INGAME
Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation

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INGAME – Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation – A holistic approach for acultural shift in education and policy

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Contents

Policy recommendations

The policy recommendations intended for policy makers working with Youth.

Areas:

(1) Culture of social inclusion,

(2) Gender equality,

(3) Civic participation among youth.

The document is prepared according to the national reports and EU documents related to the identified topics.

1. Culture of social inclusion

1.1. Partner's countries analysis

In the Dutch report we mentioned that until around 2015 the Netherlands had a relatively strong position on social inclusion. There was a strong emphasis on employment and participation in the labour market, including for women and (partly) disabled persons. Longer working hours were also encouraged. This would keep the risk of unemployment and poverty low. However, reforms and substantial cuts in social security and welfare during the preceding cabinet period were seen as potential risk factors and weaknesses. The Participation Act of 2015 introduced the participatory society: decentralisation became crucial, delegating powers and finances from the state to the municipalities, and promoting strongly the involvement of family and informal networks for people in need of care. It created a feeling of "figure it out for yourself" and the perception of an uncaring government. Although there was talk of giving children an as optimal as possible development, these hopes were more or less shattered by the COVID-19 pandemic: it quickly exposed the wide social and income gap and, with it, the inequality of opportunity in education. Socially disadvantaged families were pushed back even further and opportunities for 'equal' education shrank dramatically, partly because online education was often not possible only on a digital basis.

Another form of exclusion and (ethnic) profiling by the tax authorities was the infamous 'allowances scandal' that still persists and has hit already needy families not only socially but also psychologically hard.

The increasing flow of refugees and the war in Ukraine and a housing backlog mean that plans for the housing market and housing in general are causing even more problems. For who is more discriminated against and excluded: young starters on the housing market, Ukrainian refugees or asylum seekers who have now become status holders? Meanwhile, "gentrification" of working-class or migrant neighbourhoods does continue.

The INGAME players are made aware of these still ongoing challenges and are invited not only to be aware of them and reflect but also to actually 'roll up their sleeves' and find solutions. Not only for a fair and equitable education for all but also for living in cities in harmony, now and in a 'greener' future. INGAME provides challenges to players, which ask for solutions: how can we provide socially disadvantaged people with an equitable education? How do we ensure that there is

no ethnic discrimination in the labour market? How can we prevent hate speech and discrimination in social media and keep communities 'whole'? What do we really do for the disabled and how can we provide good food for the needy? We have given this a stronger emphasis than 'the arts' and 'heritage' as other contributors to culture. A healthy, inclusive society, where everyone feels equally valued and respected, is perhaps stronger, more critical and self-aware, and has the thereby more mental peace to appreciate artistic beauty and creativity, look its history in the eye and value its heritage.

Despite Lithuania's efforts in economic growth and improvements in employment rates, the country continues to face persistent challenges of inequality and poverty and this is particularly concerning situation among young people. The obstacles to social involvement faced by socially excluded young people can have long-lasting consequences not only for their individual well-being but also for the overall development of the country. Therefore, addressing these issues and promoting social inclusion has become a key priority for Lithuania.

To tackle youth unemployment and enhance social inclusion, Lithuania has been implementing various initiatives and programs. One such initiative is the promotion of youth entrepreneurship. By encouragin[1] young people to develop their entrepreneurial skills and providing them with necessary support and resources, Lithuania aims to create a culture of innovation and self-employment. This not only opens up opportunities for young people to create their own businesses but also contributes to job creation and economic growth in the country.

Non-formal education plays a crucial role in empowering socially excluded young people and equipping them with the necessary skills for active participation in society. Lithuania recognizes the importance of providing alternative educational pathways and learning opportunities outside of traditional formal schooling. Non-formal education programs focus on developing practical skills, fostering creativity, and promoting personal development. These programs give the opportunity to acquire valuable knowledge, competencies, boost confidence and self-esteem, enabling young people to overcome social barriers and contribute to their communities.

Integration into the labor force is another vital aspect of promoting social involvement among

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[1] https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/en/legalAct/29643bb0e8db11ed9978886e85107ab2

young people. Lithuania acknowledges the need to provide comprehensive support for young job seekers, particularly those facing multiple disadvantages. This includes targeted employment services, vocational training, and mentorship programs to facilitate their transition into the labor market. Additionally, efforts are being made to reduce discrimination in hiring practices and create inclusive work environments that value diversity and provide equal opportunities for all young people, irrespective of their background or abilities.

By focusing on these areas and implementing effective policies and initiatives, Lithuania aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society for its young population. It recognizes that investing in the social inclusion of young people not only benefits them individually but also contributes to the overall well-being and prosperity of the nation. Through these efforts, Lithuania seeks to build a future where every young person has the chance to fulfill their potential, actively participate in society, and contribute to the country's sustainable development.

1.2. Policy recommendations on the Culture of social inclusion

Culture is recognized as a major contributor to the advancement of creativity in young people, which is considered tremendously beneficial for the whole of society both on economic and social aspects[234]

1. Ensure equal access to cultural institutions (e.g., theaters, museums a.o.) and programmes for all young people;
2. Promote and support the professional development of young artists;
3. Encourage the development of new methods of cultural expression and artistic creation;
4. Create more places where young people can develop their talent and express themselves creatively (accessible to people with disabilities);
5. Enhance education and training for young professionals in culture;
6. Promote youth interaction on cultural issues with other countries;
7. Develop cooperation with youth, sports and cultural institutions from other countries in

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[2]https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/cyprus/83-national-strategy-on-creativity-and-culture-for-young-people
[3]https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/cyprus/84-promoting-culture-and-cultural-participation
[4]https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/culture-and-diversity/cultural-inclusion

order to exchange good practices in dealing with youth issues;

8. Give young people opportunities for participation in local, regional or national actions.
9. Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture
10. Disseminating information on cultural opportunities
11. Promoting knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people
12. Promoting inter-group relations among students
13. Promoting relationships between the school settings, parents and local communities
14. Promote communication and consultative decision-making strategies
15. Acknowledge representative student voice and leadership
16. Acknowledge acceptance of diversity as normal and comfortable.

2. Gender equality

2.1. Partner's countries analysis on the gender equality

The disparity between women and men in **Lithuania** is not so much in work as in the power sector (32.5 points) and time (50.6 points).However, it is essential to note that Lithuania has taken significant steps towards ensuring gender equality. The country has implemented legislation known as the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which strictly prohibits any form of discrimination, whether direct or indirect, based on sex. This legislation also includes provisions to combat sexual harassment, which is a vital aspect of creating a safe and inclusive environment for all individuals.

Furthermore, to oversee the enforcement of these laws, Lithuania has appointed an independent equal opportunities ombudsman. This position ensures that any violations of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men are properly addressed and provides a platform for individuals to seek redress in cases of discrimination.

Recognizing the need for continuous improvement, Lithuania has made amendments to its existing laws in response to recommendations from professionals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2016, revisions were made to both the Law on Equal Treatment (2005) and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998). These changes aimed to strengthen the legal framework and address emerging issues pertaining to gender equality.

Specifically, the amendments to the Equal Treatment Act (2005) introduced significant changes.

Firstly, potential employers are now prohibited from asking jobseekers for personal information regarding their family situation, age (unless legally required), private life, family formation, and attitudes towards family planning. This measure ensures that recruitment processes are based on merit and qualifications rather than personal characteristics unrelated to job performance.

Additionally, the revised legislation guarantees equal opportunities for women and men in the purchase of goods and services. This means that women should not face less favorable treatment due to factors such as pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, except in cases where such distinctions are explicitly required by law.

By implementing these amendments and strengthening existing legislation, Lithuania aims to create a society where gender equality is not only protected by law but also actively promoted in all aspects of life. It is through these efforts that Lithuania strives to reduce the disparities that exist in the power sector and ensure that both women and men have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.

2.2. Policy recommendations on the gender equality

Gender refers to the socially constructed set of expectations, behaviors and activities of women and men which are attributed to them on the basis of their sex. Social expectations regarding any given set of gender roles depend on a particular socio-economic, political and cultural context and are affected by other factors including race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and age. Gender roles are learned and vary widely within and between different human societies, and change over time[56].

The promotion of gender equality and combating any form of gender-based discrimination or gender inequality are at the heart of the Youth for Democracy programme of the Council of Europe:
1. Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism
2. Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence
3. Ensure the equal access of women to justice
4. Achieve balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making
5. Protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls

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[5]https://rm.coe.int/gender-mainstreaming-toolkit-23-gender-equality-and-youth/168092e9ef
[6]https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/youth

6. Achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures
7. Promote a human rights-based approach,
8. Encourage gender-balanced participation in youth activities and measures to ensure the participation of young parents,
9. Encourage a gender-inclusive language and representation in materials related to educational activities,
10. Encourage gender-sensitive educational approaches,
11. Encourage safe environments
12. Ensure inclusive working facilities
13. Acknowledge gender differences in education and transition to employment
14. Acknowledge gender inequalities in access to the labour market
15. Encourage inclusion for young families and their care responsibilities.

3. Civic participation among youth.

3.1. Partner's countries analysis on the civic participation among youth

In the Dutch report (2020) we mentioned civic engagement, which is also called social involvement, and which is perceived as broader than civic or citizens' initiatives. At that time, there was a distinction between four forms, in short: - Public participation in government plans - Social initiatives with government involvement if necessary - Cooperation between social initiators, parties from society and government - Social initiatives in response to government Potential instruments to provide an interface for social involvement between the central government and society where, for example: Green Deals, the Dutch National Fund for Green Investments, the Acceleration Agenda for the Do-Democracy, and the Social Participation Code. All with the intention to bring parties together and let the government respond better to social involvement and vice versa.

If we then look at a division withy on one side government steering (government policies and realisation of own goals) and on the other side no role of government (citizens initiatives and entrepreneurial initiatives, both with realisation of own goals), in the middle co-creation is possible. With citizens' participation on the one hand (by invitation - civic engagement and advice to policy makers) and government participation in citizens' (and entrepreneurs') initiatives on the other.

What is striking is that education of young adults is not mentioned here. In our report, we cautiously concluded that a learning-centred approach could clarify things and stimulate them at an earlier stage. Young adults should become aware of and learn to use what democracy can offer us, including 'new' forms such as deliberative democracy, or even direct democracy.

Serious gaming that explores all these aspects 'through play' can contribute to this awareness. INGAME - developed especially for young adults - provides just that: we regularly confront players with societal challenges and encourage them not only to think up their own solutions (and usually in collaboration with 'others'), but also offer the opportunities to show that citizens have the power to turn an initiative into something lasting. We demonstrate this in various themes in the game, especially in education, urban life, social inclusion, climate and major global issues.

Conversations with teachers taught us that they found the content of the game challenging, in a positive way (it also led to conversations among the teachers themselves). They found the combination of (online) games and face-to-face thematic activities from the textbook in the classroom to be a find, especially because the game can serve as a conversation starter for activities and conversations about sometimes thorny or 'heavy' topics. The game lends itself perfectly to subjects such as social studies and civic manners, but also for interdisciplinary lessons or projects, i.e. biology, chemistry, history, or physics.

As witnessed by the approval of L. 145/2018, the Conte Government in Italy has focused on the establishment of a specific youth representative body (the National Youth Council), to ensure and increase their participation in civil and political life. The youth participation strategy is also drawn, as well as for all policies in favour of young people on which there is a concurrent competence between the State and the Regions, through the Agreement between the two parties and the other territorial actors (ANCI and UPI). The Agreement represents a form of institutional dialogue between the Government and local authorities in which the financial resources, objectives and priorities of intervention in the field of youth policies are defined.

The priorities are:

- the inclusive participation of young people in the political social life of the territories in order to enable them to participate in the decision-making process and to be able to direct policies aimed at the target audience;
- projects that meet the expectations of autonomy and achievement of young people

who promote active and direct participation in cultural and sporting activities, including through the use of the National Youth Charter;

- orientation activities and dissemination of good practices, aimed at the prevention of youth discomfort in its various sleeps and with particular reference to the prevention of the phenomenon of new addictions affecting the younger generations.

More specifically, at national and local level institutions and civil society organisations concurs to:

- the promotion of values and attitudes towards becoming responsible citizens;
- the development of the ability to critically understand life, mass media and social media contexts;
- to promote active participation in school and local communities;
- the development of relationships that strengthen the dimension of trust, sense of belonging and sense of community;
- the promotion of representation and active citizenship, experimenting with new forms and opportunities for participation;
- the promotion of opportunities to encourage co-design between different actors, making young people protagonists also in the design phase of the project.

Concerning the formal education system, the integrated digital teaching (DDI - Didattica Digitale Integrata) was already foreseen by the National Curriculum Plan of the Good School (2018) as an educational approach that integrates the use of digital tools in school, the DDI was then introduced in the School Plan 2020-2021, which also provides for its mandatory inclusion in the Triennial Training Offer Plans (PTOF), as a complementary method to teaching in presence that - and here is the key point - alternates lessons on digital platforms to teachings and activities in presence.

Integrated digital teaching therefore offers the possibility of increasing multimedia resources and combining innovative teaching methods. As reported in "THE SCHOOL ONLIFE. Practical Guide for Digital Teaching" in this type of teaching the use of technologies

"is accompanied by a theory of learning no longer based on the pure transmission of knowledge, but on participation, interactivity, on the critical reworking of content and learning of new methods and tools to study and know". - Italian Ministry of Education.

According to the Civil Society Institute in Lithuania, there has been a significant decline in citizens' participation in civic activities over the past year, with almost three quarters of the population not belonging to any kind of organization. This trend is concerning as civic engagement plays a vital role in shaping a strong and vibrant society.

In 2019, those who did engage in civil commitments primarily did so through charitable donations, with 39% of respondents involved in this activity. Voluntary environmental cleanup events were the second most popular form of civic engagement, with 32% of respondents participating. Commitment to the actions of local communities was also significant, with 26% of respondents involved. However, it has to be noted that participation in these activities has been steadily declining over the last decade.

By comparing the data to the one of 2012, we can observe a substantial decrease in various forms of civic engagement. The number of people donating to charity has decreased by 9%, participation in voluntary environmental cleanup has decreased by 22%, and local community engagement has decreased by 11%. These figures underscore the urgent need for initiatives that promote and encourage citizens to actively participate in these activities.

Interestingly, 2019 did witness a slight increase in one type of civic activity: the signing of petitions, both online (23%) and offline (13%). This indicates that individuals may be more inclined to express their opinions and advocate for change through digital platforms. However, it is crucial to note that commitment to all other activities showed a slight decline or fluctuated within the margin of statistical error.

Participation in civic organizations and movements remained relatively stable, with 8% of the population involved. While this may indicate some level of consistent commitment, it is crucial to explore strategies to increase this involvement further and attract more individuals to join these organizations.

The decline in civic participation is a complex issue and there is a number of potential causes. Factors such as changes in societal values, increasing individualism, and a lack of awareness about the importance of civic engagement could contribute to this trend. It is important for government bodies, civil society organizations and educational institutions to collaborate and develop strategies to reverse this decline.

Efforts should focus on fostering a culture of civic engagement from an early age, educating the public about the benefits of participation, and creating accessible platforms for individuals to get involved. Furthermore, strengthening community ties and encouraging collaboration between different organizations can help create a sense of collective responsibility and motivate citizens to actively contribute to their society. By fostering a culture of civic involvement, Lithuania can build a stronger, more cohesive society that actively addresses its challenges and works towards a better future.

3.2. Policy recommendations on civic participation among youth

Specific recommendations were drawn in **Greece** from the questionnaires that were distributed to relevant stakeholders (youth, civil society employees etc) and they can be summarized as follows:

- Policy makers in education and civil society working with youth should organize workshops and activities that will give a voice to young adults and empower them to participate in civic engagement.
- Education plays a crucial role in increasing young adult participation in civic engagement. Therefore, educational institutions of all levels can help a lot in increasing youth participation in public life.
- Schools and colleges can plan and develop educational programs that will help young people realize the importance of civic engagement.
- Young adults should be given chances to speak in public and express themselves about public matters.
- Digital technology and gamification (e.g. role-playing games where participants will be rated by their peers for their positive or negative contribution to a common goal) shall play an important role in promoting social inclusion and equal participation.
- Awareness raising and social media campaigns, festivals and webinars offered by educational institutions, art contests, individual and group sessions, and other such activities aiming at civic engagement combined with fun and entertaining activities shall be organized as they will increase young people's sense of understanding about public life.
- User friendly and engaging digital storytelling should be used in educational gaming in order to enhance decision making options and promote cultural diversity.
- The integration of Web 2.0 technologies in the Greek education system should be made
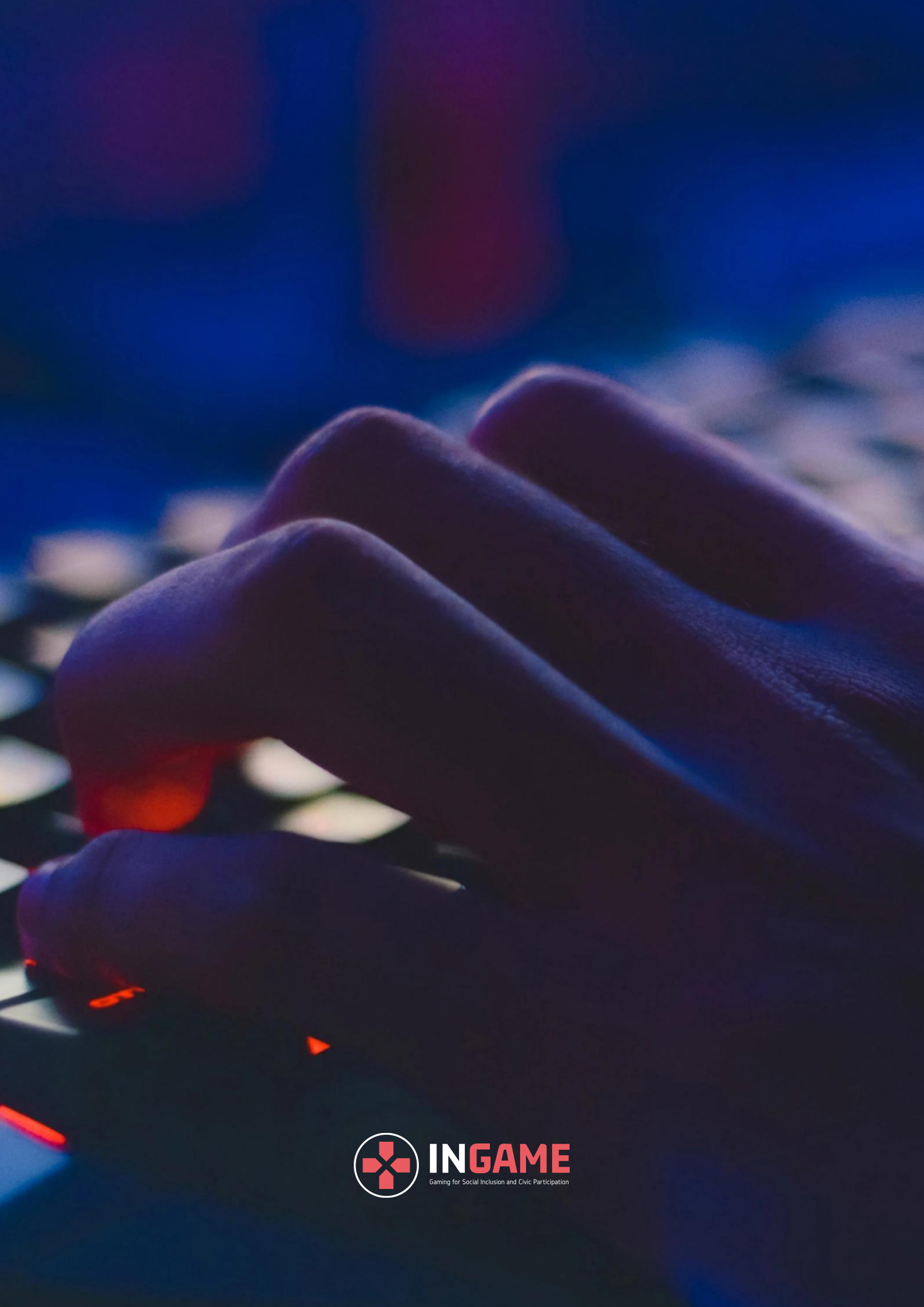
through a multi-channel approach to increase motivation and achievement of the desired learning objectives. Such an approach needs to be horizontally applied to the formal education system in general in the Greek context.

- In Greece, concrete evaluation policies are needed in relation to the existing school curriculum in order to overcome the persisting barriers to the integration of modernized technology and/or game-based learning materials in the formal education system.

- It is of great importance to improve the teaching context in Greece as a whole through more flexible classroom organization, as well as via the equipping of the Greek school with efficient technological equipment and facilities.

- Much emphasis should be placed by the central government (Ministry of Education) on the training policies for primary and secondary teachers and educators regarding the effective use of Web 2.0 technologies in the physical, but also in the online classroom.

- Further knowledge on Web 2.0 practices is needed in order for teachers to be able to create innovative pedagogical tools and solutions for all learning fields. Such training should be systematic and should also be accompanied by the strengthening of the role of the school advisors' role, which at present is rather undermined in Greece.

- Lessons learned from the 2020-2021 Coronavirus pandemic in terms of managing online/distance learning could act as a learning exercise for the Greek education system.

Everyone benefits when teens and young people are involved in their communities. Communities gain the power of youthful energy and innovative ideas, and youth see themselves as partners in society, ready and prepared to contribute to the common good[7].

1. promote policies and laws that encourage adolescent participation
2. strengthen platforms for adolescent participation
3. help adolescents develop the skills they need to form and voice their opinions
4. help communities support adolescents to create solutions and lead change
5. focus on the adolescents most likely to be excluded

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[7] https://www.unicef.org/adolescence/participation

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