CALL FOR RESEARCHER(S):

SOLIDAR+ Policy Paper on Enabling Learning Environments and the Role of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in Fostering the Development of Citizenship and Digital Basic Competences

I. INTRODUCTION

SOLIDAR+ is the Learning Hub of SOLIDAR; a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR brings together over 50 member organisations based in 26 countries of which 21 are EU countries. We work together in Social Affairs, International Cooperation and Lifelong Learning.

SOLIDAR+ calls for an education agenda that is inclusive, participatory, and future-oriented. This includes prioritising inclusive education with increased public investment, promoting Global Citizenship Education to foster peace, critical thinking, digital literacy, and just transitions, and ensuring accessible digital education. SOLIDAR+ advocates for recognising non-formal and informal learning and supporting flexible, learner-centred pathways to empower communities, strengthen active citizenship, and help individuals adapt to rapid societal changes. For more info www.solidar.org

In the framework of our work on promoting inclusive learning and sustainable societies, SOLIDAR+ is currently looking for expert(s) to draft a policy paper on **Enabling Learning Environments and the role of non-formal and informal learning in fostering the development of citizenship and digital basic competences**.

II. BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION OF THE OUTPUT

A common frame that reunites the membership of SOLIDAR+ is the fact that each one of them is striving to achieve social justice through education, ensuring that all learners have access to quality, public education that is done in a lifelong learning manner. This includes advancing Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to help learners develop the knowledge, skills and values needed for civic engagement, inclusion and democratic participation across Europe and beyond. SOLIDAR also places growing emphasis on Digital Citizenship Education (DCE), supporting its members with training, advocacy and resources to bridge the digital divide, encourage ethical and responsible use of digital technologies, and ensure the digital transition enables inclusive participation in society.

The membership of SOLIDAR+ accounts for providers of informal and non-formal education, and partners of formal education providers, which operate at national level either as networks of such providers in their country or as stand-alone providers. Therefore, when discussing learning environments and how these can enable the development of citizenship and digital basic competences, the reference should always be non-formal and informal learning, while connecting how knowledge developed in such contexts can be best used to enhance the work done in formal education.

This paper aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how supportive learning environments – particularly non-formal and informal ones – can foster the development of citizenship competences and basic digital competences. In doing so, the paper also aligns with and contributes to the objectives of the European Commission's Basic Skills Action Plan, offering insights into how non-formal and informal learning can support the development of basic competences, including digital and citizenship competences, essential for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

The general objectives of the publication are as follows:

- To map the understanding of crucial elements for learning environments to foster the development of citizenship competences and basic digital competences.
- To examine the specific role of non-formal and informal learning providers in creating and contributing to these environments and highlights how the knowledge and skills gained in such contexts can complement formal education.

The publication should conclude with policy recommendations for policymakers on meaningful ways to strengthen learning environments that effectively develop civic engagement, inclusion, democratic participation, and digital competences across all types of education.

III. PROCEDURES

a. Application Process:

Applications need to be submitted electronically to Elisa Gambardella (elisa.gambardella@solidar.org) **and Alexandra Matthys** (alexandra.matthys@Solidar.org no later than Tuesday 20 March 2026, EOB.
The proposal should include:

1. A copy of (each) researcher's CV

2. A document that contains the following information:

   a. A proposed methodology and related timeline

   b. Critical review of and comments on the research question and concept for the policy paper as outlined in section II

   c. Provisional literature review

3. Proof of similar assignment(s) handled in the past.

b. Time Frame

No.	Activities	Timeline
1	Publication of the call for tenders	20 February 2026
2	Deadline to submit an application	20 March 2026
3	Evaluation of proposals	23-26 March 2026
4	Communication of results	27 March 2026
5	Cooperation Agreements signed	1 April 2026
6	Policy Knowledge Exchange (Brussels)	14/15/16 April 2026 (TBC)
7	Establishment methodology Focus groups	May 2026
8	Focus groups (online) w SOLIDAR+ MOs	June 2026
9	Check-in & Feedback meeting	June-July (TBC) 2026
10	First draft of the publication	8 September 2026
11	Feedback round	Mid September 2026
12	Final draft of the publication	7 October 2026
13	Presentation at the Thematic Conference (Brussels)	December 2026 (TBC)

IV. BUDGET AVAILABLE

SOLIDAR+ will provide financial support of EUR 5000 (this amount includes 21% Belgian VAT)

V. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The payment shall be made with the following instalments:

1. 30% of the total financial support paid after the cooperation agreement is signed.

2. 70% of the total financial support paid after the submission of the final report approved by SOLIDAR+ team.

VI. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF THE PROPOSAL AND THE RESEARCHER(S):

a. Researchers

- Experience in producing research for EU-level advocacy purposes.

- Peer reviewed publications on subjects relevant to this call.

- Previous collaborations with (progressive) CSOs working in non-formal education will be an asset.

- Being associated with a university or a research institution will be an asset.

b. Proposals

1. Overview

- The critical review and comments to the concept for the policy paper outlined in Section II are well articulated.

- The literature review is appropriate/adequate to address the research question.

2. Understanding of Research Problem and Issues

3. Quality of Research Design

- Appropriate methodology
- Feasibility for meeting the deadline and ensuring that data can be collected and interpreted

For further information and informal queries, you may contact us at the above mentioned email addresses.