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CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING MONITOR 2020

ESTONIA





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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 Estonian 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 (GCE) 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. One of the most equitable education systems of Europe raises to the challenge, boasting a high percentage of learners with advanced level of global competences, while GCE is weaved through the formal education system. The focus falls more on environmental education, missing on some of the wide variety of topics implied by GCE, but it must be acknowledged that Estonia is ahead many of the European countries in this respect. Similarly, ranking 3rd on the [DESI index](#), Estonia was exceptionally well-prepared for the

digital transition. The percentage of citizens with at least basic digital skills is above the EU average, while digital infrastructure gaps are small. Estonia proved itself a country capable to build up global and digital competences to adapt its population to the 21st century. However, it must be highlighted that the teaching professionals have been requesting more training on ICT while the autonomy provided to schools in picking their way during the pandemic has also created some discrepancy in the access to the education that learners had. Though not insurmountable these challenges require immediate reaction, just as likewise Estonia confronts also with increased support for far-right, populist parties who are creating societal polarization along racial, ethnic or religious grounds. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have been fighting against it, empowering communities to develop the global skills needed to understand the 21st century societies and reject populist threats. For this reason, the public authorities must continue their collaboration with CSOs intensifying the way education stakeholders collaborate to deliver a lifelong and lifewide approach to learning. This is essential especially as teachers report insufficient collaboration amongst each other and with other stakeholders. The whole-school approach model can contribute to a continuous learning process attuned to the requirements of a globalized and digitalized world.

INTRODUCTION

Estonia has been a success model for weathering the digital learning aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic. The high investment in education has created a well-equipped system that was accustomed to relying on ICT tools during the educational process. The level of digital skills that the Estonian citizens hold is also very high, but there is still more to be done to ensure that all learners are prepared to enter into the digital transition. Similarly, more efforts must be done to upskill and reskill all learners for the green transition, given that for the moment the focus in Estonia is on environmental education rather

than on global citizenship education (GCE). This narrowed focus also has implications for intercultural education with Russian minority groups being left behind in the educational process, and with attitudes towards migrants becoming more negative, on the backdrop of a far-right party joining a government coalition. Estonia finds itself at a crossroads moment where it can choose to continue its positive path on education and upscale its work on GCE, or usher in increased polarization which is fueled by the extreme right sentiment that is currently growing.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

TERMINOLOGY

Depending on which GCE stakeholder the research focuses on, the terminology used varies. Global education, environmental education, education for sustainable development and GCE itself are used in the Estonian context. The topic is linked with SDG 4.7¹, as the Estonian Education Development Plan refers to this, and the Ministry of Education is focusing on this topic². However, the work done in Estonia on the topic, is linked more with Environmental Education (EE), stemming from an increased public consciousness related to the environmental crisis and from years of investment into this topic in formal education. The connection with environment is the main element discussed at the expense of global justice issues³.

GCE IN FORMAL EDUCATION

GCE is part of the formal education curriculum as a cross-curricular topic, but also, indirectly, as part of the citizenship education curriculum. Citizenship education is provided from 6th grade onwards in Estonia, while also being integrated into other school subjects⁴. The main goals of the topic are to ensure that students acquire social literacy - knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards functioning in society and making responsible decisions. The aim of the subject is to create prerequisites for strengthening civic identity and social cohesion, and active citizenship to support a willingness to engage in dialogue and respect between people who understand the world differently, as well as the student's own awareness

1 4.7 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.

2 Global Education Network Europe (2019). Global Education in Estonia. The European Global Education Peer Review Process National Report on Global Education in Estonia. P.32. Available at : <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f6decae4ff425352eddb4a/t/5f60f122145a8629dcd2f298/1606480166130/Estonia-PR-report.pdf>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021. ;

Saleniece, Ilze (2018). Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much Do We Care?. CONCORD Europe. p.59. Available at: https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CONCORD_GCE_FundingReport_2018_online.pdf. Last accessed: 5 January 2021.

3 Global Education Network Europe (2019). Global Education in Estonia. P.32.

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

of worldview issues⁵. Though the term GCE is not used and there is no GCE strategy in education, the specific objectives for citizenship education classes are aligned somewhat with GCE, which is an element also reported by approximately 77% of Estonian school heads⁶. Students are expected to identify as citizens of the world and identify global issues for which to take co-responsibility. Intercultural tolerance and collaboration is promoted, while also the development of soft skills such as media literacy, critical thinking in relation to political, economic and social environments and the capacity to develop logical arguments are fostered⁷. The balance is tipped in favour of a national perspective, but the quality and equity of the Estonian education system are building up students that could undertake GCE. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Survey identified that the civic competences of Estonian learners have improved, being above the other 20 countries studied. 43% of the Estonian eight-graders had very high levels of civic knowledge, while only 3.4% of them reported very low levels⁸. The academic performance, including the level of civic knowledge, is very little dependent on the socio-economic background of the learners, Estonia being the

country with the most equitable education system in Europe from this perspective. The percentage of learners lacking basic skills is the lowest in Europe, at 11%. Educational institutions can adapt the curriculum and choose the learning materials, illustrating a flexible system that adapts to the needs of the learners and to the diversity of needs based on the local context. The decision-making process in the educational institutions is done in a process of multi-stakeholder collaboration that resembles the whole-school approach. Schools heads work together with teachers, psychologists, school inspectors and parents to determine the right course of action for academic performance⁹. These latter two points mentioned reveal a healthy approach that is conducive towards mainstreaming GCE across all education topics and for developing the whole-school approach.

As the logistics are set in place to deliver an educational system that can easily incorporate GCE, it is worth mentioning that the implementation of policies or of processes foreseen for the delivery of education is not fully reflecting the commitments made. The inclusive education reform is moving ahead, but the number of specialists needed in the educational institutions (psychologists, therapists, special education teachers) is insufficient, effectively putting into doubt how much of a whole-school approach to decision-making exist given this serious lack of support staff. Moreover, teachers are reporting that their collaboration with their colleagues and with parents is deficient, which highlights some difficulties to ensuring that GCE trickles down to all subjects in a way that reinforces each of them¹⁰. Though Estonia is a country that provides GCE in the initial teacher education (ITE) and in continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers¹¹, 17.2% of teachers are reporting a need for training on



5 Government of the Republic of Estonia (2011). Regulation No. 2 “State Gymnasium curriculum”. Available at : https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktilisa/1280/7202/0013/2m_lisa5.pdf. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

6 Global Education Network Europe (2019). Global Education in Estonia. P.47.

7 Government of the Republic of Estonia (2011). Regulation No. 2 “State Gymnasium curriculum”.

8 European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 Estonia. P.5.

9 European Commission (2020). Equity in school education in Europe. Eurydice report. P.148. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/equity_2020_0.pdf. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

10 Global Education Network Europe (2019). Global Education in Estonia. P.51-54.

11 European Commission (2019). Education and Training Monitor 2019 Estonia. P.5.



teaching cross-curricular skills compared to 12.1%, which is the EU-23 average.¹² Though the Estonian pupils are still performing well on global competences, this can easily slide back if the educational system does not foster these skills. For the moment, there is little difference between the knowledge of global issues that immigrant background pupils have compared to the ones of non-immigrant background ones, yet again revealing the equity of the educational system. Estonian learners have a high cognitive adaptability, which is above the OECD average, while the learners are very open to learning about new cultures. However, paradoxically and unfortunately, students' attitudes towards immigrants are very disparaging, and are below the OECD average, veering close to attitudes of students from Turkey, Hungary and Saudi Arabia¹³.

IS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ENOUGH?

Environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development are the most focused on topics in formal education, with the Ministry of Education and Research collaborating with the Ministry of Environment for the

Implementation Plan of EE (2019-2022). This plan defines EE as "a system of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, which recognizes the relations between natural, economic, social and cultural environments based on the concept of sustainable development. EE deals with the awareness of natural relations and impacts, including the human impact, both in local and global context"¹⁴. The development of the plan took a multistakeholder cooperation approach as it was developed in partnership with environmental education experts, school directors, representatives from environmental institutions and NGOs, as well as with municipalities. It considers formal, non-formal and informal education as well, revealing the beneficial aspect of engaging all stakeholders in the development of a strategy that uses all available resources to support learners in a lifelong and lifewide manner. The plan is linked with Estonia's Lifelong Learning Strategy, which is another piece of policymaking that reveals the commitment of the Estonian government to use a whole-government approach to issues related to EE, and to try to mainstream education for sustainable development across the entire educational process. The issue, however, is that global education is not yet a priority for the Ministry of Education and Research. It is missing from policy documents, and it will have repercussions if this shall not be addressed¹⁵. EE cannot be done in a vacuum, ignoring the implications of global justice and competences for critical thinking in relation to global challenges. The impressive efforts from the Ministry of Environment to mainstream EE covers only one facet of GCE, which in no means should overshadow the importance of citizens developing a consciousness linked with nurturing nature and the environment surrounding them, but it is not enough to have this aspect of education included given the complexity of globalization. The Ministries need to collaborate better on how to include the global frame in their policymaking approach.

12 Ibid.

13 OECD (2020). PISA 2018 Results Volume VI - Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?. P.36. 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.

14 Global Education Network Europe (2019). Global Education in Estonia. P.20-21.

15 Ibid.

CASE STUDY

The aspect of global framing and of organizing educational activities that extends in a lifelong way for learners is best exemplified by the Estonian hobby schools. These institutions tend to be ran by CSOs or NGOs, and they tend to provide a specific focus, such as music or sports. These institutions benefit from grants from the state authorities, and the formal education institutions also can have their own hobby schools, to complement the work done in formal education. SOLIDAR Foundation member, Johannes Mihkelson Centre (JMC), has pointed out that [Nature House of Tartu](#) represents a best practice example of hobby schools. The school is part of [UNESCO's Associated Schools Network](#) (UNESCO ASPNet).

The focus of the Nature House of Tartu is environmental education, but it provides it in a whole-family approach that ensures that the young learners will continue to grow in their home environments. Sustainable lifestyle promotion is a main goal, while ensuring that learners can take on environmentally friendly hobbies and their awareness on the climate emergency and the value of the environment is raised. This hobby school also provides content for the formal education curriculum on environmental education and encompasses and Adult Training Centre to make sure that it can adequately train parents but also educators on how to

include environmentalism in their civic education perspective. The institution is managed in a completely environmentally friendly way, ensuring that its carbon footprint is minimal. Creativity, investigative spirit and a practical approach are all fostered, to ensure that environmental education changes the mindset of the learners.

The [UNESCO ASPNet](#) is also highly important to mention here. It was founded in 1953 and encompasses 11500 educational institutions across the globe. Member institutions work in support of international understanding, peace, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development and quality education in practice, relying on dedicated teachers who put in an extra effort to educate their students, enrich their own and student's view of the world and be more tolerant. The range of activities of the schools participating in the network is not strictly limited. Schools carry out various projects that are used to introduce innovative methods and approaches in education, raise awareness on UN Sustainable Development Goals and implement Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). Schools participating in the network can exchange experiences with ASPnet schools from other countries and participate in video conferences and international events.

In this GCE landscape, the role of the civil society cannot be minimized. CSOs are the ones promoting a comprehensive vision of GCE, that considers the global perspective beyond just environmentalism. Many CSOs working on GCE are united in the [Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation](#) (AKÜ) which facilitates their engagement with the government, specific ministries and educational institutions to promote GCE. The efforts outside of the

formal context to raise awareness on the topic and provide non-formal and informal education remain exceptionally valuable. The constant link with public authorities puts these NGOs in a favourable position to influence the agenda and expand the current narrow focus on GCE. The authorities need to upscale the multitude of educational initiatives happening outside the formal setting to ensure that lifelong learning can be a permanent feature of GCE.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

COVID-19 AND DIGITAL LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the Estonian authorities to close most educational institutions, with the exceptions of kindergartens, on 16 March 2020¹⁶. The gradual reopening began in May 2020¹⁷, and the new academic year began with indications from the government on safely reopening schools¹⁸. Flexibility was awarded to schools, and the general idea was to keep younger learners physically in schools, while older ones would engage in distance learning. The situation was managed on a case-by-case basis, with Tallinn shifting more learning digitally once its infection rate per 100.000 inhabitants increased¹⁹. Overall, the Estonian case was reported as a success story given their preparedness to engage in digital education.

62% of the Estonian population has at least basic digital skills, and 37% has above basic digital skills, both numbers exceeding the EU average. Estonia ranks 3rd on the Human

Capital in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)²⁰. However, the numbers are still not fully acceptable considering the widespread need to engage in online learning during the pandemic. Luckily, digital education and skills development have been on the agenda for the years prior to the pandemic. Modern technology is a common fixture in the teaching and learning of Estonia, which has facilitated the



16 CEDEFOP (2020). Estonia: Responses to the Covid-19 outbreak. Available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/estonia-responses-covid-19-outbreak>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

17 Ibid.

18 Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia (2020). The recommendations of the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia for the start of the school year during the spread of COVID-19. Available at: https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/the_recommendations_of_the_ministry_of_education_and_research_of_estonia_for_the_start_of_the_school_year_during_the_spread_of_covid.pdf. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

19 Baltic News Network (2020). Tallinn orders part of pupils to switch to distance learning over virus. Available at: <https://bnn-news.com/tallinn-orders-part-of-pupils-to-switch-to-distance-learning-over-virus-216948>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

20 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Estonia. P.4. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8d1877f8-2495-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-171316210>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

benefitted from an online learning platform, which was again a percentage higher than the OECD average²⁵. This situation also comes on the back of a recently completed infrastructural investment in all educational institutions, which has positioned Estonia very well in terms of access to tools to deal with the pandemic²⁶. At least 90% of all learners in Estonia go to highly equipped educational institutions, while over 50% of schools have a high speed internet connection. Further modernization investment will continue until 2022²⁷. The pandemic could also be weathered because of the online platform, *E-koolikott*, which was already in place, delivering digital learning resources for schools, making those available even for parents, and providing a very dynamic space to categorise learning and provide feedback on it.

Schools were empowered to react however they saw fit to the pandemic, with each implementing the model that was most suitable for them. The governmental indications were vague, but for the reason that the schools were already well equipped and well-versed in working online. It is important to note that not all stakeholders were pleased with these differences, given that it did open the ground of approaches that could foster inequity in an educational system that is recognized for its equity²⁸. This access to resources extends outside of formal education as well, with Estonia having one of the quickest broadband connections in the world²⁹. Estonia improved its broadband coverage, delivering ultrafast broadband to

83% of the households, a number almost 23ppt greater than the EU average. Unfortunately, the rural areas of Estonia are left behind, with only 32.8% of the rural areas benefitting from ultrafast broadband³⁰. The *Digital Agenda 2020*, has been launching the 'Last Mile' programme, to ensure that the last bits of the country are covered by ultrafast broadband³¹, however, it seems that the targets of the Agenda will not be met, and some households will continue to be excluded. Moreover, the affordability of internet access is problematic in Estonia, with the costs being higher than the EU average³².

The leading status of the Nordic countries, in terms of online learning, is applicable to Estonia as well. All these countries have made available for free their online resources. You can read more below about the innovative tools used in Nordic countries for distance learning, hybrid learning or online learning.



25 OECD (2020). School Education during COVID-19: Were teachers and students prepared? – Country Note Estonia

26 European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 Estonia. P.4.

27 European Commission (2020). Education and Training Monitor 2020 Estonia. P.5.

28 Ibid. P.7.

29 Global Education Network Europe (2019). Global Education in Estonia. P.17.

30 European Commission (2020). Country Report Estonia 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.39-40. Available at : <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0505&from=EN>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

31 Government of the Republic of Estonia (2018). Digital Agenda 2020 for Estonia. Available at : https://www.mkm.ee/sites/default/files/digitalagenda2020_final.pdf. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

32 Ibid. Pp.39-40.

CASE STUDY

The educational resources offered by Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia can be found [here](#). The list is constantly updating and provides resources for every level of formal education. Below you can find a very small sample of the type of tools provided by these nations.

- ♦ 99math: Is a tool that provides access to math exercises to learners from elementary and primary school. The exercises are done in game and competition formats. The gamification of education is a highly interesting approach especially in the times of the pandemic.
- ♦ CodeMonkey: Is a fun and educational game-based environment where primary and elementary school learners were developing coding skills.
- ♦ EdVisto: Is an online video storytelling platform applicable for all school levels that transforms key social media elements into a powerful learning method.
- ♦ eKool.eu: Is a school management tool bringing together students and their families, schools and supervisory bodies.

The digital capacities of the population are of course reflected by the CSOs as well, with many transitioning their activities online. Therefore, the hybrid learning model will offer the possibility to better combine the work of formal, informal and non-formal education providers to ensure that all can collaborate and facilitate a more seamless lifelong learning process.

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [JMC](#), has continued its Job Club programme during the pandemic using videoconferencing tools. You can read more about their transition online, and about how beneficial it is for CSOs to continue to provide the needed support to learners during these trying times, in the box below.

CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [JMC](#), has been organizing a Job Club for the past years to provide various disadvantaged groups with support in their efforts to upskill or reskill and to find employment on the Estonian labour market. The Club provides 100 hours of education covering topics such as psychological preparation for entering the labor market, job interview and self-presentation training, development of study skills, working life planning and relationships. It is followed by support group meetings where the trainees discuss about their experiences trying to join the labour market, and it also has a practical work component. Support personnel is at all steps available, which respond

with tailored solutions for the situation of each trainee, supporting them with administrative advice, social support, and liaising on their behalf with other agencies and organisations. Creative therapy is provided as part of the club, as well as frequent efforts to have cultural exchanges activities.

The pandemic pushed all the meetings organised in the framework of the Job Club online, via the Zoom videoconferencing tool. [JMC](#) has informed about the smooth transition given the advanced digital skills of both staff members and beneficiaries. The minimal disruption allowed for the learners to continue to be prepared so that when the pandemic was over, they could retry joining the labour market.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

[Our previous Monitor edition](#) looked at the way intercultural education was facilitated through the cooperation of formal education institutions with non-formal and informal education providers. For this edition, the focus is expanded to see how the CSOs are collaborating amongst each other outside of the formal education space to provide intercultural education in all the settings of life. As intercultural education is about changing mindsets and ensuring that all people can be treated with respect and the diversity can be celebrated, it is important to consider how community partnerships and community projects are empowering people to thrive in a multicultural society and how a bottom-up approach can mainstream intercultural education and inclusion in all contexts of life.

INEQUITY LINKED WITH MIGRANT BACKGROUND

Estonia has a large community of Russian natives, which can debunk the claim that Estonia is largely heterogeneous. However, the intersectionality of the migrant groups, is, indeed, not as complex as in other countries, also given the small number of migrants and refugees coming with the 2015 migrant wave that have settled in Estonia. In 2017, around 68.000 inhabitants in Estonia belonged to ethnic groups other than Estonian and Russian, out of a population of approximately 1 million³³. Even though this is the case, the diversity of the Estonian population is increasing and the globalized world that the Estonians live in no longer

allows people to be un-versed in intercultural education just because their fellow citizens do not have roots in other cultures. For the moment, the academic achievement, including the level of English language skills, is significantly lower for learners coming from Russian-medium education institutions rather than for ones coming from Estonian-medium ones³⁴. This extends to the civic knowledge score as well, with the learners from Russian-medium education institutions scoring 58 points lower on civic knowledge tests compared to their peers from Estonian-medium education institutions³⁵. It can be seen that the system of education called the most equitable due to the absence of socio-economic background discrimination is having significant issues based on the migrant background of learners. This is occurring also as a populist right-wing party, the Estonian Conservative National Party (EKRE), has joined the governmental coalition and has contributed to changes in the regulations on entry and stay for third country nationals coming to study or work in Estonia. These have been significantly restricted, limiting the capacity of foreigners to join Estonia, and taking a backwards action at a time when borders are becoming more porous. Civil society actors have called the move xenophobic³⁶. Moreover, the situation regarding inclusion has also extended to the LGBTIQ+ community, with conservative media channels starting petitions against the funding received by CSOs representing this community, and with conservative politicians becoming uneasy with this community³⁷. Estonia finds itself at a moment of crossroads, where it can

33 Statistics Estonia (2017). RV0222: POPULATION BY SEX, ETHNIC NATIONALITY AND COUNTY, 1 JANUARY. Data available here: https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat/rahvastik__rahvastikunaitajad-ja-koosseis__rahvaarv-ja-rahvastiku-koosseis/RV0222. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

34 European Commission (2020). Country Report Estonia 2020. P.33. ; European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 Estonia. Pp.5-7. ; European Commission (2019). Education and Training Monitor 2019 Estonia. Pp.7-8.

35 European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018 Estonia. Pp.5-7.

36 CIVICUS Monitor (2020). Right-wing Government Coalition Attacks LGBTI Rights. Available at : <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/11/30/right-wing-government-coalition-attacks-lgbti-rights/>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

37 CIVICUS Monitor (2020). State Financed Civil Society Fund Relocates from Capital City, Attacks on Minority Rights. Available at : <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2020/02/19/largest-umbrella-ngo-relocates-capital-city-attacks-against-minority-rights-or-organisations-cont/>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

veer more towards isolationism and discrimination or it can better invest in education programmes led by CSOs that understand the diversity on the ground and the issues with which the Estonian population is confronting.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS TO BUILD PEOPLE'S CAPACITIES

For this reason, SOLIDAR Foundation member, [JMC](#), has engaged in multiple programmes to support migrants and refugees. They have collaborated with the [International House Tartu](#) and the [Estonian Refugee Council](#), two main actors in the field of migrant integration in Estonia, to provide a total of 45 joint events all over Estonia, where beneficiaries of international protection, foreigners and Estonian locals met. This was part of a 2018-2019 project funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the EU. At least 200 people who have received international protection in Estonia were expected to complete this program and develop the multilingual information materials and training materials that take into account the needs of migrants and refugees. The events organized were either sports ones or cultural ones, with multiple language cafés being organized across Estonia to ensure that the migrant population can get better acquainted with the native population³⁸.

To support communities, more investment - financial, temporal and human resources - has to be dedicated to deliver tailored responses to the needs of each community member. All



Source: JMC

have to have equal opportunities to learning, even if these come in a non-formal and informal way, to make sure that the communities are empowered to integrate all and to actively participate in society. Therefore, a certain part of the population is also formed by the detained Estonians, who are being released back into communities. These ex-prisoners need support to reintegrate in society and avoid recidivism. The communities are stronger only when each member is well taken care of and thrives. You can read below more how the CSOs are supporting the integration of this vulnerable group, and how they are contributing to closing the gaps that formal education cannot cover. The importance of non-formal and informal education is clear, and there is a need for state authorities to better link all levels and types of education to ensure a holistic approach that would provide equal opportunities to all community members.

38 Matiisen, Mirjam (2018). 'Saame tuttavaks!' Sillamäe keelekohvikus. Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus. Available at: <http://www.jmk.ee/saametuttavaks/>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

CASE STUDY

SOLIDAR Foundation member, [JMC](#), has developed a programme through which it supports recently released detainees to reintegrate in the Estonian society. Beyond having its staff members already starting this process within the correctional facilities, they have implemented a follow-up programme through which the prisoner returns to society. Support service personnel accompanies the ex-prisoners helping them maintain, improve or prevent further decline in abilities to cope. Through their activities, the support personnel ensures the daily subsistence of the person released from correctional facilities, motivates them to fulfill the set goals, especially the goals related to work and study, as well as to maintain obedience to the law. To support the client's independent coping and, if necessary, to find

a place of residence, the support person cooperates with local governments and temporary accommodation service providers in Pärnu, Jõhvi and Harju County. The ex-detainees are then supported to join [JMC](#)'s Job Club, which was presented in one of the case studies above. This support service is free of charge as it is being supported by the European Social Fund. The programme has received many positive testimonials from ex-detainees who state that they have reintegrated successfully in society.

Such programme must be further supported, as the CSOs have the capacity to build up the human capital in each community and to strengthen the solidarity amongst all while ensuring equal opportunities in life.

FUNDING

This section will account for general spending in education, while also referring to the investment that is specifically dedicated for GCE, and for digital skills development and closing digital gaps. Estonia is one of the highest investors in national education in Europe, with the public expenditure as percentage of GDP being at 6.2% in 2019, compared to the EU-27 average of the same year, which was 4.6%³⁹. This is an impressive difference, and it contributed to Estonia maintaining good quality online learning during the pandemic. However, before the economic crisis of 2008, the investment was around 7%⁴⁰, which reveals the fact that the Estonian education system had to learn to do more with less funding than it initially had. So, even in the case of Estonia, there are questions about how much more the Estonian government should invest in education.

The GCE funding has been growing since the early 2010s, but after 2014, it has also experienced decreases⁴¹, revealing that it might have reached a high point that the governmental authorities are less willing to exceed. The funding is still insufficient and Estonia has to also rely significantly on international funding, such as from the EU, to be able to advance the work of GCE in formal, informal and non-formal education. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for GCE-related projects 240.100 EUR in 2018, which was a serious decrease since the 2016 funding of 348.000 EUR. The Ministry of Education and Research makes even smaller funds available, with 20.000 EUR invested in the UNESCO ASPNet, mentioned in the previous sections, and another 100.000 EUR dedicated to a few other projects. It is unclear how much of the 2.3 million EUR budget for the Environmental Awareness Programmes goes

for EE, but this represents another source of funding⁴². The scattered nature of these small grants makes it difficult to adequately invest in GCE and make it a mainstay in education at all levels and contexts in Estonia. A number of other foundations are providing additional sources of funding⁴³, but it becomes difficult for formal education institutions to go out of their way for further funding on the topic, and even more difficult for CSOs to have to manage this complex architecture for funding.

The total budget to achieve the [Digital Agenda Estonia 2020](#) was approximately 223 million EUR, spread out over 2014-2019⁴⁴. The investment has paid off with the Estonian e-services being state-of-the-art, with the level of digital skills in the Estonian population being high, and with the education institutions being well-equipped and ready to engage in online learning, to include digital citizenship in the classroom and to prepare the education professionals to foster learning in a digital context. It is important for Estonia to maintain the same level of investment in its upcoming digital strategy, but also to consider that some goals of the previous Digital Agenda were still unmet. The investment linked with the expansion of the broadband connection across Estonia has not meet all targets, as it was reported in the previous sections. Therefore, more funding has to be allocated to ensure the closure of all infrastructural gaps, to effectively ensure that access to the internet becomes a public good and digital skills are fostered. Although, it must be pointed out that due to the pandemic, the government has increased the funds for the Last Mile programme by 15 million EUR, to speed up the process of ensuring that all households can access fast internet connections⁴⁵.

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

40 Ibid.

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

42 Global Education Network Europe (2019). Global Education in Estonia. P.39.

43 Ibid.

44 Government of the Republic of Estonia (2018). Digital Agenda 2020 for Estonia.

45 ERR (2020). IT minister confirms conditions for "last mile" internet connections. Available at: <https://news.err.ee/1131229/it-minister-confirms-conditions-for-last-mile-internet-connections>. Last accessed: 7 January 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Expand the focus of Environmental Education, effectively transforming it in GCE and mainstreaming it across formal education
- ◆ Better support teachers at the start of their career and improve ITE to ensure that they are prepared for GCE and ICT
- ◆ Improve CPD for teachers for GCE and ICT skills
- ◆ Ensure that each educational institutions has sufficient education support staff members, and facilitate the actual implementation of the whole-school approach in educational institutions
- ◆ Provide more avenues for non-formal and informal education providers to collaborate with formal education institutions given their expertise on GCE
- ◆ Better harmonise GCE funding opportunities for easier procedures of application
- ◆ Increase investment in GCE for non-formal and informal education providers to ensure that the GCE process continuous at all steps of the learners' lives
- ◆ Maintain high levels of investment in the development of digital skills and close the remaining digital infrastructure gaps in rural areas
- ◆ Engage in a systematic review process to establish why some learners are dissatisfied with the level of digital skills they have, and determine a course of action to promote soft digital skills
- ◆ Provide targeted investment to the Russian-medium educational institutions to ensure that academic achievement gaps are closed
- ◆ Increase the funding for CSOs to ensure that they can continue their work on inclusion

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