



An Roinn Gnóthaí  
Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade

# Public Consultation on the Development of the Priorities and Policy Programme for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

***An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála***  
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## Submission Form

### Public Consultation on the Development of the Priorities and Policy Programme for Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026

<b>Mandatory questions</b>	
Name	Leigh Brady
Organisation (if any)	Irish Development Education Association (IDEA)
Date of submission	12.12.2025
Do you agree to all of the terms set out in this consultation process, including those set out under section 5 and 6?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Optional questions</b> <i>The following questions are asked only to help us understand the range of perspectives received as part of this consultation process.</i>	
Respondent type (i.e. individual, NGO, business, academic, local authority, etc.)	NGO network
What is your sector/area of work?	Global Citizenship Education
What is your connection to the issues you are providing feedback on? For example, are you an expert practitioner, person affected by a policy issue, member of the public with a general interest in the topics, etc.?	I am the policy advocacy manager of <a href="#">IDEA</a> , the national network for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) on the island of Ireland. IDEA represents 110 <a href="#">members</a> , ranging from educational entities to NGOs to individuals, all of whom work to provide and promote GCE in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings across the island of Ireland. IDEA has a long track record of advocating for strengthened GCE policy and practice in Ireland, in Europe and globally. IDEA is an Irish Aid strategic partner for Global Citizenship Education. This submission brings together the views of a wide range of IDEA members, including but not exclusive to eight other Irish Aid strategic partners for GCE ( <a href="#">WorldWise Global Schools</a> , <a href="#">Global Village</a> , <a href="#">STAND</a> , <a href="#">SAOLTA</a> , <a href="#">the Ubuntu Network</a> , <a href="#">the DICE project</a> , <a href="#">Youth 2030</a> and <a href="#">developmenteducation.ie</a> ). IDEA has been a member of the European Commission <a href="#">DEAR Programme</a> Multi-Stakeholder Group for the past several years, attending all policy dialogues that are convened by the Group. In addition, IDEA is a member of the <a href="#">Civil Society Alliance for Global Citizenship Education</a> , an advocacy

### Optional questions

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	platform for GCE at European level and was a long-standing member of the <a href="#">CONCORD</a> GCE Working Group until it was disbanded in November 2024. IDEA is also a member of <a href="#">Bridge 47</a> – an international advocacy network to advance achievement of SDG Target 4.7 in Europe and globally. We were also a project partner within the <a href="#">DEAR-funded Bridge 47</a> project from 2017 to 2021.
Describe your geographical focus in the context of your submission? For example, rural, urban, national or EU wide.	National (Ireland - All of Island) and EU wide

### Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

Through these consultations the Government is seeking to gather observations, suggestions, and reflections on how Ireland can best fulfil its Presidency role; ensure the Presidency policy programme is informed by diverse perspectives from across Irish society; and identify EU-wide issues, themes, and policy areas that should be given particular attention during Ireland's Presidency.

It is proposed that Ireland's overall policy approach for the 2026 Presidency will be expressed at a high level in the form of a single overarching phrase or slogan setting out a people-centred and future-oriented vision for the EU, accompanied by three priority themes.

Respondents are asked to consider the following guiding questions and to limit their responses to each question to a maximum of 500 words. Please note that you do not have to respond to all questions.

Respondents are welcome to submit additional information alongside Submission Form. However, in such cases, respondents must provide a summary of the additional information under the 'Any other comments' question. This response should also be limited to a maximum of 500 words.

#### Question 1 – What should Ireland choose as the high-level thematic priorities for its Presidency of the Council in 2026?

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words. (493)*

**Global Citizenship Education** should be a high-level thematic priority for Ireland's Presidency of the Council as it is a powerful vehicle through which the EU can harness the potential of its citizens to achieve two key commitments outlined in its [Strategic Agenda 2024-2029](#), namely; "become the first climate-neutral continent", and "take the lead in addressing global challenges", as well as through which to deliver the main priorities under the "Free and Democratic Europe" pillar. These priorities include:

- promoting and safeguarding the **rule of law**
- strengthening **democratic resilience** and **debate**
- protecting **free and pluralistic media** and **civil society**
- ensuring that tech giants take responsibility for **safeguarding democratic debates online**
- upholding the **UN Charter** and promoting global peace, justice and stability

### Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

In addition, **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)**, as per the definition in the [Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025](#) (p.4), is a vital tool through which communities can uphold EU values such as “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”, which are the “EU’s primary strength, as well as its compass both within the EU and globally” (EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029).

In the current context of a rise of populism, disinformation, polarisation, xenophobia, and armed conflicts in Europe and worldwide, Global Citizenship Education is more urgent now than ever. It is alarming that the Mission Letter of the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG-INTPA) does not include any mention of Global Citizenship Education (hitherto known as development education and awareness raising under DG-INTPA) or global solidarity at all. It mentions human rights and human development just once, a paucity that stands in clear contradiction to the aforementioned values of the EU. In line with Ireland’s long-standing policy position on Global Citizenship Education, global solidarity, international human rights and human development, we strongly recommend that Ireland adopt Global Citizenship Education as one of its high-level thematic priorities of its Presidency of the Council. We also strongly recommend that Ireland proactively promotes the inclusion of these values and policy priorities within the negotiations for the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034. Allowing it to recede from the political agenda would not only be imprudent and strategically unsound, but also incongruent with existing and recent EU Council Conclusions and Recommendations including:

- EU Council Conclusion 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 Education and Training contributing to strengthening of European Values and Democratic Citizenship](#)
- EU Council Recommendation on Learning for the [Green Transition and Sustainable Development](#)

Choosing Global Citizenship Education as a high-level priority would also be in alignment with over 25 EU Member States’ commitments under the Dublin Declaration (European Declaration on Global Education to 2050), adopted at the Dublin Congress in November 2022, and co-hosted by Ireland and Luxembourg.

### Question 2 – Which particular policy areas and legislative proposals should be a focus of work for the Irish Presidency of the Council in 2026? What should the Irish Presidency aim to achieve in these areas?

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words. (480)*

Ireland should prioritise the SDGs and lead the Council in engaging in the process for a post-Agenda 2030 sustainable development framework. Furthermore, the policy area of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as set at European Commission level within DG-INTPA via the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) Programme and within the Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture should be a priority for Ireland in the lead up to, during and beyond its Presidency of the Council. Particularly, Ireland should ensure that GCE and global solidarity feature within the priorities of the new MFF. Specifically, Ireland should advocate for:

- A real global perspective in the MFF proposal. Currently, citizenship education seems to be narrowly framed around EU values as they apply within the EU but not outside its borders. The

Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations
<p><b>global</b> aspect of citizenship education is of critical importance to ensure EU citizens are informed and empowered to act democratically to address the unprecedented challenges the whole world is facing: climate crisis, rising inequality, war, disinformation, and political extremism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEAR to remain a separate funding stream and not be absorbed into broader funding envelopes. It is in the EU's best interests that citizen engagement and global solidarity remain at the heart of the EU's global partnerships. The upcoming MFF offers an opportunity to reaffirm DEAR as a cornerstone of GCE and secure dedicated and sustainable funding for its continuation.</li> <li>• Transparency, sustainability, and predictability in the financial support of GCE programmes, such as via DEAR, Erasmus+, CERV and AgoraEU.</li> <li>• Improved cohesion and coherence between funding instruments and programmes that support GCE. This helps strengthen the impact of regional initiatives and foster a consistent EU-wide message in citizenship education.</li> <li>• Sustainable and dedicated, clearly labelled funding for GCE within new internal instruments (e.g. AgoraEU) and the Global Europe instrument.</li> <li>• Promotion of civil society initiatives to advance GCE across Europe. This funding should be accessible to all relevant education and information stakeholders: in formal, non-formal and informal settings, for all age groups and learners as well as for citizens for raising awareness. This includes safeguarding funding for CSOs working on human rights, gender equality, peace, and accountability, even in contexts facing local political pressures. Strengthening these resources is essential for fostering informed, active, and globally responsible citizens.</li> <li>• A lifelong, life-wide and transformative approach to education and learning, to ensure that all citizens can obtain key transversal and citizenship competences. These competences are central to strategic foresight and building a sustainable future in which everyone can prosper. While the European Commission’s emphasis on equipping people with skills for the labour market is important, this focus may inadvertently underplay the depth of democratic turbulence unfolding within Europe and beyond. What is urgently needed, including to drive the Commission’s much wanted labour productivity, are citizens equipped with transversal and citizenship competences – who can think critically, act responsibly, and engage across borders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 3 – How can the work of the Council during the term of the Irish Presidency make the most substantial positive impact for people, businesses and communities across the EU?</b></p> <p><i>Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words. (143)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By committing to policy coherence and standards setting as a central EU value at a time when massive increases in defence spending by the EU and 'simplifying' regulations will reduce environmental protections, dilute corporate sustainability disclosure rules and reverse human rights outcomes within Europe and beyond.</li> <li>• Recommitting to living up to the EU's values at a global level requires keeping human rights-based and principled overseas development assistance as a priority of the EU's duties and responsibilities in action.</li> </ul>

### Guiding Questions for Stakeholder Consultations

- By reaffirming and amplifying its policy and funding support for Global Citizenship Education, given the multiplier effect GCE can have and its role in fostering solidarity, critical understanding and global connections. Global Citizenship Education is essential for Europe's future and helps counter disinformation, and democratic erosion. It contributes to building resilient democracies at home and stronger partnerships abroad, and empowering citizens ready to face global challenges together in times of crises.

### Question 4 – How can we best communicate the values and benefits of EU membership to its citizens and create a sense of ownership, amongst citizens, over Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU?

*Please limit response to a maximum of 500 words.*

By highlighting examples of EU values in action, amplifying and enabling the work of GCE practitioners across all 27 EU Member States.

### Question 5 – Any other comments

*Respondents are welcome to submit additional information alongside Submission Form. However, in such cases, respondents must provide a summary of the additional information under the 'Any other comments' question. This summary should also be limited to a maximum of 500 words. (138)*

As a member of the Civil Society Alliance for GCE, IDEA contributed to and endorses the statement issued by the Alliance on the place of Global Citizenship Education in the MFF negotiations, which we have attached as additional information and provide the link to here: <https://www.solidar.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/gce-alliance-mff-statement-3.pdf>. We have drawn on this statement in our submission as it represents our joint policy position across 25 members of the Alliance.

IDEA was a long-standing member of the CONCORD GCE Working Group until it was disbanded in November 2024. IDEA remains engaged with CONCORD via its membership with Dóchas and is advising Dóchas on the GCE component of its upcoming project of civil society support to the Irish, Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies of the Council of the EU, which Dóchas is leading and will implement together with CONCORD and counterparts in Lithuania and Greece.