



CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING MONITOR 2021

FRANCE

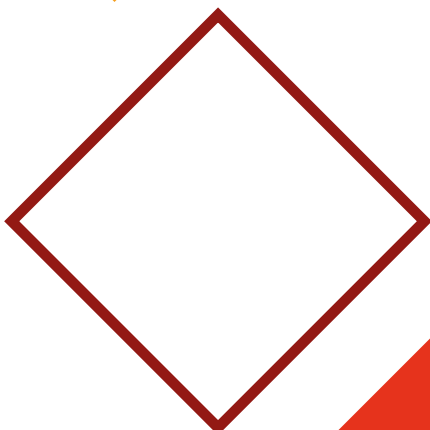
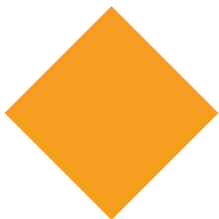




TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
INTRODUCTION	4
EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD	5
EES in formal education	5
EES in non-formal and informal education	8
SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE	11
The impact of the pandemic	11
Spotlight: French values used to purge the civic space	12
Civil society strikes back	14
CONCLUSION	17
RECOMMENDATIONS	18
BIBLIOGRAPHY	19

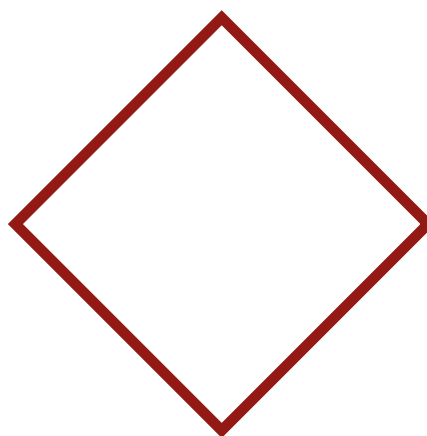




ABSTRACT

The following report is one of eleven national case studies building up the 6th edition of the SOLIDAR Foundation's annual Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor. The French case study looks into the implementation of Education for Environmental Sustainability (EES) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) considering the importance of these two topics in equipping learners with the needed competences to fight against the climate crisis. The report also assesses the possibility of learners to exert the civic and green competences that they acquire in the context of a shrinking civic space in France. The findings related to green competences reveal a well-structured, non-siloed and comprehensive approach to including EES and ESD in formal education at all levels, while also creating an environment conducive to the implementation of the topic in a cross-curricular fashion. The collaboration with informal and non-formal education providers is not brought to full fruition yet and this is a missed opportunity due to the need to connect the formal learning with the local reality

beyond just the theoretical level. Though practical community partnerships have been developed, these are for the moment depending on the willingness of certain stakeholders in various communities and not reaching all learners. At the same time, the state of the civic space is not conducive towards learners' capacity to exert their civic and green competences and for the opportunity of civil society to work together with the public authorities in facilitating a just, green transition. The recent pieces of legislation in 2021 as well as the abuses made by law enforcement authorities, in relation to COVID-19 restrictions, on the freedom of assembly and association have pushed the civic space in France to a narrowed down status. In light of these challenges, the Monitor will conclude with a set of recommendations to ensure more coherence in the approach of the public authorities in relation to the mainstreaming of EES and in relation to ensuring that an environment is created for active citizens to promote a more sustainable way of living and for them to be better listened to by the public authorities.



INTRODUCTION

The following report represents one of eleven national case studies feeding into the 6th edition of the SOLIDAR Foundation's annual [Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor](#). The purpose of this case study is to analyse and investigate the changes undertaken in the fields of citizenship education and lifelong learning policies in France and their relationship with the state of the civic space in the country. The French report is focused on two main topics: education for environmental sustainability (EES) in the frame of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), and the shrinking civic space and the ways civil society organisations (CSOs) counter this nationally and through cross-border solidarity. The report will initially assess the situation of EES' inclusion in formal, informal and non-formal education in France, assessing the law and policy infrastructures as well as the way in which they are practically implemented. It will connect the implementation of EES with a vibrant civic space,

considering that the environmental challenge requires concerted effort among learners who are adequately equipped with transversal competences for dealing with 21st century global challenges and among the public authorities who must take immediate action given the urgency of the crisis. Though this responsibility must not fall on the shoulders of learners, it is important for the civic space to be open for them to participate and have ownership over the process of greening the country. Based on this, the Monitor will evaluate the openness of the civic space, considering setbacks during the pandemic but also trends specific to the context of France. This national report will conclude with recommendations aimed at the challenges that will have been revealed in relation to the implementation of EES and the status of the civic space, ensuring that learners enjoy a space where they can develop their civic and green competences and then implement them in society.

EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

EES IN FORMAL EDUCATION



Education for environmental sustainability (EES) has had a long history in France, emerging in 1977 as environmental education through an informative circular. The concept has been truly defined, strengthened and mainstreamed as of 2004 when it was rebranded as environmental education and education for sustainable development¹, with a governmental project for its inclusion in all French schools being

launched in 2005². A new informative circular from 2007 has taken this vision of EES and included it in formal education as a cross-curricular topic. All teaching programmes were expected to address the complex relationships between humans and environment, linking the environment with the social, economic and geopolitical fields³. By 2013⁴, EES was enshrined in the education law and in 2021 the French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports published a Vademecum – Education for sustainable development by 2030⁵. The vademecum promotes benchmarks for stakeholders in education on adapting local realities to scientific quality and educational consistency while including more educational resources on seas and oceans in classrooms. It also guides the expansion of ESD from formal education to extracurricular activities⁶. The vademecum emerged as the process of including EES in the curriculum at all levels of compulsory education in France was concluded, ensuring that the topic is well covered and providing the tools to education professionals to make this inclusion a reality in the day-to-day teaching process. The vademecum and the overall link between the governmental approach and Agenda 2030 have pushed for the adaptation of teacher training to current needs, with the education professionals being prepared to adopt the new culture regarding the environment, connect ESD with local contexts, and adapt the material to the classroom. The curricula focuses not only on teaching content related

1 French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Education for Sustainable Development*. Available at : <https://www.education.gouv.fr/l-education-au-developpement-durable-7136>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

2 UNESCO and UNECE (2005). France – General introduction into the school system of environmental education for sustainable development. In *Education for Sustainable Development – United Nations Decade 2005-2014*. Available at: https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/GoodPractices/Submissions/Countries/France/NationalComUNDESDPrior1/national_e.pdf. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.

3 French Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research (2007). Circulaire n. 2007-077: Education for Sustainable Development. In *Bulletin Officiel* n.14, 5 April 2007. Available at: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2007/14/MENE0700821C.htm>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

4 French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Education for Sustainable Development*

5 French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Vademecum: Education for Sustainable Development*. Available at: <https://eduscol.education.fr/document/5239/download?attachment>. Last accessed: 11 February 2022.

6 Eurydice (2022). *National Reforms in School Education: France*. Available at : https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-school-education-23_en. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.

to sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity, but also on boosting learners' observatory and reasoning competences in relation to the processes that impact sustainability⁷. Contextualisation of the notions acquired in mathematics, physics and chemistry is done, coupling natural and social sciences to deepen the systemic approach needed for learners to combat the climate crisis. Similarly, the topic is mainstreamed through history and geography, as expected, but the long tradition of citizenship education is also connected with global citizenship and the environment⁸. **With over 9 years of formal education which feature citizenship education as a topic, France ranks as the European country that focuses the most on this**, and the implications are significant with most education professionals being able to easily teach the topic in the classroom and with the learners' civic competences ranking fairly highly compared to the rest of the world⁹. Therefore, the link between citizenship education and the environment serves only to show how essential public authorities view the topic for ensuring that learners will successfully become active citizens in society.

The French public authorities have adopted a multi-faceted response to mainstreaming the topic, as they complemented the processes of enshrining the topic in law and in curricula with the 2013 launch of the E3D certification for education institutions. This foresees the fact that these institutions can be labeled as committed to working on sustainable development from a global perspective. 10% of schools in France have received this certification, which clearly shows that the work is still in progress, but it must be highlighted that obtaining it has its difficulties considering that the buildings, their maintenance and the school environment in general must be up to ecological standards¹⁰. As the drive at EU level was more often than not linked to greening education institutions rather than addressing the educational paradigm in which they have been operating, it is encouraging to see the complex approach of the French authorities, which have certainly focused on the carbon footprint of education institutions but have done so while reforming the educational content and practices linked to EES and ESD as well. In 2021, a guide was provided by the public authorities to support education institutions in approaching the E3D label. Moreover, the label is dependent on all of the staff working in the institution to be trained to include ESD in their work while there is also the expectation that there are teachers responsible to supervise the work of learners and of the institution in relation to greening or becoming more sustainable¹¹. This type of support for the academic profession is crucial to ensure that the right environment is established for the topic to be mainstreamed within classrooms.



7 French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Qu'est-ce que l'éducation au développement durable ?*. Available at: <https://eduscol.education.fr/1118/qu-est-ce-que-l-education-au-developpement-durable>. Last accessed: 11 February 2022.; French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Vademecum: Education for Sustainable Development*.

8 French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Vademecum: Education for Sustainable Development*.

9 Bozec, Géraldine (2016). *Éducation à la Citoyenneté à l'École : Politiques, Pratiques Scolaires et Effets sur les Élèves*. Conseil national d'évaluation du système scolaire (CNESCO). Available at: <https://www.cnesco.fr/en/citizenship/international-comparison-on-citizenship-education/>. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.

10 European Commission (2021). *Education and Training Monitor 2021: France*. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2021/en/france.html#three>. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.

11 French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2013). Circulaire n.2013-111 : Démarche globale de développement durable dans les écoles et les établissements scolaires (E3D) - Référentiel de mise en œuvre et de labellisation. In *Bulletin Officiel* n.31, 29 August 2013. Available at: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/13/Hebdo31/MENE1320526N.htm>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

CASE STUDY

The efforts towards the lowering of carbon footprint of education institutions was also promoted in a gamification format by the French authorities. The [Cube.S competition](#) stands as a testament for this as it is designed for lower and upper secondary education institutions which undertake the task of reducing their energy consumption over a period of five years. A national ranking is created for this, pushing education institutions to take more initiatives to meet the goals of the French Energy Transition Law which aims for 40% energy savings by 2030. The new edition of Cube.S started functioning as of the 2021 academic year,

with a first batch of prizes to be given in 2023 based on the progress made by education institutions. The participants to the challenges receive a communication toolkit on this, a guide of good practices and feedback from previous editions of Cube.S as well as 4 half-days of awareness raising on energy consumption in their institution, amongst others. The idea is to minimally guide the education institutions, allowing them to choose the type of energy saving action they wish to pursue. For the moment, 459 education institutions are engaged in this competition.

Another step in the French process of mainstreaming the topic has been to empower learners. In 2019, eco-delegates were created, representing a position for which pupils could be elected for and allowing their participation in the school steering committees, together with all the other education stakeholders (school administration, school leaders, teachers, elected pupils, staff representatives supervising the work of eco-delegates but also partners, local administration representatives, partner associations)¹². The democratic process of managing the education institutions is fully in line with

SOLIDAR Foundation's recommendations regarding the collaborative process of governing education institutions using a whole-community approach¹³. The election of eco-delegates is now compulsory in secondary schools and they have four essential missions: carrying out projects to be built collectively; being ambassadors to the school's departments, managers and authorities, as well as to external partners; reporting on the actions carried out, contributing to their evaluation and to their valorisation; passing on information and knowledge to their peers. This creates co-ownership of the green

12 European Commission (2021). *Education and Training Monitor 2021: France.*; French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Des élèves éco-délégués pour agir en faveur du développement durable.* Available at: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/des-eleves-eco-delegues-pour-agir-en-faveur-du-developpement-durable-10835#:~:text=Youtube%20est%20d%C3%A9sactiv%C3%A9-,Un%20%C3%A9co%2Dd%C3%A9l%C3%A9gu%C3%A9%20par%20classe,poussent%20%C3%A0%20s'y%20engager>. Last accessed: 11 February 2022.

13 SOLIDAR Foundation (2021). *The Commodification of Education and the Prevalence of For-Profit Education Stakeholders. SOLIDAR Foundation Policy Paper.* Available at: https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/374/original/SOLIDAR_Foundation_Policy_Paper_on_the_Commodification_of_Education_October_2021.pdf?1633423601. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.



EES IN NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

If the formal education sector is being reformed to structurally include ESD, the situation in non-formal and informal education is slightly less clear. The amount of ad-hoc initiatives developed by informal and non-formal education providers is significant, but it becomes apparent that the connection with the formal education sector and with the structured approach is insufficiently developed. The formal education sector is promoting projects, partnerships and work done extracurricularly, but priority over who is part of the school steering committees is still given to actors from the formal education sector or representatives of the learners.

direction of education for learners and it actively involves them in the process of becoming active participants in the green transition. Moreover, the delegates must be elected with respect for the gender balance as one male and one female delegate are elected per education institution¹⁴.

The holistic approach at the level of formal education is expanded towards a whole-government approach, as a framework for cooperation was signed among the Ministries of Ecological Transition, of Agriculture and Food, and of Education. The Ministry of Ecological Transition is prioritizing EES in its work, relying on the foundations laid through the education systems to advance the green transition¹⁵. This concerted approach prevents working in silos and highlights how central the goal of the ecological transition is for the French public authorities, while revealing a well-planned and well-connected effort to make this a reality. Overall, the approach in formal education is commendable, though the structured interconnection between formal, informal and non-formal education is only now in development.

SOLIDAR Foundation member, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, reports that it engaged with the French government on multiple occasions to discuss the possibility of expanding the inclusion of EES and ESD in education, highlighting that its suggestions are considered. However, they confirm that the topic can be included even more. The challenge is also linked with the way this is streamlined through adult education. Considering that the climate emergency requires urgent action, there is a need to prepare all learners, of all ages, and not just those within formal education to adapt to the new requirements linked to sustainability and to understand what are the planetary boundaries. At the moment, based on data from 2019 which accounted for the participation of adults aged 26-64 in education and training on a span of 4 weeks prior to the implementation of this survey, it appears that approximately 19% of adults in France engaged in education¹⁶.

14 ADEME (2020). *Le guide de l'éco-délégué : AU COLLÈGE. Agir pour la transition écologique et solidaire*. ADEME: Angers. Available at: <https://bibliothèque.ademe.fr/cadic/425/guide-eco-delegue-college.pdf?modal=false>. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.; French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Des élèves éco-délégués pour agir en faveur du développement durable*.

15 French Ministry for the Ecological Transition (2021). *L'éducation à l'environnement et au développement durable*. Available at: <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/education-lenvironnement-et-au-developpement-durable>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

16 Eurostat (2021). *Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age*. Available at: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=trng_lfs_01&lang=en. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.

These numbers are impressive if compared to other EU countries¹⁷, but they are far-off from what is needed to ensure a just green transition and prepare learners for the 21st century society. The situation is more positive in France due to the '[compte personnel de formation](#)', a model considered by the European Commission's when building its [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts](#). This establishes an entitlement for life-long learning, where each worker has access to an account of funding which can be used towards following up development courses¹⁸. Though this represents an important solution that clearly had some benefits in the French

case, it remains the case that adult education continued to be more focused on workers and more accessible to workers who already are more qualified¹⁹.

Given this situation, SOLIDAR Foundation members are shifting the perspective from labour market oriented training by providing a wider variety of non-formal and informal learning that aims to tackle the way learners conceive their interaction with the environment. Below you can find more examples from the types of training organised by the SOLIDAR Foundation membership in France.



17 Ibid.

18 Perez, Coralie and Vourc'h, Ann (2020). Individualising training access schemes: France – the Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal Training Account – CPF). *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/301041f1-en.pdf?expires=1639672953&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=3B5AE28EB38C64008D8104DD655AE13C>. Last accessed: 11 February 2022.

19 Fernandes, Sofia and Kerneis, Klervi (2020). Towards and Individual Right to Adult Learning for all Europeans. Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Institut Jacques Delors. Available at: <https://www.fepeurope.eu/attachments/publications/life-long%20learning%20-%20a4%20-%20def%201%20-%202088%20pages%20%204%20cover%20pp.pdf>. Last accessed: 10 February 2022. Pp. 26-30 and 58.

CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, proposes a volunteering programme aimed at the ecological transition. The [Transi'Terre programme](#) raises awareness on the ecological crisis by highlighting the impact of the raising temperatures, by insisting on the suffering experienced by those most disadvantaged in society first, and links it all with scientific research. [La Ligue](#) wishes to address the citizens' mentality and behaviours, to ensure that they promote a sustainable environment. The programme is aimed at anyone but also for those volunteers engaged in the French Civic Service. It is designed on three axes: educating environmental protection, critical thinking on the ecological transition, and acting daily for an ecological transition. They foresee different levels of engagement and of commitment, but activities organised under the programme's frame include sports and cultural activities to discover a region's flora and fauna, the organization of exhibitions focused on the chain of production of various pieces of clothing, educational courses on SDGs, a comparative analysis of recycling procedures performed by different countries, setting up ecological gardens across cities, and similar activities.

The programme provides volunteers with pedagogical resources on themes related to the ecological transition, with materials to organize awareness raising campaigns, board games on the topic, while the volunteers are also steered towards various non-formal courses and seminars/webinars to develop the knowledge on how to talk about the themes at hand and to make them easily understandable for a wider audience. The programme has gained more traction in Pays de la Loire but it represents only one model of activities that [La Ligue](#) supports in the field of the ecological transition, as they also developed an educational course on biodiversity for cohorts of learners of younger ages and a movement for the ecological labelling of its holiday centres. Nearly 280 young civic service volunteers are involved by [La Ligue](#) in ecological transition missions in mainland France and overseas. This reinforces the idea that **the approach of informal and non-formal education providers is structural, large-scale and can be relied upon to provide experiential learning fully attuned to the specific local needs.**

Based on this, and on the challenges to boosting up the participation of adults in education, there is a need for the French strategy for the

green transition to step up its efforts of connecting the formal, informal and non-formal education sectors.

SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

The value of the development of a holistic approach to learning for sustainability is that learners can actualize this behaviour in society, bringing about real change that can impact the course of the environmental crisis. For this to be the case, it is essential to rely on a broad civic space, in which learners can actively push for the expansion of education for environmental sustainability. The situation in France appears at odds with the governmental commitment for environment, given that the civic space has suffered numerous setbacks in the recent years. The Monitor will continue with an assessment of this situation and what its implication is for having active citizens that can promote sustainability.

THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

As in many countries across Europe, the pandemic has brought with it restrictions meant to protect the health of the citizens. A state of health emergency was announced with the emergency law no. 2020-290²⁰, which effectively provided the Prime Minister to issue decrees linked to people's freedom of movement and assembly in light of the health crisis. The state of health emergency was extended until June 2021 with further lockdown measures being implemented intermittently as of October 2020²¹. **Civil society organisations (CSOs) that were working in the solidarity or social action sectors have seen a reduction of 80% of their activities compared to CSOs working in other sectors.** Around 1.4

billion EUR was foreseen as lost for the CSO sector during the strict lockdowns of 2020, while CSOs were being excluded from having access to the State Solidarity Fund during this period until advocacy from [Mouvement Associatif](#) has ensured the opening up of the fund²². The [French League of Human Rights](#) has also drawn attention during this period to the crackdown on protestors regardless of the format of the actions that they were leading (in cars, through social distanced human chains) while the restaurants, bars, malls and supermarkets were left to function normally²³.

The police forces continued to ban protests and arrest activists even after the Council of State's decision in June 2020 that bans on demonstrations were not justified under the health situation at that moment²⁴. The Council of State also suspended on two occasions the police's uses of drones for surveillance during protests in the absence of a legal framework



20 Légifrance (2020). *LOI n° 2020-290 du 23 mars 2020 d'urgence pour faire face à l'épidémie de covid-19 (1)*. Available at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000041746313/#>. Last accessed: 09 February 2022.

21 International Centre for Non-Profit Law (2022). *COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker : France*. Available at: <https://www.icnl.org/covid19tracker/?location=42&issue=&date=&type=>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

22 CIVICUS (2020). *Unjustified Ban on Protests during Pandemic; Charlie Hebdo Faces Attack Again*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/10/08/unjustified-ban-protests-during-pandemic-charlie-hebdo-faces-attack-again/>. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.

23 Ligue des droits de l'Homme (2020). *Manifester est un Droit Fondamental. Il doit être défendu*. Available at: <https://www.ldh-france.org/manifeste-est-un-droit-fondamental-il-doit-etre-defendu/>. Last accessed: 09 February 2022.

24 CIVICUS (2020). *Unjustified Ban on Protests during Pandemic; Charlie Hebdo Faces Attack Again*

that could guarantee peaceful assembly²⁵. Moreover, police brutality during demonstrations has grown significantly over the pandemic, partly also because this self-declared, empowering mandate of stopping demonstrations even when they were legal. Some examples where the securitization of police forces appeared fully fledged, considering the unnecessary emergence of police officers in riot gears or considering the arrests and tear gas usage, include the healthcare professionals' protest of 16 June 2020, the Yellow Vest demonstrations of 11-13 September 2020, the 7 March 2020 International Women's Day March, among many others with protestors injured or wrongfully detained²⁶.

In light of this situation, but also in light of aspects that will be discussed in the following section of this Monitor, CIVICUS has classified the civic space in France as narrowed²⁷, which should raise signals of alarm especially on the backdrop of the rise of far-right politicians with high support in the run-up to the presidential election of 2022. Candidates such as Marine Le Pen and Eric Zemmour have been enshrouded in narratives of opposing and criticizing the morally bankrupt mainstream media²⁸, creating a climate of doubt and fear for the media sector and building up tensions in relation to the various protests ongoing in France. This powder keg situation reflects the narrowed civic space but also raises concerns about a potential worsening of this status in the following year.



SPOTLIGHT: FRENCH VALUES USED TO PURGE THE CIVIC SPACE



The main spotlight falls upon two pieces of legislation which have been deemed harmful unanimously by the civil society sector. The Separatism Bill²⁹, passed in July 2021 and also known as the legislation to strengthen republican values, and the Global Security Law³⁰, which was adopted in April 2021, are the **two controversial moves made in 2021 that have also contributed to the narrowed civic space and have plunged France on a path towards an obscured civic space** based on CIVICUS ratings. Starting from the Global Security Laws, it contains many provisions to increase the authority of the police force in light

25 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021). *Protecting Civic Space in the EU*. Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2021-protecting-civic-space_en.pdf. Last accessed 15 February 2022. P.29.

26 CIVICUS (2020). *Unjustified Ban on Protests during Pandemic; Charlie Hebdo Faces Attack Again*; CIVICUS (2020). *Police Violence Against Protestors and Journalists Under Spotlight*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/05/08/police-violence-against-protesters-and-journalists-under-spotlight/>. Last accessed: 10 February 2022.

27 CIVICUS Monitor (2022). *France*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/france/>. Last accessed : 15 February 2022.

28 Sayare, Scott (2017). *How Marine le Pen played the media*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/20/how-marine-le-pen-played-the-media>. Last accessed: 11 February 2022.; Ramdani, Nabila (2021). *France's New Far-Right Firebrand*. Foreign Policy. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/08/france-zemmour-lepen-macron-far-right-election/>. Last accessed: 10 February 2022.

29 Légifrance (2021). *LOI n° 2021-1109 du 24 août 2021 confortant le respect des principes de la République*. Available at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/dossierlegislatif/JORFDOLE000042635616/>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

30 Légifrance (2021). *LOI n° 2021-646 du 25 mai 2021 pour une sécurité globale préservant les libertés*. Available at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/dossierlegislatif/JORFDOLE000042563668/>. Last accessed: 11 February 2022.

of the opposition of the Council of State to the police's actions, as detailed above. Therefore, provisions in the laws foresee more authorities to have access to images recorded by law enforcement officers' cameras. Moreover, it approves the sanctioning of media releasing damaging imagery of law enforcement officers engaged in suppressing protests³¹. CSOs have decried the impact this has on the freedom of assembly as protestors have less chances to document abuses and are less aware of how imagery of them is being used further³². This is the case also due to the fact that the law foresees that video surveillance captured by drones does not require judicial authorization to film demonstrations or to keep people aware of the fact that they are being filmed. [Amnesty International](#) and the [French League of Human Rights](#) have expressed their clear opposition to the law in light of huge infringements on public freedom and in light of the generalized state of surveillance it creates³³. The law is also increasing reliance on private security companies which diminishes the accountability and legal responsibility in case of police malpractice³⁴ but which also falls right into the securitization speech that has been mainstreamed in France and that views too many of social interactions as in need for policing due to potential threats. This construct in the French society is counterproductive towards maintaining a free, tolerant and enlarged space for the civil society to flourish. The previous SOLIDAR Foundation Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor has raised concerns about exactly this lack of willingness to work on inclusion. Secularism does not mean the discrimination of all religious

minorities, but rather it must invite for a conversation on religious affiliations and for respecting everyone's religious choices³⁵.

The other controversial law, the Separatism Bill, puts forward a new system for the accreditation of religious authorities which has been deemed by the equality body [Défenseur des droits](#) as problematic³⁶. The law is disproportionately affecting groups from certain ethnic origins, Muslim people or even groups associated with or thought of as Muslim people. However, the most controversial aspect of it is the requirement for CSOs to sign 'a contract of republican engagement' in order for their operations to be permitted³⁷. This vague formulation gives discretionary powers to public authorities to dismantle any CSO of which they disapprove, seriously infringing on the freedom of association³⁸. Moreover, subsidies for the organisations are linked to this contract, and any violation of it requires reimbursements³⁹, which again puts CSOs in a constant threat of losing their capacity to operate on the whim of



31 CIVICUS (2021). *Controversial Global Security Law Adopted, Creating a State of Generalised Surveillance*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/05/18/controversial-global-security-law-adopted-creating-state-generalised-surveillance/>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.; European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021). *Protecting Civic Space in the EU*. P.30

32 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021). *Protecting Civic Space in the EU*. P.30

33 CIVICUS (2021). *Controversial Global Security Law Adopted, Creating a State of Generalised Surveillance*.

34 Ibid.

35 Frank, Andrei (2021). *Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020: French national report*. SOLIDAR Foundation. Available at: https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/313/original/CLLL_Monitor2020_National_report_France.pdf?1617694931. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

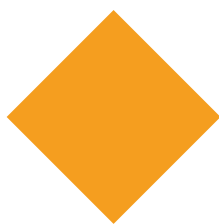
36 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021). *Protecting Civic Space in the EU*. P.34.

37 CIVICUS (2021). *National Assembly Approves Controversial 'Separatism Bill', Massive Protests Opposing #Passanitaire*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/09/01/national-assembly-approves-controversial-separatism-bill-massive-protests-opposing-passanitaire/>. Last accessed: 11 February 2022.

38 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021). *Protecting Civic Space in the EU*. Pp. 41-42.

39 Ibid.

the public authorities. The law is being seen by watchdogs and other CSOs as an endangerment of the secular laws passed at the end of the 19th century and in the 20th century, while also a general attack on freedom⁴⁰. Similarly to the Global Security Law, the republic values law comes on the background of artificially created narratives of us-vs-them, recasting the violent murder of professor Samuel Paty⁴¹ and other acts of terrorism, as a distinct opposition between Republican order and radical Islam. The black or white references, and the dichotomy created, casts religious and ethnic minorities in a negative light and reinforce the securitization mindset that is used to protect the ‘essential fabric of the French society’. The vague understanding of what the French society is, and certainly a type of understanding that negates the contribution and participation of a multitude of already vulnerable groups, is being further disseminated through the populist far-right campaigning that is occurring at the moment. If nationally this is the impact of the law, at the European level it also has raised concerns, with the Council of Europe’s Expert Council on NGO Law expressing the incompatibility of the parliamentary procedures associated regarding the law with the European law, while underlining the concerns associated with the opportunities to withdraw funding, limitations on foreign funding and discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities⁴².



CIVIL SOCIETY STRIKES BACK

The civil society has strongly responded to these developments. The aforementioned watchdogs have been frequently launching statements and monitoring the process. Their efforts went even beyond, with 18 CSOs forming a coalition for associative freedoms and submitting a joint letter (co-signed even by outsiders from the coalition – reaching 32 signatories) to the opposition members of the Parliament, for the purpose of pushing them to refer the legislative project for the Separatism Bill to the French Constitutional Council. They continued to put pressure but, unfortunately, the bill was passed, prompting the same organisations to send their own external contribution to the Constitutional Council, highlighting the unconstitutional aspects of the bill⁴³. The European Civic Forum actualized the importance of cross-border solidarity, by showing its support for the plight of CSOs in France and releasing a statement that framed the law as a fundamental threat to civil liberties⁴⁴. CIVICUS has also written to the European Commission and the European Fundamental Rights Agency expressing its concern and urging the Commission to question the French lawmakers and policymakers⁴⁵. **The solidarity at national level expanded at EU level and it does amplify the voices of CSOs, allowing them to put pressure on different fronts, but most importantly, allowing them to feel heard and supported by their fellow activists** operating under various other types of restrictions of civic space, which have been intensifying across Europe.

40 CIVICUS (2021). *National Assembly Approves Controversial ‘Separatism Bill’, Massive Protests Opposing #Passsanitaire*.

41 Makooi, Bahar (2021). ‘The violence shook me profoundly’: Teachers, students remember Samuel Paty’s murder. France24. Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20211015-the-violence-shook-me-profoundly-teachers-students-remember-samuel-paty-s-murder>. Last accessed: 10 February 2022.

42 Council of Europe (2021). Opinion on the Compatibility with the European Standards of the Bill to Ensure Respect for the Principles of the Republic by All: Opinion prepared by the Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/opinion-on-the-bill-to-ensure-respect-for-the-principles-of-the-republ/1680a1f40e>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

43 CIVICUS (2021). *National Assembly Approves Controversial ‘Separatism Bill’, Massive Protests Opposing #Passsanitaire*.

44 Civic Space Watch (2021). *France: Open letter -The French “Separatism” Bill raises concerns for rights and civil liberties: The EU Commission must question France*. Available at: <https://civicspacewatch.eu/france-open-letter-the-french-separatism-bill-raises-concerns-for-rights-and-civil-liberties-the-eu-commission-must-question-france/>. Last accessed 14 February 2022.

45 CIVICUS (2021). *National Assembly Approves Controversial ‘Separatism Bill’, Massive Protests Opposing #Passsanitaire*.

CASE STUDY

Solidarity has been key among the CSOs in France and they have also been the ones that for years, before the restrictive legislation on the civic space was passed, proposed an alternative model of education. SOLIDAR Foundation members, CEMEA, La Ligue de l'Enseignement and Solidarité Laïque, joined trade unions, CSOs, human rights watchdogs, among others, in co-signing a [statement](#) in the aftermath of Samuel Paty's murder, in October 2020. In face of the gruesome murder, these organisations showed solidarity by refusing the vilify Muslims and follow the securitization discourse of the Macron presidency, but rather they have issued a critique of radical Islam and a way forward in educating all French learners to understand what peaceful co-existence means but, more importantly, to work together on finding ways to heal the

societal divisions which France has been experiencing. Their commitment to secularism and the Republican values is a far cry from the understanding of the French public authorities, as they have been insisting on education, pluralism, acceptance, healing, while the public authorities have pushed a criminalization strategy, aiming to ban all that creates fear of future terrorist attacks while stoking the exact same fear in relation to minority groups.

The type of solidarity that CSOs and non-formal and informal education providers have been showing in France towards the formal education sector, towards abuses of power and towards the challenges ahead is inspiring for the civic spirit that is existent and for what learners can benefit from.

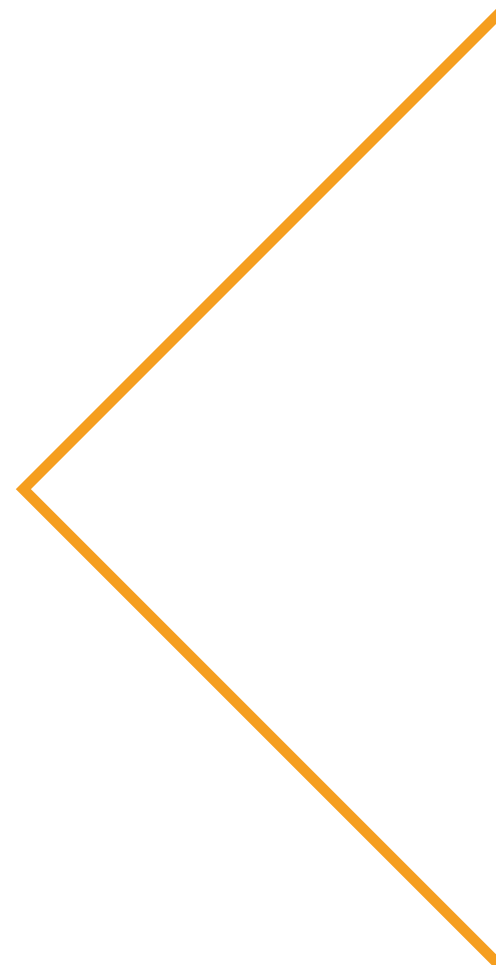
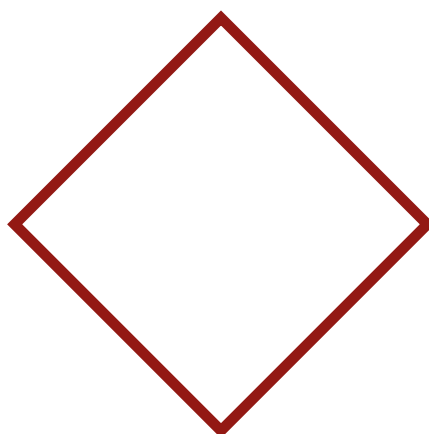


Source: Education International

Even as the two pieces of law have passed it must be mentioned that their initial content was even more problematic but the intensified pressure of CSOs and the constant referrals to the Council of State have led to certain amendments and sections of the laws being removed before the laws were passed. A provision of the Separatism Bill aimed at the closure of places of worship in case of dissemination of ideas, speeches or actions which would incite discrimination or the act of committing offences was struck down by the Council of State in December 2020⁴⁶. Similar provisions and other laws were rejected over 2020 and 2021, with significant efforts made by the CSOs to prevent them from passing in their original form, but a trend can be noticed towards more and more legislation that would shrink the civic space being pushed forward, especially as a new project of law is now aiming to reinstate many of the police's forces to use drones even if the Council of State constantly insisted on the police refraining from this. The climate in France regarding the civic space is deeply

problematic, but at these times it is inspiring to see the actions of the broader civil society, and not only of the CSOs. The French people have taken to the streets on multiple occasions, documenting the abuses of the law enforcement authorities, condemning the actions of the public authorities and fighting for a truly protected civic space.

The current context of the civic space is worrisome for the opportunity of citizens to exert their civic competences as well as to adapt them towards the green transition. The constant state of threat in which the civil society finds itself and the insistence of the lawmakers and policymakers to continue the pushback against them increases the difficulty of learners to fully exert their rights, while developing and advocating for transversal competences linked to the green transition. The fragile situation of the civic space must be addressed if there is to be a conducive interaction between civil society and public authorities to work together on addressing the 21st century global challenges.



46 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021). *Protecting Civic Space in the EU*. P.32.

CONCLUSION

The Monitor reveals an incoherent approach of the French public authorities to the global challenges of the time. On the one hand, the approach towards mainstreaming EES and ESD and towards developing the consciousness of learners regarding the impact of local actions at global level and regarding the importance of global solidarity is welcome and comprehensive. The French ministries are operating in collaboration, targeting all levels in formal education to better reflect the topic in the curricula, to better train the education professionals, to provide staff dedicated to looking into the greening of the education field, to empower learners to take action and participate in community-based projects. All of this is regulated through an impressive policy architecture on the topic. On the other hand though, the French public authorities have not made sufficient efforts to connect the work in formal education with the informal and non-formal education sector, which has expertise and numerous best practice examples but does not benefit, yet, from a structured relationship of collaboration with the formal education sector. Continuing the inconsistencies, the global solidarity embedded into formal education with ESD and EES is completely at odds with the vilification of the Muslim community through the recent pieces of legislation that are restricting the civic space. At the same time, the non-siloed

and concerted effort taken to mainstream EES is surprisingly antithetical to the way the civic space is treated, with the public authorities shrinking it further and losing the opportunity to empower the civil society to contribute to EES and to work constructively with it in addressing the climate emergency. The narrowed status of the civic space has been impacted by the pandemic and the way the authorities have made use of it to cancel numerous demonstrations, even if organised safely, in a country which has had significant active movements in the recent years. The pandemic and the securitization discourse employed in the aftermath of horrific terrorist attacks have been abused of in order to exert more control over CSOs, making their very existence dependent on the agreement of the public authorities. This situation is not conducive to a vibrant civil society that can support learners in actualizing their civic and green competences and embolden them to actively participate in the greening of the French state and in showing solidarity in the environmental crisis to other nations and peoples. SOLIDAR Foundation and its members in France express their concern towards this current state and urge for more collaboration between the state and formal education on one side and the civil society and the informal and non-formal education providers on the other side.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Provide more support for a quicker transition of all education institutions to the E3D status
- ◆ Intensify the monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum for EES and ESD
- ◆ Promote more structured avenues for collaboration between the formal, informal and non-formal education sectors, ensuring that projects can be done in partnership between education institutions and the community in all corners of France
- ◆ Ensure that the 'compte personnel de formation' can be used for the development of transversal competences accounted for the green transition as these are also essential for the labour market even if not connected directly with the work of one employer or another
- ◆ Strengthen the system of guidance and information related to adult education, while providing more support and incentives for disadvantaged and low-skilled adults to participate more in further education, including the 'compte personnel de formation'
- ◆ Repeal the Global Security Law and the Separatism Bill, heeding to the advice of the CSOs most deeply affected by it
- ◆ Better prosecute instances of police brutality especially in light of the authorities violating decisions from the Council of State on numerous occasions connected to the cancelled protests
- ◆ Ensure adequate funding support is made available for CSOs considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector
- ◆ Put an end to the securitization speech and adopt an approach that recognizes the intrinsic value of the ethnic and religious minorities, striving for their inclusion and not for their assimilation or integration.

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