

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION STRATEGY: PUBLIC CONSULTATION IDEA ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION (ACE) WORKING GROUP

**Glossary of Acronyms in Annex 1*

1. What aspects of the current Strategy (2021–2025) have worked well?

Having an established strategic partner for the ACE space is vital. Since 2021, [Saolta](#) has seen significant expansion. Recognition has grown, alongside numerous milestones:

- Aontas Star award for GCE.
- Global Compass for Further Education and Training sector.
- Mapping reports of GCE in ACE across Ireland.
- Resources created, modules updated and reviewed.
- Global Spaces training with DEN-L.
- Embedding GCE in Initial Teacher Education for ACE.
- Work with Public Participation Networks and Local authorities.
- Capacity building with Education and Training Boards.
- Communities of Practice.

Since 2021, significant progress has been made in embedding GCE within the national and international volunteering sectors, through non-formal adult education. Key developments include:

- The 2024 relaunch of Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies - now implemented by 25 organisations working with approximately 1,000 international volunteers annually.
- Inclusion of Global Citizenship within Ireland's first National Volunteering Strategy (2021–2025), notably under Objective 4 - reinforces the role of ethical and skills-based volunteering in advancing Global Citizenship outcomes.

ChangeMakers Donegal/Inishowen Development Partnership and LYCS are reaching new audiences with GCE programming (businesses, Traveller communities, migrant communities, people in recovery from addiction, etc.). There is a great appetite to work together and learn from each other within the sector. Self Help Africa has noted possibilities to work locally and in the informal sector (in shops, libraries, with volunteers). Development Perspectives SDG Advocate training is an example of a high quality GCE project. This project has been supported since 2021 by Irish Aid and is an important example of measuring impact (Stories of Action, the Midterm review and an impact study from 2018 – 2024).

2. What aspects of the current Strategy have been most relevant to your work or experience?

This strategy has supported increasing accessibility, flexibility and relevance during the changing political and social climate. Mainstreaming of GCE has been empowered on the basis of this strategy - at council level, via PPNs, as well as in other settings. Community, relationship-led and place-based work continues to be of vital importance.

3. How has the national and global context for GCE changed 2021–2026, and how should the next Strategy respond?

The world is facing a polycrisis: serious armed conflicts and genocide, a worsening climate crisis, diminishing support for International Law and multilateralism, and a parallel/connected rampant surge in misinformation/disinformation.

Ireland has experienced significant social and political changes, including increased polarisation, anti-migrant mobilisation, growing racism, the housing crisis, challenges within the international protection system, and wider public uncertainty in recent years. A future strategy should place greater emphasis on helping people understand how global issues intersect with lived local realities. GCE can play an important role in enabling people to explore connections between migration, climate change, conflict, inequality and the experiences of communities across Ireland. This grounding in everyday realities may also help make GCE more relevant and accessible to wider audiences. Critical thinking and affective engagement (i.e. growing need for depth education and GCE) should be incorporated as core lifelong and life-wide skill building in the strategy.

The information environment has changed significantly since 2021. The growth of social media influence, disinformation, conspiracy narratives, algorithmic content and artificial intelligence presents new challenges for democratic participation and informed citizenship.. Supporting people to analyse information critically, understand how narratives are shaped, and navigate misinformation is increasingly essential to meaningful engagement with global issues. Disruption of AI in our learning systems is real - we are the test subjects of this - and disruption to the quality of information and how we understand it is changing in front of us. We cannot overestimate the need to tackle this challenge at its core . A revised strategy should therefore place greater emphasis on critical media and digital literacy as core competencies for global citizenship.

What is happening in Palestine reminds us to keep the action component as part of GCE. Climate action requires the funding of local groups and empowering local politicians. Food systems are an indicator of the interconnectedness of our world, and the recent fuel protests showcase the ways in which injustice in other parts of the world have direct impacts on others around the planet.

4. What actions could support increased uptake of GCE across formal, non-formal and informal education settings?

- GCE opportunities should be more available, especially in geographic areas where there is less GCE provision.
- Continued and increased work with seldom heard communities and leveraging of community links consistently.
- Continued investment in Saolta, the Irish Aid GCE strategic partnership for GCE in ACE, and in the sector more generally.
- Provide funding and support to roll out the Global Compass Framework across the FET sector, including placement of GCE facilitators as part of FET.
- Increase funding and support for accredited and non-accredited capacity building programmes and activities for adult educators and facilitators - geographically also.

This would include continued resourcing of accredited CPD pathways for GCE practitioners working with adult learners.

- There is an opportunity to strengthen investment in community-based GCE. Existing community structures such as local development companies, volunteering organisations, migrant-led groups, family resource centres, local authority networks and PPNs provide important spaces for learning, dialogue and participation. Future support could build on these existing networks, enabling GCE to reach people who may not otherwise engage through formal education settings and creating stronger connections between local action and global understanding.
- Provide funding for ACE-specific GCE research, such as a third mapping of GCE in the ACE sector, with an all-island scope
- More participatory research is needed to echo the real needs of the groups and communities that are engaging with GCE programming, and how to retain this dialogue to improve practice.

See p.43 of [Vision 2030: Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens](#) for further examples of actions that could be taken within the areas of policy, research, curriculum development and integration and capacity-building to support increased uptake of GCE in ACE settings.

5. How can collaboration between Government, civil society and education stakeholders be strengthened?

** See Annex 2 for a list of current connections of ACE organisations with Government departments*

A key priority should be establishing stronger cross-government ownership of GCE. The issues addressed by GCE, including migration, racism, climate change, inequality, misinformation, and democratic participation, are no longer confined to international development policy, they are central domestic concerns. The next strategy should consider a more coordinated approach across government departments including DFHERIS and Solas. See p.42 of [Vision 2030: Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens](#) for examples of what a coordinated approach with DFHERIS could achieve for GCE in ACE. Shared objectives and implementation would aid a whole-of-government ownership of GCE and civic participation. On-the-ground GCE practitioners often cannot see the extent of collaboration across Government departments, civil society and education stakeholders - collaboration should be more formalised, explicit and developed across relevant policy areas. Structured interdepartmental mechanisms with clear mandates and shared objectives would ensure greater policy coherence and reduce fragmentation.

We would welcome an all-island approach to GCE, coordinated as part of the Department of Taoiseach's commitment to the Shared Island initiative. From a policy perspective, the Green Skills 2030 (Further Education and Training Green Transition Strategy) should inform the new GCE strategy. In addition, coordination should extend beyond national policy into local implementation, enabling stronger collaboration between local authorities, ETBs, community organisations, Macra na Feirme, PPNs, migrant-led groups and GCE providers to support place-based learning. Interdepartmental coordination should not only happen at policy level - it should also support practical collaboration between these actors.

There should also be stronger alignment of funding and delivery systems so that GCE activity is reinforced across sectors such as formal, non-formal or informal education

alongside explicit recognition of volunteering as a strategy that uses a cross-cutting pathway for GCE linking community participation, civic engagement and international solidarity.

The strategy should develop shared outcomes and evaluation frameworks across departments in order to better demonstrate the contribution of GCE to inclusion, social cohesion, civic participation and global solidarity.

6. What are the main challenges facing GCE stakeholders at present?

GCE practitioners, often experienced freelance facilitators, have a level of uncertainty and weak working conditions. There is a lack of full understanding of the GCE practitioner role at a local level.

Without further GCE resources, ODA is under threat in Ireland in the coming years. GCE is not a one-off intervention; it is a process-driven work rooted in building interconnectedness and capacity. As it involves life-long, life-wide learning, short-term or single-cycle programming cannot deliver lasting change; the work only pays off over sustained, long-term engagement. Sustaining that engagement, including the harder conversations on anti-racism, discrimination, inequality, and solidarity requires continued funding. Without it, the field risks losing the depth, trust, and continuity on which this work depends.

7. What new potential practice opportunities exist which could increase GCE reach and uptake in Ireland, and Ireland's GCE influence in Europe under the next Strategy?

- While the current strategy has a strong focus on justice and inequality, there is scope for deeper engagement with questions of power, privilege, colonial legacies, racism and positionality. Future investment should support learners to critically examine the systems, histories and relationships that shape global inequalities, and to reflect on Ireland's place within an interconnected world.
- The next strategy should place a stronger emphasis on demonstrating meaningful outcomes and impact - understanding how GCE influences attitudes, behaviours, community action, policy engagement, solidarity, and civic participation over time, rather than focusing primarily on participation numbers. Supporting organisations to capture both quantitative and qualitative evidence of change will strengthen the case for continued investment in the sector and demonstrate the contribution of GCE to Irish society.
- An all-island lens is of critical importance, as the issues we are collectively facing do not recognise geographic borders.
- GCE should continue to evolve beyond awareness-raising alone - supporting decolonial approaches that enable people to critically engage with power, inequality and interconnectedness while also creating opportunities for meaningful participation, collective action and social change.

Annex 1

ACE - Adult and Community Education

CDETB - City of Dublin Education and Training Board

CPD - Continuous Professional Development

DAFM - Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

DCEE - Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment

DEN-L - Development Education Network – Liberia

DEY - Department of Education and Youth

DFAT (DFA) - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DFHERIS - Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

DRCDG - Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht

ETB - Education and Training Board

ETBI - Education and Training Boards Ireland

FET - Further Education and Training

GCE - Global Citizenship Education

GC - Global Citizenship

IDEA - Irish Development Education Association

ITE - Initial Teacher Education

LMETB - Louth and Meath Education and Training Board

LYCS - Lourdes Youth & Community Services (Dublin Inner City)

NALA - National Adult Literacy Agency

PPN - Public Participation Networks

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

Annex 2

Current collaboration/connections:

Comhlámh: links with:

- DRCDG, volunteering infrastructure eg. National Volunteering Strategy, and community participation policies
- DEY through the End Orphanage Volunteering Campaign.

LYCS links with:

- Range of Government Departments and Agencies across programming, mainly DFHERIS
- GCE work links with CDETb through the Inner City ACE Forum - LYCS Chair the new GCE Working Group for this Forum.

The Inishowen Development Partnership in Inishowen, Donegal - ChangeMakers Donegal project links with:

- DRCDG - through funding, along with other departments.

Meath Partnership links with:

- LMETB, and establishing links with local integration teams.

SAOLTA links with:

- Solas, ETBI and Local Authorities, DCEE.

Self Help Africa: links with

- DFAT, DAFM

80:20 links with:

- NALA and a range of adult education centres.