***Call for strengthening non-formal education: Statement of Schüler Helfen Leben Foundation***

According to the *Global Risk Report 2022* by the World Economic Forum[[1]](#footnote-1), *Social cohesion erosion* is the risk that has worsened the most globally since the start of the COVID-19 crisis. It is perceived as a critical threat to the world across all periods—short, medium, and long term—and is believed to be among the most potentially damaging for the next ten years. This situation leads to a loss of social capital and the fracturing of social networks negatively impacting social stability and individual well-being resulting in public anger, distrust, divisiveness, lack of empathy, marginalization of minorities and political polarization.

As a part of the solution, the strengthening of non-formal education can contribute to creating exemplary young people who are educated and empowered to be the ambassadors of sustainable change in society, promoting human rights values. Achieving excellence and truly empowered remarkable youth requires focusing not only on knowledge but also on developing personal integrity, merits and confidence. A good (read: resilient) activist is driven by people’s needs, has a vision, ethical principles, and social commitment, and is oriented towards the future. Besides being knowledgeable, a good agent of change should aim to be empathic, respectful, trustworthy, hardworking, self-confident, independent, and well-networked. Aware that being a leader is not a title awarded but deserved through hard work, engagement, and commitment, we see non-formal education as a stepping-stone for young people who will seek out leadership roles and actively contribute to the development of society.

Therefore, **we call for introducing and strengthening civic engagement non-formal education programs aimed at empowering young people** because we believe that only empowered and socially aware young people are to be true agents of change in combatting the multiple global crises to come. We believe that the prevention of social cohesion erosion is only possible by joint action of global youth.

In order to reach as much young people aiming to be agents of change in society as possible**, we call for more targeted and better structured intensive funding of non-formal education** through United Nations agencies since coordinated global action is essential to activate youth on grass-root levels.

1. 2022 World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report, available at <https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2022.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)