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CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING MONITOR 2020

ITALY

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ABSTRACT

The following report represents one of nine national case studies feeding into the SOLIDAR Foundation's annual Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020. The purpose of the Monitor is to take stock of the developments at European and national level in terms of citizenship education policies and lifelong learning policies. The Italian report is focused on the general three main themes: global citizenship education, digital citizenship, and community partnerships for interculturality. It accounts for challenges, governmental approaches to them, and civil society approaches to them for each of the three themes. In a year in which learning has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become more apparent how essential global citizenship education is for the development of competences that prepare learners for global challenges and that prepare them to act responsible towards their fellows beyond any national border. The topic is becoming more widespread in formal education in Italy, but the current resources allocated to all education stakeholders are insufficient to make it a reality or to implement it quickly enough to address the climate crisis. Italy is confronting also with reduced digital skills for its population, with regional discrepancies in terms of digital infrastructure and skills attainment. These issues reveal difficulties in preparing citizens for the green and digital transition, as the efforts in the past years have not anticipated the rapid digitalization and the climate crisis. The pandemic has taken the centre of attention, but underlying issues regarding the inclusion of migrant background learners is still experienced, and the development of intercultural dialogue is happening within communities, thanks to CSOs and in direct opposition with the incitement to hatred that Lega Nord and the far-right parties have been promoting. In these circumstances, informal and non-formal learning providers must be allowed to cooperate more with public authorities to ensure that they can provide the support to achieve a lifelong and lifewide learning approach over education that prepares citizens for the 21st century society.

INTRODUCTION

Italy appears as a leading country on the topic of global citizenship education (GCE), even if it enforces more ambitious and wide-spreading initiatives linked to education for sustainable development rather than the entire spectrum of GCE. The advancement in GCE are, however, stunted by a lack of investment in education, by insufficient collaboration among all stakeholders to implement a lifelong and lifewide approach to GCE, by an outdated teaching methodology and by insufficient support and training provided to teachers and educators. Similar challenges of resources are linked to the low percentage of Italian population that has at least basic digital skills. The digital infrastructure and skills gap across regions in Italy has exacerbated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The speed of the internet connections across Italy are also a significant concern. All of these issues have contributed to learners being insufficiently prepared to act as digital citizens. Prior to the pandemic, the debate on the integration of migrants, and implicitly on intercultural education, has been taking over politics in Italy. The pandemic has clearly impacted the migrant background learners more, as they were already significantly disadvantaged, experiencing an educational path that was limiting their social mobility. In these challenges, civil society organisations (CSOs) have provided respite through informal and non-formal education initiatives that have brought culture into people's lives at a time of social isolation. The work done by the CSOs proves invaluable to maintaining social cohesion in Italy and for maintaining communities united. For this reason, their role must be increased in both policymaking and policy implementation on all types of education.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

TERMINOLOGY

Across Europe, GCE takes many forms and understanding which requires a definition over how it is used by the various actors in Italy. The Italian Ministry of Education and the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) both operate with the term GCE and define it as the set of information, awareness-raising, training and education activities that addresses various issues such as peace, democracy, human rights, the environment, diversity, economic and social justice and which is aimed at strengthening the global dimension of citizenship in children, adolescents and adults[1]. The Italian platform of NGOs and civil society organisations working on development cooperation and humanitarian aid also operates with the concept of GCE, while mentioning usages of terms such as development education and world education in Italy as well[2]. SOLIDAR Foundation members in Italy do not directly work with the term GCE, but they mention that they promote global competences or actions consistent with GCE through their work on citizenship education topics.

THE FUTURE OF GCE

GCE terminology is widespread among the Italian public authorities even though, later in this report, it will be considered exactly which GCE facet is implemented in formal, informal and non-formal education. The Ministry of Education focused on GCE as part of the objective "Strengthening students' key competences" under the National Operational Programme for

the school sector 2014-20 (PON Per la Scuola – competenze e ambienti per l'apprendimento). Through this project, in 2018, the Italian Strategy for Global Citizenship Education emerged, its drafting being coordinated by the Autonomous Province of Trento and CONCORD Italia, involving ministries, regions, local authorities, universities, volunteer organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs) in the drafting process. This multi-stakeholder approach to developing a document that would guide all education stakeholders in the endeavor of mainstreaming GCE has lasted for one year. The document builds up on the current legal architecture existent in Italy regarding development cooperation and GCE, seeking to promote GCE within Italy. The recommendations focus on establishing a multi-stakeholder group to work on the topic, raising awareness of GCE and consistently promoting information about it, ensuring that all education stakeholders are promoting opportunities for GCE, ensuring synergetic cooperation among all these stakeholders, promoting public debate on the topic and striving to ensure an integrated approach with all the other educational strategies[3]. This comprehensive approach to GCE is missing in many of the EU countries and the sweeping approach undertaken by Italian authorities is very encouraging.

Following this strategy, Italy became the first country to make it mandatory to study sustainable development and the climate crisis in formal education as of September 2020, with teachers being already trained for this as of January 2020. Every grade level included 33 hours of climate education which would be

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1 Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (2021). Cittadinanza globale. Available at: https://www.miur.gov.it/cittadinanza-globale. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.; Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo sostenible (2021). Educazione alla cittadinanza globale: serve un soggetto che coordini le azioni. Available at : https://asvis.it/home/4-8069/educazione-alla-cittadinanza-globale-serve-un-soggetto-che-coordini-le-azioni-. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.
2 Saleniece, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. CONCORD Europe. p.79. Available at: https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CONCORD_GCE_FundingReport_2018_online.pdf. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.
3 Surian, Alessio, et al. (2018). Strategia Italiana per L'Educazione alla Citadinanza Globale. Autonomous Provicen of Trento, AOI and CONCORD Italia. Available at : https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2020/06/il-comita-to-interministeriale-per-la-cooperazione-allo-sviluppo-approva-la-strategia-italiana-per-l-educazione-alla-cittadinanza-globale.html. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

integrated into civic education classes, geography classes, math and physics, ensuring that every week of the academic year at least one hour of climate education would be done[4]. Though the cross-curricular element can prove to be difficult to implement and the focus on education for sustainable development limits what GCE is about, it has to be acknowledged that the mandatory aspect of this, the mainstreaming of it in formal education and the efforts done to coordinate educational efforts to tackle this global challenge are encouraging. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented considering the turmoil engulfing the Italian government in the past years. The Education Minister at the time of this policy being shaped up was coming from the Five Star Movement and he was a staunch supporter of green policies, but was a part of a governmental coalition that included Matteo Salvini and his party

who promoted a science-denying narrative[5]. Since then, this government has collapsed, while the new following one finds itself into a crisis[6], showing a significant political instability which does not bode well in the field of education. The aforementioned reforms were possible also because of the expertise that schools gained with the funding obtained from National Operational Programme for the school sector 2014-20, which made available 120 million EUR on citizenship education projects. Participating schools received up to 30 000 EUR for 30- or 60-hour modules on global citizenship education[7]. As we mentioned in our previous Monitor edition approximately 15 million EUR of this funding was dedicated for active citizenship programmes with only approximately 81 million EUR of the grant being accessed[8]. Though this revealed a lack of incentives for schools to engage in this topic, the implemented projects might have inspired the current approach to GCE.

THE FOUNDATION TO WITHHOLD GCE

Though this can be considered as a proactive approach towards GCE it must be highlighted that some underlining difficulties could frustrate the process. The situation presented in the last Monitor's edition, regarding teacher shortages is still applicable[9], with 50% of vacancies not being filled at the start of the 2019-2020 academic year[10], as Italy lacks the professionals to implement GCE. The teachers

4 International Bureau of Education of UNESCO (2020). Is Italy the first country to require Climate Change Education in all schools?. Available at: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/news/italy-first-country-require-climate-change-education-all-schools. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

5 Hodal, Kate (2019). Italy to put sustainability and climate at heart of learning in schools. The Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/nov/06/italy-to-school-students-in-sustainability-and-climate-crisis. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

6 Giuffrida, Angela (2020). 'Now is not the time': Italians angry and perplexed as government teeters. The Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/14/italians-angry-and-perplexed-as-government-teeters. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

7 European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 Italy. Pp.5-6. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2018-italy_en.pdf. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

8 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020: Italy. Lucie Susova and Elisa Gambardella (eds), SOLIDAR Foundation. Pp.9-10. Available at : https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/129/original/Country_Italy_NEW1.pdf?1588766698. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

9 Ibid.

10 European Commission (2020). Country Report Italy 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. P.40. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0511&from=EN. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

have increased workloads, low wages, limited career prospects, and find themselves in precarious employment even though the Buona Scuola reform of 2015 should have solved these issues[11]. Based on this, it is even more problematic, as SOLIDAR Foundation members explain, that teachers' workload will also involve creative ways of teaching citizenship education and GCE since these remain up to the schools' autonomy, creating regional discrepancies. Such discrepancies frustrate the implementation of a successful GCE programme that would prepare all citizens for the 21st century society. As identified in our last Monitor[12], the regional discrepancies in academic attainment remain marked this year as well, with the results of standardized tests in the North outperforming the Southern one. The rates of early school leaving are significantly higher in the South compared to the North[13]. The impact that this has on social cohesion is also at odds with the concepts of solidarity and equity that GCE supposedly instills in learners.

These aforementioned challenging aspects impact the skills that learners develop. Italian learners' awareness of global issues is below the OECD average, with Italy hovering just above Belarus[14], a country known for its closed-off and inward-looking authoritarian regime. An even worrisome aspect is the fact that Italian learners have some of the worst results in terms of showing cognitive adaptability, with only Brunei, Viet Nam and Macao faring worse in the latest PISA results on global competences. Moreover, these learners are not instilled with a desire to improve themselves, as Italy has the second lowest rate of learners interested in learning about other cultures. At the same time, immigrant learners are more willing to learn about other cultures and have more respect for people from other cultures in Italy compared to the OECD average[15]. This creates serious friction amongst the student body as a significant amount of Italian learners do not have positive attitudes towards migrants. The situation is paradoxical as Italian learners report meeting people from different cultures in school contexts at a greater frequency than other OECD countries while they are also one of the OECD countries with most learners that can speak multiple foreign languages, but these do not practically translate in an attitude change[16]. A cause of this could also be that there is little reflection over their experiences, considering that Italy has the second lowest percentage of school headmasters reporting students learning about other cultural groups in formal education, out of all OECD countries[17].

SOLIDAR Foundation member, ARCI, is involved in the development of civic competences in informal and non-formal settings for Italian citizens. GCE is, therefore, an important strand of their work, even if they focus more on national level civic education. Through this mandate, ARCI has engaged in negotiations with the Italian government on multiple occasions

11 European Commission (2019). Education and Training Monitor 2019 Italy. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2019-italy_en.pdf. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.; European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Italy. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c952f293-2497-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.
12 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020: Italy.
13 European Commission (2020). Country Report Italy 2020. P.40.
14 OECD (2020). PISA 2018 Results Volume VI - Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?. P.14. Available at: https://www.slideshare.net/OECDEDU/pisa-2018-results-volume-vi-are-students-ready-to-thrive-in-an-interconnected-world. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.
15 Ibid. Pp.22, 28-31.
16 Ibid. Pp.36, 44-50.
17 Ibid. P.64.

to enhance global citizenship education projects, opening an interview on the scholastic recognition of these experiences. It is essential to understand that GCE can be done only in a lifelong and lifewide learning perspective, recognizing the competences that learners get from practical experiences throughout their life, and especially those that reveal the global nature of the current societies. Moreover, CSOs are pushing the boundaries set for GCE in formal education, by focusing on themes such as international crime syndicates, the Holocaust, intercultural dialogue, and many others which provide the widest range of experiences for learners to be accustomed with the 21st century society. For these reasons, CSOs must be supported in cooperating with all education stakeholders, including formal education providers, to ensure the adequate preparation of learners for the 21st century society. Below are some examples of how CSOs can inspire the development of global competences.

CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, ARCI, has been implementing for some years the project Campi della legalità, which translates into Fields of Legality. The project is aimed at providing education to the youth on the impact of the criminality promoted by the Mafia and on the dangers of perpetuating a culture that protects the illicit activities performed by this international crime syndicate. The project uses lands that were confiscated from the Mafia since 2004 to organize summer work camps for the youth. The learners alternate with study, information and training sessions on the topics of the fight against the mafia. The project benefits also from an intergenerational perspective, as older people have volunteered to support the implementation of the camps.

The 2019 edition has welcomed 483 participants who were divided across different camps across Italy. The project has also developed two manuals to train the youngsters on anti-mafia notes. This type of learning provides insights into global issues, through practical experiences and in a lifelong learning context.

Source: ARCI

CASE STUDY

One of the CSOs federated by SOLI-DAR Foundation member ARCI, called Deina aps, has been implementing a project on Holocaust remembrance. The project, Promemoria Auschwitz, is supported by public authorities in the region of Turin, while being under the non-economic patronage of both chambers of the Italian assembly. Beneficiaries are engaged in workshops on the history of Nazism and fascism, travelling afterwards to Krakow, Poland, to visit the Auschwitz camp, the Krakow ghetto, Schindler's factory. The process of the project concludes with beneficiaries reflecting over their experiences and disseminating this impact in their community.

The administrative, financial and logistical aspects of the project differ from each region in which it is implemented, but the goal is always the same: connecting past and present in a way that reveals how global education implies not only all a geographic component but also a temporal component about the impact of history on our current societies. Human rights, active citizenship, democracy are other themes discussed across the project's activities, preparing citizens to learn from their past and understand how their role as a citizens must be constantly exerted to avoid gross violation of human rights.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

EDUCATION AND COVID-19

As the first European country to be affected by COVID-19, Italy was the first to close all of its education institutions on 4 March 2020. By the end of the month, the switch on e-learning was completed. National and regional working groups containing CSOs and national and local authorities have been formed to manage the closure, which lasted for the entire lockdown period[18]. The government launched the Digital Solidarity initiative for private and public entities to provide digital resources to alleviate the impact of the lockdown on citizens. The platform continued throughout the autumn of 2020 with a more tailored approach of launching a call for various companies, organisations, foundations, associations to develop digital learning tools. The Ministry of Education replicated this initiative also on its website, from the beginning of the crisis, to ensure that the educational resources can be collected and easily
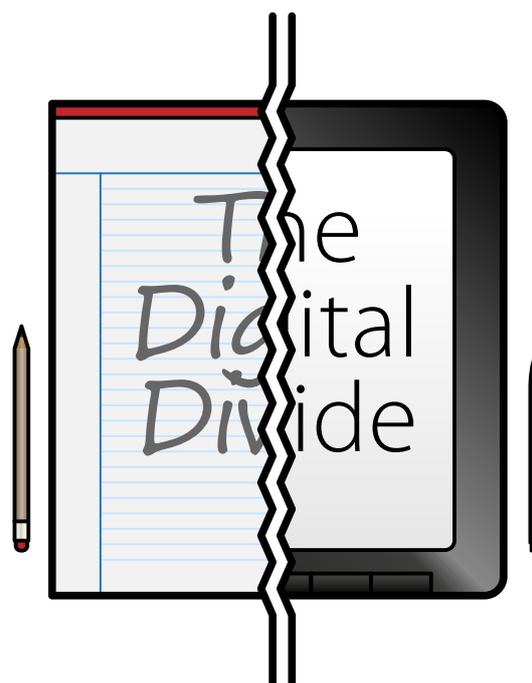
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18 CEDEFOP (2020). Italy: Responses to the Covid-19 outbreak. Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/italy-responses-covid-19-outbreak. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

accessed by schools. The usage of broadcast TV was also employed, with the government signing an agreement with RAI for broadcasted school lessons. The Ministry of Education provided resources to ensure that schools could acquire ICT equipment that could be handed out on free loan to disadvantaged learners[19]. SOLIDAR Foundation members report that though the Ministry of Education platform existed, schools had autonomy over which resources to use, which meant that regional discrepancy intervened.

Education institutions reopened again in September 2020, but were forced to close again in November 2020 due to the second wave of COVID-19 intensifying. In January 2021, plans are set for education institutions to return to a physical format considering that many experts have highlighted the dangerous of distance learning. Save the Children's research revealed that 35% of learners claimed that they are more behind on their schoolwork now than they were at the same stage of other academic years, while 28% of the learners claim that at least one of their classmates dropped out of school[20]. Though no comprehensive impact assessment study was made in Italy, research from the Joint Research Centre of the EU addresses the impact of the loss of school hours for the first lockdown. An estimated 1.68 hours per week were lost in the previous academic year due to online learning, which seems to translate to a decrease of 10 points in results from PISA tests[21].

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND THE REGIONAL GAP

In this context, it must be considered whether Italy was prepared for such a transition to distance learning. Basic digital skills attainment is low in Italy, while the risk of an increased digital divide, which was presented in our previous Monitor[22], is increasing. 41.5% of the Italian population has basic digital skills, more than 15ppt less than the EU average, while 22% of the Italian population had above basic digital skills, another number below the EU average (33.3%)[23]. Even in these circumstances, Italy did not have a digital strategy that aimed to address the issue of digital literacy for the entire population until this year[24], when, by all accounts, it was too late given the forced transition to a digital society. Only 25% of the Italian households have ultrafast broadband connection, compared to the EU average of 60%.

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19 CEDEFOP (2020). Italy: Responses to the Covid-19 outbreak. Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/italy-responses-covid-19-outbreak. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.
20 Dellanna, Alessio and De Michele, Stefania (2021). Italy's schools set to reopen as NGOs highlight risks of remote learning. EuroNews. Available at: https://www.euronews.com/2021/01/06/italy-s-schools-set-to-reopen-as-ngos-highlight-risks-of-remote-learning. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.
21 Di Pietro, Giorgio; Biagi, Federico; Dinis Mota Da Costa, Patricia; Karpinski, Zbigniew and Mazza, Jacopo (2020). The Likely Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Reflections based on the Existing Literature and Recent International Datasets. Joint Research Centre Technical Report. Pp.43-44. Available at : https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC121071/jrc121071.pdf?mc_cid=ecbb7c6ba9&mc_eid=26e959399a. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.
22 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020: Italy.
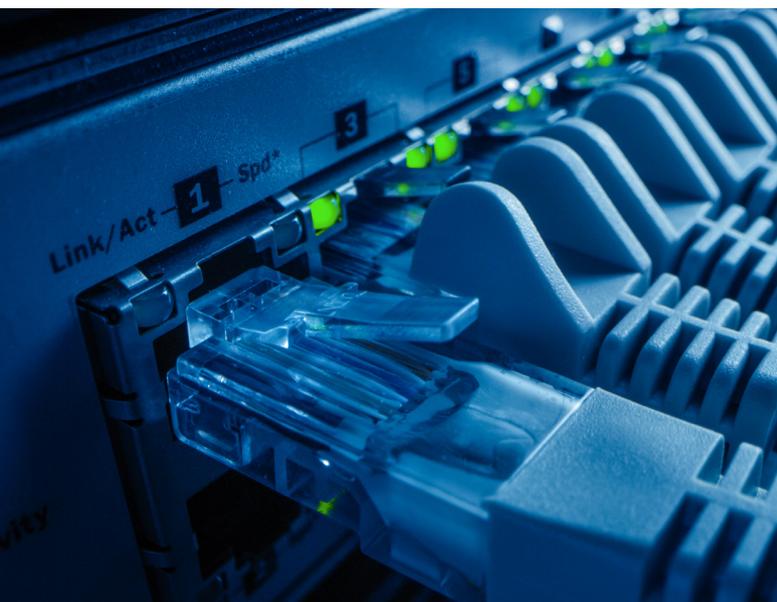23 European Commission (2020). Country Report Italy 2020. Pp.41-42.
24 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Italy. Pp.10-11.

Even in terms of fast broadband connection, the rural areas of Italy are left behind, with only 43.4% of the households having it, compared to the EU average of 52.8%[25]. The significant lack of digital competences and digital resources leads to questions on how people were able to actively participate in society and continue their learning during the pandemic. Education institutions managed the situation slightly better than the country overall. In the absence of a general strategy for digital skills, schools benefitted, since 2015, from a National Plan for Digital Schools which lists 35 actions covering every aspect of schools' digitalisation, from infrastructure and IT equipment to redesigning classrooms and strengthening the digital competences of both teachers and pupils. The Plan is monitored by the Ministry of Education, but no review of its implementation has been published until now[26]. However, it can be observed that schools in Italy are equipped in line with their European counterparts, though they experience a lagging connectivity speed. Almost

all schools have access to the internet (95.4%) but only 26.9% have a high speed connection, well below the EU average of 47%. 43% of school headmasters report issues of connectivity while only 35.6% of teachers report feeling comfortable to integrate ICT in the classroom. Fueling the lack of confidence of teachers is also the fact that only 68% report participating in in-service training on ICT in 2018[27]. Though these numbers are getting better since 2013, it still is insufficient. The result of these slow developments is that, in a time when digitalization is occurring on all fronts, only 35% of teachers used ICT in most or every school hour in 2018, while only a minority of teachers used interactive learning resources, practice programmes or learning games[28].

During COVID-19, it was reported that 2.6% of all students did not have access to distance learning. Given the universal nature of the right to education, this is problematic. In 2019, 12% of children aged 6-17 lived in families that did not own a computer or a tablet, a number which raised to 20% if only the Southern households were considered. 40% of Italian children lived in overcrowded homes in the same year[29]. These numbers point to serious practical challenges in the way those most disadvantaged were able to continue their education online. Between March and June 2020, 201.7 million EUR was allocated to acquire digital devices, but the systemic inequalities and the existent challenges also point towards the fact that learners are not prepared to be part of a digitalized society[30].

Apart from the development of skills and competences being impacted by the pandemic, it must be mentioned that many avenues for

25 European Commission (2020). Country Report Italy 2020. P.48.
26 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Italy. P.4.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid. P.5.
30 Ibid.

personal development were stunted. The lack of access to cultural or sporting events, the daily interaction with members of one's community were all challenges experienced during the lockdown. Mental health was in danger and this was the moment where CSOs have intervened with numerous opportunities for informal and non-formal learning that were tailored for people's needs in this new situation. Moreover, the CSOs have showed solidarity and have provided a sense of hope for the people, uniting people at times of physical distancing. SOLIDAR Foundation member, ARCI, launched the Virtual Resistance campaign which encompassed a wide range of efforts to maintain the communities together. Below you can find a wider presentation of this project that has revealed how CSOs can continue to permeate the lives of the Italian citizens and how they should be involved more by local and national authorities when considering learning and education .

CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, ARCI, has implemented a national campaign as the COVID-19 pandemic caused Italy to go into a lockdown in March 2020 which was called Resistenza Virale. The campaign was meant as an act of civic responsibility, to encourage citizens to respect the governmental indications in order to mitigate the impact of the disease. However, it was also meant as a means of solidarity with all Italian citizens during these trying times. As the activities of the ARCI clubs that were happening in physical format had to also be interrupted, ARCI moved its work online. Culture emotions and curiosity was spread in the online realm, revealing how successfully CSOs have adapted their support for the population online.

The campaign put forward online tools which people could use during this pandemic. It has also organized a multitude of events such as screenings, book readings, concerts, opera and theatre performances, skills development workshops and classes for the young ones in an online format, contributing as much as possible to ensure that people did not lose the humane connections they established in their community during the pandemic. Such a widespread effort has united communities and brought people together in continuous learning even in these trying circumstances. For this reason, the innovative work of the CSOs should be cherished, promoted, better funded and supported for partnerships with local authorities to ensure the continuation of the lifelong and lifewide learning process for all Italian citizens.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL SOCIETIES

The Monitor's previous edition looked into the collaboration between non-formal and informal education providers with formal education providers for the delivery of intercultural education. In the current contexts, much of the development of this topic happens outside of formal education, and has to be thought of in a lifelong and lifewide perspective. Intercultural education permeates all life contexts given the globalized nature of the current society. As a result, this year's edition looks more into the partnerships that CSOs, as non-formal and informal education providers, set up within and across communities in an effort to launch a bottom-up approach for promoting interculturalism. Empowering individuals to engage in intercultural dialogue will strengthen the resilience of communities and will ensure that the diverse demographics in any European country lead to people thriving rather irrespective of their background.

THE POWER OF NETWORKS

SOLIDAR Foundation member, ARCI, has been one of the organisations that launched the National Network for Combatting Hate Speech and Phenomena. NGOs, associations and researchers from various universities and research centres across Italy are part of this network which is involved in mapping and fighting hate speeches and phenomena for some time. Consistent with this, ARCI is also part of the European No Hate Speech Movement, coordinating their work in Italy. This movement carries out studies and documents that are useful to open up debates on what counts as hate speech and how it can be eliminated through new methodologies and greater awareness of the phenomenon. The idea for both is to create a counter-narrative to prevent hate actions to perpetuate themselves. The organisations involved are sharing educational resources, are sharing best practices, and are launching common campaigns. This type of cooperation provides strength to the cause and sufficient resources to tackle it even in more localized contexts.

Source: ARCI and its **I was a foreigner - Humanity that does good** campaign

CSOs have been leading the work in building up a counter-narrative against xenophobia. SOLIDAR Foundation member, ARCI, has recently concluded a project on this theme. The project, REACT: Respect and Equality: Acting and Communicating Together (2017-2019), brought partners from the UK, Germany, Italy, France and Spain, including another SOLIDAR Foundation member, La Ligue de l'enseignement and was aimed at combatting the hate speech aimed at migrants and other disadvantaged groups online. Through a media literacy initiative, the aim was to reduce incidence of hate crimes in the countries participating, while also providing research on the occurrence of these actions online. Social media accounts were monitored in a qualitative fashion to understand the situations in the project countries, and based on this, the project partners developed counter narratives for these xenophobic ways of expression.

An educational toolkit was developed as the main project outcome, which provided descriptions of educational activities for learners aged 13-18 that could be easily included in the school curriculum. The objective was to educate youngsters to become online activists, taking up the social responsibility of promoting positive counter-narratives to the poisonous hate speech currently spreading virtually. This bottom-up approach would see the younger generations empowered to step up against all forms of hate crimes and prevent them from happening, effectively become promoters of intercultural education and intercultural dialogue.

Though ARCI is engaging in partnerships and networks, it must be pointed out that ARCI itself is a national network of ARCI clubs. These clubs act as associations who join the national-level ARCI but maintain financial autonomy and autonomy over their activities as long as they are aligned with ARCI's ethos. Social promotion is the main goal of these associations which encourage citizens' self-organization into intermediate bodies, run on the basis of an internal and democratic mutual agreement. The clubs organize educational, cultural, social and entertainment activities, being able to promote whatever topics they are interested in on the basis of being a democratic organisation open to adapt its programme based on the wishes of the beneficiaries who are its members. ARCI clubs create a micro-climate of democratic engagement, training people how to be civically responsible through the way in which they are organized. Beyond this, the clubs create solidarity among the members of the communities through the promotion of culture in an accessible way that creates social bonds. Cultural

deprivation is considering by ARCI representatives just as serious as material deprivation for the impact that it can have on perpetuating exclusion and racism. ARCI clubs are inclusive spaces, which facilitate meetings and relationship-building along with raising awareness on social issues. The association promotes, among other things, info points to access rights, translations for messages of public interest into many languages, awareness-raising campaigns on (in)equality, and educational courses in schools. The clubs provide access to services that public authorities do not make available or that people have difficulties in accessing. This reveals once more the essential aspect of ensuring that public authorities adequately fund organisations with such expertise and agree to collaborate with them in order to serve people easily in their own communities and with tailored supported. Below you can find some examples of the work that ARCI does in various communities, which develops various skills and competences but also unites members of a community, overcoming any differences that might have.

INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION TO COMBAT XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION

These efforts to increase cohesion are needed especially as the far-right party Lega Nord is pushing an aggressive narrative against migrants and refugees. Such combative approaches serve only to perpetuate the already existing inequalities caused by the background of learners. The 32.5% rate of early school leaving for migrant background learners aged 18-22 is three times as high as that of native learners. This is marked as one of the highest gaps in Europe. Migrant background learners are also almost two times as likely as native ones to repeat the grade, while they are also disproportionately pushed to enroll in VET at the expense of higher education which leads to a reduction in social mobility and to a creation of unequal opportunities[31]. The gaps in academic achievement have been reported in our previous Monitor[32], which reveals yet again that the measures taken in formal education are progressing at a too slow pace to tackle this issue. For this reason, the above description of how some CSOs operate in Italy can serve as a step forward to support migrants and refugees in fully integrating in Italy, while preparing the Italian population to be more attuned to a multicultural society. The task ahead is difficult since the government is still producing many violations of human rights towards refugees that SOLIDAR's Silver Rose awardee, Sea-Watch, tries to bring in Italy from the Mediterranean sea. A ship entering in September 2020 was prevented to enter two weeks earlier by the public authorities, putting the lives of these refugees at risk[33]. The services that CSOs are providing are far more humane than what the government is currently envisioning, which implies a need to better support the CSOs in their efforts to ensure that human dignity is respected. Only through their work can intercultural dialogue be promoted adequately.

31 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Italy. Pp.8.
32 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020: Italy.
33 CIVICUS Monitor (2020). Migrant Rights in the Spotlight. Available at: https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/09/29/migrant-rights-spotlight-protest-calls-end-covid-19-measures/. Last accessed: 20 January 2021.

FUNDING

This section shall consider the general funding in education in Italy, but also the funding allocated for global citizenship education and for the digital transition in light of COVID-19. Italy had the lowest governmental expenditure on education both as percentage of the general government expenditure (8.2%) and as percentage of GDP (4%) in Europe in 2018[34]. These numbers are devastating considering that the teaching profession is not sufficiently remunerated and that the increasing challenges facing the educational sector require more funding. Though, since 2017, investment in education has been increasing, it is not sufficient given the current needs and it does not increase quickly enough to mitigate the challenges ahead.

National public bodies remain the main investors in GCE in Italy, with the responsibilities shifting from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the Ministry of Education. The recent focus on education for sustainable development and on the GCE grants for schools reveal how the Ministry of Education has increased its influence over the topic. In 2015, 1 million EUR was allocated for GCE in Italy[35]. After these investments, the funding in GCE was followed by the call for proposals which was part of the National Operational Programme for the school sector 2014-20. As mentioned above, only 81 million EUR were used up out of the budget of 120 million EUR[36], which puts GCE under a strain. The introduction of education for sustainable development as a mandatory topic in formal education would also need significant investments which have not been made. For the moment, the ambitious initiative to mainstream aspects of GCE in formal education in Italy is not yet backed by adequate resources that would reform the educational system and also train teachers to deal with these new challenges, while ensuring the retention of the teaching professionals.

The investment in closing the digital skills and resources gaps has been intensified due to COVID-19. 201.7 million EUR were allocated to schools by the Ministry of Education to acquire new digital devices that would allow for distance learning. In total, 3 billion EUR were allocated by the government to support students, parents, families, universities and schools. There is an equal division of the funding among higher education and primary and secondary education. These investments have been used to also prepare for the reopening of the academic year in September[37]. However, UIL-SCUOLA, one Italian trade union for education, reported that the 80 000 requirements envisioned for the September start of the year would have been hired on precarious contracts, at a stage when already over 20 000 of the professionals working on education operate on such contracts[38]. This is unacceptable and points out to serious underinvestment in education which has dire consequences on learners, given that their educators and teachers would be in a precarious situation and would not receive sufficient training.

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34 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Italy. Pp.6.
35 Saleniece, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. Pp. 28, 31.
36 Frank, Andrei (2020). Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020: Italy.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand the idea of mainstreamed education for sustainable development to the entire GCE spectrum

- Provide more practical opportunities for learners to practice global competences by ensuring more partnerships between formal education providers and CSOs that can provide lifelong and lifewide learning support

- Increase funding in GCE for CSOs and specifically in processes that include GCE in formal education

- Ensure that the education professionals receive stable employment contracts that secure the continuity of the staff members implementing GCE in light of the fact that schools continue to be understaffed

- Provide better training on GCE and inclusion of ICT in the classroom in both initial teacher education and continuous professional development

- Provide targeted investment into the rural areas and the South of Italy to close the digital infrastructure and skills gap

- Speed up the process to ensure that all households have access to ultrafast broadband connection, effectively designating access to internet as a public good

- Address the curriculum to ensure more usages of ICT in formal education

- Ensure no cuts of funding for CSOs in the aftermath of the pandemic given their essential role in providing support for the citizens during the lockdown

- Provide more avenues for cooperation between public authorities and CSOs to deliver tailored support for citizens even in cases of physical distancing

- Combat the damaging narrative developed by the far right movement regarding interculturalism

- Provide targeted support to regions with more migrant background learners, ensuring that the academic achievement gaps are closed

- Increase overall investment in education, ensuring that Italy comes at least on par with the EU average.

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