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# CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING MONITOR 2020

# FRANCE





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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 French 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. Though France has a strong tradition for civic education and global citizenship education is present in many policy and legislative documents, with the civil society in close cooperation with the government over policymaking on the topic, the learners underperform on global competences while the current debate on the way civic education and

secularism are reconciled with religious diversity reveal challenges for the educational system. The gruesome murder of Samuel Paty as well as the following protests point also towards a polarized French society, which can be a result of limitations within the educational system to prepare learners for the 21st century society. The division is exacerbated by the fact that learners from a migrant background were significantly disadvantaged during the pandemic with regards to access to conditions for participating in distance learning. In these times, the civil society organisations (CSOs) have been contributing to provide informal and non-formal learning within the French communities to empower them to develop the global and digital competences needed for the 21st century. The French authorities must further cooperate with CSOs, ensuring that they can reach learners in their own environments, while adapting the educational system to the needs of all. Lifelong and lifewide perspectives are needed for global education, which implies a need to adapt also the formal education system to recognize the potential synergies across all education stakeholders in order to provide a holistic approach to education that puts the learner at the centre of the process.

# INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 crisis impacted the provision of education in France, the slow speed of the internet connection across the country and the discrepancy in terms of access to appropriate conditions for engaging in education between advantaged and disadvantaged learners have been significant barriers to ensuring equal opportunities to access distance learning. The situation will have repercussions on the educational achievement of the learners in a context where there were already concerns about the basic skills attainment in France and about the discrepancy in academic achievement between native learners and migrant background ones. Global citizenship education (GCE) competences would have been needed to support learners during this pandemic, but the system in France is more focused on a national perspective, that misses the impact

of global challenges such as the pandemic. Though citizenship education is highly present in the French education system, GCE has to still go a long way, with very little investment allocated to it and with it being associated to development cooperation rather than national education. The inappropriate focus on GCE is reflected in the increasing polarization among French communities, which have reached new levels with the protests that occurred in the aftermath of the murder of Samuel Paty<sup>1</sup>. The work of informal and non-formal education providers during these times has proven invaluable, and it is time for the French government to recognize the expertise that these organisations bring and increase the agency that they have over involvement in education and over shaping the education, and more specifically the GCE, policymaking.

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

### TERMINOLOGY

France boasts a developed approach to citizenship education, which has also extended to GCE. The term employed by the NGOs and public authorities to address GCE is Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity (ECSI)<sup>2</sup> though references to education for sustainable developments, to development education and to global education emerge as well based on SOLIDAR Foundation members' work. However, the shared perspective of all stakeholders when it comes to ECSI facilitates the process of discussing the topic and planning for it.

### GCE'S PLACE IN A RICH CULTURE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

France is one of only two countries in Europe, together with Belgium, that provides compulsory citizenship education at all educational levels in formal education. Beyond this, citizenship education is also approached as a cross-curricular topic, effectively ensuring that civic competences are developed at each step<sup>3</sup>. This is conducive for the promotion of GCE, as this would, at least, be indirectly part of citizenship education. Our members report a cross-curricular approach to GCE in France but underline that it still is taught through a

1 Onishi, Norimitsu and Méheut, Constant (2020). A Teacher, His Killer and the Failure of French Integration. The New York Times. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/26/world/europe/france-beheading-teacher.html>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

2 Saleniece, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. CONCORD Europe. p.65. Available at: [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CONCORD\\_GCE\\_FundingReport\\_2018\\_online.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CONCORD_GCE_FundingReport_2018_online.pdf). Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

3 European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 France. Pp.4-5. Available at : [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2018-france\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2018-france_en.pdf). Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

predominantly national perspective, focusing on civic rights rather than competences. Our members also explain that the topic is heterogeneously approached in education institutions, with many burdens placed on teachers and educators in terms of deciding over the implementation of the topic in the classroom.

Though the implementation can be problematic, it must be highlighted that GCE manages to enter the political agenda in France, which is not the case in many of the other European countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the French Development Agency (AFD) are all working on the topic. AFD has welcomed ministries, local authorities and CSOs, including SOLIDAR Foundation member [Solidarité Laïque](#), in a consultation to develop a position on "Strengthening citizen commitment for ecological, solidarity and democratic transition in France and in the world: the essential role of the ECSI" which is to be published in 2020. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working intensely on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), therefore, approaching GCE as part of SDG 4.7<sup>4</sup> as well. Since 1999, [EDUCASOL](#) was a national platform of public authorities working on ECSI which brought together over 30 NGOs interested in the topic. The platform has engaged in policymaking on GCE, providing reflections on, mappings of, studies on ECSI, taking stock of the situation in France<sup>5</sup> and proposing solutions for mainstreaming GCE in education. SOLIDAR Foundation member, [Solidarité Laïque](#), has previously chaired the

[EDUCASOL](#) platform, being well-positioned to work on the development of GCE definitions and policies, cooperating in several mandates with the MFA, the AFD or the French Ministry of Education, with the DAREIC (Délégués académiques aux relations européennes et internationales) and increasingly being involved in INSPE (Institut national supérieur du professorat et de l'éducation). However, in 2019, due to structural and financial resources, [EDUCASOL](#) was dissolved, raising questions about the direction that GCE will have and about the commitment that national authorities plan to give to the topic in the final leg of the Agenda 2030 goals.

The importance of CSOs contributing to policy-making on a topic on which they have vast expertise cannot be sufficiently stressed, and this is reinforced further at a time when COVID-19 has fueled more polarization and isolationism. For the moment, the legal architecture surrounding the provision of GCE is encouraging, as this is part of the [Law on Orientation and Programming for Development Policy and International Solidarity](#) published in July 2014, in which reference is made to raising citizens' awareness on international development issues. GCE is part of the national curriculum. In these official texts, it appears as the element 'aimed at providing students with keys to understanding the major global imbalances and encouraging their reflection on ways to remedy them, by contributing to the understanding of environmental, economic, social and cultural interdependencies on a global scale'<sup>6</sup>.

4 By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

5 EDUCASOL (2018). État des lieux de l'éducation à la citoyenneté et à la solidarité internationale en France. Available at : [http://www.educasol.org/IMG/pdf/educasol\\_etat\\_des\\_lieux\\_esci\\_edition\\_2018.pdf](http://www.educasol.org/IMG/pdf/educasol_etat_des_lieux_esci_edition_2018.pdf). Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

6 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of France (2020). Programmes scolaires. Available at : <https://www.education.gouv.fr/programmes-scolaires-41483>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

## THE RECENT PROMOTION OF GCE AND ITS IMPACT ON LEARNERS' GLOBAL COMPETENCES

The historical approach to ECSI has been intensified in the aftermath of the 2015 terrorist attacks, with the publication of the French action plan for the '[Great mobilisation of schools for the values of the Republic](#)' led to a stronger focus on moral and civic values and critical thinking. A '[Citizen Pathway](#)' (Parcours citoyen) was launched in 2016, consisting mainly in moral, civic and media education, and targeted at all levels of school education. A '[Citizen Reserve of National Education](#)' was created in 2015 to enable civil society volunteers to work alongside teachers on citizenship and secularism projects<sup>7</sup>. SOLIDAR Foundation members, [CEMÉA](#) and [La Ligue de l'enseignement](#), engaged with these programme, providing secular education in support of formal education in this manner. The intersection between informal, non-formal and formal education in a lifelong and lifewide manner is encouraging, especially considering the great avenues for CSOs to provide support and ensure that all citizens

have the competences to actively participate in society. However, this comprehensive approach to partnerships is limited to a national perspective, not preparing the learners for the upcoming global challenges, or still operating with a paradigm of citizenship education that is not conducive to foster solidarity in the increasingly diverse French society.

The approach to the topic yielded some mixed results regarding the global competences that learners develop. Students with a migrant background are far likelier to be aware of global issues and respect other cultures compared to the native population, a worrisome gap in a country that has a high population of migrant background learners. The cognitive adaptability of all French learners is significantly below the OECD average, which is coupled with France being one of the countries with the fewest learning activities organized in schools from the countries participated in the latest PISA research results<sup>8</sup>. Though the French learners speak multiple foreign languages at the end of their educational process and they also had the opportunity to be in contact with more cultures



<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 France. Pp.4-5.

<sup>8</sup> OECD (2020). PISA 2018 Results Volume VI - Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?. P.14, 16, 22, 72. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/OECD/edu/pisa-2018-results-volume-vi-are-students-ready-to-thrive-in-an-interconnected-world>. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.



than learners from other countries, this does not fully translate into a capacity to develop the needed global competences for a 21st century society<sup>9</sup>. This could, however, be a symptom of a larger deficiency in the French educational system, as the percentage of low achievers is exceptionally high, with an even higher number (over 20%) for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. France is the EU country with the strongest link between low achievement and the socio-economic status of learners<sup>10</sup>. The inequity in education can impact the type of skills that the learners have access to, which is not conducive for developing the global skills solidarity needed to ensure that the current global challenges can be tackled by all learners. The inequalities are exacerbated by school segregation, with many disadvantaged learners grouped in the same educational institutions, while also the teaching body in these institutions being less prepared compared to their counterparts from privileged educational institutions<sup>11</sup>.

The French authorities are currently working on improving this situation with linking educational measures to measures on housing, urban policies and poverty alleviation. Halving class sizes in the first two grades was extended to all disadvantaged schools in September 2019, benefiting 300.000 children (20% of the total)<sup>12</sup>. The latter already showed first positive results as national assessments in French and mathematics in the first and second grades show that gaps between pupils from disadvantaged and other schools have slightly decreased<sup>13</sup>. Unfortunately, French teachers report an above-average need for professional development in teaching students with special needs (33.7% vs 21.0%) and individualised learning (23.7% vs 13.2%)<sup>14</sup> compared to the EU average, highlighting an unpreparedness to build transversal competences while putting the learner at the centre of the educational process. Measures have been taken in the direction of improving continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers<sup>15</sup>, but it remains to be seen what impact it will have, and whether the global dimension is sufficiently reflected in this training. There are no specialist teachers of citizenship education but increased efforts have been made since 2015 to strengthen teachers' competences in transmitting values related to civic and moral education, both in initial teacher education (ITE) and CPD programmes. The role of teachers in this area has moved towards helping students to learn, for instance by promoting their ability to engage in debates and develop critical thinking<sup>16</sup>.

9 Ibid. Pp.49-50.

10 Di Pietro, Giorgio, et al. (2020). The Likely Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Reflections based on the Existing Literature and Recent International Datasets. Joint Research Centre Technical Report. Available at : [https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC121071/jrc121071.pdf?mc\\_cid=ecbb7c6ba9&mc\\_eid=26e959399a](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC121071/jrc121071.pdf?mc_cid=ecbb7c6ba9&mc_eid=26e959399a). Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

11 European Commission (2020). Country Report France 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.44-45. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0509&from=EN>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

12 Ibid.

13 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 France. P.8. Available at : <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/767e3242-2499-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-171316425>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

14 European Commission (2020). Country Report France 2020. Pp.44-45.

15 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 France. P.8.

16 European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 France. P.4.

## CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [Solidarité Laïque](#), organized the [La Rentrée Solidaire](#) campaign with a two-fold aim: raising awareness about GCE and practicing solidarity as implied by GCE. The campaign promotes pedagogical practices for GCE and focusing on topics linked to solidarity, but it also contains a component of fundraising to provide educational resources to deprived areas in the world, ensuring that all children have access to free and quality education

that has a global solidarity perspective. Their latest iteration has seen [Solidarité Laïque](#) supporting children and schools in DR Congo. The relevance of the project stems from the fact that it understands that promoting GCE can be done only if learners' baseline needs are met. As a result, [Solidarité Laïque](#) works to ensure that all learners grow in a world where GCE is the norm while it supports all of them to receive education and be supported for social inclusion.

# DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

## COVID-19 AND DIGITAL LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the French authority to close educational institutions by emergency decree on 16 March 2020. They remained closed until May 2020, when gradual reopening resumed<sup>17</sup>. As the second COVID-19 wave hit in the autumn of 2020, this time French authorities maintained the educational institutions opened, to the dismay of many teachers and learners who protested, only to be met with aggressive responses from the police force<sup>18</sup>. The inadequate sanitary measures are a risk to all learners and education professionals, and they point to unpreparedness related to digital

learning and hybrid education from French authorities. The pandemic revealed significant discrepancies between learners from privileged socio-economic backgrounds and those who are disadvantaged. Parents in France reported a deterioration in their relationship with their children during the lockdown which they attributed to an insufficient amount of rooms in their households and to the insufficient access to digital devices in their households. 24% of parents in advantaged families mentioned this, whereas the percentage significantly increased for disadvantaged families to 32%. Only slightly more than 90% of native pupils had a computer in their household, which is

17 CEDEFOP (2020). France: Covid-19 crisis - ensuring continuity of learning in vocational training. Available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/france-covid-19-crisis-ensuring-continuity-learning-vocational-training>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

18 FRANCE 24 (2020). French teachers strike over Covid-19 risks in crowded classrooms. Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20201110-french-teachers-strike-over-covid-19-risks-in-crowded-classrooms>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

not acceptable when discussing a universal right such as education<sup>19</sup>. The gap regarding the presence of a computer in the household between natives and 1st or 2nd generation learners is of more than 10ppt, pointing out how more vulnerable learners are being left further behind. 6% of pupils in primary schools and 10% of those in secondary schools have been disengaged in education due to the pandemic, while it is estimated that, based on the yearly average of hours spent in schools being affected by COVID-19, the test scores in main subjects can decrease by 14%<sup>20</sup>.

To offset the impact of the pandemic, measures were taken, such as providing digital equipment to vulnerable pupils, mentoring and tutoring through voluntary networks and the redeployment of 25.000 volunteers from the Civic Service, developing an online platform ([Je veux aider](#)), and additional funding to local associations<sup>21</sup>. [Television programmes](#) were also used to promote distance learning. However, SOLIDAR Foundation member, [CE-MÉA](#) has raised the alarm on the implication of using digital tools that are managed by GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and



Microsoft). The issues related to personal data usages and violation of privacy remain valid and put into a different perspective the implication that the pandemic has had on people being in control of their personal data but also in terms of developing digital citizenship competences related to data management<sup>22</sup>. In this context, the civil society has proved to be an essential guarantor of people's freedom by providing alternatives to GAFAM. As CSOs have been developing such tools, it is important to acknowledge their essential role in facilitating digital learning, but also to choose their resources given that they do not commodify people.

**CEMÉA**

### CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [CE-MÉA](#), has provided an alternative free license platform to support distance learning without collecting data on users and commodifying them. The [Zourit platform](#) contains digital tools in a similar vein to what Google has offered via GSuite. This digital space for teachers contains a mailbox, a pad for

collaborative work, video-conferencing and hosting capacities and a cloud for storage. For the moment, 20 schools in France are operating with the Zourit platform, and [CEMÉA](#) is expanding its efforts to ensure that more educational institutions can be protected from the tech giants while still empowered to continue digital education.

19 Di Pietro, Giorgio, et al. (2020). The Likely Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Reflections based on the Existing Literature and Recent International Datasets. Pp.25-26.

20 Ibid.

21 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 France. P.5.

22 Klein, Naomi (2020). How big tech plans to profit from the pandemic. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/may/13/naomi-klein-how-big-tech-plans-to-profit-from-coronavirus-pandemic>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

According to a report by the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, published on 21 April, in France, 2% of children under the age of 17 do not have an Internet connection at home. Although the figure may seem low, it still represents 1 pupil in 50. Overall, in 2019, 12% of the French population did not have access to an internet connection from their household regardless of the device that they use<sup>23</sup>. This challenge of digital connectivity is even more problematic in rural areas, while fast broadband internet connection is only available in 36% of French households, which is below the EU average of 41%<sup>24</sup>. France is implementing the Ultrafast Broadband plan (France Très Haut Débit) to cover the national territory with very-high speed broadband. The plan started in 2013 and an estimated 20 billion EUR in total will be invested<sup>25</sup>, but, based on this pandemic, this implementation of the plans needs to be intensified.

### PRECONDITIONS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

More learners between the ages 16 and 19 in France report having above basic digital skills than the average in Europe, amounting to 62% of this age group<sup>26</sup>. However, given the extent of the pandemic these numbers can be insufficient. Digital infrastructure gaps have been tackled in the recent years with the 2015 digital strategy for education ([Plan numérique pour l'éducation](#)). 2.3 billion EUR have been invested between 2013 and 2017 in digitally equipping schools, but the country still confronts with fewer digitally equipped and connected primary schools than the EU average, though it seems to be aligned with the EU when it comes to secondary and higher education<sup>27</sup>. The share of educational institutions with highspeed internet connectivity at all education levels is still

lower than the EU average, showing how much the educational system was being stretched when it came to hybrid or blended learning. Though the authorities have been tackling infrastructural problems, there are still many gaps related to how digital learning is implemented in education and to how prepared teachers are to include digital tools in their class. Though schools are becoming increasingly equipped, the share that have existing school strategies to use digital technologies and promote teachers' professional development, is lower than the EU average at all education levels. More teachers (22.9%) than the EU-22 average (18.0%) reported a need for ICT training. In France, most of the CPD courses are provided on-line via the M@gistère platform which offers around 400 free training courses to teachers<sup>28</sup>. More incentives need to be made to boost participation in such trainings, given how only 36% of teachers report allowing students to use ICT tools in the classrooms, compared to the 53% OECD average. CPD becomes essential also because only 50% of French teachers had 'usage of ICT' included in their ITE, compared to the OECD average of 60%. Moreover, 30% of schools heads in France report that the lack of digital skills for teachers is a hindrance school's capacity to provide quality instruction<sup>29</sup>. In general, the participation of teachers in online courses, or working towards the inclusion of ICT in schools is abysmal, which renders investment in infrastructure useless as competences to use this infrastructure are not developed<sup>30</sup>. Non-formal and informal education providers have frequently come in to compensate for this problem, preparing teachers on digital skills. The role of the CSOs cannot be minimized, and there should be more structural cooperation among all types of education to ensure that the digital gaps can be closed given how much of people's current livelihood is affected by digitalization.

23 Bernard, Vincent, et al. (2020). Logements suroccupés, personnes âgées isolées... : des conditions de confinement diverses selon les territoires. Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, 189. Available at : <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4478728#consulter>. Last accessed: 8 January 2021.

24 European Commission (2020). Country Report France 2020. P.56.

25 Ibid

26 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 France. P.4.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid. P.6.

29 OECD (2020). School Education during COVID-19: Were teachers and students ready? – Country Note France. Available at : <http://www.oecd.org/education/France-coronavirus-education-country-note.pdf>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

30 Ibid.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Providers of popular education, including SOLIDAR Foundation member, [CEMÉA](#), have been working on the ground to promote interculturalism, they have been leading projects and building up alliances, but any conversation about promoting interculturalism in France, in 2020, will be under the spectrum of the gruesome murder of Samuel Paty, a civics education teacher who has framed conversations on the topic of freedom of expression around caricatures<sup>31</sup>. This has been followed up by protests related to the usage of caricatures aimed at the Muslim community<sup>32</sup>. The level of polarization in the French society is high and the need for community-based actions is more acute than ever.

## A GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSE TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY PROJECTS

In January 2020, the [National Agency for Territorial Cohesion](#) (ANCT) was set up to be a partner for local authorities in the implementation of territorial projects. The ANCT represents the French government's effort to support the development of neighbourhoods and communities which have a predominantly disadvantaged population. Though encouraging to see such a mobilization from the side of the state authorities, it must be acknowledged that this arose from high discrepancies among neighbourhoods, from societal polarization, ghettoization and the dangers of radicalization in some of these neighbourhoods<sup>33</sup>. Recognising the increasingly young population of migrants that settle in such neighbourhoods, and the implications this has on societal inclusion, the ANCT is developing 'city contracts' with local authorities for specific activities, which are then

implemented by various local associations. Although this type of cooperation between all types of stakeholders is beneficial, and shows a coherent response to the present challenges, SOLIDAR Foundation member, [CEMÉA](#), reports that the intermediaries (i.e. the CSOs implementing the projects) have little say on how this programme is to be designed. The positive impact that CSOs can have on the life of newcomers and the easy way in which CSOs can approach newcomers in their own new communities is stunted by the fact that they cannot factor in their opinion on how to best approach learners in their communities.

Though this approach is positive, and it certainly yields examples of essential work performed by CSOs on the ground, it has many deficiencies in the way it is implemented. The anecdotal evidence cannot cover the implications of structural issues. As the work of ANCT should advance in the framework of the 2017 report 'Live together, live big. For a national reconciliation', which recommended '48 measures



Northern Paris suburb

31 Onishi, Norimitsu and Méheut, Constant (2020). A Teacher, His Killer and the Failure of French Integration.

32 Deutsche Welle (2020). Muhammad cartoon row: Anti-France protests erupt across Muslim world. Available at : <https://www.dw.com/en/muhammad-cartoon-row-anti-france-protests-erupt-across-muslim-world/a-55448696>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

33 Burke, Jason (2020). Attacks in France put Islamist extremism back in spotlight. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/29/attacks-in-france-put-islamist-extremism-back-in-spotlight>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

intended to recreate urban, social and republican cohesion<sup>34</sup>, 100 mayors in France have reported in a public letter that it is far from meeting these objectives. Many neighborhoods and communities are left behind, fueling more inequality and societal polarization. As a result, in this letter, the mayors have urged President Macron to include 1% of the funds allocated for the COVID-19 Recovery Plan to closing gaps among communities<sup>35</sup>. Without meeting the basic conditions of cohesion, it is hard to speak about community partnerships and about mobilizing people in their community.

### **UNDERSTANDING INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: THE CASE OF LONG-STANDING DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND THE TRUE MEANING OF INCLUSION**

In the aftermath of the Samuel Paty's murder, the French authorities have announced that they are not changing their approach to education<sup>36</sup>. Though essential to not allow weakening freedom of expression in the face of terror attacks, there must be further reflection on why certain parts of the population are left behind and are in danger of radicalization. The public authorities' response must acknowledge the diversity of the French population and readapt education in this way. In this sense, the CSOs have been performing invaluable work to bridge the gap between various social groups and to build up solidarity. Their work on the ground must be , and instead of maintaining the educational system as it is, it would be more beneficial to increase the financial support for CSOs providing intercultural education, but also to open up avenues for their participation in policymaking on education.



34 Ville et Banlieue (2017). Plan Borloo sur les banlieues : Résumé des 19 programmes. Available at : <https://www.ville-et-banlieue.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Re%CC%81sume%CC%81-des-19-programmes-PlanBanlieue-JL.BORLOO.pdf>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

35 Franceinfo (2020). Covid-19: "Cities and working-class neighborhoods remain a blind spot in the recovery plan": a hundred elected officials launches a "cry for help" to Emmanuel Macron. Available at : [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/economie/plan-de-relance/covid-19-les-villes-et-quartiers-populaires-restent-un-angle-mort-du-plan-de-relance-une-centaine-d-elus-lance-un-appel-au-secours-a-emmanuel-macron\\_4180365.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/economie/plan-de-relance/covid-19-les-villes-et-quartiers-populaires-restent-un-angle-mort-du-plan-de-relance-une-centaine-d-elus-lance-un-appel-au-secours-a-emmanuel-macron_4180365.html). Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

36 Deutsche Welle (2020). As France mourns slain teacher Samuel Paty, some question secular values. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/samuel-paty-france-radical-islam-secularism/a-55383482>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

## CASE STUDY

In an effort to combat polarization, CEMÉA is implementing the [TineSol \(Tineri Solidari\) project](#) in Nantes since October 2019. The project aims to support Roma people, specifically those coming from Romania, and living in deprived suburbs of Nantes. The project supports families, children and associations to fight against the stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination experienced by the Roma. It is a human and intercultural experience carried by young French and Roma people.

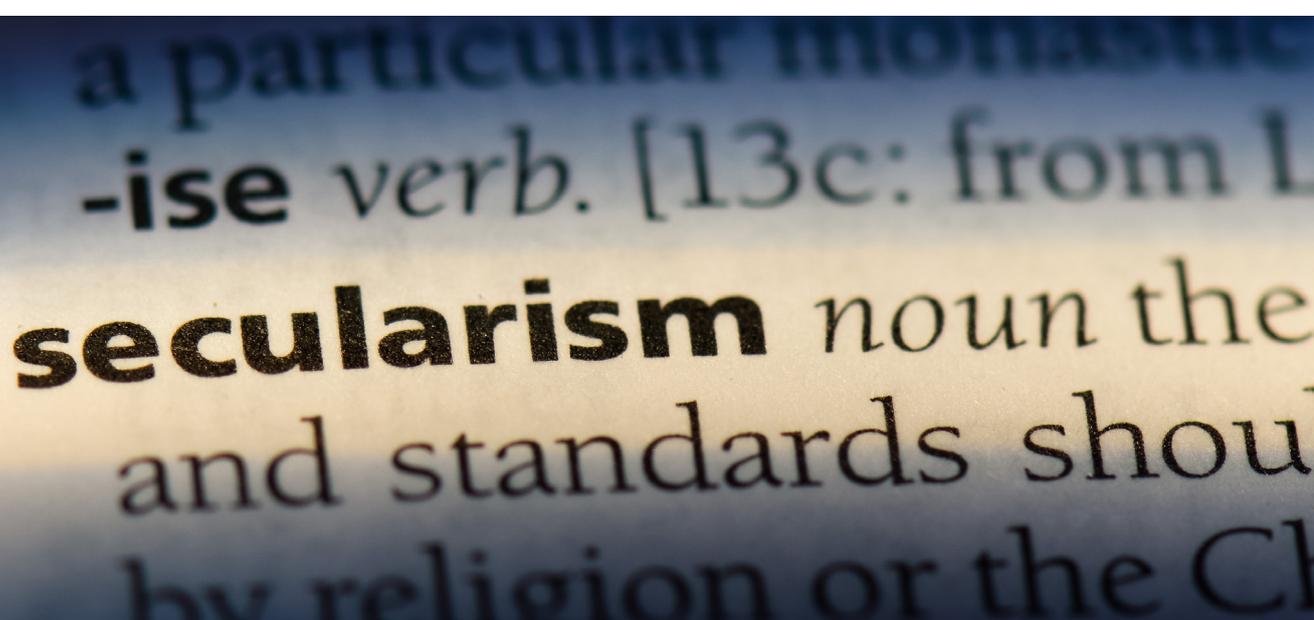
It is a project for which 13 civic services are working with a mixed gender group, French/Roma, aged between 16 and 24 years old and whose mission lasts 9 months. Volunteers are present at CEMÉA from Monday to Thursday. Mondays are mainly devoted to training and administrative and social support. Tuesdays are dedicated to the preparation of team interventions

in the different townships. On Wednesdays, the teams set up activities for children in the slums and on Thursdays the teams go to meet children living in the slums who do not attend school in order to find levers for getting children into school and to offer them educational activities (arithmetic, reading, vocabulary, etc.).

During the civic service, the 13 volunteers take their BAFA (Brevet d'Aptitude aux Fonctions d'Animateur), their first aid training and a whole range of training and discovery courses are provided according to their individual and/or collective project. The project provides a purpose and develops competences for the volunteers, while it also ensures that the volunteers engage other disadvantaged learners and support those in developing intercultural competences and integrating in the French community.

Discussing about the secular values that must be protected in the aftermath of terrorist attacks overlooks the fact that youth gang violence is rising in France, with the recent confrontation between Chechen and North African gangs in Dijon<sup>37</sup> bearing evidence for how polarized, on ethnic lines, the French society is. Paris has been also struggling in the past years with increased gang violence. Youngsters out of education and employment, excluded from society and participating into illicit activities must be better supported. The French educational system must provide them with a chance to hope for a future, and, therefore, national authorities must rely more on CSOs that can embed themselves in the French communities and provide the education needed to uplift the youngsters. SOLIDAR Foundation member, **CEMÉA**, promotes popular education in an effort to ensure that learners participate in their learning process, and are co-creators of education together with teaching professionals. The popular education model is dynamic and based on notions of class, political struggle, and social transformation, but also through this frame, **CEMÉA**, addresses secular education.

**CEMÉA** goes beyond the idea of banning religious symbols from the educational system, and in fact encourages dialogue and cooperation when discussing religious matters, fostering a feeling of acceptance and promotion of the distinct diversity of all learners. **CEMÉA** is one of the intermediary CSOs which implements the ANCT's programme to promote secular education, being part of the employees and volunteers who are in direct contact with the public: popular education and youth advisers, technical and sports advisers, specialised prevention educators, sports educators, coaches, facilitators, mediators, social workers, teachers, etc. The deployment of training courses is based on a unique teaching kit and a network of qualified trainers at national and regional level, to ensure expertise and the consistency of the messages disseminated. The guidelines and contents of the kit were validated by a partnership working group, led by the ANCT, bringing together several ministries as well as the Secular Observatory, the National Centre for Territorial Public Service (CNFPT) and the Social Union for Housing (USH). The kit promotes an approach based on law and



37 Euronews (2020). Chaos in Dijon after armed gangs face off against police in fourth day of violence. Available at : <https://www.euronews.com/2020/06/16/chaos-in-dijon-after-armed-gangs-face-off-against-police-in-fourth-day-of-violence>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

dialogue. On the pedagogical level, a pragmatic approach has been chosen: starting from a historical and legal framework, the application of the principle of secularism is approached through different practical cases adapted to the professional situations of the participants<sup>38</sup>. However, these practitioners should be included in the process of setting up the training for learners, designing the structure and objectives, rather than engaging in this top-down approach. The textbox below presents an example from [CEMÉA](#) of trainings that actually provide youngsters with a purpose and offer

them the chance to avoid engaging in illicit activities and finding a way to actively participate in society.

More flexibility must be allowed for the development of community partnerships and for CSOs' cooperation with state authorities to be able to tackle the current societal polarization. Secularism does not mean the promotion of values palatable for France's native population but rather a welcoming approach to diversity, where it is acknowledged, respected and celebrated, building solidarity amongst all.



### CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [CEMÉA](#), identified the importance of building up skills that can empower youngsters to actively participate in society. For this, they identified the importance of being skilled to perform a role in society, and focused on providing BAFA (Brevet d'Aptitudes aux Fonctions D'Animateur) training. Youngsters between the ages of 17 and 25 engage in this course which also contains a practical experience lasting for minimum 30 hours. The

course is provided for approximately 40 EUR being an accessible alternative that provides a state-recognised diploma, practically including the youngsters in the French society via lifelong learning. The BAFA trainings are phased out across France and represents an example of how CSOs can collaborate with state authorities in constructively keeping the youngsters out of gangs rather than punishing them for gang-related activities that they engage in.

38 La prefecture et les services de l'État en région Île-de-France (2020). Laïcité et vivre ensemble. Available at : <https://www.prefectures-regions.gouv.fr/ile-de-france/Region-et-institutions/L-action-de-l-Etat/Laicite/Le-plan-de-formation-Valeurs-de-la-Republique-et-laicite>. Last accessed: 6 January 2021.

# FUNDING

This section will cover public investment in education as a percentage of the GDP, while also reflecting on the specific funds allocated for digitalization in education and for global citizenship education. France allocates 5.1% of its GDP to public investment in education, a number above the EU average, but also a number that reflects how much of a priority education is internally for France, given that this 5.1% represents 9.1% of total public expenditure. This latter number is below the EU average of 9.9%. Though the expenditure levels are better than in other countries, given the challenges that the French system is experiencing, there must be more investment allocated to education, to be able to reach the pre-austerity investment which was around 5.7% of the GDP<sup>39</sup>.

The funding allocated to GCE is not enough to be able to readapt the educational system to the global challenges. Though funding for this has increased in the first half of the 2010s, from 2 million EUR to 3.5 million EUR<sup>40</sup>, the percentage of funding for GCE coming from the French official development assistance was a mere 0.04% in 2017<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, [EDUCASOL](#)'s research revealed the limited budgets that various associations had for GCE, with 58% of surveyed associations reporting dedicating less than 250.000 euros in 2018 for GCE activities<sup>42</sup>. SOLIDAR Foundation

member, [Solidarité Laïque](#), reflected on the investment patterns on GCE to highlight that it is mostly project-based, with limited chances for structuring and structural investments. This approach to GCE is unsustainable given that it should underpin the entire educational process and it should also be implemented by all education providers.

France's Ultrafast Broadband Plan was mentioned in this report as a valuable piece of investment linked with the digital transitions. The 20 billion EUR that will be invested by 2022 are welcomed<sup>43</sup>, but, as the pandemic has revealed, the speed of internet across France is slow, and this investment must occur quicker. Moreover, lack of access to multiple digital devices would render the speed of internet useless, which means that the governmental authorities should increase investment in ensuring that all education institutions and all learners are equipped with devices to engage in online learning. The current regional discrepancies that affect the rural areas and the learners from disadvantaged families highlight a need for increased investment in the country's digitalization process but also for targeted investment to close gaps.

39 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 France. P.3.

40 Saleniece, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. P.27.

41 EDUCASOL (2018). État des lieux de l'éducation à la citoyenneté et à la solidarité internationale en France. Pp.36.

42 Ibid. Pp.32-39.

43 European Commission (2020). Country Report France 2020. P.56.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Support CSOs involved on GCE to rebuild the EDUCASOL platform or a body similar to this
- ◆ Speed up the process of dismantling segregation in formal education institutions
- ◆ Provide better teacher training on GCE and on ICT to ensure that all education professionals, regardless of the education institutions that they work in, are equipped with the competences needed to provide quality education
- ◆ Provide targeted investment for socio-economically disadvantaged families to ensure that the learners from these families have the needed resources to engage in education
- ◆ Mainstream GCE in the formal education system and allocate increased and stable investment to the topic
- ◆ Facilitate the cooperation between formal, informal and non-formal education providers on the provision of GCE and digital skills in a lifelong and lifewide learning manner
- ◆ Speed up the process to ensure ultrafast broadband internet to all French households
- ◆ Increase investment to ensure that all education institutions are equipped with the digital tools needed for online learning
- ◆ Promote free license software in education provision, especially by supporting the efforts of CSOs using such software at the expense of GAFAM
- ◆ Ensure more agency to CSOs in the process of city contracts established by the ANCT
- ◆ Promote the involvement of CSOs in the provision of intercultural education in France to combat societal polarization
- ◆ Investment in the efforts of non-formal and informal education providers to provide the French youth with skills and competences that offer alternative pathways to gang activities
- ◆ Develop an educational model that includes the culture and history of all minorities in French and that celebrates dialogue and cooperation as the tenets of secularism rather than obscuring religious debate or framing religious debate with insufficient background to cultural diversity in all curricular subjects.

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