. Eurydice report. Pp. 18, 135. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/integrating_students_from_migrant_backgrounds_into_schools_in_europe_national_policies_and_measures.pdf. Last accessed: 19 November 2019.

25 Ibid. P.39

26 European Commission. Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures.

FUNDING

Citizenship education and any lifelong learning strategy depend on the funds allocated for the education sector and for CSOs filling in the gaps where formal education cannot contribute. As of 2018, Germany was spending 4.1% of its GDP on education²⁷, independently, in 2016, 9.5% of governmental expenditure was directed to education²⁸. Both numbers are below the EU average. Länder are bearing

three quarters of the costs for public education being responsible for this area, which is enormous pressure on those affected more strongly by migration or on those that have been already lagging behind in terms of educational performance. However, SOLIDAR Foundation members report increased funding for citizenship education and democratic values promotion.

RECOMMENDATIONS



DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

- ◆ Comprehensive evaluation system of the implementation of digital schools, more seriously tying the digital infrastructure funding to this;
- ◆ Renewed federal focus offered to media literacy and governmental cooperation with journalists' associations and CSOs in the provision of media education.
- ◆ Targeted investment in citizenship education and in digital citizenship education in the Länder that are lagging behind, to close regional gaps that perpetuate social fragmentation.



CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

- ◆ Simplified procedures for obtaining federal and Land-level funding for CSOs with smaller operational capacity
- ◆ Increased support for NFIL and recognition as a complementary learning process to formal education to facilitate the acquisition of skills and competences needed to be an active member of society.

²⁷ European Commission. Education and Training Monitor Germany 2019.

²⁸ European Commission. Country Report Germany 2019

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