

# Written submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Youth

## Irish Development Education Association, April 2026

### 1. Introduction

This briefing document is submitted to members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Youth (the “Committee”) by the [Irish Development Education Association](#) (IDEA) ahead of a special public meeting with the Committee and other invited delegates on Wednesday, 06 May 2026 to discuss **EU/Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education**, in the context of celebrations of Europe Day on 09 May 2026.

It is intended as a high-level overview to support discussion and should be read alongside IDEA’s [Vision 2030: Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens](#) - a renewed vision and strategic roadmap for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland. Given the breadth of activity in this area, it does not seek to provide an exhaustive account of all data, initiatives, or member contributions, but rather to highlight key themes, priorities and examples. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the document should be read in that context.

IDEA is the national umbrella body for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education, representing over 100 members working to provide and promote this type of education in formal, non-formal and informal education settings across the island of Ireland.

IDEA is also a strategic partner of Irish Aid in the implementation of its [Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025](#) as well as being a member of the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) National Steering Group and ESD Advisory Groups on Schools and Further and Higher Education. IDEA is also a member of Coalition 2030 and Dóchas.

IDEA was created in 2004 but many of our members have been working to promote global justice and sustainable development for much longer, some of them as far back as the 1970s (e.g. Trócaire, Concern Worldwide, Comhlámh, An Taisce). Our members are a community of educators, advocates and support organisations, working with each other and with the Irish Government and other strategic partners, to create an ever-expanding collective of active global citizens on the island of Ireland. IDEA members have also played a significant role in building, energising and delivering on shared approaches such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Dublin Declaration on Global Education and Education for Sustainable Development - initiatives that, for two decades, IDEA and our members were also active in pushing for.

We fully align with the [European Declaration on Global Education to 2050](#), also known as **the Dublin Declaration on Global Education**, and endorsed by the Irish Government and 24 other European governments in November 2022, which states: “For the first time in human history, the scale and complexity of problems we face are such that they threaten our very existence. Problems such as climate change, inequality, poverty, and war. Addressing such enormous issues is not easy... but it is possible. We believe that education can be a powerful force in bringing about long-term change, but it must take account of these realities of local and global injustice. To imagine different futures, we need learning processes that involve people in understanding these issues...learning that encourages necessary competences such as critical analysis, the

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ability to evaluate multiple perspectives, the ability to learn better as well as the ability to unlearn those things that are no longer useful.”

Last year, we developed and launched [Vision 2030: Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens](#). We were fortunate to have the Cathaoirleach of this Committee, Deputy Cathal Crowe, speak at the launch event in October 2025 in Dublin.

### Key Aspects of Vision 2030:

- **Target:** Create a society of active global citizens, empowering people to understand and act on global crises and combat disinformation.
- **All-Island Approach:** It is an all-island strategy, outlining key outcomes needed to achieve quality GCE for supporting policy, program, and funding priorities for GCE.
- **Strategic Action:** Developed through extensive member engagement and consultation, it provides a roadmap to connect with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Goal:** Protect and build upon foundations in Global Citizenship Education to broaden impact in community, youth, and formal education sectors, by further embedding Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education in curriculum, policy and systems within formal, non-formal and informal educational settings.
- **Calls for:** increased investment, aiming for 3% of official development assistance (ODA) for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education

The framework aligns with Ireland’s [second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2022-2030 \(ESD to 2030\)](#), Irish Aid's Global Citizenship Education Strategy and the successive [Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plans](#).

## 2. Context and purpose

Ireland has a strong tradition of valuing education as a force for social progress, shaped by our own history of hardship, resilience and global engagement. This is reflected in a longstanding commitment to international solidarity, multilateralism and development cooperation, and in the recognition of education as a means of building understanding, participation and shared responsibility. Today, Ireland is widely recognised for its work in GCE and ESD, with established policy frameworks, institutional support, and a strong ecosystem of educators and organisations working across formal and non-formal settings.

This work matters now more than ever. The urgency of the moment cannot be understated. We are living in a time of increasing complexity and growing turbulence. Global challenges such as the rise of authoritarianism, climate change, inequality, war, conflict, and technological change are increasingly interconnected. Public understanding is shaped by a fast-changing, often polarised information environment fuelled by waves of misinformation and disinformation. Many people, particularly young people, are seeking to make sense of these realities and to understand their role within them. This presents not only an immediate challenge, but a real opportunity for education to support deeper understanding, critical thinking and meaningful civic engagement.

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Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education respond directly to this need. They support learners of all ages to navigate complexity, to examine issues from multiple perspectives, and to connect local experiences with global dynamics. In doing so, they help to foster active, informed and engaged citizens, equipped to participate fully in society. Building on Ireland's strong foundations, this submission highlights the opportunity to rise to this critical challenge. This requires unified and non-partisan leadership from across both Houses of the Oireachtas, and across different Government departments, to drive a major new programme of investment that strengthens this work further across policy and practice, ensuring it can reach its full potential in supporting learners and society in the years ahead.

### 3. What is Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education

Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education is a term that combines two standalone educations that are closely related, and which increasingly show overlap and serve the same purpose.

Irish Aid defines Global Citizenship Education (GCE) “as a **lifelong educational process**, which aims to increase public awareness and **understanding of the rapidly changing, inter-dependent and unequal world** in which we live. By challenging stereotypes and encouraging independent thinking, GCE helps people to critically explore how **global justice** issues interlink with their everyday lives and how they can act to build a better world. This is particularly important in an increasingly globalised world faced with immense challenges, such as the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, **climate change**, entrenched **poverty and growing inequality**, as well as misinformation-fuelled radicalisation.....”

Ireland's ESD to 2030 strategy defines ESD as “a **lifelong learning process**” that “enables people to **understand the world around them** and to identify the links and interdependencies between our individual actions, wider society and the natural and humanly constructed environment, locally and globally. ESD is grounded in principles of **social justice, equity and a respect for human rights** and seeks to **foster engaged and active citizens**, of all ages, **motivated to take action** towards a sustainable future. By learning from one another and working individually and collectively, key global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century such as **climate change, poverty, inequality**, sustainable consumption, health and wellbeing, can be addressed...”

They both seek to **educate and empower learners to have the knowledge, understanding, skills and values** needed to navigate an increasingly complex world and **to make it a fairer and more sustainable place, for everyone**. They both address global challenges with local impact, such as climate change, war/conflict, inequality and environmental degradation.

Both promote approaches that are grounded in a **systemic understanding** of how these issues are interconnected, and what their **root causes** are. They both seek to achieve similar **core competencies** in learners. They both involve **transformative learning**: They move beyond knowledge transmission to encourage action, empowering learners to be agents of change, **individually and collectively**.

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Both policy frameworks take a **holistic approach to integration**: they seek to integrate core elements (environmental, economic and social sustainability and a global solidarity lens) across curricula, school policies, and learning environments. Both also adopt a **holistic approach** to learning, with a strong emphasis on participation and active engagement.

ESD and GCE differ mainly in that they evolved from different starting points. ESD is often considered an offshoot of environmental and nature education and GCE an offshoot of development education. In the past, ESD often focused mainly on **environmental sustainability** and GCE often focused mainly on **unsustainable economic development models** and **systemic injustice** within Global North-South relations. Notwithstanding the importance of conceptual academic research on each of these educational traditions, in practical terms, **ESD and GCE are growing closer both in terms of content and pedagogy.**

In a nutshell, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are both essential types of education for today's world. Furthermore, the complexity of societal issues forces us to **collaborate and work in broad multistakeholder coalitions**, not territorialise: *“Vital coalitions between educational actors, and even with other sectors, are a necessity and an ethical duty”<sup>1</sup>*.

Thus, the distinction between the two matters less than the clarity of understanding that both are urgently needed, require upscaling fast, and call on us all to work together to achieve that.

#### 4. Policy Alignment (Ireland, EU and International)

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are reflected across a wide range of Irish, European and international policy frameworks. In Ireland, this includes Irish Aid's Global Citizenship Education strategy and the Government's ESD to 2030 strategy, alongside broader commitments across education, youth, climate and development. Taken together, these recognise the role of education in supporting critical thinking, active citizenship and engagement with global challenges, across both formal and non-formal settings.

At European and international level, this is reinforced through frameworks such as the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 (the Dublin Declaration), UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action, and the OECD Global Competence Framework. Central to this is Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7, which commits to ensuring that learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including human rights, equality, peace and global citizenship. More recent developments, including UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights and the UN Transforming Education initiative, further underline the importance of this area.

Ireland's policy commitments are also backed by sustained investment and partnership, particularly through Irish Aid's Global Citizenship Education strategy and ESD to 2030. In recent years, funding for civil society organisations and schools has increased, supporting both long-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.djapo.be/en/education-for-sustainable-development/esd-or-wce-whats-in-a-name>

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term partners and a wider range of grant-funded initiatives, and helping to extend this work across different education and community settings.

There is also an established basis for cross-departmental collaboration. This includes the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Education and Youth, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) working together in relation to the ESD to 2030 strategy<sup>2</sup>, alongside engagement with the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, among others. This provides a starting point for embedding sustainability and global citizenship themes more consistently across the education system.

### 5. Scale, Reach and Impact

Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development reach **hundreds of thousands** of learners of all ages across the island of Ireland each year, with wider indirect reach extending to over one million. However, a more coordinated approach to data and measurement is needed to fully capture and support this impact<sup>3</sup>.

This is achieved thanks to frontline educators (State and non-State actors, including IDEA members) across schools, early years learning spaces, Education and Training Boards, Further Education colleges, universities, youth clubs and community centres. It is enabled thanks to combined state funding<sup>4</sup> from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Irish Aid), Department of Education and Youth, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Over **360,000 learners** of all ages across the island of Ireland in **2024** engaged with Global Citizenship Education in classrooms, lecture halls, youth clubs, community centres, and other learning spaces. Education for Sustainable Development projects benefited **189** primary and secondary schools in **2024**. In the same year, youth benefited from 10 youth-led climate justice projects under the Youth Climate Action Fund. In addition, students and staff at **17** Higher Education Institutions benefited from Education for Sustainable Development projects in **2024**.

For **2025**, although verifiable figures are pending, it is estimated that the number of learners reached via engagement with Global Citizenship Education was similar to 2024 (over **360,000**) whereas the number of learners accessing Education for Sustainable Development via schools is estimated to have almost doubled from 2024 due to a significant increase in funding and in reach (projects across **390** schools).

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<sup>2</sup> The latter three departments co-lead implementation of ESD to 2030.

<sup>3</sup> GCE figures are cited from the Irish Aid GCE Strategy Mid-Term Review report (May 2025) and ESD figures are cited from the 2<sup>nd</sup> ESD to 2030 progress report and other government sources. Unfortunately, figures of numbers of learners reached across all projects funded under ESD to 2030 are unavailable. However, conservative estimates would set the number of learners at between 150,000 – 190,000 annually.

<sup>4</sup> See annex 1 for information on funding across the different government departments.

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In addition to learners, thousands of educators and educators-in-training are equipped each year to be able to provide Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education via Continuous Professional Development opportunities and Initial Teacher Education modules. Between 2021 and 2024, **45,670 educators** benefitted from ITE or CPD opportunities on Global Citizenship Education. These included primary and post-primary school teachers and student teachers, as well as youth educators and adult and community educators.

No. of educators reached with GCE ITE or CPD from 2021-2024:

| Year         | No. of educators |
|--------------|------------------|
| 2021         | 10,681           |
| 2022         | 10,374           |
| 2023         | 11,684           |
| 2024         | 12,931           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>45,670</b>    |
|              |                  |

The table below provides indicative funding allocations based on available data and serves as a useful reference point, recognising that not all elements may be fully captured and that figures will continue to be refined over time. Important caveats regarding funding from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) are provided in a note below this table.

|                        | Irish Aid GCE Strategy | ESD Strategy Dept of Education & Youth (DEY) | Breakdown DEY  | ESD Strategy DFHERIS (via HEA) | ESD Strategy DCDE                          |
|------------------------|------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| 2021                   | 6,300,000 <sup>1</sup> |  |  |                                |  |
| 2022                   | 7,700,000              | 43,500 <sup>2</sup>                          | For CSOs   | 7,700,000                      |  |
| 2023                   | 9,800,000              | 820,000 <sup>3</sup>                         | 550,000 for schools<br>270,000 for CSOs              | 6,100,000                      | 10,000                                     |
| 2024                   | 9,800,000              | 873,000 <sup>4</sup>                         | 458,000 for schools<br>415,000 for CSOs              | 5,000,000                      | 10,000<br>457,861<br>450,000<br>25,000,000 |
| 2025                   | 9,780,000 <sup>5</sup> | 1,326,000 <sup>6</sup>                       | 860,000 for schools <sup>7</sup><br>466,000 for CSOs |                                | 10,000<br>192,088<br>173,793<br>500,000    |
| <b>TOTAL 2022-2025</b> | <b>36,900,000</b>      | <b>3,062,500</b>                             |  | 18,800,000                     | 26,803,742                                 |

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*Note and caveats regarding funding from DFHERIS and DCDE<sup>5</sup>:*

*The funding cited from DFHERIS, administered by the Higher Education Authority's National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education relates to grant allocations via the SATLE (Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education) fund. The SATLE fund is designed to drive teaching and learning innovation across the higher education sector with a focus on three priority areas, of which ESD is one. We do not have figures of how much of the overall SATLE fund is allocated to ESD projects. In addition to this, the N-TUTORR project provided funding for ESD and other themes (€40 million for the period 2022 – 2024). This national project across the Technological Higher Education sector aimed to transform student experience. This includes many ESD initiatives, but we do not have figures for how much of the €40 million was spent on ESD.*

*The funding cited from DCDE corresponds to allocations to different schemes within DCDE, some of which relate directly to ESD and some indirectly. For example, the 450,000 (2024) and 500,000 (2025) cited in the table above were awarded to 30 Local Authorities nationwide under the Play and Recreation Scheme to improve access to quality play and recreation facilities. The €25 million cited corresponds to capital funding provided in 2024 through the **New Building Blocks Extension Grant Scheme, which** delivered thousands of additional early learning and childcare places. Projects were required to incorporate **Universal Design Guidelines** (integrating social and environmental sustainability).*

Beyond the scale and reach of GCE and ESD, it is important to mention the impact of both these educations on curricula, policies and systems. A key aim of both GCE and ESD frameworks is to embed the principles, core competencies and other key aspects of these educations in policy, curricula, systems and education settings across all levels of education and lifelong learning.

Significant advances have been achieved in this regard. In terms of **curricula**, key GCE and ESD concepts, principles, competencies and approaches have been integrated into primary and post-primary curriculum frameworks and subject specifications over the past few years. For example, many of the Junior Cycle Statements of Learning reflect GCE and ESD themes/concepts, and the eight Junior Cycle key skills also relate to GCE and ESD. There is also a new Leaving Certificate subject on Climate Action and Sustainable Development, and 'being an active citizen' is now included as one of seven key competencies in the primary curriculum framework. Furthermore, students can now earn GCE and ESD related degrees, diplomas and certificates at HEIs, and national Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Further Education and Training (FET) courses now have accredited or non-accredited GCE and ESD opportunities in every local authority area. Since 2022, all new student teachers must study GCE as part of their initial teacher education programme through the inclusion of GCE in the Céim Standards.

In terms of **embedding ESD and GCE across Higher Education Institutions**, in August 2024, the Higher Education Authority appointed an ESD Policy Advisor whose job is to advance ESD-related teaching and learning practices across higher education institutions, and via SATLE has funded the development and delivery of digital badges for staff across HEIs on ESD and the SDGs, Sustainability Fellowships, Sustainability Champions for ESD, and the development of a Sustainable Futures Champions Network. In addition, STAND, in partnership with The Union of Students of Ireland (AMLÉ) and the Board of Irish College Societies (BICS) is embedding GCE in

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<sup>5</sup> Data provided by DFHERIS and DCDE officials via the ESD National Steering Group.

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national and campus level student leadership. AMLÉ represents over 360,000 students across the island of Ireland and BICs represents 800+ societies across 11 HEIs.

### 6. Strong ecosystem, inspiring initiatives and impact on learners and educators

There is already a strong ecosystem in place for GCE and ESD. IDEA represents, and Irish Aid supports, a vibrant GCE sector comprising nine Irish Aid GCE Strategic Partners as well as 100 other organisations, educational institutions, individuals and networks nationwide that collectively reach close to one million people every year, predominantly learners and educators, with activity spanning all 16 Education and Training Boards, 20+ higher education institutions, hundreds of schools, youth services, community organisations and digital learning spaces and platforms. They also work within networks across Europe and internationally. Many of our members also implement ESD projects under ESD to 2030, such as ECO-UNESCO, Global Action Plan and An Taisce Green Schools Programme.

**In schools**, GCE is embedded through WorldWise Global Schools and Global Village. Over **8,000 teachers** participate in GCE training and support annually. **186 post-primary schools** hold the WorldWise Global Schools Global Passport for whole-school engagement. This whole-school approach helps embed GCE across teaching, student leadership, school culture, policies and community engagement. WorldWise Global Schools has worked with over 70% of post-primary schools to make GCE an important part of their school life since 2013. Trócaire and Concern Worldwide are supporting schools and young people across the island to engage with global justice through classroom resources, campaigns, and initiatives like the Concern Debates, which supports students to critically engage with global justice issues while developing research, information discernment, respectful disagreement and dialogue skills. Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, Children in Crossfire engage 60 schools with their Educating the Heart Programme and Self Help Africa connects learners with questions of food systems, climate resilience, smallholder farming and trade justice. The Irish Sustainability Schools Network supports teachers and students to build confidence and inspire climate and biodiversity action in schools across Ireland. See [RTÉ reportage on Irish Sustainability Schools Network](#). **In initial teacher education**, DICE and the Ubuntu Network ensure every new teacher graduates with the capacity to teach for global justice and equality, reaching more than **7,000 student teachers** each year.

**In higher education**, STAND is embedding GCE into campus life by engaging over **20,000 students** directly each year (**plus 18,000 online**) and driving advocacy and capacity building initiatives for student leadership bodies and higher education staff across the island of Ireland.

**In adult and community education**, Saolta directly supports over **700 educators** annually and delivers workshops with local authorities and Public Participation Networks across the island, linking GCE to local government policy, Further Education and Training, community development and lifelong learning. Saolta also reaches over **30,000 learners** and educators annually through targeted public engagement promotion. Elected representatives, executive staff and members of Public Participation Networks **in all 31 Local Authorities** have participated in Saolta-led GCE workshops since 2020. Síolta Chroí is an award-winning social enterprise that provides educational events and retreats on sustainable living and nature. Offerings include gatherings for

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farmers, webinars on land management, and workshops on food gardens. See [showcase video of Síolta Chroí's inspiring Soil, Soul, Society project](#).

**In Global Youth Work**, Youth 2030 engages more than **1,000 youth workers, volunteers and educators**, and **800 young people** directly each year in youth organisations, youth settings, and at third level through accredited training, participation forums, events, and innovation funding, with a **digital reach of over 280,000**. In addition, 12 youth organisations provided GCE to **13,685 young people** in 2024.

**In terms of resource support and debate**, DevelopmentEducation.ie provides the **national digital platform for GCE resources**, reaching over **165,000 online users** annually, while the Centre for Global Education publishes a biannual, peer reviewed, open access, online journal dedicated to GCE called Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review.

IDEA, as a national membership body for the sector, works to connect, strengthen and **represent the sector** through capacity building, spaces for dialogue and shared learning, and through advancing policy and advocacy on GCE in Ireland and internationally. IDEA also drives quality through the [Code of Good Practice for Development Education](#), applied by **53 organisations** and recognised internationally through the 2021 GENE Global Education Award. IDEA has also developed a [Theory of Impact for GCE](#) framework, data collection tool and data visualisation platform for the GCE sector to demonstrate its collective impact.

Beyond IDEA members' work, many other innovative and inspiring ESD initiatives are taking place across the country, for example across HEIs. See the [HEA ESD Spotlight Series](#) (Feb - Nov 2025) and the [HEA ESD Spotlight Series Case Study Compendium](#) (Nov 2025) for more information.

The impact of GCE on individual learners and educators is clear. Those engaged in GCE often speak about seeing the world differently and becoming aware of stereotypes, questioning the origins of their choices, and developing empathy for people they may never meet but whose lives are affected by injustice.<sup>6</sup> Learners are also reporting increased knowledge, confidence and capacity to act on global issues in recent years. E.g. the Youth 2030 Mid-Term Review showed significant positive impacts in 2024. 88% of youth workers surveyed reported enhanced capabilities, 82.5% noted increased confidence to act on global issues, and 92% of young people reported increased knowledge of global development issues.

Educators consistently report greater confidence in leading conversations on climate, migration, inequality, and global justice. Youth, adult and community workers describe how GCE equips people of all ages to resist misinformation and share constructive narratives with peers and families. Educators also report increased understanding on global issues: e.g., in 2024, developmenteducation.ie engaged with 863 teachers and student teachers and 94% reported improved understanding, knowledge, or potential behaviour change regarding global issues.

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<sup>6</sup> Golden, 2023a; Hogan & O'Flaherty, 2021; Kearns & McCormack, 2021; McCormack & O'Flaherty, 2010; O'Flaherty et al., 2011; O'Toole & O'Flaherty, 2024; Rose, 2022.

## **7. Learner and educator perspectives**

There are many learners and educators who have attested to the difference that GCE and ESD have made to their lives. See example of a learner testimony - [Kirsten Baltazar, GCE programme graduate](#) and an educator testimony - [Conor O'Leary, trainer with Kildare and Wicklow ETB](#), provided live during the launch of our new vision and strategic roadmap for GCE in Ireland, Vision 2030. For more learner perspectives, see our [Stories](#) of Change.

## **8. Core challenges**

Ireland has very strong foundations in GCE and ESD. There are clear policy commitments, established programmes, and sustained leadership, particularly through Irish Aid. Over time, this has built real capacity, reach and experience across the system.

The question now is less about direction, and more about how that ambition is carried through in practice. This work sits across a number of departments, strategies and sectors. While progress has been made, it is not yet fully joined up. For those working in the area, this can mean navigating different frameworks and funding streams. Educators are already carrying heavy demands, and without time, training and proper resourcing, this work can feel like one more pressure rather than a supported part of education. For learners, it can feel uneven or disconnected, rather than part of a clear and coherent learning journey. Therefore, this work is most effective when embedded, rather than treated as an add-on or short-term project.

When it comes to investment, it is strong in parts but remains limited in overall terms and uneven across the system. The support of government has been central to what has been achieved to date. However, broader, cross-government resourcing has not yet kept pace with the level of ambition set out in national and international commitments, including SDG 4.7. Funding is often short-term or programme-based, which makes it difficult to plan ahead, sustain work, or build on what has already been achieved.

There is also a wider risk to consider. In a more uncertain global context, progress that has taken years to build cannot be assumed. Without sustained support and investment, there is a real possibility that momentum could stall or be lost. To this end, IDEA's Vision 2030 roadmap document points to a way forward that is relatively straightforward. It is not about creating new policy, but about making better use of what is already in place. This includes stronger coordination across departments, closer alignment between Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development, and a more consistent approach to resourcing and delivery. It also points to the need to strengthen quality, extend reach, and ensure that educators and organisations are supported to sustain and deepen this work over time.

The opportunity is to build on what is already there, connecting it more effectively, supporting it properly, and enabling it to reach further, so that it can meet both the scale of the challenges and the possibilities ahead.

## **9. Recommendations:**

As mentioned above, the foundations are strong. The focus now must be on how we build on them. We see four main areas where action is needed.

First, **stronger cross-departmental coordination**, to bring greater alignment between government departments and policy objectives across education, foreign policy, environment, youth, community, justice and related areas. In particular, we urge closer more strategic alignment between Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development. This is about moving beyond parallel efforts towards a more coherent, whole-of-government approach.

Second, **sustained and increased investment** to upscale reach and deepen engagement with learners of all ages and backgrounds across all counties. This would involve greater support to youth work, adult and community education, further and higher education, informal learning, and digital learning spaces. In particular, people of all ages need extra support to navigate misinformation, resist polarising narratives and build democratic resilience. Investment should also include support for diaspora-led, community-based and specialist organisations, ensuring diverse perspectives are represented in funding, decision-making and delivery.

Increased investment is also needed in research and impact measurement, as well as educator support and system capacity, across all educational settings. This goes beyond continuous professional development to include time, resources, networks, and long-term support for educators and organisations, ensuring they are confident, connected and able to sustain and deepen this work across all parts of the island. It also requires more predictable, timely and coordinated funding across government to match the scale of ambition set out in policy and the urgency of the moment.

Third, **further integration of GCE and ESD into curricula, assessment, and lifelong learning** across all levels. Beyond policy, this requires attention to the practical side of integration: clearer, joined-up guidance and resourcing for schools and education providers, so that these themes are embedded in a way that is consistent, accessible and meaningful across different settings, rather than experienced as an added layer.

Fourth, we urgently need to **strengthen partnerships** across and within government, civil society, and education stakeholders through a coordinated all-island approach, including through the Shared Island initiative at the Department of the Taoiseach. We also need to strengthen partnerships with the **Global South**.

Taken together, these actions point towards the need for a more ambitious and unified programme of investment, coordination and coherence across government. This is not about creating new policy frameworks, but about strengthening and connecting what already exists, so that it can operate at the scale and level of coherence now required.

## **10. Conclusion**

Ireland is strongly placed to lead on Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development. This has already been recognised across Europe, including through the GENE Peer Review, which points to the quality, reach and innovation of Irish practice. That leadership is built on strong foundations, shaped by Ireland's own history; a society marked by colonialism, famine, migration, conflict and division. Those experiences have deepened our understanding of injustice, solidarity and peacebuilding, and continue to shape Ireland's role internationally, including in development cooperation, humanitarian response, peacekeeping and education.

At the same time, Ireland has long understood the power of education to shape society. It has been central to social progress on this island, from tackling poverty to supporting peace. Today, that same foundation is under pressure. Polarisation, inequality and disinformation are testing cohesion at home. There is a clear need to strengthen the role of education in helping people make sense of a complex world, to think critically, and to engage constructively in society.

Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development offer a practical way to respond. They support resilience at home, while also strengthening Ireland's contribution internationally at a time when principled engagement is needed, building on the leadership already demonstrated through Irish Aid and wider government commitment. With sustained investment and stronger coordination, there is a real opportunity to deepen this work - strengthening cohesion, supporting participation, and ensuring Ireland continues to lead with credibility and purpose.