

Dóchas – CADA – IDEA joint submission to Irish Aid GCE Strategy Consultation

24 July 2026

Joint Submission

Dóchas, CADA and IDEA welcome the opportunity to contribute jointly to Irish Aid's consultation on the next Global Citizenship Education (GCE) Strategy. This submission focuses on the case for a stronger all-island approach and responds to Questions 4, 5, 6 and 7, complementing other submissions made by IDEA, Dóchas and CADA. It draws on learning from the Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future project¹, implemented by the three partners with support from the Shared Island Civic Society Fund. The project engaged 54 practitioners from 50 organisations through six North–South dialogue sessions and mapped GCE actors, connections and future opportunities across the island.

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

A clearer delivery architecture for all-island GCE would support increased uptake across formal, non-formal and informal education settings, particularly in Northern Ireland, where policy recognition, dedicated funding and infrastructure are less developed.

This direction is supported by recent strategy and review material. The GENE Peer Review identifies appetite North and South for a structured whole-island approach to quality GCE, while recognising the need for clarity on mandates, strategy and resourcing. IDEA Vision 2030 calls for a differentiated approach to Northern Ireland, including mapping provision and policy, strengthening the CADA GCE Working Group, engaging education bodies, increasing cross-border cooperation and advocating for increased support for Northern Ireland and all-island GCE. The Irish Aid Mid-Term Review also highlights opportunities to map funded projects, review the all-island approach, encourage cross-border collaboration and strengthen links with GCE organisations in Northern Ireland. Through the Shared Island project, Dóchas, CADA and IDEA mapped 25 GCE actors across the island.

Recommendation: retain the strengths of the current framework while adding an explicit all-island strand with practical actions on mapping, coordination, evidence, practitioner development, curriculum engagement and sustainable funding.

¹ [Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future: Enhancing Cross- Border Learning and Connection on Global Citizenship Education](#) project report

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

Collaboration could be strengthened through a more intentional all-island GCE architecture that recognises different mandates, policy contexts and capacities North and South. The Shared Island dialogue sessions identified the absence of formal cross-border infrastructure as a key barrier. At present, collaboration often depends on relationships, short-term projects and voluntary effort by stretched organisations. The next Strategy should resource the infrastructure needed for joint planning, policy engagement and shared learning.

The collaboration between Dóchas, CADA and IDEA demonstrates an emerging approach to strengthened coordination. Together, the three networks connect international development organisations, specialist GCE practitioners, Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland actors, education stakeholders and civil society partners. Their members have already invested time, trust and expertise in shared learning, mapping and dialogue. This foundational work, and the relationships developed, can serve to help advance the next phase of all-island GCE cooperation, including convening, evidence-building, policy dialogue, practitioner exchange and cross-border programme development.

The case for strengthened all-island coordination is clear. Both IDEA and Dóchas have an all-island membership and IDEA's Vision 2030 includes all-island working among its priorities. CADA's GCE Working Group provides a vital space for collaboration, coordination and advocacy in Northern Ireland, involving many IDEA members. The GENE Peer Review also points to practical proposals such as cross-border consortia, shared resources, peer learning, whole-institution pilots, a flexible innovation and knowledge-exchange fund, and an annual all-island forum.

As recommended in the Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future report, four interconnected pillars should guide this work: **funding**, including multi-annual support for coordination and cross-border programming; **policy and advocacy**, including a coordinated sectoral voice and formal engagement with policymakers and education bodies; **curriculum integration**, ensuring GCE is embedded across curricula; and **collaboration and partnerships**, extending beyond the current GCE sector to include teacher education providers, curriculum authorities, school networks, youth and community sectors, faith communities, trade unions, local authorities and Black and minority ethnic organisations.

Recommendation: support a specific all-island GCE coordination mechanism within the next Strategy to facilitate structured dialogue between Irish Aid, civil society, Northern Ireland actors

and education stakeholders, and to enable formal North–South partnerships in curriculum, teacher education, evidence and practice.

6. What are the main challenges facing Global Citizenship Education stakeholders at present?

The main challenges facing GCE stakeholders are structural, strategic and practical. Shared challenges across the island include limited recognition of GCE beyond Irish Aid, limited evidence of impact due to capacity challenges in undertaking impact measurement, uneven reach, gaps in thematic coverage and low uptake among some educators of critical, justice-oriented GCE. Organisations also face capacity constraints that limit long-term planning, research partnerships, sustained policy engagement and collaboration.

These challenges are sharper in Northern Ireland. There is no equivalent dedicated public strategy or funding framework for GCE, policy recognition is weaker, and the education system operates through different curriculum, governance and ministerial structures. The Shared Island project identified major barriers to cross-border cooperation: funding disparity, geographic gaps, policy misalignment, limited curriculum access and the absence of formal cross-border infrastructure. Northern Ireland-based organisations often work with very limited GCE staffing and fragmented funding, making it difficult to sustain provision, influence policy or participate equally in all-island initiatives.

The Irish Aid Mid-Term Review confirms these challenges and opportunities. It notes scope for growth for GCE learners in Northern Ireland beyond formal settings, the value of stronger connections with NI GCE organisations, and the potential contribution of ringfenced resources for Northern Ireland. It also reiterates the importance of the Strategy’s all-island commitment and identifies partnership with CADA as one way to enhance its imprint in Northern Ireland. There is also a need for a stronger evidence base. Mapping undertaken through the Shared Island project shows a committed ecosystem, but one that is unevenly resourced and not yet fully visible as a connected system. Evidence is needed on geographic coverage, urban-rural gaps, learner reach, educator needs, thematic strengths and the quality and depth of cross-border collaboration.

Recommendation: support phased strengthening of GCE in Northern Ireland and across the island, beginning with mapping and needs analysis, followed by investment in coordination, practitioner capacity, evidence-building, curriculum engagement and pilot activity in schools, youth, further education, higher education, adult and community settings.

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?

There is a strong opportunity to develop Ireland's GCE leadership through a whole-island approach. By 2035, our shared vision is that GCE across the island operates as a unified, sustainable ecosystem where practitioners collaborate naturally, learners develop critical consciousness about global interdependence and local action, and GCE is embedded as essential learning from early years through post-16 education.

Practice opportunities include joint North–South research on GCE impact; shared mapping tools; educator and practitioner exchanges; communities of practice; whole-school and whole-institution pilots; shared curriculum resources; and thematic funding streams for all-island partnerships. There is also scope to extend GCE beyond established audiences by engaging parents, trade unions, businesses, faith communities and community-based organisations working on anti-racism, migration, climate justice, peacebuilding and democratic participation, as well as investing further in engaging with local authorities, Public Participation Networks and youth organisations.

These opportunities align with the GENE Peer Review's emphasis on structured all-island working and the Irish Aid Mid-Term Review's proposal to use future strategic priority streams, including all-island partnerships, to build on the Innovation Challenge Fund model. They also reflect IDEA Vision 2030's call to engage cross-border stakeholders such as teacher education networks and cooperation bodies, and to build on local organisations and networks through existing or new funding mechanisms.

Northern Ireland, and border communities bring distinctive learning that can strengthen Ireland's European contribution, including experience in peacebuilding, divided societies, reconciliation, human rights education and community-based approaches to social change. These are highly relevant in a European context marked by polarisation, misinformation, climate injustice, inequality and shrinking civic space. With appropriate investment, all-island GCE can show how global learning supports democratic resilience, solidarity and sustainable development in complex local contexts.

Recommendation: set staged milestones for all-island GCE between 2027 and 2031: resource a coordination mechanism; create a flexible fund for cross-border innovation and knowledge exchange; support formal partnerships between education bodies and civil society; and convene an annual all-island GCE forum to share evidence, align priorities and strengthen Ireland's influence in European and international GCE spaces.

Conclusion: Through sustained collaboration over the past 18 months, Dóchas, CADA and IDEA, and their members, have put in place the foundations, relationships and shared ambition needed to build a more collaborative all-island approach to GCE. The next Irish Aid GCE Strategy offers an opportunity to strengthen GCE as a practical, values-based response to inequality, polarisation, misinformation, climate injustice and pressures on democratic participation. It can also develop a shared island vision for GCE: one that recognises different contexts North and South, builds on existing networks, and supports a coherent, sustainable and inclusive ecosystem. With clear resourcing, coordination and partnership structures, Dóchas, CADA and IDEA, alongside their members and partners can continue to contribute to strengthening GCE across the island, supporting stronger learning outcomes and a more connected shared island rooted in solidarity, justice and collective responsibility.