



# CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING MONITOR 2021

## EUROPEAN OVERVIEW





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## ABSTRACT

The Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor is SOLIDAR Foundation's flagship publication, coming into its 6<sup>th</sup> edition and analysing policy developments linked to citizenship education and lifelong learning at EU level and across Europe. The Monitor was devised as a follow-up mechanism to the [2015 Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education](#) and to renew member states' commitment to promoting the EU identity and values. Therefore, each edition focused its thematic priorities on the aims of the Paris Declaration, adapting the specific aspects of citizenship education analysed so as to provide a comprehensive picture of facets of the topic throughout the years. The 6<sup>th</sup> edition represents the last edition, considering that, since the Paris Declaration, there has been more work done at EU level with regards to strategic documents on citizenship education while the challenges ahead have also changed in scope. The different editions of the Monitor have reflected this by developing its building blocks, and as a conclusive edition, the Monitor will commence by looking at Education for Environmental Sustainability (EES) which is a subsection of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) - analysed in the previous Monitor edition. The reason for this is the ever increasing urgency of the climate crisis, as well as the impetus to promote EES at EU level. EES can serve as a catalyst to motivate learners to take individual and collective action against climate crisis, but also to raise awareness on the importance of demanding that others hold up to their responsibility, referring specifically here to policymakers and large corporations. The recent years have been filled with promises regarding reducing the carbon footprint and emissions, however, when it comes to the actual implementation of the actions to meet the targets or to consistency between action and speech, many stakeholders across Europe have fallen short. In some of the countries analysed in this edition, the climate crisis is not even prominent in the political debate. Therefore, GCE, and its subcomponent of EES, become more relevant than ever to prepare all learners to understand the urgency of

the crisis and to support transnational action to tackle it. The Monitor will look into formal, informal and non-formal education, seeing how the topic is mainstreamed, assessing its presence into strategic and policy documents, into curricular developments, into pedagogies, while also considering the cooperation among the different types of education providers. However, as a conclusive edition, it will also look into the possibilities that learners have to activate their green or environmentally sustainable competences in the day-to-day life. The 2015 Paris Declaration was foreseeing the development of citizenship education so that it would allow learners to actively participate in the civic space in a way that was respectful towards their peers and to foster democratic participation in society. The measures to be adopted to overcome the climate crisis will carry profound consequences for the current economic and societal model, and thus require democratic support to be implemented successfully and inclusively. To actualise green competences and for EES to be fully effective also to this end, learners require the civic space to act and to foster collective action by means of it. Consequently, the Monitor will consider the situation of the civic space, also compared to how it was when the Paris Declaration was published, to see whether learners truly can master civic competences. The Monitor will look into trends related to the openness of the civic space across Europe, taking into account also how the pandemic has impacted this, and providing good practice examples from the membership and the partners of SOLIDAR Foundation. The research is based on eleven national reports from Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain and the UK which are all feeding into the European Overview of the Monitor. The findings serve as the basis for SOLIDAR Foundation's policy recommendations and advocacy in the coming year as well as a conclusion to this specific format of monitoring in SOLIDAR Foundation's work, taking stock of the enablers and barriers to implementing Global Citizenship Education and its subcomponents across Europe.



## FOREWORD



**MIKAEL LEYI,**

Secretary General SOLIDAR & SOLIDAR Foundation

The 2021 edition of the Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor concludes the cycle of annual publications released by SOLIDAR Foundation since 2017. Based on the Paris Declaration of the Education Ministers from 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination through education, the six publications provide evidence-based policy recommendations developed in close cooperation with SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners. The Monitor promotes the idea that democracy is incomplete unless the demos is nurtured within a culture of active democratic participation that enables citizenship to mean something more than a formal status and to drive individual as well as collective emancipation.

The Paris Declaration sought to bring Europeans together based on a set of common

values and to rebuild trust in the European project, aiming to support European societies to escape crises by means of education. Since then, a lot of dramatic changes in our societies added pressure to these ambitions. We have witnessed a surge of nationalistic sentiments across Europe, a worsening climate crisis, a deadly pandemic, a rapidly increasing process of digitalisation, and, most recently, a devastating and brutal war not seen in Europe since World War II. Can the Paris Declaration and all the work emerging from it contend with these dramatic and ever-changing world realities?

SOLIDAR Foundation and its members will respond with a resounding yes. Over the Monitor's editions, and as it changed with these circumstances, the publication has demonstrated the value of promoting the attainment of competences through lifelong learning for active participation in society. It has done so by analysing good practices from our membership in an increasing number of countries and identifying policy recommendations to be promoted at the national and European level. Among the main themes that the Monitor has been contributing to are citizenship education - including its global and digital dimensions, intercultural education, the importance of partnerships between the formal, non-formal and informal sectors of education for the provision of inclusive and quality learning opportunities, and the role of civil society organisations to this end.

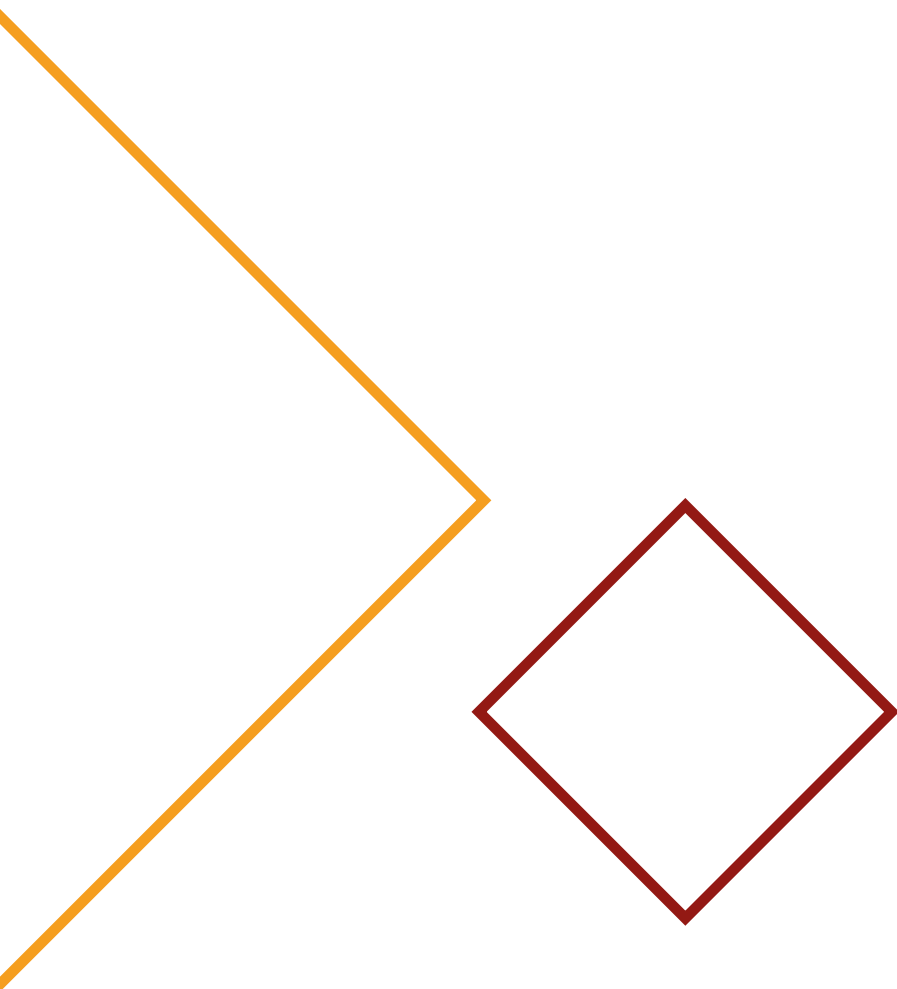
In this edition we aim to deepen the understanding of Global Citizenship Education and its role to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal number 4 to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by analysing the situation of Education to Environmental

Sustainability in Europe. We also continue to focus on the state of play for civic space and present the work of civil society organisations to illustrate this. No defining challenge can be fought alone or in an environment that does not allow for collective action, this is how a democratic culture is nurtured and relevant competences developed that are necessary to achieve the Just Transition we need.

The 2021 edition of the “Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor” concludes a 5 year-long endeavor to showcase the important contributions by civil society organisations to promote citizenship education in Europe. To conclude this process we celebrate all the people and organisations who fought against injustices, against difficult odds and who showed extreme

resilience in promoting education and developing their communities in this challenging period.

Finally, this has been a collective effort by our network. Covering these many topics in 22 countries would have not been possible without the 24 member organisations that participated in this publication. We extend our gratitude to all of you as well as the many partners that joined us over the years in promoting this work. While the Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor comes to an end, the ambition of SOLIDAR Foundation to advance democratic participation and citizenship education does not, and we will keep doing so with new tools, together with our members and partners across Europe.



# INTRODUCTION

## OBJECTIVES

The Monitor is SOLIDAR Foundation's flagship publication, studying the situation across European countries with regards to developments related to citizenship education and lifelong learning. Reaching its 6<sup>th</sup> edition, it maintained the same fourfold objectives as in each of its previous iterations:

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

While its goals have always been the same, the thematic focus has been adapted with each edition, to be able to study citizenship education from different angles and provide a more comprehensive picture of its situation across Europe. However, its thematic focus has always been informed by the action that has created the impetus for the Monitor's elaboration: the [2015 Paris Declaration Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education](#), which was signed by all Ministers responsible for education in Europe. Normally, the chapters of the Monitor were linked with one of the four aims of the Declaration:

- ◆ Ensuring that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship;
- ◆ Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the Internet and social media, so as to develop resistance to all forms of discrimination and indoctrination;
- ◆ Fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs;
- ◆ Promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Monitor will refer to these aims in a slightly different way compared to the previous editions which will be explained in the Context section.

## CONTEXT

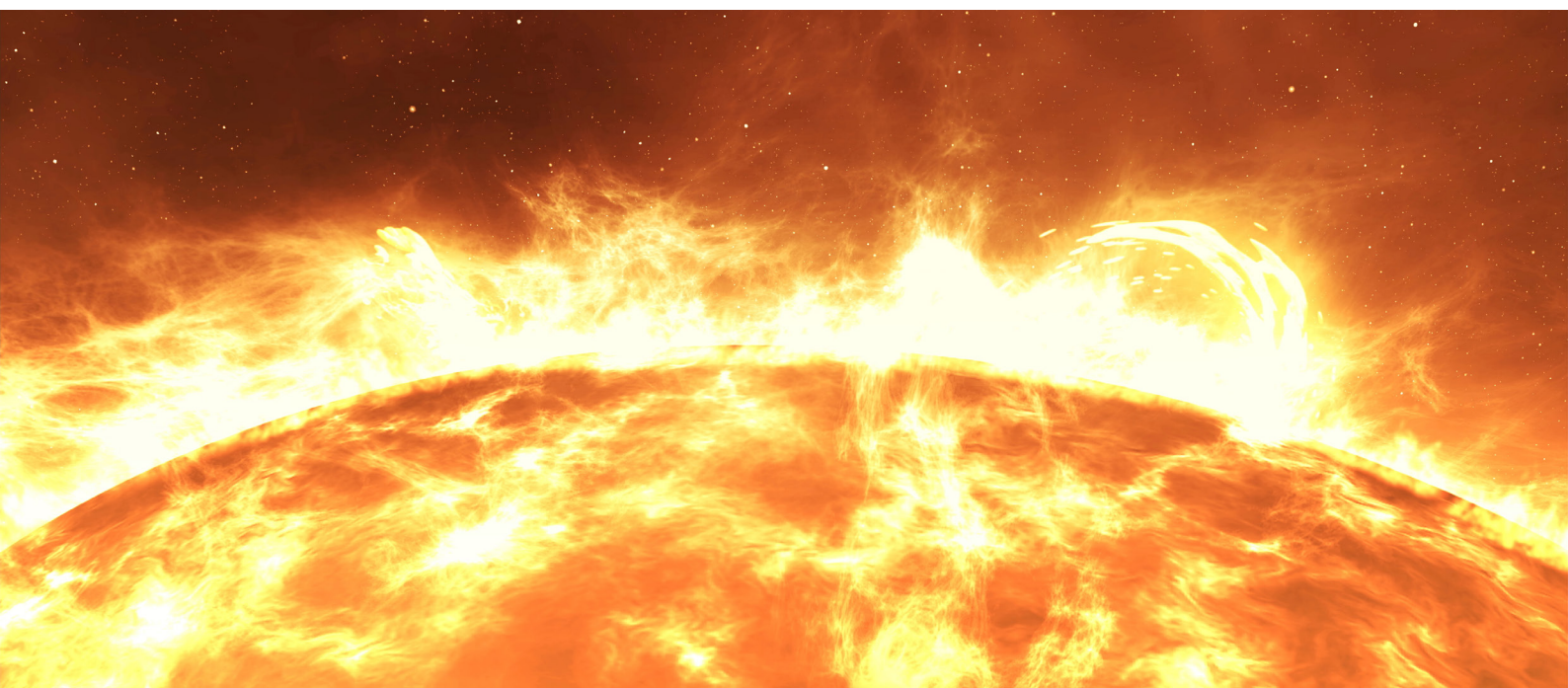
The Monitor will focus on two thematic areas for this edition. One is focused on the mainstreaming of Education for Environmental Sustainability (EES) across Europe, while the other looks into the state of the civic space in relation to the potential for the knowledge obtained through lifelong and lifewide learning to be actualised by learners in the civic space. The first thematic area will capture the aims of the Paris Declaration in the sense that the climate emergency is one of the global challenges that has to be addressed via citizenship education. However, given that each challenge has its own particularity, strands within citizenship education might be better equipped to deal with specific challenges. Considering that the defining challenge of this moment is ensuring that

<sup>1</sup> European Council (2015). Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. *Informal Meeting of European Union Education Ministers*. Paris. Available at : [https://eu2015.lv/images/notikumi/2015-3-10\\_Declaration\\_EN.pdf](https://eu2015.lv/images/notikumi/2015-3-10_Declaration_EN.pdf). Last accessed 18 February 2022.

the human-made climate challenge will not irreparably damage the planet in the years to come, **EES becomes the part of citizenship education that can reveal how equipped learners are to actually tackle this global challenge.** Last year's edition started from the same premise, and looked into the role of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to address this aspect<sup>2</sup>. This edition builds upon it by zooming in on a section of GCE, because it is elevated by the several EU-level processes which have renewed interest in EES. This serves as an opportunity to understand what is the situation of EES and if this building block of GCE is properly implemented, considering that, in its absence, an incomplete delivery of GCE is experienced. The recent releases of the European Commission's [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability](#) and the European Commission's GreenComp, the European sustainability competence framework, represent actions that show a momentum for the mainstreaming of EES in formal, informal and non-formal education, ensuring that learners are prepared for

the green transition and for combatting the climate crisis.

EES is to be framed within the GCE frame because **the awareness raised for environmental issues requires democratic participation to actively demand and promote positive change towards a Just Transition.** Therefore, the topic should bring to the limelight the quality of the available avenues for democratic and social participation in society. There is a need for due diligence in ensuring that everyone walks the talk, through simultaneous individual and collective action, and, generally, through showing democratic support to the profound measures required to shift to a sustainable societal model to preserve social cohesion. Democratic engagement is key for achieving a Just Transition<sup>3</sup> and the state of the civic space is an excellent indicator of the quality of democratic participation in society. For this reason, the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Monitor analyses the civic space to identify the main challenges for a democratically supported Just Transition.



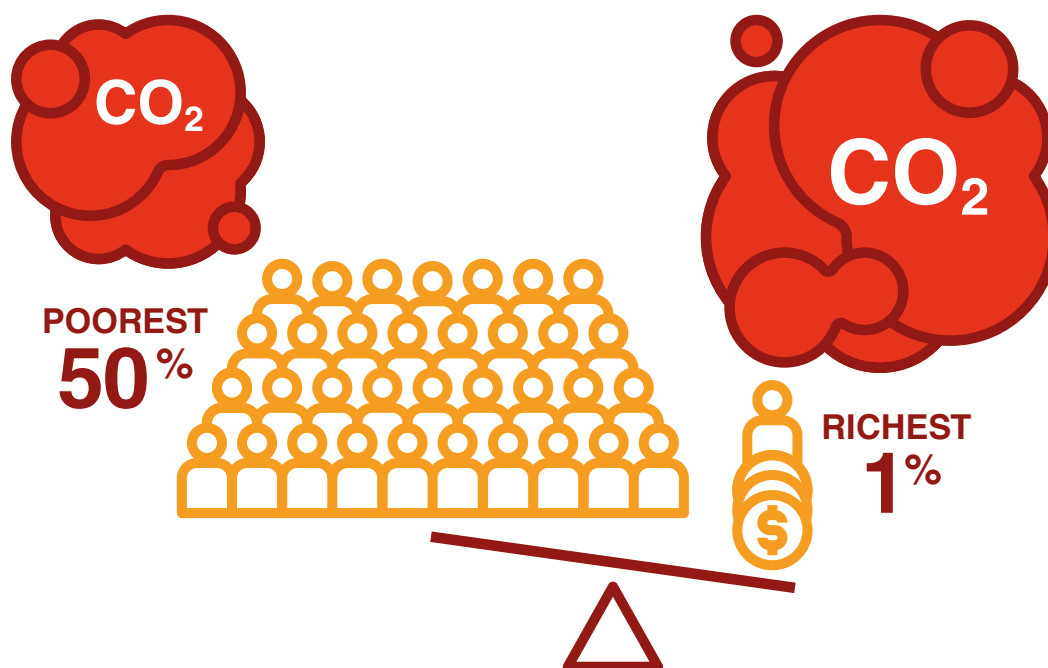
2 Frank, Andrei (2021). *Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020*. SOLIDAR Foundation. Available at: [https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/310/original/CLLL\\_Monitor\\_2020\\_EuroOverview\\_SOLIDAR\\_Foundation\\_online.pdf?1617695521](https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/310/original/CLLL_Monitor_2020_EuroOverview_SOLIDAR_Foundation_online.pdf?1617695521). Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

3 Mascarenhas-Swan, Michelle (2017). The case for a just transition. *Energy Democracy*. Island press: Washington, DC. Pp. 37-56. Available at: <https://movementgeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Chapter-3-of-Energy-Democracy-MG.pdf>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.



The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is currently working on its Sixth Assessment Report (AR26) which is to be published in 2022, and has released The Physical Science Basis of this report during last year. The findings are shocking considering that discussions on addressing climate change have been ongoing for years. Even as it is clear what needs to be done to save the environment, at this moment, there is an intensification of the global warming with significant risks of being unable to prevent the global temperature reaching 2°C if immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are not undertaken in the next decade. Every single region of the globe is under threat and expects worsened environmental

conditions based on the findings of the report<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, not only the current policies are not addressing this but even an optimistic view of the pledges and targets risks to fail keeping the heating below the target set in the [Paris Agreement](#). In 2017, it was revealed that 71% of global gas emissions since 1988 were produced by just 100 privately owned fossil fuels companies<sup>5</sup>. The richest 1% are responsible for double the amount of emissions as the poorest half of humanity<sup>6</sup>. United States, Japan, Canada and Western Europe account for 12% of the world’s population but have produced 50 percent of all the planet-warming greenhouse gases in the past 170 years<sup>7</sup>. All of this was followed by empty ‘blah blah’, as it was called by Greta Thunberg, prior to the COP26



4 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2021). *Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying*. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

5 CDP (2017). *Carbon Majors Report 2017*. Pp. 14-15. Available at : <https://www.cdp.net/en/articles/media/new-report-shows-just-100-companies-are-source-of-over-70-of-emissions>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

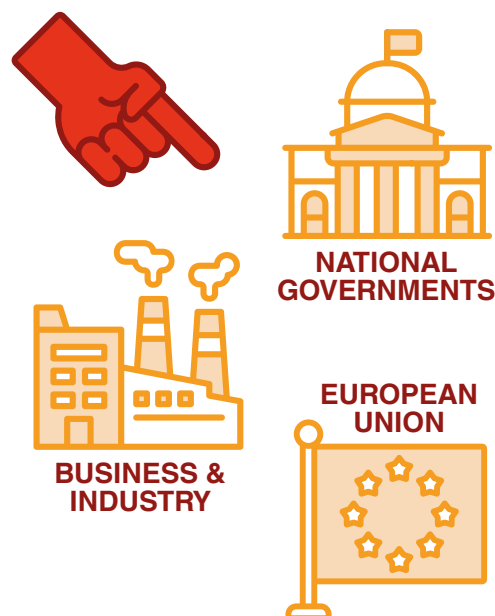
6 Oxfam International (2020). *Carbon emissions of richest 1 percent more than double the emissions of the poorest half of humanity*. Available at : <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/carbon-emissions-richest-1-percent-more-double-emissions-poorest-half-humanity#:~:text=Oxfam%E2%80%99s%20new%20report%2C%20%E2%80%98%20Confronting%20Carbon%20Inequality%2C%E2%80%99%20is,to%20discuss%20global%20challenges%20including%20the%20climate%20crisis>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

7 The New York Times (2021). *6 Takeaways from the U.N. Climate Conference*. Available at : <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/13/climate/cop26-climate-summit-takeaways.html>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

in Glasgow, in 2021<sup>8</sup>. Pledges and promises have become the ‘get-out-of-jail-free card’ that conglomerates and corporations started to use while it is uncertain if this is backed by any reasonable attempts to make that a reality. In 2021, only 20% of the Fortune 500 companies had environmental targets based on actual science, while a lack of requirements on publishing climate information meant that no company fully disclosed how it plans to reach net-zero<sup>9</sup>.

Such information must be constantly repeated since it shows how **the current climate crisis is a choice, done while perpetuating socio-economic injustice and inequality. For this reason, all learners must be equipped with knowledge to understand the challenge and what they can do to limit their own carbon footprint, but also must be made aware of the responsibilities of others and what they can do through political and collective action to ensure that everyone works under democratic principles to save the planet. The Monitor will present the situation of EES across European countries, assessing whether the way it is mainstreamed in formal, informal and non-formal education is adequately equipping learners with competences needed to adapt to the complex systems and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that together contribute to the climate crisis.** This supports the views of the Europeans, given that the Eurobarometer survey of July 2021 showed that 93% of respondents believe climate change to be a serious issue, while 29% of respondents picked it as the main issue in the current societies. 87 to 90% of respondents

identify gas emission reduction, increased usage of renewable energy and energy efficiency as potential solutions, with a majority asking for structural action to be taken by national governments (63%), business and industry (58%) and the EU (57%)<sup>10</sup>. Though this is the case,



eco-anxiety is raising amongst many young people, as 84% of youth are seen to be at least moderately worried about their future. With daunting numbers also coming from ten countries studied with regards to 45% of involved youngsters in the research reporting that fears linked to the environment have impacted their capacity to perform their daily routine<sup>11</sup>. EES can tackle such situations by empowering the people already aware of the crisis to take

8 Carrington, Damian (2021). ‘Blah, blah, blah’: Greta Thunberg lambasts leaders over climate crisis. The Guardian. Available at : <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/sep/28/blah-greta-thunberg-leaders-climate-crisis-co2-emissions>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

9 Timperley, Jocelyn (2021). The truth behind corporate climate pledges. The Guardian. Available at : <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/26/climate-crisis-green-light>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

10 European Commission (2021). Eurobarometer Survey. *Climate Change: Climate Action and the Environment Energy*, 2273/513. P.7 Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2273>. Last accessed: 16 February 2022.

11 Hickman, Caroline et al. (2021). Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey. *Lancet Planet Health*, 5. Pp. 863-873. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00278-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext). Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

meaningful action and understand how and on whom to exert pressure for structural reforms to occur.

**This challenge requires the freedom to speak and act, it requires the existence of a civic space where all learners can actively participate and can set the ground work for collective action.** The ethos of the Paris Declaration of 2015 was based on ensuring that all have a voice, and that radicalism and extremism are not silencing anyone, while fear is not being used to frustrate what it means to be a citizen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized world. Anchored in the Paris Declaration, the time has come for the Monitor to take stock of what has changed since and for SOLIDAR Foundation to broaden its policy underpinnings, considering the vast architecture of publications that occurred in the aftermath of the Paris Declaration. The second part of the Monitor's last edition will focus on the civic space, giving more prominence to the element that has recurred in each edition of this publication, because of its nature as an enabling environment for expressing citizenship education as well as based on the fact that it is the locus that builds the identity of SOLIDAR Foundation membership. The Monitor analyses its openness in the past years, assessing whether fear, the freedom to speak and act together, the common values of co-existence in the civic space have changed in one way or another since the momentous pledge of the Education Ministers to address such issues. The situation of the civic space will be connected with the first part of the Monitor, using it as a case study for the benefits of the civic space in addressing a global challenge. If the climate crisis is not the only challenge that societies confront with, it at least requires, similarly to any other challenge, concerted action, boosted by the active involvement of all within a vibrant civic space. Depending on the status

of the civic space in the European countries, one can understand whether there are more enablers than challenges towards addressing the climate challenge, towards mainstreaming EES and towards actualising the knowledge passed on by EES in everyone's daily life, at both the local and European level. The general trend experienced in relation to the civic space across Europe is one of shrinking<sup>12</sup>, which is not solely linked with the starting point of the Paris Declaration that looked into rising extremism, but rather it is linked with societal polarisation that has had multiple causes over the years. If this is the general trend, the Monitor will delve deeper into the findings from its national reports and provide a comprehensive picture of this situation, the way in which it affects learners' freedom, and the impact it has on the capacity to address global challenges while using the civic space.

## METHODOLOGY

The Monitor employs the same research methodology as in all its past editions. The mixed methods used were questionnaires, implemented on the member organisations and partners of SOLIDAR Foundation in the countries targeted for reporting, semi-structured interviews with the respondents of the survey, while everything is complemented by desk research from the side of the SOLIDAR Foundation Secretariat. The European overview of the Monitor is supported by eleven national reports, with the countries selected for this year's edition being: Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and the UK. The survey implemented on the members and partners of SOLIDAR in these countries collected data on how EES is included in formal, informal and non-formal education, considering curricular aspects, the

12 CIVICUS (2021). *The CIVICUS Monitor 2021*. Available at : <https://findings2021.monitor.civicus.org/>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

presence of policy or governmental strategies to mainstream the topic, considering the exact definition on which the stakeholders in each country rely and the methods for its implementation in all types of education. At the same time, the questionnaire collects proxy data for assessing the status of the civic space, looking at funding for civil society organisations (CSOs), COVID-19 restrictions on the activity of CSOs, CSOs' participation in different policymaking and decision-making processes, including the National Recovery and Resilience Plans' elaboration. The questionnaire ensures a collection of the good practices of CSOs in terms of mainstreaming EES and in terms of protecting the civic space, while it also accounts for CSOs' involvement in cross-border collaborations and EU-level processes considering how the challenges discussed by the Monitor are global in nature. The data collected from the questionnaire was addressed during in-depth semi-structured interviews, to better understand the good practices collected and

to clarify aspects related to each topic. To complement this, the SOLIDAR Foundation Secretariat engaged in desk research as well, relying on sources such as the Education and Training Monitor, the [National Recovery and Resilience Plans](#) as well as the European Commission's evaluation of said plans, data from Eurydice, UNESCO, the OECD, as well as sources commissioned by the national governments of the studied countries. The aim was to build the possibility of engaging in cross-country comparisons in relation to the implementation of EES, for a clear picture of the state of EES across Europe, but also to ensure similar comparisons with regards to the situation of the civic space, for highlighting any existing trends across Europe. Lastly, the Monitor builds upon all its previous editions, using the findings to contextualise any new data gathered for the latest edition.

# EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: LIFELONG AND LIFE-WIDE LEARNING FOR THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES

## CONCEPTS

From the starting point, there is a need to clarify what is meant by Education for Environmental Sustainability (EES), while also to explain the usage of some terms across the report considering that each European country has different understandings and nomenclature for the idea of educating people about aspects related to the environment. The most recent publications on the theme from the EU's [Joint Research Centre](#) (JRC) provide together a comprehensive understanding of EES. For the JRC, sustainability education foresees the integration of sustainability in all areas of education for the purpose of changing the behaviour of learners to make them attuned to their society, environment and planet<sup>13</sup>. Here, sustainability accounts for prioritising the needs of all life forms and of the planet in such a way that does not allow for human action to go beyond the planetary boundaries. The point of this type of education is to develop sustainability competences in all learners, ensuring that they embody sustainability values, embrace complex systems and take action to restore and maintain the ecosystem's health, while enhancing justice and generating visions for sustainable futures<sup>14</sup>. In a nutshell, these are the elements that form EES, and they have been standing at the basis of the European Commission's new framework for sustainability competences, [GreenComp](#). **SOLIDAR Foundation deeply appreciates the framework, supports its contents and believes that it is essential to rely on a common definition of such topics to make the mainstreaming of EES easier, while acknowledging that GreenComp**

**leaves sufficient room for national manifestations of EES.** As SOLIDAR Foundation was conducting research for the development of the current edition of the Monitor, GreenComp was not yet available, therefore, though SOLIDAR supports the framework, it has not informed in a structured way the elaboration of this report. However, SOLIDAR Foundation was engaged in the consultation processes at EU level for the development of the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning environmental sustainability, as well as for GreenComp, hence many of the perspectives, concepts or approaches in this report will be overlapping with the contents of GreenComp.

Understanding the diversity of conceptualisations for this topic, it is unlikely that EES is used in each European country in the same way or even used at all, but if understood as presented above, EES can serve as a placeholder, fully or in part, for concepts such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Global Citizenship Education (GCE or GCED), Environmental Education (EE), Education for Environment (EE). Therefore, EES will be used interchangeably for any type of education that makes reference to environment and the role of people within ecosystems, while specific mentions to GCE or ESD or any other type of education will be made only when certain conclusions related to the mode of implementation of the education can be drawn due to the different terminologies. A further observation for clarification purposes needs to be made in relation to GCE. SOLIDAR Foundation has a clear position of what GCE is, which is accounted for in its [2020](#)

13 Bianchi, Guia (2020). Sustainability competences. Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg. Available at : <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC123624>. Pp.8-12. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

14 Bianchi, Guia; Pisiotis, Ulrike and Cabrera Giraldez, Marcelino (2022). GreenComp: The European sustainability competence framework. Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg. Pp.11-13. Available at : <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128040>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

[Policy Paper](#), and it is unequivocally broader than EES<sup>15</sup>. EES represents a sub-section of GCE, and SOLIDAR Foundation will approach EES in the frame of GCE, guiding any recommendation towards EES or its implementation in a way that would make it fit in the broader paradigm of GCE or that would advance the mainstreaming of GCE.

With these conceptual clarifications in mind, the report will now proceed to look into how the topic is being mainstreamed in formal education on one side, and in informal and non-formal education on the other side, across Europe.

## EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN FORMAL EDUCATION

A significant challenge for assessing the way EES is implemented in education is the lack of sufficient cross-country data that can be compared, with limited studies looking at the implementation of the topic<sup>16</sup> even if it is clearly revealed as crucial for meeting the SDGs and contributing to offsetting the climate crisis. At

the same time, evaluating the presence of the topic in formal education is just a first step, considering how this in itself cannot guarantee that the learners have the adequate competences to act consistently with sustainability values. However, a higher rate of reference to environment and sustainability in official documentation or in curricula makes it more likely for these elements to be included in the classrooms. More frequent occurrences of the topic in the day-to-day education, consequently, make it more likely for learners to develop a predisposition to act in a way that brings about sustainability. Therefore, the discussion in this chapter will be focused on the existence of an environment conducive towards the mainstreaming of EES rather than on the outcomes of EES with regards to learners' competences.

A first step for EES at EU level was represented by the [1988 Council Resolution of the Education Ministers on Environmental Education](#). The acknowledgement over the importance of the environment was recognised and the EU Member States were committing to better incorporate it in teacher training, curricula, daily education, while setting up partnerships with



15 SOLIDAR Foundation (2020). Global Citizenship Education Policy Paper. Available at : [https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/148/original/GCE\\_Policy\\_Paper.pdf?1594110914](https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/148/original/GCE_Policy_Paper.pdf?1594110914). Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

16 Leicht, Alexander; Heiss, Julia and Won Jung Byun (2018). *Issues and trends in education for sustainable development*. UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261445>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

education stakeholders outside of the formal environment. The topic has an even longer history if we consider the UNESCO efforts around it, with non-binding resolutions from the 1970s containing references towards environmental education<sup>17</sup>. Advancements have been made ever since, but if we are to consider recent data from UNESCO, the pace at which these are occurring is inadmissible considering just how urgent the climate crisis has become. 92% of the education documents investigated in a recent UNESCO report contained references to EES, but the depth of inclusion was on average low, as 45% of these documents had between only 0 and 300 words on these themes, with only 17% showing a moderate focus<sup>18</sup>. At the same time 36% of the teachers responding in a survey linked to the study mentioned no usage of EES themes in the pre-service training they receive in their country<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the timetables of education institutions revealed a decline of around 4 percentage points between the instruction time for EES in the 1980s and the one in the 2000s<sup>20</sup>.

This data accounts for global trends, and it is clear that regional divergences exist, with some other continents having less opportunities to include EES in education. However, even if the situation is slightly better in Europe that the average for UNESCO states, the situation is not nearly sufficiently developed to meet the environmental requirements. **Across the eleven countries studied for this year's edition of the Monitor, references to EES**

**are made in the formal education sector in all, while the topic is generally included in a cross-curricular fashion**<sup>21</sup>. Minimal exceptions to this occur in Portugal which includes the topic transdisciplinary and cross-curricular for all the levels except upper primary and lower secondary education where ESD is present as a stand-alone topic, and EES represents a section of ESD<sup>22</sup>. At the same time, some of the countries provide also the option of elective courses which can focus on ESD, with EES as a part of them. Such examples exist in Slovenia<sup>23</sup>. Portugal and Italy are the only countries with mandatory requirements for the inclusion of EES, Italy establishing a minimum amount of hours per year that must be dedicated to the topic, while Portugal just requiring the topic to be present in pedagogical plans and curricula<sup>24</sup>, with the caveat that Northern Ireland makes ESD a mandatory requirement for the content approached in Key Stage 3<sup>25</sup>, but which is not representative for the UK as a whole<sup>26</sup>. There must be mentioned that regional divergences in terms of approach occur in the UK, Germany and Spain considering the devolved nature of the regulation of the education sector, therefore, the degree to which the topic is referenced or implemented depends on the adoption of strategies by the specific administrative units in charge of education<sup>27</sup>. SOLIDAR Foundation encourages the implementation of the topic in a cross-curricular manner, but as was the case for citizenship education and GCE in the previous editions of its Monitor<sup>28</sup>, SOLIDAR Foundation highlights

17 UNESCO (2021). *Learn for our planet: a global review of how environmental issues are integrated in education*. Pp. 14-15. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377362>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

18 Ibid. P.23.

19 Ibid. Pp.27-28.

20 Ibid. P.17.

21 See national reports associated to the European overview of the Monitor.

22 Government of Portugal (2017). *National Strategy for Citizenship Education*. Available at : <https://cidadania.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/pdfs/national-strategy-citizenship-education.pdf>. Last accessed: 16 February 2022.

23 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2012). Key topics: ESD competencies, green economy, holistic and systemic approach, development of curriculum, permanent teacher training, quality of education (Slovenia). Available at: [https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/7thMeetSC/Country\\_Reports/Slovenia.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/7thMeetSC/Country_Reports/Slovenia.pdf). Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

24 See national reports for Italy and Portugal.

25 This represents Post-Primary Years 8, 9, 10. It accounts for all learners aged 11 to 14.

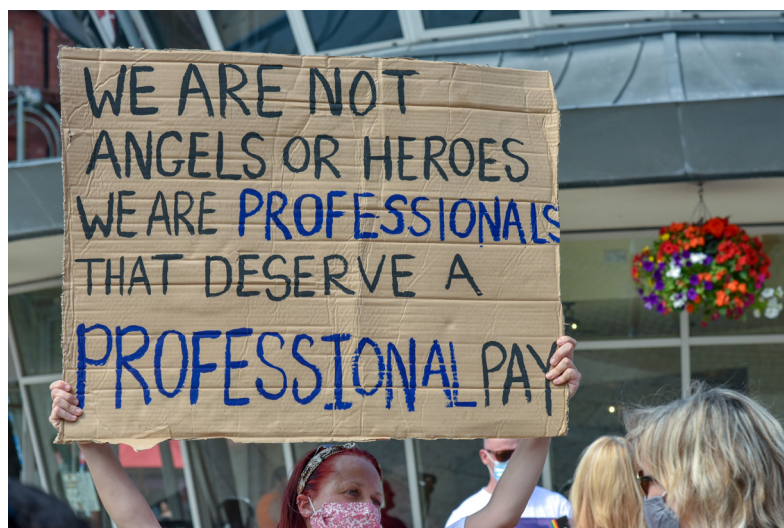
26 See national report for UK.

27 See national reports for Germany, Spain and the UK.

28 Frank, Andrei (2021). *Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020.*; Frank, Andrei (2020). *Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2019*. SOLIDAR Foundation. Available at: [https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/121/original/Citizenship\\_and\\_Lifelong\\_Learning\\_Monitor\\_2019\\_-\\_online.pdf?1587973552](https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/121/original/Citizenship_and_Lifelong_Learning_Monitor_2019_-_online.pdf?1587973552). Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

the fact that **for a topic to be implemented cross-curricularly in a successful manner, there is a need for an environment conducive to this, for a tremendous amount of resources invested and for constant collaboration across all education stakeholders to organically include the topic in each subject and ensure that from subject to subject the knowledge of each learner is consolidated**<sup>29</sup>. This is not yet the case across Europe due to other structural issues which will be covered in this report.

Firstly, when discussing about the cross-curricular implementation, resources are needed, however, investment in education has not been rising at the same levels as the GDP and is far from reaching pre-2008 levels<sup>30</sup>, revealing how austerity has impacted education. There was an outcry as the pandemic hit because public education institutions, just like all public services, were even more stretched out by the crisis due to the chronic lack of investment in the years prior to the health crisis<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, the [National Recovery and Resilience Plans](#) (NRRPs) seemed to be the right moment to address some of the investment gaps. However, none of the countries that were eligible for an NRRP mentioned EES, ESD or GCE in their plans. Links to the green transition or to refitting education institutions have been made, but there is no ambition to address the curricula or to ensure that the paradigm employed in education is addressed in such a way that it makes all learners aware of the global challenges ahead and how to combat them. The NRRPs in some countries are dedicated to addressing



some of the structural challenges that were mentioned to be frustrating the implementation of EES<sup>32</sup>. The most comprehensive challenge that exists across the countries studied is the academic achievement gap and the regional inequity in access to and achievement in education. The particularities are different from country to country, but **the fact that parts of the population engaged in formal education is being left behind or isolated based, usually, on socio-economic or migrant background conditions, reveals that not all learners can adapt to the fight against climate crisis**. This is unacceptable considering how every learner needs to be prepared for the climate crisis if it is to be tackled. Such scenarios exist in Germany where not all the Länder have adopted with the same intensity the National Action Plan on ESD<sup>33</sup>, or in Italy where the North-South discrepancy in terms of academic achievement is worrisome for a consistent implementation of EES<sup>34</sup>. Slovakia is confronting

29 Frank, Andrei (2020). *Global Citizenship Education Policy Paper*.

30 The World Bank (2021). *Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) – European Union*. Available at : <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=EU>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

31 European Public Service Union (2021). *The COVID-19 pandemic one year on: the need to revalue our public services*. Available at : <https://www.epsu.org/newsletter/covid-19-pandemic-one-year-need-revalue-our-public-services>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

32 See all national reports associated to the European Overview.

33 Holst, Jorrit et al. (2020). Monitoring Progress of Change: Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within Documents of the German Education System. *Sustainability*, 12 (4306). Available at : [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341631975\\_Monitoring\\_Progress\\_of\\_Change\\_Implementation\\_of\\_Education\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Development\\_ESD\\_within\\_Documents\\_of\\_the\\_German\\_Education\\_System](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341631975_Monitoring_Progress_of_Change_Implementation_of_Education_for_Sustainable_Development_ESD_within_Documents_of_the_German_Education_System). Last accessed: 13 February 2022.

34 European Commission (2021). Commission Staff Working Document: Analysis of the recovery and resilience plan of Italy. *Accompanying the document Proposal for a Council Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Italy*, {COM(2021) 344 final}. Pp.12-13. Available at : <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0165&from=EN>. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.



with the issue that learners from a socio-economically disadvantaged background are lagging behind by three years compared to their more advantaged peers, while the issue of segregation of the Roma learners yields implications for the academic achievement of this social group<sup>35</sup>. Portugal is confronting with increasing rates of underachievement in basic competences, which are significantly higher than the EU average or the ET2020 targets, but also with one of the lowest percentages of adults aged 25-34 that passed their upper secondary education<sup>36</sup>. While Croatia experiences the shortest cycle of mandatory education in the EU, with some of the lowest amount of hours for teaching in primary and secondary education and with the education institutions

still operating based on shifts<sup>37</sup>. **These challenges appear as disparate, but they all reflect an inadequate environment for the mainstreaming of EES or for ensuring that each learner has access to EES.** The long-term structural issues existent in formal education across Europe must be addressed, so that the education professionals will benefit from enough time, proper classroom sizes, flexible curricula, infrastructural resources to be able to plan together how to include EES cross-curricularly, while providing practical activities that would connect learners to their environment for practical learning.

A commendable aspect across all countries is the emergence of strategies, action plans and



35 European Commission (2021). Commission Staff Working Document: Analysis of the recovery and resilience plan of Slovakia. *Accompanying the document Proposal for a Council Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Slovakia*, {COM(2021) 339 final}. P.53. Available at : [https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/com-2021-339\\_swd\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/system/files/com-2021-339_swd_en_0.pdf). Last accessed: 18 February 2022.; European Commission (2020). Country Report Slovakia 2020. *2020 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011*. Pp.36-40. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0524&from=EN>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

36 OECD (2020). *Education Policy Outlook: Portugal*. P.11. Available at : <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Portugal-2020.pdf>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

37 European Commission (2020). *Education and Training Monitor 2020: Croatia*. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2020/countries/croatia.html>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

other policy documents clearly referencing the mainstreaming of EES or of EES as part of ESD which have been developed over the 2010s<sup>38</sup>. This aspect has even expanded to the adoption of large-scale educational reforms as seen in Croatia (School for Life Reform)<sup>39</sup> and Spain ([the new organic law of education – LOMLOE](#)), while in 2021 the Slovenian government started a process of reviewing the education sector, aiming to publish a new plan which will be aligned with the European Green Deal and the Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning<sup>40</sup>. As the Croatian and Spanish reforms came out in 2019 and 2020, it is still hard to judge their impact but they have been gradually implemented with promises for funding from the NRRPs to be dedicated to making both of them a reality. It must be specified that EES is central for the Spanish reform, with a clear understanding of its importance and with signposting on how to include it in the classroom, how to train education professionals, how to set evaluation guidelines for EES competences, while the Croatian reform is more focused on the structural hurdles in education and simply includes ESD as a cross-curricular topic<sup>41</sup>. This, of course, is only the first step, as it remains to be seen how such strategies are being implemented, if they are meaningfully placed on political agendas but also if follow-up to them is foreseen.

The reason why follow-up is essential is because in some instances strategies or action plans have recently expired but the process of renewing them or publishing an updated version for the coming years is stalling. **While most countries have at least a valid national strategy for sustainable development, with some even having action plans and strategies for EES or ESD, Serbia, Slovakia and Portugal find themselves in limbo.** The [National Sustainable Development Strategy in Serbia](#) has not been updated since it expired

in 2017, the National Strategy for Global Education expired in 2016 and the process of its renewal was started only in 2021 in the case of Slovakia<sup>42</sup>, while the [National Strategy for Environmental Education from Portugal](#) expired in 2020 with no process yet announced for renewing it. It is important that EES is not linked with the willingness of the political actors that are in power to implement it, but rather that the process is organically taken up by whoever is in leadership at a specific moment as this cannot be a partisan issue considering the universal consequences of the climate crisis. Attention also needs to be given to the fact that the speed at which such documents are updated or amended based on developments linked to the environment is not encouraging. 75% of the SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners involved in the research for the Monitor mentioned no changes to these strategies in their country in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members and partners reporting on amendments to national sustainability strategy in light of the pandemic



At the same time, the Monitor allowed for the identification of a set of good practices in formal education when it comes to EES, and most of them are connected or similar to the Eco-School initiative. The case study below explains the Eco-School initiative, provides examples of its functioning in some of the countries studied and contains some examples undertaken outside the Eco-Schools initiative but following the same principles.

38 See all national reports associated to the European Overview.

39 Eurydice (2022). *Croatia: National Reforms in School Education*. Available at: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-school-education-11\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-school-education-11_en). Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

40 Government of Slovenia (2021). *Pričejamo proces prenove programov*. Available at: <https://www.gov.si/novice/2021-03-08-pričenjamo-proces-prenove-programov/>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

41 See national reports for Croatia and Spain.

42 See national report for Slovakia.

## CASE STUDY

The [Eco-Schools Programme](#) or the [Green School Programme](#) are international initiatives which have expanded across most of the countries studied in the previous and current edition of the SOLIDAR Foundation Monitor, reuniting tens of thousands of education institutions from the formal sector across tens of countries from all continents. Operating since 1994, the Eco School programme provides flexibility in terms of the commitment that each education institution puts into this work, while also allowing the education institutions to prioritise the challenges or aspects that they wish to focus on. Depending on the commitment, education institutions can set up eco-boards which are composed of learners, education professionals, and other stakeholders, but which are mostly steered by the learners, so that they can become socialised into a culture of taking action and having ownership over the solutions to address the climate crisis. The idea is to develop transversal competences by the integration of EES in all classroom subjects, facilitating that exact need for the coordination of the education activity to ensure that

a cross-curricular topic can be adequately mainstreamed.

The Green School Programme allows for the same flexibility, while facilitating an environment also for deeply committed education institutions. It involves a 7-step process through which education institutions can better integrate EES in their daily work while making sure that the institution itself becomes more environmentally conscious and adopts new teaching methods. Providing support to education institutions via inspiring workshops, methodical teaching materials, professional consultations, peer learning, and partnerships across the network of Green Schools, the programme is supporting education institutions to run an environmental audit, create an environmental action plan, engage in monitoring and evaluating the plan's implementation, draft an eco-code and in general to boost up advocacy and EES resources. The programme helps education institutions work on developing competences for the learners, such as empathy, creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, respect for nature and others.



The cases above, though valuable, experience the same approach of ad-hoc and voluntary action from education institutions which implies that many will not engage in this work and a plethora of learners will not have access to this type of education. However, one needs to reflect on these cases due to the way that they are implemented. They imply a requirement to

transform the entire education institution in order to be able to deliver EES. It is insufficient to simply add this in the curriculum and assume that the work has been finalised. For this reason, the case study below was added, to show how the model discussed above can be mainstreamed in formal education.

### CASE STUDY

An example from France shows how the concept of a school aligned with EES has to look like. The main element is the empowerment of the learners. [In 2019, eco-delegates were created](#), representing a position for which pupils could be elected and which allowed their participation in the school steering committees, together with all 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). 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 approach. 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



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 institution.

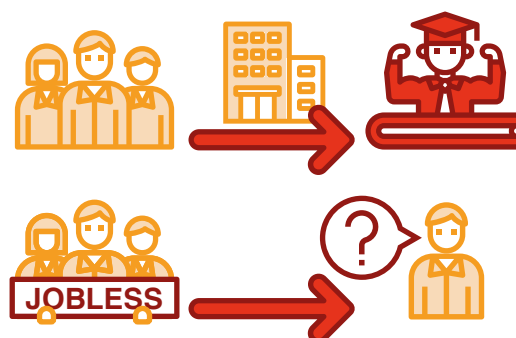
This is similar to having an eco-board or an eco-code, even if it clearly is not as comprehensive as that. Although the case can be improved upon, it shows that small changes in the way education institutions are governed can be facilitated through policymaking and can lead towards more active learners in relation to EES and to actually building up mindsets and transversal competences linked to this, rather than experiencing passive knowledge transmission which is not necessarily conducive to people taking action and actualising their green competences in relation to real world challenges.

## EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

This section will prioritise the situation of adult education in Europe, shifting its focus slightly only in the last part. **The reason for an increased focus on adults is informed by the fact that, while informal and non-formal education expand to a wider variety of learners than just adults and artificial age distinctions are not helpful at promoting a lifelong and lifewide understanding of learning, the findings of the Monitor still point towards more young learners being targeted for EES, with a vast majority of a heterogenous group of the population, the one of adults, being left behind at a time when they should be the main target given the fact that they are in the majority and they have, as a result, a more widespread impact on the environment.**

The tendency mentioned above is defied in the [Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030](#), as references are made to addressing adults' attitudes towards the environment, or fostering behaviours outside of the workplace, or encouraging lifelong learning and the related mindset for all adults, or to learning in the community and for democratic participation<sup>43</sup>. Such a perspective reveals a blueprint for a much needed trajectory for adult learning in Europe during the climate crisis. However, the fact of the matter is that adult participation in learning is at abysmally low numbers, with a decrease experienced in the post-COVID-19 period. In 2020, four weeks prior to the implementation of the labour force survey, it was revealed that on average only 9.2% of adults between the ages 25 and 64

participated in formal or non-formal education. A share lower by 0.9 percentage points compared to 2015 and by 1.6 percentage points compared to 2019<sup>44</sup>. Clearly the cancellation of training activities due to COVID-19 had a tremendous impact on adults' learning, but more worrisome is the fact that these training opportunities did not find an outlet to be organised at least partially, such as other forms of formal education for younger learners were adapted. Out of the countries studied for this edition of the Monitor, Croatia, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia lag below the EU average, with disastrous numbers experienced in Croatia, Slovakia, North Macedonia and Serbia each with a rate below 4%<sup>45</sup>. **Employers remain the main source of providers of non-formal education for adults<sup>46</sup>, which is deeply problematic considering that this would be reaching only the employed population, with the unem-**



ployed, usually belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic categories and in need of the most support for learning and skills development, being left behind, hence widening the inequalities gap in Europe. Financial drawbacks

43 Council of the European Union (2021). *Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030*. Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14485-2021-INIT/en/pdf>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

44 Eurostat (2021). *Adult Learning Statistics*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult\\_learning\\_statistics#Providers\\_of\\_non-formal\\_education\\_and\\_training\\_activities](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics#Providers_of_non-formal_education_and_training_activities). Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

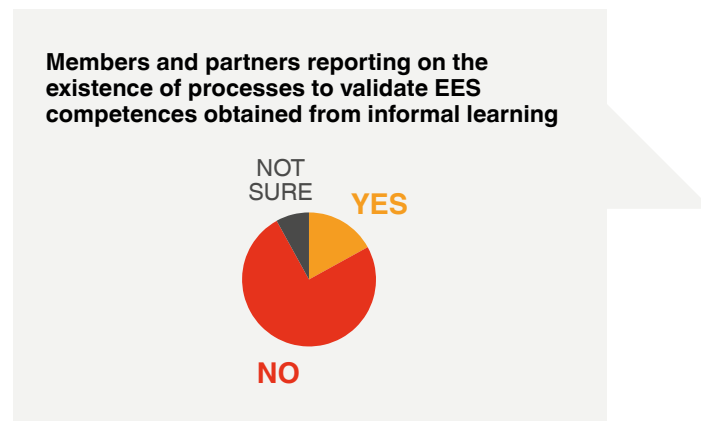
45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

experienced by CSOs during the pandemic<sup>47</sup> do not bode well for their capacity to compensate for the missing training during the pandemic or for supporting those learners most disadvantaged in society.

The collection of data on informal learning for adults is much more complicated, but the latest available data, from 2016, revealed higher rates of participation in such activities, with an EU average of 59.7%<sup>48</sup>. Though encouraging, this is still problematic given the facile nature of engaging in informal learning and the flexibility associated with that. Rates such as 43.5% in Germany<sup>49</sup> also show the discrepancy across the EU in terms of people’s culture of engaging in informal learning. The research might not realistically capture people being subjected to such actions of learning since it depends on what is defined as informal learning and whether or not the learners recognised being in such a situation. However, the research is valuable for determining which adults are sufficiently reflective to understand that they were engaged in a situation of informal learning, which might be even more important than the simple fact of being subjected to learning, considering that self-reflection helps to contextualise learning and to be able to meaningfully incorporate it in learners’ values, attitudes or mindsets. Barriers to an increased participation of adults in informal and non-formal learning are linked to the validation of the competences acquired from such learning, or, to be more specific, to its

lack thereof or to the lack of awareness and information provided on processes of validation of adult learners<sup>50</sup>. **The 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning was targeting this exact problem, but its recent evaluations have**



**shown that there is still much more progress required until its adequate application<sup>51</sup>.** 82% of SOLIDAR Foundation members involved in the Monitor explained that there is no validation of informal learning linked to EES in their country.

Though the section was mainly focused on the education of adults, the members and partners of SOLIDAR Foundation have been expanding their target groups when it comes to the delivery of EES in informal and non-formal ways to other age groups as well. One common trend emerged across a vast majority of

47 Tageo, Valentina et al. (2021). *The response of civil society organisations to face the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent restrictive measures adopted in Europe*. Pp. 49-52. The European Economic and Social Committee. Available at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/qe-02-21-011-en-n.pdf>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

48 Eurostat (2021). *Adult Learning Statistics*.

49 Ibid.

50 European Trade Union Confederation (2021). *ETUC Position on enhancing validation of non-formal and informal learning*. Available at: <https://www.etuc.org/en/document/etuc-position-enhancing-validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

51 European Commission (2020). *Study Supporting the Evaluation of the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning*. Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ea175fa5-ca31-11ea-adf7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

the respondents to the Monitor's survey and it is worth paying further attention to. This is the **cooperation among formal, informal and non-formal education providers**, since CSOs contributing to this research have been building up ad-hoc partnerships with formal education institutions to provide EES in a fashion that is lifelong and lifewide, targeting young learners in their community and also outside of the strict schooling programme. The benefit of these collaborations, beyond the clear exchange of methodologies and pedagogies, is, of course, the opportunity to make learners aware that thinking and acting on EES does not conclude once the formal education

classes are finished. In this way, also, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, which might not be properly supported by formal education, can be aided to catch up with their peers in updating their green competences and their attitudes and values towards the environment. The cases below present a common strategy in the engagement of formal education institutions by CSOs, but each comes with local and regional peculiarities which highlight the need for all policymakers to pay attention to such collaboration and to direct attention into creating a policy and legislative environment that fosters and institutionalises them to ensure that all learners can benefit from such synergies.

## CASE STUDY

### Croatia

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [Centre for Peace Studies](#) (CPS), coordinated the 2-year project (2019-2021) '[Znanje za održivo djelovanje](#)' ('Knowledge for sustainable action') in which they partnered with the environmental CSO [Green Istria](#) and six schools with the aim of introducing additional sustainable development content into formal education. Through the project, teachers were trained to include SDGs in teaching, set up school teams, and, in cooperation with CSOs, implemented education programs for SDGs in schools. Participatory learning methods were used to develop competences and motivate students to act

and understand the role of their own engagement in positive social change. The focus was on student action involving parents and the community, and special attention was paid to student volunteering in the community. In cooperation with teachers, a manual for the practical implementation of teaching in the field of Sustainable Development was developed. This [publication](#) describes the key principles of ESD as envisioned by the project, describes the work done in partner schools, and also includes interviews with key Croatian activists, professionals, and volunteers working on Sustainable Development.



Source: Znanje za održivo djelovanje project



## Slovakia

Linked with the Green School Programme, a member organisation of SOLIDAR Foundation's partner, [Ambrella](#), coordinates the programmes implementation in Slovakia. This organisation is NGO [CEEV Živica](#) and it has expanded the programme to 251 education institutions across the country. Operating on the same principles as described above, this model of continuous support is needed across all education institutions to ensure that EES can be mainstreamed, and the way [CEEV Živica](#) is sharing its expertise on the topic is essential for revealing how formal, informal and non-formal education providers should collaborate, valuing the different perspectives, building up on the accumulated knowledge and making EES a reality. Each of these programmes should not be implemented in silos, separating formal education providers from informal and non-formal ones.

## Spain

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [La Liga Española de la Educación y la Cultura Popular](#), implements the project 'Classrooms with a Taste of Earth'. This was presented at length in the prior edition (2020) of the Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor, but it effectively creates methods for including EES in formal education and trains teachers to bring this experiential and practical learning in the classroom.

The reason for sharing these examples is to obtain an understanding of the potential for collaboration amongst the diverse types of education providers for the delivery of learning in a life-long and lifewide manner. More details on these cases and other such case studies can be found in the other national reports.

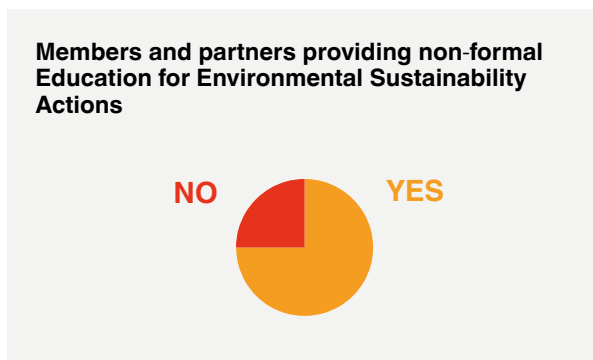


Source: CEEV Živica. Map of all schools that joined the Green School Programme in Slovakia.

## SOLIDAR FOUNDATION MEMBERS' LINK WITH EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

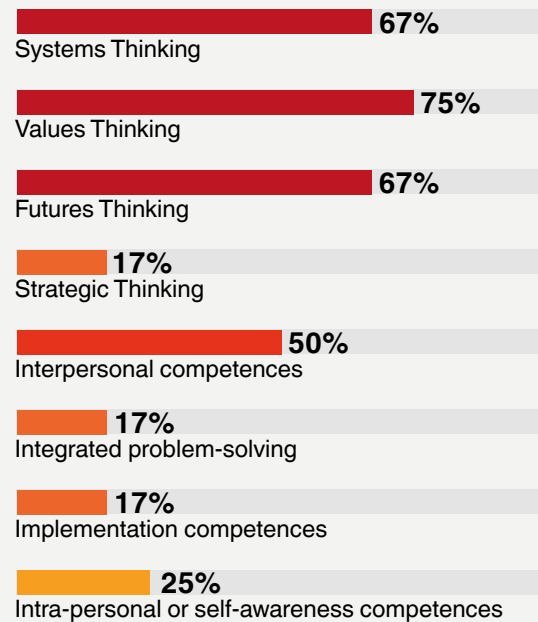
SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners have been providing informal and non-formal education on EES for all age groups. **This section will explore the diversity of learning activities employed to mainstream EES, revealing the wide variety of innovative practices existent among CSOs when it comes to transformative education, while raising awareness on the innumerable opportunities to actualise green competences and to build partnerships across the different education providers.**

75% of SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners contributing to the Monitor report incorporating EES in their non-formal learning opportunities. The explicit mention to EES reveals awareness in the civil society sector for the relevance of the topic, but it does not in any way mean that the other respondents to the research survey are not engaged in building the learners' capacity in relation to the transversal competences associated with EES.



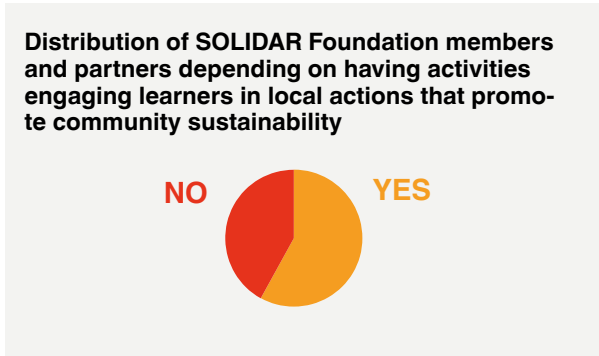
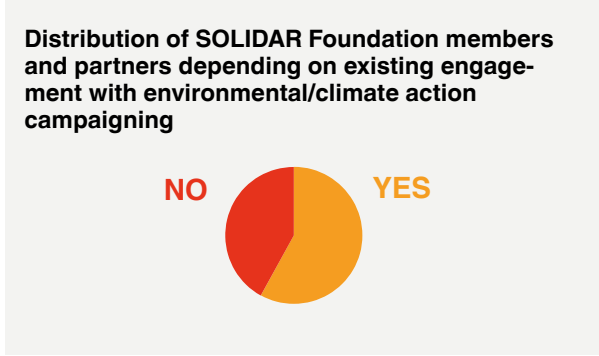
The graph below shows the focus that SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners take with respect to the transversal competences.

**Percentages of SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners developing transversal competences linked to EES**



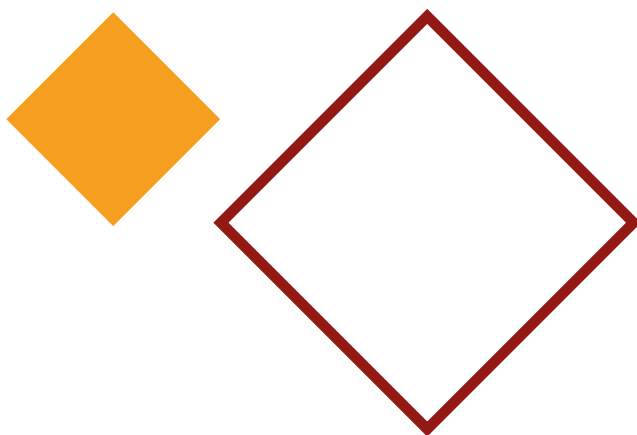
They unanimously work on values thinking and an overwhelming majority looks into systems thinking and futures thinking which are values now reflected in the EU's [GreenComp](#). The work of members and partners and their responses to this research came in the months prior to the release of GreenComp, though SOLIDAR Foundation has been sharing examples of members' work with the European Commission in the period of prior to the publishing of GreenComp. The interpersonal approach remains meaningful for the subjects of the research, but there is a concern regarding the practical implications of this training considering that few of the organisations researched relied on strategic thinking or problem solving when delivering their learning opportunities. This can also be connected with the way in which CSOs not working directly on environment issues relate to environmental activism

when providing their educational offer. Though a large number of the CSOs researched incorporate EES in the learning, there is a lower number of CSOs that engage with climate action campaigning or with environmental grassroots movements or engage learners directly in local actions for sustainability compared to answers to other questions on EES.



Though the lack of connection with practical learning or issues is more prominent in formal education, this is an aspect that the CSOs and the informal and non-formal education sector at large must also prioritise more in their work to ensure an adequate implementation of EES.

As the climate crisis is intensifying, the need for immediate action means that also organisations or agents that normally do not work on the environmental issues are changing their approach to ensure that EES and sustainability thinking are entrenched at the foundation of their work. For this reason, **campaigning in itself can prove to be an essential means of engaging in informal education while also taking meaningful action for the protection of the environment.** This is an example that in research on informal and non-formal learning gets ignored, limiting the potential that CSOs can offer. In four of the studied countries – Italy, North Macedonia, Portugal and Serbia – respondents to our survey pointed out towards the engagement of a broader range of CSOs in campaigning for environmental protection, going beyond the usual sustainability-focused organisations. Examples of this active engagement, and of building up synergies among CSOs to share the knowledge in terms of EES and in terms of engaging people into active participation can be found in the textbox below.





## CASE STUDY

### Italy

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [ARCI](#), contributes to the campaign [Clean Up the World \(Puliamo il Mondo\) campaign](#), which is led by the green NGO [Legambiente](#). The action facilitates organised, voluntary collection of abandoned waste, while using this setting to launch conversations on social issues. For example, in 2021, the topic of the campaign was [Let's clean the world from prejudice](#) and was implemented together with 39 organisations working on integration and migrant rights, from 24 to 26 September. The overarching aim of the campaign was to spark reflection on how making the planet cleaner means also wiping out - along with the waste - any preconceptions and mechanisms that feed marginalisation, injustice, abuse. This is the exact practical learning that the informal and non-formal education setting can provide better than formal education in many European countries, proving how easy it is to reach to a multitude of learners and support them to connect with the world around them. This is only one example of a campaign in which ARCI is involved, as they collaborate frequently with activists across Italy.

### Portugal

In the village of Covas do Barroso there is one of the largest estimated deposits of lithium in Western Europe. This means that proposals for the building of mines have been made, but, residents, with the support of environmental organisations, have launched a campaign titled [“Minas não, sim à Vida”](#) to stop the development of the mine in its initial phase. The civil society is supporting learners to reflect on the potential impact that decarbonisation plans could have on local communities across the EU. Even if the projects foresee [green mining](#), which is a more responsible and sustainable extraction of resources, it also can encompass large amounts of waste, and air and water contamination. Civil Society has been [at the forefront](#) of organised action to protest the prevalence of green mining and economic interests over the wellbeing of citizens while contributing to raising awareness regarding the environmental implications, and, effectively educating citizens in informal ways about EES.

## CASE STUDY

### Serbia

Similarly to Portugal, SOLIDAR Foundation member, Initiative for Development Cooperation (IDC) supported the Ecological Uprising held in Belgrade in April 2020, which was organised to protest the lack of government action to prevent water, land and air pollution by industries such as the mining sector, considering that Serbia breathes one of the most polluted airs in the world, even setting the pollution record in Europe in January 2021. At the same time, through its [Green Initiative](#) project, IDC, together with its project partners [Young Researchers of Serbia](#), work with environmental grass-roots movements at the local level on recycling and waste management. The Green Initiative gathers 22 CSOs and contributes to creating a sustainable waste management system in Serbia by establishing functional mechanisms for the stimulation of primary waste selection through participation of all relevant actors in society. The Green Initiative is an outstanding example of how a meaningful and engaging learning environment for the provision of EES is key to achieving the green and digital transitions.

### North Macedonia

SOLIDAR Foundation member, Community Development Initiative (CDI), has joined the [Friends of the Shara](#) campaign, founded by the Center for Education and Development, the Ljuboten Mountaineering Club, the Macedonian Ecological Society and the Civic Integration Initiative and launched in 2021. The campaign is funded by GIZ and the [South Eastern Europe Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group](#), and is focused on declaring the Shara Mountain a national park, to prevent the exploitation of its resources and foster its biodiversity.



# EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

## EU LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Evaluate the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) with regards to the green transition by monitoring the way in which Member States are taking up the GreenComp; establish indicators to measure the inclusion of EES in the educational reforms linked to the NRRPs
- ◆ Include EES in any upcoming policy proposals or legislative proposals linked to citizenship education
- ◆ Set up a European Agency for Citizenship Education to ensure better mainstreaming of citizenship education, with its component on EES as well, across the EU Member States and to provide Member States with support in implementing the topic
- ◆ Make use of the Education for Climate Coalition to set up avenues for cooperation between formal, informal and non-formal education providers with the aim of providing EES in a lifelong and lifewide manner of learning
- ◆ Promote a model of whole-school or whole-community governance in education that resembles the Eco-School approach to ensure that the green competences are promoted also in the way the education institutions are being run
- ◆ Review the current Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts to ensure that any effort of including adults in learning will also account for developing competences that go beyond labour market needs and assist them in addressing global challenges such as the climate crisis
- ◆ Create more synergies across all education proposals at EU level to ensure that the green competences are prioritised
- ◆ Set up targets for monitoring the way in which adults are acquiring green competences
- ◆ Review the current Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning environmental sustainability to present clearer connections between the education of learners in formal education and the education of adult learners, while also providing a greater attention to intergenerational learning
- ◆ Review the Stability and Growth Pact, excluding public investment in education from the deficit and debt calculations so that more public resources can be put in education to address the structural challenges that prevent the mainstreaming of EES.





## NATIONAL LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Implement EES in formal education in a cross-curricular and transversal manner, without limiting it to specific subjects or reducing it to a limited amount of hours in the instruction time. The topic should be a paradigm informing holistically all subjects in formal education
- ◆ Adapt the national competence framework according to the GreenComp, to mainstream the efforts for the mainstreaming of EES across the EU
- ◆ Support the education professionals by including EES in the initial teacher training and continuous professional development courses, while also facilitating the participation of education professionals in such training by ensuring time and resources are dedicated for training that occurs during working hours
- ◆ Adopt the model of green schools, reviewing the governance and democratic structures within each education institution to ensure the co-participation of education professionals and learners in the way decision making in education institutions is occurring, to obtain legitimacy for any choice, build up ownership over choices taken and develop an active participation in the fight against climate change from all stakeholders in education
- ◆ Reinforce the avenues for collaboration among formal, informal and non-formal education providers, ensuring that EES is delivered in a lifelong and life-wide manner, while practical and participatory learning that cannot be held in the classroom is facilitated to improve the connection between learners and their local community
- ◆ Renew or develop strategies and action plans for the implementation of EES in education
- ◆ Increase public investment in education to ensure that each learner, regardless of their background, has access to EES and that there are sufficient resources for a paradigmatic change within education institutions to provide the topic in a cross-curricular manner and with the support of a Sustainability Coordinator
- ◆ Boost adult participation in learning and ensure that EES becomes a component across adult learning programmes.



# THE STATE OF THE CIVIC SPACE: CAN THE EUROPEAN CIVIC SPACE NURTURE LIFELONG AND LIFE-WIDE LEARNING?

## CONCEPTS

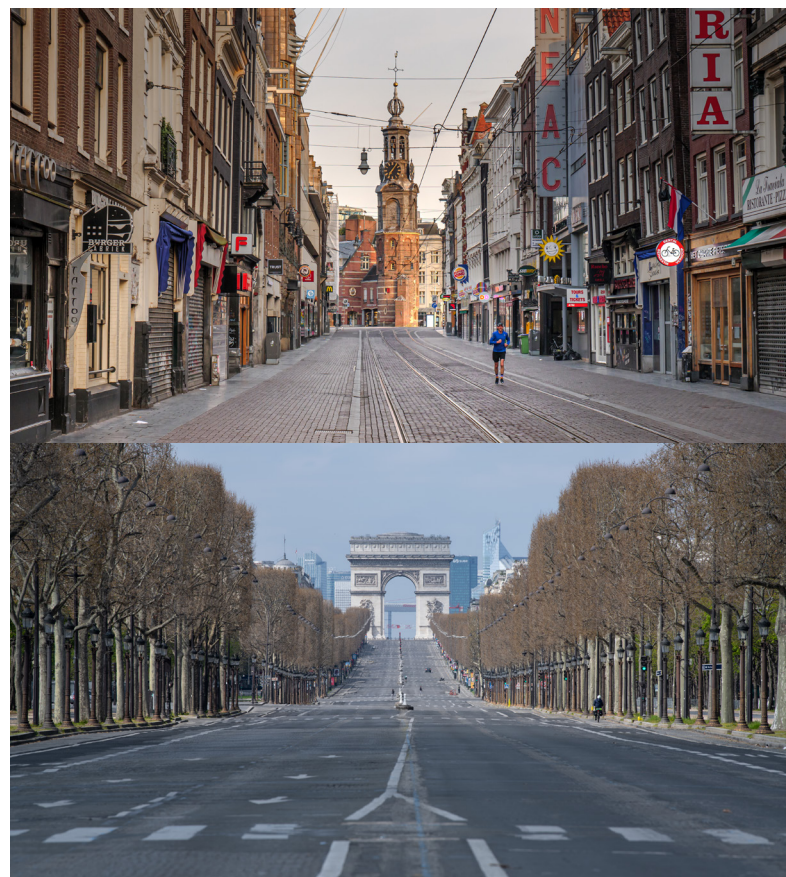
There is a necessity to define the civic space before considering why this was relevant in this year's edition of the Monitor. As defined by the United Nations, it represents that environment that enables the civil society to be active in the political, economic and social life of their societies. The set of rules and conventions that makes this environment possible create the opportunity for the civil society to access information, engage in dialogue, express its positions, unite to amplify their views. Prerequisites of a functional civic space represent the freedom of assembly, the freedom of association, and the freedom of speech, among other essential human rights<sup>52</sup>. The previous section of the Monitor discussed the education needed to address one of the fundamental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It became apparent that **practical learning and active participation for ensuring change based on the learning experienced are hallmarks of the education needed for combatting climate change**. This can be put in practice only with an ample and protected civic space since structural changes on the political, economic and social life of all learners are required to address climate change. To influence those, learners need to become active citizens in the civic space.

Concurrently, the Monitor was launched to assess whether the citizenship education that learners receive across Europe was supporting them in maintaining the EU values while being active participants in society. As the Monitor emerged during a moment when fear caused by terrorist attacks was threatening participation to the civic space and was reinforcing radical ideas, which are inconsistent with an open

civic space, its latest edition serves also as an assessment of how the civic space looks like now compared to 2015.

## THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE CIVIC SPACE

As threatening as the terrorist attacks of the early and mid-2010s were for the fabric of the civic space, the COVID-19 pandemic had a more immediate and absolute effect. In 2020, all European countries imposed some restrictions on the freedoms that represent the prerequisites for an open civic space. A majority of the European states, in fact, imposed outright



52 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2021). *Protecting and expanding civic space*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/CivicSpace/Pages/ProtectingCivicSpace.aspx>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

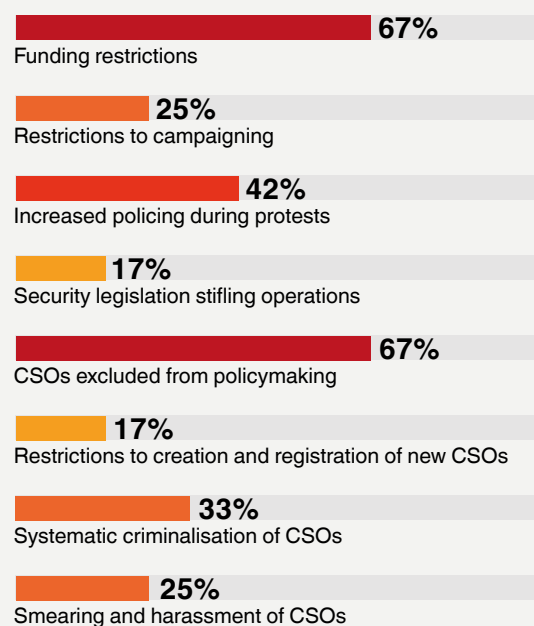


prohibitions on the exertion of rights such as freedom of assembly, freedom of association or freedom of movement. At the point of drafting this Monitor, in February 2022, 110 countries worldwide still had emergency declarations active, 59 countries had measures impacting the freedom of expression, 153 countries had measures impacting freedom of assembly, while 61 countries had measures impacting the right to privacy. All of these were stemming from decisions taken in 2020 or 2021 as a result of the pandemic<sup>53</sup>. Out of the countries studied for the Monitor, only Germany and Portugal benefitted from an ‘Open’ rating for the civic space as provided by the [CIVICUS Monitor](#), to which SOLIDAR contributes, and which constantly monitors the situation of the civic space across Europe. Serbia reached a worrisome rating of ‘Obstructed civic space’, while all other studied countries confronted with a ‘Narrowed’ civic space<sup>54</sup>.

In countries where obstruction of the civic space was observed prior to the pandemic, the sanitary restrictions had the effect of further exacerbating existent problems. However, the four main challenges experienced across most of the studied countries were linked to funding, media freedom, an inability of CSOs to perform their work due to physical restrictions or inconsistency of COVID-19 restrictions, and the denial of CSOs’ participation in policymaking. The graph below reveals further identified issues by the CSOs contributing to this research, some of which will be discussed in the following section.

Funding for CSOs has been a challenge in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, with austerity measures frequently targeting

#### Issues of concern in relation to the civic space for the SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners over the past year



the civil society sector<sup>55</sup>. **The COVID-19 pandemic was aggravated by the fact that it illuminated more than a decade of underinvestment in public services<sup>56</sup> and in CSOs<sup>57</sup> aiding the implementation of**



53 International Center for Non-Profit Law (2022). *COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker*. Available at: <https://www.icnl.org/covid19tracker/>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

54 CIVICUS (2021). Europe and Central Asia. In *Findings of the CIVICUS Monitor 2021*. Available at: <https://findings2021.monitor.civicus.org/europe-central-asia.html>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

55 Shahin, Jamal; Woodward, Alison and Terzis, Georgios (2013). *Study on the Impact of the Crisis on Civil Society Organizations in the EU – Risks and Opportunities*. The European Economic and Social Committee. Pp.2-3. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/eesc\\_qe-32-12-548-en-c\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/eesc_qe-32-12-548-en-c_en.pdf). Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

56 European Public Service Union (2021). *The COVID-19 pandemic one year on: the need to revalue our public services*.

57 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021). *Protecting Civic Space in the EU*. Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg. P.8. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2021-protecting-civic-space\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2021-protecting-civic-space_en.pdf). Last accessed: 16 February 2022.

**public services, which led to a situation of unpreparedness in the face of this sanitary crisis.** SOLIDAR Foundation members in the UK and Spain expressed the fact that the role of CSOs became closer to the one of a service provider, being required to support disadvantaged citizens while the austerity related cuts have denied them many public services<sup>58</sup>. Findings in Spain point towards the fact that the pandemic has impacted the poor eight times more harshly than it has the rich, while the poverty rate has increased, reaching 23.1%<sup>59</sup>. While this situation is implicit in Spain, as SOLIDAR Foundation members report the need to step up their work in supporting increasingly vulnerable communities, in the UK, the situation is far clearer with members of the UK government criticising the fact that the UK CSOs do not resume themselves to simply providing services without taking any political stance<sup>60</sup>. On the other hand, in some countries, more immediate cuts have been experienced on top of the austerity related underinvestment. CSOs in France experienced a loss of 1.4 billion EUR during the strict lockdowns of 2020, with the same organisations being denied access to the State Solidarity Fund. This has been addressed as a result of successful campaigning from [Mouvement Associatif](#), but not before many CSOs ended up seriously affected by the lack of funding during an exceptionally difficult period for their operations<sup>61</sup>. A similar situation occurred in North Macedonia where the emergency funding packages released by the government had in fact foreseen a reduction of approximately 525.000 EUR from the funding

for CSOs<sup>62</sup>, at a time when only increasing this fund would have been an acceptable measure. After protests, this decision was reversed, but the funding was reallocated with a very short deadline to apply for it and with a timeframe of only two days in which the government reviewed all the 549 applications<sup>63</sup>. Therefore, even if the funding returned, it clearly came back with many challenges sprung on CSOs and with many missing out on the chance to adequately access it. The promised relief funding for CSOs in Croatia was meant to be launched in April 2020, only for it to come out in December 2020, and with similar application hurdles as in North Macedonia, considering that selected applicants were the ones to submit the quickest, rather than those with the highest quality applications<sup>64</sup>. Slovakia has been confronting with politically motivated cuts to the CSOs working on gender-related matters, as the government has been accused of making the application and selection procedures opaque and rewarding conservative CSOs rather than the best applicants<sup>65</sup>. In Slovenia, the government tried to use the 7th anti-corona stimulus package of December 2020 to eliminate the state fund for NGOs, but, thankfully, this did not pass due to protests from the civil society<sup>66</sup>. In Germany, CSOs' entire funding is being threatened by the recent interpretations of the antiquated Non-Profit Legislation which is establishing the status of CSOs as charitable associations. This is key for accessing tax benefits and for accessing certain funding lines. However, the law does not specify the promotion of human rights or social justice, or the

58 See national reports for Spain and the UK.

59 Oxfam Intermon (2020). *Una reconstrucción justa es posible y necesaria*. P.6. Available at : <https://www.oxfamintermon.org/es/publicacion/reconstruccion-justa-posible-necesaria>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

60 See national report for the UK.

61 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: 17 February 2022.

62 CIVICUS (2020). *Funding Cuts and No Economic Assistance for CSOs during COVID-19*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/06/15/funding-cuts-and-no-economic-assistance-csos-during-covid-19/>. Last accessed: 16 February 2022.

63 Bosilkova-Antovska, Anja (2021). *Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development. Regional Report: Western Balkans 2020*. Balkan Civil Society Development Network. Pp.34-35. Available at: [https://www.balkancsd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/94-5-Regional-Monitoring-Matrix-Report-2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.balkancsd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/94-5-Regional-Monitoring-Matrix-Report-2020_FINAL.pdf). Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

64 See the national report for Croatia.

65 Kohutková, Ivana (2021). *Slovakia: Government move risks polarising the civil society sector*. Civic Space Watch. Available at: <https://civicspacewatch.eu/slovakia-government-move-risks-polarising-the-civil-society-sector/>. Last accessed: 16 February 2022.

66 CIVICUS (2021). *Government Continues Its Attack on CSOs*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/02/04/government-continues-its-attack-csos/>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

fight against racism or other types of discrimination when conferring the charitable status and this has been used by certain politicians to launch investigations into the engagement of CSOs in the political life. This has a chilling effect on CSOs which are seeing their entire livelihood threatened arbitrarily in case their role exceeds that of mere service providers<sup>67</sup>. Reducing funding that CSOs need for their survival means less capacity to organise, support and involve themselves in the protection of the civic space and in bringing the people to the civic space. Without CSOs, it becomes increasingly difficult for citizens to figure out the complexities of active engagement in the civic space or to collectively tackle challenges or advocate for public authorities to take action towards some of these challenges.

The situation was further exacerbated by unclear COVID-19 restrictions, or regional discrepancies between the restrictions, or simply a way of implementing such directives that gave insufficient time to CSOs to be able to adapt. SOLIDAR Foundation members in Italy and Serbia reported such confusions, which have been considered somewhat intentionally applied to frustrate the work of certain organisations<sup>68</sup>. Insufficient explanations over why certain measures are better than others or

inconsistent implementation of such measures have also made many CSOs across Europe doubt the true intention behind some of the restrictions. The well-being of all, the protection of health and the respect of sanitary precautions should always be the first priority, and there needs to be an acknowledgement that without these, the situation in Europe during the pandemic would have been even more dire. SOLIDAR Foundation members indeed supported the campaigns that encouraged people to respect the safety measures, for as hard as they were impacting their own work and social and cultural activities in general. At the same time, there are limits to what actually protects health and what becomes an unreasonable infringement on human rights. This is exactly what was discovered in Germany, as its [Infection Protection Act](#) was interpreted very strictly by public authorities which has resulted in many legal battles led by CSOs, which culminated with the April 2020 ruling of the German courts which clarified that the absolute prohibition of the right to assembly was inconsistent with the Infection Protection Act<sup>69</sup>. Similarly, in France, the [Human Rights League](#) was questioning why bars and restaurants were allowed to function if people were not allowed to protest even inside of their own cars, which would have ensured social distancing<sup>70</sup>.



67 See the national report for Germany.

68 See the national reports for Italy and Serbia.

69 BVerfG (2020). Beschluss der 1. Kammer des Ersten Senats vom 15. April 2020, 1 BvR 828/20 -, Rn. 1-19. Available at : [https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/DE/2020/04/rk20200415\\_1bvr082820.html](https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/DE/2020/04/rk20200415_1bvr082820.html). Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

70 Ligue des droits de l'Homme (2020). *Manifester est un Droit Fondamental. Il Doit Être Défendu*. Available at : <https://www.ldh-france.org/manifester-est-un-droit-fondamental-il-doit-etre-defendu/>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

**The restrictions have impacted two other important elements and that is the freedom of the press and the capacity of CSOs to engage in policymaking.** This was experienced in Serbia, especially as the country lacks, at the writing of this report, a National Strategy for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society after the expiration of its last iteration – a situation experienced in North Macedonia as well<sup>71</sup> –, while the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society was closed in 2020<sup>72</sup>. SOLIDAR Foundation members in the UK report the fact that CSOs are expected to implement governmental programmes but are not part of the consultative processes which determine the direction of the programmes<sup>73</sup>. Regarding all the EU Member States, only half of the members and partners involved in the research from these countries reported being consulted by their government for the preparation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs), while those that were consulted expressed an uncertainty whether their positions were meaningfully considered<sup>74</sup>. The patterns of reduced involvement for CSOs in policymaking across Europe can also be somewhat explained by the expeditious manner in which governments have been implementing executive decrees. This way of dealing with policymaking has become more entrenched during the pandemic and has led **SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners to decry the way in which people are excluded from decisionmaking in North Macedonia, Spain, Serbia, and Italy while worsening relations and less involvement was expressed by members in**

**Portugal, with partners from Slovakia explaining that better established and more known CSOs enjoy more of a presence in consultations**<sup>75</sup>. Not only CSOs were targeted but also the press, and without media freedom, documenting the situation of the civic space becomes significantly more difficult. The crack-down on press occurred in some countries prior to the pandemic, with a clear example in Slovakia, where the murder of the journalist Ján



Kuciak has shocked the entire Europe<sup>76</sup>. In Slovenia, for almost an entire year, the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) has had its state funding completely retracted, while it was also subjected to constant attacks from the state officials in relation to its integrity<sup>77</sup>. Similar attacks have been recorded in Serbia and Croatia<sup>78</sup>, while in North Macedonia during the pandemic the freedom of movement of the press was prohibited unless the journalists would have been included in two registrars, entering intense supervision over their work<sup>79</sup>.

71 Bosilkova-Antovska, Anja (2021). *Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development. Regional Report: Western Balkans 2020*. P.44.

72 Naunova, Kristina and Neshikj, Ilina (2020). *Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development. Regional Report: Western Balkans 2019*. Balkan Civil Society Development Network. Pp.9; 30-31. Available at: [http://www.balkancsd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/76-6-Final-Regional-Monitoring-Matrix-Report\\_up.pdf](http://www.balkancsd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/76-6-Final-Regional-Monitoring-Matrix-Report_up.pdf). Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

73 See the national report for the UK.

74 See the national reports for Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.

75 See the national reports for Italy, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain.

76 Walsh, David and Crowcroft, Orlando (2020). *Jan Kuciak murder: The crime and trial that sparked a 'renaissance of civil society'*. EuroNews. Available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/03/jan-kuciak-murder-the-crime-and-trial-that-sparked-a-renaissance-of-civil-society->. Last accessed: 14 February 2022.

77 See the national report for Slovenia.

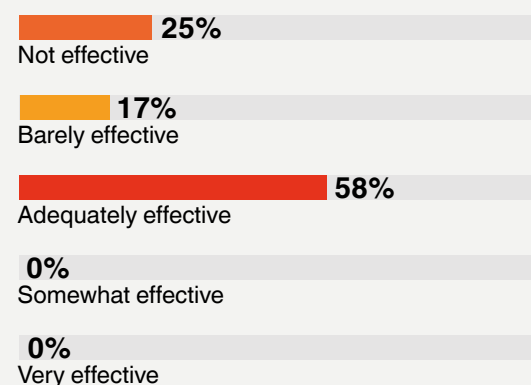
78 See the national report for Croatia and Serbia.

79 Kotevska, Biljana (2021). *Legal environment and space of civil society organisations in supporting fundamental rights: North Macedonia*. Pp.5-6. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/franet\\_north\\_macedonia\\_civic\\_space\\_2021.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/franet_north_macedonia_civic_space_2021.pdf). Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

The situation of these blatant violations of human rights and attacks on the integrity of the civic space have not received their worthy attention due to the fact that the pandemic has been ravaging the European countries on all fronts. However, this just underlines how many losses in terms of the freedom of the civic space have been experienced in the past years, which have led to a vast majority of European countries to not have an ‘Open’ CIVICUS rating for their civic space<sup>80</sup>. The situation has been worsening since the release of the Paris Declaration, which is not to say that CSOs or the civic space were not affected then, but the worsening trends of now have passed without being punished. The situation in Poland and Hungary has been continuously deteriorating with insufficient meaningful action at EU level to address these violations of the civic space<sup>81</sup>. At the same time, **SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners consider that there is an imbalanced attention provided to Poland and Hungary that are now being used to shrug off any restrictions in countries that are still yet to arrive in the extremist position in which Hungary and Poland are right now.** At the same time, the members and partners consider that the EU is insufficiently engaged in their country to combat the serious abuses of powers done by the public authorities.

On one hand, this in no way means that actions have not been taken in the studied countries to improve the situation of CSOs or of the civic space. On the other hand, any positive development presented in the national reports associated with the Monitor is overshadowed by the fact that it is an ad-hoc action surrounded by many other structural developments that restrict the civic space. It seems that abuses directed at CSOs, the press or civil society in general have been accepted much more easily with fewer consequences for the perpetrators in the recent years. Such an ongoing situation can reach to a point of no return and in the

**SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners rating the effectiveness of the EU’s actions to protect the civic space in Member States**



absence of a vibrant civic space it will become difficult to ensure the adequate participation of citizens in society.

**UNITY IN DIVERSITY: A TREND OF SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE**

Each national report associated with the Monitor has a section dedicated to spotlighting a specific way in which the civic space is being targeted for restriction. Although each civic space context has its own specificity and its own developments, what the spotlighting section of each report will reveal is a trend of a shrinking civic space. At the same time, another trend that is becoming apparent across Europe is the continuation of the fight to protect the civic space by CSOs, even in light of the above-mentioned developments, and the fact that people continue to take part in the civic space, making use of the citizenship education they received.

The spotlight section that can be found in each country report sheds light on another worrisome aspect of the limitations to the freedom of assembly, and thus to the civic space, which is police brutality. Though instances of police brutality intensified during the pandemic, the

80 CIVICUS (2021). Europe and Central Asia. In *Findings of the CIVICUS Monitor 2021*.

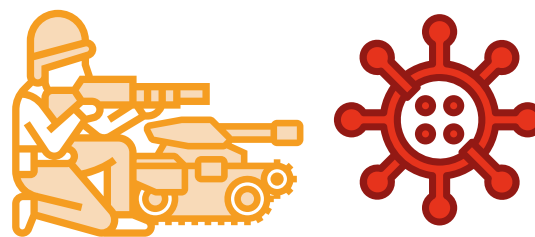
81 Zalan, Eszter (2021). *EU Commission letters to Poland, Hungary: too little, too late?*. EU Observer. Available at: <https://euobserver.com/democracy/153591>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.



nature of how these developed led to an institutionalisation of them and to a way of entrenching them that will become very difficult to contest. This is the case due to **significant legislative changes that have empowered the police to frustrate the civic space**. The reason why this deserves its own section is connected very much to the discourse of **securitisation**. The Copenhagen School was referring to this in relation to public authorities deciding to upgrade a regular political issue into a matter of ‘security’, into a matter that threatens the livelihood of the citizens<sup>82</sup>. If the Paris Declaration was providing a different response than securitisation to the terrorist attacks of the time, aiming to educate people against values and attitudes that would give rise to hatred and conflict, political actors from all sides of the political spectrum, maybe emboldened more by the far-right movement, have, to different degrees, brought in securitisation solutions to the problem. The discussion around the COVID-19 pandemic was many times phrased as a war against an

invisible enemy<sup>83</sup>, heightening the risk to people’s livelihood to almost mythical dimensions. This is not to say that people’s lives were not in danger, but to highlight how war policies entered quicker into people’s imaginations of the pandemic than the regular public health policies. This is the case while also more and more political actors endorse the idea of an EU army, an element echoed even in the European Commission’s President State of the Union address<sup>84</sup>. One of the most fervent supporters of an EU army is French president Emmanuel Macron<sup>85</sup>, the president of the country that was one of those most brutally shaken by the terrorist attacks that have informed the Paris Declaration. The legislative processes presented here in relation to the police force make the case for the securitisation approach being prioritised at the expense of other strategies, and this becomes apparent by looking at how the increased powers of the police have been limiting the capacity of CSOs to act and the capacity of people to actively participate in society.

Police brutality has been on the rise in France, Germany, Spain and the UK, while police malpractice on racial lines was seen in Croatia and recent proposed reforms in Slovenia would have seen an increase in the powers of the



82 Stritzel, Holger (2007). Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(3): 357-383. Available at : <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1354066107080128?journalCode=ejta#:-:text=Ole%20W%C3%A6ver%20and%20Barry%20Buzan,a%20call%20for%20urgent%20and>. Last accessed: 15 February 2022.

83 Panzeri, Francesca; Di Paola, Simona and Domaneschi, Filippo (2021). *Does the COVID-19 war metaphor influence reasoning?*. PLoS ONE 16(4): e0250651. Available at : <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0250651>. Last accessed: 16 February 2022.

84 European Commission (2021). *2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH\\_21\\_4701](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH_21_4701). Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

85 Euractiv (2018). *Macron calls for ‘true European army’ to defend against Russia, US, China*. Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/macron-calls-for-european-army-to-defend-against-russia-us-china/>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

police which would have caused a similar context to the one experienced in France, Germany, Spain or the UK<sup>86</sup>. This type of violence relates to legislative changes which have broadened the powers of the police and which have been experienced during the pandemic. At the same time, the war discourse used for the pandemic might have had an impact into how protestors against human rights violations during the pandemic were treated by the police. This vicious cycle has emboldened policymakers to make proposals for giving more powers to the police exactly during the COVID-19 times. Examples here are the proposed [Police, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill](#) in the UK, the proposed amendments to the Intervention Measures Act in Slovenia<sup>87</sup>, the [Global Security Law](#) in France, as well as the recent proposals to expand the police force, the [Gag Law](#) in Spain, or the police malpractice in the wrongful deaths of migrants in Croatia<sup>88</sup> and they show the way in which the state organ that was supposed to protect the organisation of actions in the civic space ended up restricting the work of civil society. The bill in the UK would have allowed for more powers to the police to break down protests, especially for shallow excuses such as noise disturbances, too close proximity to the Palace of Westminster or for them being too small scale, as well as more discriminatory stop and search powers and a criminalization of the Traveller way of life. The bill was targeting more the ethnic minorities, Traveller communities and black people than it would other groups in the British society<sup>89</sup>. The law in France

allows the police to obtain drone footage of protestors while the media and the people are not allowed to record the police officers, which creates an asymmetry in terms of the right to report abuses of powers<sup>90</sup>. The 2015 Gag Law in Spain foresees more easiness for police to disrupt protests, and similarly to France, a prohibition of people to film law enforcement authorities<sup>91</sup>. The Law's implementation spiked tremendously during the pandemic, as the 75 days of confinement brought an increase by 42% for the sanctions given under the law from the total number of such sanctions given in the period 2015-2018<sup>92</sup>. In Germany, similarly to Spain, civilians and protestors have expressed a disproportionate use of power by the police and unnecessary escalations of conflicts, all while the police failed to protect the press from far-right attacks<sup>93</sup>. France elicits the same imagery with police officers in riot gear epitomising the full securitisation of the police force and



86 See the national reports for Croatia, France, Germany, Slovenia, Spain, and the UK.

87 Government of Slovenia (2020). *Ordinance on the temporary prohibition of public gathering at public meetings and public events and other events in public places in the Republic of Slovenia*. Available at: <https://www.gov.si/en/news/2020-03-19-ordinance-on-the-temporary-prohibition-of-public-gathering-at-public-meetings-and-public-events-and-other-events-in-public-places-in-the-republic-of-slovenia/>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

88 See the national report for Croatia.

89 Civic Space Watch (2021). *UK: Calls For #KillTheBill as the UK Government Seeks to Stifle Protests Even Further*. Available at: <https://civicspacewatch.eu/uk-calls-for-killthebill-as-the-uk-government-seeks-to-stifle-protests-even-further/>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

90 See the national report for France.

91 Head of State of Spain (2015). *Ley Orgánica 4/2015, de 30 de marzo, de protección de la seguridad ciudadana*. Available at: [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2015-3442](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2015-3442). Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

92 López-Fonsenca, Óscar (2020). Spain resorted to 'gag law' more than ever before during coronavirus lockdown. *El País*. Available at: <https://english.elpais.com/politics/2020-06-30/spain-resorted-to-gag-law-more-than-ever-during-coronavirus-lockdown.html>. Last accessed: 21 February 2022.

93 CIVICUS (2021). *Journalists Continuously Targeted at Anti-COVID-19 Protests*. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/04/13/journalists-continuously-targeted-anti-covid-19-protests/>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

the escalation of any type of protest<sup>94</sup>. **These laws have been disproportionately hitting people belonging already to disadvantaged groups, and have been creating a process of 'othering' that is at odds with all the values and aims promoted by the Paris Declaration.** Though legislation in Croatia on phone surveillance during the pandemic was thwarted<sup>95</sup>, the police continued to abuse its power especially in relation to migrants coming through the Balkan corridor. The courts have confirmed the wrongful involvement of the police in the death of Madina Hussiny in 2017, which, for however momentous it would be, cannot be considered a win given the loss of Madina. The police is yet to adequately be held accountable for their involvement in this case, while they still continue to resort to appeal procedures to overrule the courts' decisions<sup>96</sup>.

These recent legislative developments have clearly taken a different route than what the Paris Declaration was espousing, revealing that the commitment made by the ministers of education might be less relevant compared to the work of other ministries. Even if the sector is mentioned in relation to the progress of our societies on multiple fronts, it is not at the top of the agenda when it comes to addressing societal polarisation. **The environment around the civic space is not conducive to informal and non-formal learning and towards tolerance and equity. However, in this case, the CSOs and NGOs operating across Europe have been the ones adopting the principles of the Paris Declaration in the midst**

**of their work.** For any disheartening trend noticed in relation to the civic space, the civil society has been there to show another trend of action being taken and of people fighting for their rights. The UK Police, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill was defeated in January 2022 in the House of Lords following intense protesting from the civil society<sup>97</sup>, revealing how collective action can shape the way in which decisions are taken in our societies. The community-level cooperation was successful in allying with the opposition parties, especially the Labour Party, and has put a dent in the hopes of this law passing. However, the essential aspect about the civic space and civil society is that this is a continuous fight, which will need to proceed and keep people engaged considering that the law can still be sent back to the House of Lords for approval. A similar continuous fight is led by SOLIDAR Foundation member, [CPS](#), in Croatia, where it pursues any available legal recourse to protect the rights of the migrants. Civil society can also fight by means of legal procedures, though, similarly to continuous protests and community organising, this requires tremendous time and energy, but also costs to cover the legal fees needed. A 4-year long process concluded with [CPS](#) winning the legal case related to the wrongful death of Madina Hussiny<sup>98</sup>, but this simply opens up a myriad of possibilities for legal appeal, which shows how lengthy such procedures are. Although this is the case, continuous pushing in this direction can lead to long-lasting results for the civil society. Such was the case in Germany when civil society successfully denied, by legal means,

94 Lichfield, John (2020). *America Has a National Guard. France Has National Riot Police*. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/09/france-riot-police-george-floyd-protests/>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.

95 Frank, Andrei (2021). *Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020: Croatia National Report*. P.10. Available at : [https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/311/original/CLLL\\_Monitor2020\\_National\\_report\\_Croatia.pdf?1617694844](https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/311/original/CLLL_Monitor2020_National_report_Croatia.pdf?1617694844). Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

96 See the national report for Croatia.

97 BBC News (2022). *Crime bill: Lords defeats for government's protest clamp-down plans*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-60032465>. Last accessed: 22 February 2022.

98 Centre for Peace Studies (2021). *On the ECtHR Judgement Confirming that the Croatian Police are Guilty of Madina's Death - Prime Minister Plenković must dismiss the top of the Ministry of the Interior and the police*. Available at : <https://www.cms.hr/en/azil-i-integracijske-politike/europski-sud-za-ljudska-prava-potvrdio-da-je-hrvatska-policija-kriva-za-smrt-djevojci-plenkovic-mora-smijeniti-vrh-mup-a-i-policije>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.





PROTESTS



COMMUNITY ORGANISING



LEGAL RECOURSE



CROWD-FUNDING



PEER-LEARNING



CAMPAIGNING

the actions of the police to thwart protesting in April 2020<sup>99</sup>. The authorities' misinterpretation of the legislation in connection to the pandemic and the freedom of assembly was challenged in court and brought a significant victory. Beyond protests, community organising, or legal recourse, crowdfunding is another alternative that the civil society has to protect the civic space and support CSOs and the press. This was the situation in Slovenia, where the Slovenian Press Agency managed to resist almost a year without governmental funding also due to an impressive crowdfunding campaign<sup>100</sup> that saw the people understand the importance of an independent press body, and allowing them to show their support for this. At the same time, beyond financial support, people and CSOs can support each other with increased collaborations during these hard moments. **Knowledge-sharing activities, study visits and peer learning, exchange of good practices, exchange of resources, common campaigns, are ways in which CSOs across all studied countries have tried to offset the**

**challenges that they experience. This is the moment where the power of transnational networks and of cross-border solidarity exposes itself**, as all CSOs involved in this research have confirmed that they are part of at least one such network, with the majority being part of multiple ones considering that they were already members of SOLIDAR Foundation.

For all the avenues available and shown by the CSOs in Europe, the most important one remains the continuation of their work. **Against all odds, the fact that CSOs continue to support people and to build up communities is what emboldens people to have faith in the civic space and to want to become engaged.** The education that CSOs provide in non-formal and informal ways is a bottom-up approach that ensures that people are aware of what is the civic space, what is at stake if it is lost, and what their civic responsibility is. Below there are some examples of educational work continued by CSOs, but more such cases can be found in the national reports.

99 BVerfG (2020).

100 CIVICUS (2021). *Amendment to Public Law and Order Act Threatens Fundamental Rights, Last Paycheck for STA Staff*. Available at : <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/09/07/amendment-public-law-and-order-act-threatens-fundamental-rights-last-paycheck-sta-staff/>. Last accessed: 18 February 2022.



## CASE STUDY

### Germany

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [Willi Eichler Akademie \(WEA\)](#), has continued its work of educating the German people to understand civic values and the EU values, building a feeling of belonging to the European project. This work has also been done through WEA's project [Europa-Impulse](#), which has been running since 2019, with financial support from the German Federal Agency for Civic Education. Through the project, WEA implements various workshops, conferences, meetings, seminars and similar events to discuss the topic of Europe and European identity, developing knowledge and skills that enable active participation in a democratic society, but also in the context of European citizenship. The project is marked by large-scale annual conferences, such as the one in 2021 that focused specifically on the UN's [Agenda 2030](#) and sustainable development goals (SDGs), as well as on how these relate to Europe. You can find [here](#) the interventions of all speakers, and follow the debate that emerged from this conference. Through each thematic focus, the aim remains boosting people's understanding of the Europe-wide context, but also familiarising German learners with the specific aspects of the other European countries towards which they must show solidarity. By means of the project, German citizens had the opportunity to meet with members of the Land and federal parliaments of Germany, with MEPs, with academics, with former German politicians, while also opening up opportunities to meet current leading political figures from across Europe.

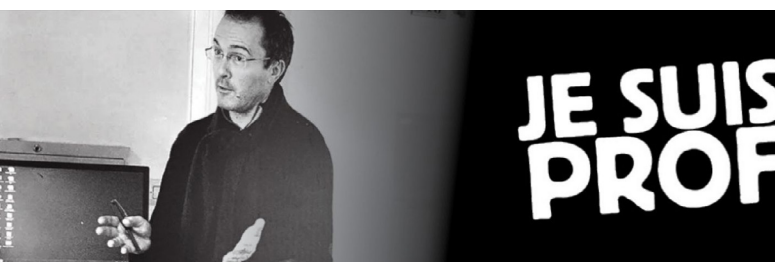
### Croatia

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [Centre for Peace Studies \(CPS\)](#), is implementing the project "[Democratic Heritage - Memorials and Heritage Museums engaging migrants in developing resilient democracies](#)" (henceforth DH). Financed by the Erasmus+ programme and joining partners from Finland, Norway, Belgium, Spain and Sweden, the project develops innovative participatory methodologies connected to adults, migrants, refugees and newcomers' learning, seeing how they correspond to the learning requirements detailed in the Council of Europe's democratic competencies. Transnational good practice workshops will be organised, leading to a handbook, translated in the seven languages spoken among the consortium members. DH will collate and collect the data from the activities to help generate more information on the effect that this methodology can have on refugees, migrants and newcomers, relating to the European Council Democratic Competencies. The project ultimately aims to develop a cross-European forum where experiences, techniques and methodologies in working with migrants, refugees and newcomer education can be shared, developed and tested on the field.



To conclude this section, there needs to be shown that the Paris Declaration's principles remain at the heart of how CSOs are directing their work and trying to build up the inclusive and socially just societies. For this, the French

example remains the most comprehensive, at odds with President Macron's increasingly conservative views, as the civil society rallied around the vicious assassination of professor Samuel Paty<sup>101</sup>, which resembled the terrorist attacks of the mid-2010s. The action taken below by three SOLIDAR Foundation members and their partners in France show that senseless acts will always occur, but the important thing is how a society responds to them and what people are taught to do, and this is all the Paris Declaration is about.



Source: Education International



## CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation members, [CE-MEA](#), [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. At a moment of a senseless act, these organisations showed solidarity by refusing to 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 in 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 criminalisation strategy, aiming to ban all that creates fear of future terrorist attacks while stoking the exact same fear in relation to minority groups.

The CSOs are clearly promoting the model espoused by the Paris Declaration, while the public authorities, even if they have assented to the Paris Declaration by virtue of the Ministry of Education signing this Declaration, decided to pursue other means to address the current societal polarisation in France.

As the education of citizens continues, the civic space must be protected to allow learners to influence decision-making about crucial elements that decide the fabric of the society in which the learners will have to operate. If the

climate crisis is the most urgent challenge ahead and needs an active civic space, then this is applicable for any global challenge that requires solidarity and collective action.

101 BBC News (2020). *France teacher attack: Seven charged over Samuel Paty's killing*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54632353>. Last accessed: 17 February 2022.

# STATE OF THE CIVIC SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

## EU LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Introduce a pillar in the European Democracy Action Plan on the civil dialogue, linking it to the European Semester, as envisaged by art. 11 TEU. Civil dialogue should be implemented through inter-institutional agreements
- ◆ Through the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, in cooperation with the Council, introduce common guidelines for Member States and candidate countries on the establishment and implementation of the civil dialogue, and provide them with training, capacity building opportunities, and related indications for an effective and participatory monitoring mechanism
- ◆ Monitor the involvement of civil society and their access to funding in the implementation of the relevant priorities in the frame of the Recovery and Resilience Facility
- ◆ Increase funding for capacity building towards CSOs to strengthen their resilience against organisational and financial shocks
- ◆ Grant more funding centrally managed through European agencies and EC DGs, with no or little co-financing required to meaningfully support CSOs excluded from funding at national level
  - ◆ Candidate countries: include funding to CSOs and its transparency among the indicators that determine their progress in view of accession
  - ◆ New Member States: the incentives to foster a healthy civic space through funding and regulations should continue also after accession
- ◆ Review the methodology of the current Rule of Law report to consider all rule of law issues, and notably civic space
- ◆ Ensure the methodology for assessing civic space is clear, transparent, co-created with civil society and building on benchmarking mechanisms already used by the Commission and the work of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
- ◆ Add civic space as a separate pillar of the rule of law reports, systematically analysing its status in EU Member States and its impact on the rule of law.



## NATIONAL LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Ensure the constant participation of CSOs in the monitoring and implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans, while meaningfully taking on board their suggestions and recommendations
- ◆ Repeal legislative proposals such as the ones mentioned in this report, but especially all those that are infringing on the right to assembly, excessively militarising or disproportionately increasing the powers of the law enforcement authorities, preventing protestors from documenting abuses of powers, causing large-scale surveillance or discriminating against minority groups
- ◆ Boost the meaningful participation of CSOs in the policymaking and decision making processes related to lifelong learning, education and the civic space, especially by reverting the trend of streamline decision making caused by the urgency of the pandemic
- ◆ Provide adequate investment to CSOs in the aftermath of the pandemic, by increasing and returning back funding cut during the pandemic, by setting up more long-term, non-project based funding for CSOs, by providing transparent, comprehensive and well-announced rules for applying for funding, and by ensuring a transparent process on the evaluation of funding applications from CSOs
- ◆ Better protect the press freedom and ensure adequate public investment for the maintenance of a free press
- ◆ Renew or draft strategies for cooperation with the CSOs, while intensively monitoring their implementation
- ◆ Facilitate the capacity of CSOs to register their status and access financial benefits linked with their non-profit status, preventing any arbitrary exclusions of CSOs and blackmailing based on the recognition of their status.



## CONCLUSION: THE ENDING OF A CYCLE

The situation in Europe when it comes to the mainstreaming of Education for Environmental Sustainability (EES) in formal, informal and non-formal education is not encouraging, while the civic space is suffering attacks and experiences a shrinkage all across Europe. The current edition looked more in depth at EES because it is the part of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) that is most closely connected with the most fundamental crisis that the populations all across the world are experiencing right now: the climate crisis. However, the previous editions of the Monitor looked at citizenship education and GCE in a similar fashion, and the overall monitoring still reveals an insufficient attention given to these topics even though societal polarisation is constantly increasing. The findings related to EES reveal that the topic has been on agendas of policymakers at European and international level since the 1980s, but that it is still lagging behind. Though there has been an increase in the references to the topic and in the efforts to include it in formal education across the 2000s and 2010s, the talk is not being walked. All studied countries refer to EES, even if the specific terminology might vary, and the majority implement it in a cross-curricular way in formal education. However, the existent structural issues across education and the decreased funding in education point out to the fact that cross-curricular topics, for which there is a need to rehaul how education is delivered and ensure coordination for their implementation, are very difficult to be implemented in such an environment. At the same time, the policy strategies and documents for EES, or other varieties of it, are not immediately renewed upon expiration or updated according to the needs

of the pupils or to developments in the pedagogies used for these topics. This is not only relevant for formal education, since informal and non-formal education also do not benefit from structural support for the mainstreaming of EES or from an environment which encourages collaboration of education providers of different types. The implementation of EES becomes then an ad-hoc process that depends on education institutions' willingness and capacity to engage in it or to open their doors for informal and non-formal education providers. This produces imbalances and inequalities in terms of which learners have access to EES at a moment where all learners should engage in this essential topic to be able to protect the environment. Speaking of the need for all learners to engage in this type of education, the adults are many times not prioritised when it comes to EES while the participation of adults in learning across Europe is still significantly low. This aspect is unacceptable considering the looming climate crisis. The implementation of EES in an ad-hoc fashion can sometimes even be considered a best-case scenario, considering that there is also the risk for the topic to be treated as a one-off must, in which an activity is organised to feign interest in the topic. The Monitor also considered if the environment in which learners would practice their green competences is conducive to their participation, specifically looking at the freedom of the civic space in the eleven case study countries. The results are worrisome, considering that the civic space has been experiencing a constant shrinking over the past few years that was exacerbated further by the pressures that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on the CSOs. The pandemic not only reduced funding for

CSOs and prevented them from acting, but it has also emboldened state authorities to restrict fundamental rights, sometimes without an adequate sanitary justification, while it has also revealed the significant underinvestment in public services and the civil society in the past decade. The findings reveal patterns of funding slashes for CSOs, which were some of the first to be hit by cost-saving actions done during the pandemic, patterns of attacks on the media, patterns of diminishing CSOs' role to mere service providers. As the SOLIDAR Foundation Monitor comes to an end, the situation of the civic space was connected with the Paris Declaration, the programmatic document that has been underpinning the Monitor, but also with the origin of the Declaration, the mid-2010s terrorist attacks. The parallel, done in an effort to assess the way citizens can exert civic competences in the civic space, highlighted just how the discourse of securitisation has taken over Europe and how in fact citizenship education as a solution to the societal challenges has fallen down on the list of solutions employed by public authorities. The growing powers, funds and resources of the law enforcement authorities in most of the countries studied culminated in escalation of conflicts during the pandemic but also in new legislative

proposals to expand even further the powers of the police. What was supposed to be a defender of the civic space transformed into a stifling pressure on the civic space.

Under such circumstances, learners are not truly empowered to combat the climate crisis considering that they lack access to the adequate education needed to understand the complexity of the challenge, and then they have less and less access to the space where they should actualise their green competences by engaging in collective actions to demand change in the political, social and economic life of their societies. In this context, the Monitor has provided once more the example of CSOs as providers of education and as fighters for the civic space to show that work can still be done from a bottom-up approach, putting pressure for the top-down reforms to come as well. The collection of good practices from the European overview and from the eleven national reports serves as inspiration for what CSOs can do but also for what all the learners can do if they embrace the lifelong and lifewide manner of learning and engage as part of the civil society. Below are the recommendations of SOLIDAR Foundation to the challenges identified by the last edition of its Monitor.

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**Responsible editors:**  
Mikael Leyi, Elisa Gambardella

**Author:**  
Andrei Frank

**Coordination of publication:**  
Andrei Frank

**Graphic Design:**  
Maximilian Fischer

**Contributions from:**  
Ambrela, ARCI, CEMÉA, CDI, CPS, IDC  
Serbia, La Liga Española de la Educación,  
La Ligue de l'Enseignement, RSF, SLOGA,  
Volunteering Matters, Willie Eichler Akademie

Avenue des Arts, 50  
1000 Brussels - Belgium  
+32 2 500 10 20  
[www.solidar.org](http://www.solidar.org)  
@SOLIDAR\_EU

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