

July 2026

Our Budget 2027 asks

- **Increase investment in GCE, taking a cross-departmental approach, accounting for inflation and moving towards a widely recognised target of 3% of Official Development Assistance**
- **An increase in funding allocated for GCE/ESD projects under ESD to 2030**
- **Introduce a dedicated funding stream for GCE/ESD projects under the SDG National Implementation Plan**
- **Create dedicated funding streams for GCE/ESD projects under the Climate Action Plan and the National Action Plan Against Racism**
- **Increase Official Development Assistance towards target of 0.7% of GNI**
- **Adopt Coalition 2030 budget recommendations to reach furthest behind first**

Introduction

Ireland is highly respected on the world stage for its development cooperation policy rooted in the values of human rights, peace, justice, solidarity and equality.

It is these values that shape our foreign policy and also underpin our investment in educating people on this island to uphold and put those values into practice. This involves education that promotes understanding the interconnected root causes and drivers of global injustice and inequalities, and the importance of maintaining global solidarity.

Ireland, led by Irish Aid, has invested in this type of education - Development Education/Global Citizenship Education (GCE) - for 50 years, and through this investment, Ireland has helped foster a generation of informed and active global citizens. This has been instrumental in developing generations of critical thinkers across Ireland. “Graduates” of GCE have pushed the frontiers of global solidarity and contributed significantly to Ireland’s international development cooperation programme, which has made a significant contribution around the world for decades.

Between 2021 and 2025, Ireland invested €43.4 million in programmes and projects aimed at educating over 1.5 million people on this island to become informed and active global citizens.

This investment has achieved solid foundations in embedding GCE across formal, non-formal and informal education settings and within policy, structures, curricula and teacher education, meaning Ireland is often regarded as a leader and role model for other European countries.

Yet, now at a time of immense turbulence and intensified global and local challenges, those foundations must be protected, built upon and expanded.

Thankfully, Ireland has reaffirmed its leadership and continued commitment to Global Citizenship Education, as signalled by Minister of State for International Development and the Diaspora, Neale Richmond. Speaking at the launch of the 2025 [GENE Peer Review of Global Education in Ireland](#) on 30 June 2026,¹ the Minister said:

“We reaffirm our commitment to the role of GCE in helping maintain informed, fact-based thinking on the island of Ireland on the complexity and interdependence of global issues...We know that we are operating in a challenging environment. Across our schools, colleges, youth organisations and communities, educators are helping learners navigate an increasingly complex world. Misinformation and disinformation spread rapidly through digital platforms. Political polarisation and social division are becoming more visible across many societies. The climate crisis continues to pose profound challenges. Yet it is precisely because of these challenges that GCE is so important.”

Given the scale of the challenges as outlined by the Minister, for GCE to respond effectively, Ireland must now back this commitment with increased investment in GCE in Budget 2027.

Who are we and what do we do

IDEA is the Irish Development Education Association, the national network for Development Education, also known as **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)**, on the island of Ireland, and a leading voice for the sector. We represent 100+ members involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen GCE and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role it plays in fostering global citizenship and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We work in strategic partnership with Irish Aid to help deliver its Global Citizenship Education Strategy. Our members also contribute to the delivery of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, the SDG National Implementation Plan, the Climate Action Plan and the National Volunteering Strategy.

The scope of our work is guided by SDG Target 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.*

Target 4.7 is considered a key enabler and an accelerating force to achieve all SDGs.

Global Citizenship Education enables people to explore key issues such as equality, climate justice and human rights, through creative, innovative and interactive approaches.

It gives them the opportunity to examine the impact of these issues globally and locally, including how their own lives are affected. It also supports them in considering how their values, choices and actions can contribute to or mitigate an issue and in exploring what action they can take to

¹ [Irish Aid LinkedIn post 30 June 2026](#)

create positive change. As GCE focuses on the interconnectedness of the world, it empowers people to create a more just and sustainable future for everyone.

Global Citizenship Education is delivered by a range of actors in Ireland, including international development NGOs, community and voluntary organisations, educational institutions and networks, trade unions, educators, researchers, and activists. It engages hundreds of thousands of people of all ages and communities throughout the island of Ireland each year.

Thanks to the investment of Irish Aid and others, Ireland has a high impact GCE sector, informed by values of equality, diversity, sustainability and human rights. We are recognised at European and international level as a leader in GCE due to the support structures in place and the quality of the organisations and programmes.

Working closely with Irish Aid and across relevant departments, our sector has the potential to bring about large-scale positive societal change to create a just, equal and sustainable society and help fulfil Ireland's commitments to delivering on the SDGs. Achieving these goals is of utmost importance for our society to maintain support for multilateralism and Ireland's important role on the world stage as a voice for justice, solidarity and human rights. In addition, GCE helps combat the escalating threats to democracy, the rise of racism and anti-immigrant sentiments, and to swiftly transition towards a sustainable way of living. IDEA has identified several priorities for the GCE sector in Ireland to 2030 to address these escalating threats in its updated vision and roadmap for GCE to 2030, [Vision 2030 – Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens](#).

Recent Policy Developments

In recent years, there have been significant advancements in policy relating to GCE. Notably, the [Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy \(2021–25\)](#) laid a robust foundation for the sector's growth until 2025. Its [Mid-Term Review](#) and the findings of the [2025 GENE Peer Review of Global Education in Ireland](#) both emphasised the relevance and effectiveness of the strategy, to which IDEA and its members - as strategic partners, Irish Civil Society Programme partners and grantees - greatly contribute. A successor five-year strategy is currently under development. Additionally, the [Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050](#), endorsed by 25 EU Member States, at Dublin Castle in 2022 is a substantial milestone in shaping the future trajectory of GCE throughout Europe. At global level, the [UNESCO 2023 Recommendation \(revised 1974 recommendation\) on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development](#) is considered the global GCE standard.

Other important policy advances regarding GCE include:

- [SDG National Implementation Plan 2022-24](#)
- [2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2022-2030](#)
- [Climate Action Plan 2025](#)
- [EU Council Recommendation on Education and Training contributing to strengthening of European Values and Democratic Citizenship](#)

- EU Council Conclusions on [The Transformative role of education for sustainable development and global citizenship as an instrumental tool for the achievement of the sustainable development goals \(SDGs\)](#)
- EU Council Recommendation on Learning for the [Green Transition and Sustainable Development](#)
- [UN Transforming Education Summit commitments \(2022\)](#)

Despite significant progress, Ireland’s ambitious plans have not been matched with sufficient levels of funding to fulfil their objectives. Insufficient funding to meet the scale of the challenges hampers our ability to equip citizens with the necessary information, tools, and choices to navigate an ever-turbulent interconnected world that demands transversal skills and a comprehensive understanding of key global challenges. The GCE learners of today are the tax-paying citizens, policymakers and development cooperation workers of tomorrow. Therefore, reaching SDG Target 4.7 is critical to meeting the other SDGs. Commensurate investment is required to ensure Ireland can build on strong GCE foundations, ensure policy ambitions are not just aspirational, and realise the vast opportunity by harnessing GCE to create a better future.

Budget 2027 Recommendations

Increase investment in GCE, taking a cross-departmental approach, accounting for inflation and moving towards the widely recognised target of 3% of Official Development Assistance

Under the Irish Aid **Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025**, the Government significantly increased its funding for GCE from €6.7 million per annum in 2021 to €9.8 million per annum in 2023 and has maintained this level of funding for GCE since then. This is welcome and valued. However, since 2023, it has not taken inflation² and a rise in living costs into account. In addition, the current level of investment represents just 1.16% of the current Irish Aid Official Development Assistance (ODA) Budget (€840 million) and falls far short of the **projected €25.2 million per annum** that should be allocated to GCE if Ireland were to meet the widely recognised target³ for GCE funding, which is **3% of the ODA Budget**.

Global Citizenship Education suffered considerable cutbacks during the years of the financial crisis (2008 – 2016). While acknowledging that funding has been restored, it is also true that the sector took years to recover from the aftermath of those significant funding cuts endured over the years. Now the sector has been facing the **additional challenge of coping with rising operational and living costs over the past few years**. This is compounded by the growing demand for our work, and the fact that educators need a lot more support to be equipped to adequately address the growing complexity of the issues that GCE tackles, amid a backdrop of rising racism, extremism and social division.

Increasing investment in GCE by taking a cross-departmental approach would enable the sector

²[Rates of inflation in Ireland from 2023 – December 2025, Eurostat, European Central Bank](#)

³[European Conference on Awareness-Raising and Development Education for North-South Solidarity](#), held in Brussels 19-20 May 2005, building on previous suggestions by UNDP, and restated in Bridge 47’s [Envision 4.7: Roadmap in support of SDG Target 4.7](#) (2019)

to maintain the gains and intensify efforts to educate children and adults on the global challenges we face and Ireland’s important role on the world stage as a voice for justice, solidarity and human rights at a particularly critical time. It would also enable the sector to absorb the rising costs of providing quality GCE in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings.

Dóchas echoes this request in its recommendation in **“Ireland as a Model Power”**:

“Invest in Global Citizenship Education across all education settings—formal, non-formal, and informal—to ensure people of all ages understand the root causes of structural problems driving global poverty and inequality.”⁴

An increase in funding allocated for ESD/GCE projects under ESD to 2030

IDEA members are key actors in the implementation of the **Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2022-2030 – ESD to 2030**, and it is crucial that adequate funding is allocated to ensure the strategy’s successful implementation. We welcome the May 2026 allocation of €466,000 for ESD projects by organisations and the December 2025 allocation of €860,000 for ESD projects by schools by the Department of Education and Youth and we acknowledge and value the increase in this funding compared to the previous year. We would welcome a dedicated funding stream from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science for ESD/GCE projects by organisations and higher education and further education partners. This would allow more higher education and further education students to be reached in non-formal and informal learning spaces, to complement institutional efforts to embed ESD/GCE in Further and Higher Education.

A dedicated funding stream for GCE/ESD projects under the next Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan

The next iteration of the **National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** will also require a specific budget line for GCE/ESD. GCE/ESD should be a core element of Ireland’s Sustainable Development Goals NIP, contributing to reaching SDG Target 4.7. A broad public education and outreach plan is essential if the ambitious objectives of the NIP are to be achieved. This needs to be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal education.

Dedicated GCE funding streams for GCE/ESD projects allocated to the Climate Action Plan and the National Action Plan Against Racism

Projects on GCE/ESD are key to implementation of the Climate Action Plan, as well as the National Action Plan Against Racism, as the success of key parts of both action plans hinges largely on effective education initiatives. Climate justice and anti-racism are core components of GCE/ESD. This will require dedicated funding streams from the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, respectively.

⁴ [Ireland as a Model Power, Dóchas \(June 2026\)](#), p.5

Increase Official Development Assistance budget towards target of 0.7% GNI

IDEA supports the call by **Dóchas** for Ireland to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) by €132 million in Budget 2027 to make real progress towards fulfilling its promise in the Programme for Government to reach the UN target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA by 2030.

Adopt Coalition 2030 budget recommendations to reach furthest behind first

IDEA signed up to the [Coalition 2030 “Furthest Behind First” campaign](#) and we endorse its [Budget for the SDGs recommendations](#). One of the key recommendations is to categorise and align all national budget lines and reports to specific SDG targets, using both UN indicators and nationally relevant indicators. This would enable more effective monitoring of SDG progress and comprehensive budgeting for long-term sustainable development.

Related Policy Recommendations

Strategic cross-government prioritisation and policy coherence for GCE

IDEA members work across a broad spectrum of Irish society and in many different institutions and settings. Global Citizenship Education requires a supportive and coherent policy context.

Stronger coordination and collaboration are needed between relevant government departments, along with integration of GCE into their policies and programmes. These include, but are not limited to, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Education and Youth, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Stronger coordination and coherence are also needed between key policies, including the Irish Aid Strategy on Global Citizenship Education, National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, National Youth Strategy, Further Education and Training Strategy, The Climate Action Plan, The National Action Plan Against Racism, and the National Volunteering Strategy.

Integration and prioritisation of GCE in relevant institutions and networks is also necessary. These include Education and Training Boards, schools’ networks, youth sector bodies and third level institutions.

Make GCE a strategic priority in the Government’s policy agenda with clear leadership, oversight, and resourcing mechanisms to provide a coherent, integrated approach that reaches across relevant departments.

Consolidate coordination mechanisms to enhance cross-departmental coordination of GCE-related policies, and for integration into key institutions and networks.

These recommendations are echoed in the recommendation of the 2025 GENE Peer Review of Global Education in Ireland report to “*strengthen cross-government coordination and leadership to develop Global Citizenship Education further as a cross-cutting policy priority,*

with Irish Aid playing the leading, coordinating role – paving the way towards an interministerial, and eventually a whole-of-government approach.”⁵

Address precarious working conditions of GCE practitioners

IDEA members have highlighted concerns about the working conditions of GCE practitioners, noting that many experienced practitioners are being lost to more secure positions outside the GCE sector. The principle of **Decent Work** in SDG 8 should apply to all GCE practitioners. Precarious conditions disproportionately affect staff in smaller and specialist GCE organisations. When funding projects from public money we believe that the relevant Government Department should ensure that GCE grantees are adequately resourced so that their employees have, in line with SDG 8, decent and secure work.

Conclusion

We value the enhanced policy frameworks at both national and international levels that further embeds the importance of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland. We acknowledge and are proud of the progress achieved to date. At the same time, in today’s turbulent global context and era of rising disinformation, now is not the time for complacency. As Minister Neale Richmond stated at the IDEA Annual Conference last year, *“now is the time to reinforce messages of global solidarity.”*

Ireland has shown clear global leadership in GCE policy. Budget 2027 presents a vital opportunity to match that leadership with additional investment that corresponds to the scale of the challenge and the opportunity. At a time of intensifying uncertainty and interdependence, our education system, public discourse, and social cohesion will be stronger if our citizens are equipped to understand and respond to the complex global challenges of our time.

IDEA and its members stand ready to advance this shared mission - in partnership with Irish Aid and across government - to ensure Ireland continues to lead with integrity, foresight, and global solidarity.

⁵ [2025 GENE Peer Review of Global Education in Ireland](#), p.10