

VISION 2030

Towards a Society of Active **Global Citizens**



IDEA
IRISH DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Acknowledgements

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VISION 2030

Towards a Society of Active **Global** **Citizens**

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Executive summary

As a society, we are living through a period of immense change and facing challenges that were unimaginable a few decades ago.

The multilateral system is faltering, and we are seeing an unprecedented disregard for international law. There has also been a change in global power dynamics, with a shift to the far-right in some of the most powerful countries in the world. This is severely hampering Agenda 2030 and making it even more difficult to address the many global crises we are facing, including climate change, hunger, conflict, displacement and increased marginalisation of vulnerable groups. The change in how we access our information, with increased engagement with social media and online platforms and the rise of Artificial Intelligence, is driving the spread of misinformation and disinformation. This is leading to an increase in racism and hate crimes, as well as a decline in critical thinking skills and social cohesion.

At a time when the need for a society of active global citizens is greater than ever, the scale of the challenges we are facing can be overwhelming for people to process. Global Citizenship Education (GCE) can move people from a state of overwhelm to empowered action. It gives people a supported, structured way to engage with these challenges in an interactive, reflective environment. It guides them through the root causes of global justice issues and allows them to reflect on how their values, choices, and positions are shaped by and shape these systemic issues. It also allows them to explore how they can act to transform these issues, to build a fairer and more sustainable future for all. As well as promoting meaningful individual and collective action for change, Global Citizenship Education acts as a bulwark against disinformation, racism and polarisation. It equips people of all ages with the knowledge, understanding, skills

and confidence needed to navigate today's complex world.

IDEA (the Irish Development Education Association) is the national network for GCE in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. We represent over 100 members involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings across the island of Ireland. They include civil society organisations, local development partnerships, networks, coalitions, consortia, university departments, trade unions and individuals involved in education work.

IDEA members engaged with over 360,000 learners of all ages across the island of Ireland in 2024, in classrooms, lecture halls, youth clubs, community halls, and other learning spaces. Beyond schoolchildren, many GCE providers engage with young people and adult learners, including from Local Authorities, the business community, and marginalised groups, such as second chance learners, unemployed people, young people, adult basic education learners, migrants, and the Traveller and Roma communities.

Global Citizenship Educators have expertise in methods and approaches to lifelong learning, the Sustainable Development Goals, critical information literacy, human rights, and global social justice. The work of the GCE sector contributes to many government policy areas, including education, international development, climate action, justice, youth, community development, volunteering and more, and has a key role to play in the response to policy commitments from the government and relevant sectors.

IDEA's vision is for quality Global Citizenship Education for all on the island of Ireland. This is a key stepping stone towards building a society of active global citizens that strives "to create a world where every single person – especially the most vulnerable and the most marginalised – can live a decent life, with fairness, peace, and respect for their rights guaranteed...a healthy planet and understanding between different cultures and nations and respect for all forms of diversity."¹

In Vision 2030 we lay out our vision for the future of GCE across the island of Ireland and break down what is required to fulfil that vision. Our main aspirations and proposals include:

Investment and funding

- Coherent, multi-annual and long-term funding strategies designed from a whole-of-government approach are needed to achieve our vision and SDG Target 4.7. Such funding should be predictable and accessible to small, medium and large civil society organisations and other projects and partners across the island of Ireland. Funding for GCE should be increased to the internationally recognised target of 3% of Official Development Assistance (ODA). It should be included as a funding line in the second National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD to 2030), the Climate Action Plan, the National Action Plan Against Racism, and all relevant public policies to strengthen a whole-of-government approach.

Cross-government strategic prioritisation and policy coherence for Global Citizenship Education

- A supportive policy context and a cross-departmental coordinated approach is needed to achieve a more coherent and strategic implementation of GCE in all relevant national policies and programmes. These include, but are not exclusive to, the Department of

Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Education and Youth, Department of Children, Disability and Equality, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. A multi-stakeholder GCE advisory group would be welcome and supportive towards achieving stronger and more strategic coordination among stakeholders and stronger coherence between relevant policies.

Research, quality and impact

- An ambitious and effective research agenda should be included in the new national Global Citizenship Education strategy to inform and enhance delivery and practice in the GCE sector.
- Adequate resources and support are needed to progress our work in impact measurement, including the IDEA Theory of Impact for GCE. This would enable us to considerably increase our capacity to map and communicate the collective impact of our GCE work by 2030, both cross-sectorally and sectorally. It is crucial to our sector's work towards a consistent approach to impact measurement, through shared frameworks and methodologies.
- Continue to promote the IDEA Code of Good Practice as the barometer of quality GCE.

Expanded reach, deepened engagement, and further embedding in systems and settings

- Consolidate important partnerships with Irish Aid to urgently reach more learners, deepen engagement and continue to embed GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings, as well as achieve a more even geographical spread of GCE opportunities for learners across settings.

See the sections on “What is needed to make our vision a reality” and “What is needed across specific education sectors” for further details on policy and funding requirements aligned to relevant stakeholders, and proposed actions to be taken by the sector.

As IDEA is an all-island network, Vision 2030 is an all-island vision, and it includes policy, investment and programme priorities for GCE throughout the island. This is aligned with the all-Ireland scope of the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025 as well as the focus on cross-border cooperation in education within the Shared Island Initiative of the Department of the Taoiseach.

IDEA and our members are committed to working in partnership with lead actors in each area, including relevant government departments, agencies, networks and community organisations, both in the Republic and the North, so as to advance our shared vision for a just, sustainable and peaceful world.

Ireland is recognised internationally for its strong leadership, progressive policy, and sustained funding in the areas of international development, humanitarian aid, and GCE. Between 2021 and 2024, Irish Aid invested €33.6 million in programmes and projects aimed at educating over 1.2 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. At a time of immense turbulence and intensified global and local challenges, those foundations must be protected, built upon and expanded across relevant government departments. The need for Ireland to continue and increase investment towards a society of active global citizens has never been greater.



Preamble

This document is the successor to IDEA's [Vision 2025: Towards a Society of Global Citizens](#), published by IDEA in 2021 and updated in 2022.

It is the result of a collaborative process between IDEA staff and members, with contributions from other key stakeholders. Through multiple consultations with members, including cohorts of members working in Higher Education and Youth, respectively, and the IDEA Working Groups on Formal Education and Adult and Community Education, our vision and roadmap towards achieving this vision for Global Citizenship Education on the island of Ireland was co-created.

Vision 2030 was written to incorporate and align with relevant components of the IDEA Theory of Impact for Global Citizenship Education (GCE), [the IDEA Code of Good Practice for Development Education](#) and preliminary dialogue outcomes of the Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future joint project led by Dóchas, CADA and IDEA (2025).

Vision 2030 also acknowledges and situates itself within the broader national and international policy landscape on GCE and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). IDEA and its members envisage working together with policymakers and other key stakeholders towards achieving this vision.

This work has been guided by the following policies and strategies:

- Programme for Government 2025
- Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Statement of Strategy 2025-2028
- Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2022-2030 (ESD to 2030)
- National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027
- Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2025
- Climate Action Plan 2025
- Further Education and Training Strategy 2022-2024
- Community Education Framework – Transforming Learning
- National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025
- National Strategy for Youth Work and Related Services 2024 – 2028
- Young Ireland: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028
- Céim Standards for Initial Teacher Education (Teaching Council, 2020)
- UNESCO 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development
- European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 (Dublin Declaration on Global Education)

VISION 2030

Introduction

At [IDEA](#) (the Irish Development Education Association), we believe in a future that is fair and sustainable for all. We believe that creating this future requires a society of active global citizens, and that Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a powerful force and key driver in creating such a society.

This document articulates our vision of what a society of active global citizens looks like and how access to quality GCE for everyone on the island of Ireland helps achieve that society. It also details what is needed to achieve our vision and what IDEA will prioritise and focus on in the coming years to help realise it.

We fully align with the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050,² 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 ability to evaluate multiple perspectives, the ability to learn better as well as the ability to unlearn those things that are no longer useful.”

In the short period since November 2022 the global context has worsened dramatically. The need for active global citizens and for quality Global Citizenship Education for all has never been as urgent. This point was underlined by the Minister of State for International Development and the Diaspora, Neale Richmond, speaking at the IDEA annual conference in May 2025: “Now is the time to reinforce messages of global solidarity... (IDEA and its members should

continue to focus) on the hard issues - including the drivers and impacts of climate change, efforts to undermine the multilateral system, disregard for international law and international humanitarian law, and, indeed, disinformation. These are among the greatest challenges of our time.” His final words were a clear call to action: “...use your work, and the work of IDEA, to take things to the next level...that is how we win the battle.”

Vision 2030 is our response to this call to action. With continued strategic, coordinated efforts, sufficient resources and enabling conditions, we can take GCE to the next level from 2025 to 2030. Our goal is to ensure quality GCE for all as a key catalyst in creating a society of active global citizens.

Vision 2030 serves as our medium-term horizon aligned with Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

But our ambition extends beyond 2030 - towards deeper structural change and intergenerational impact. Like the Dublin Declaration, this vision looks to 2050 and beyond. We plant seeds now, for a fairer, more sustainable future for all.

Who are we and what do we do?

IDEA (the Irish Development Education Association) is the national network for Development Education, also known as Global Citizenship Education, in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. We represent over 100 members involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings across the island of Ireland. Our members include civil society organisations (CSOs), local development partnerships, networks, coalitions, consortia, university departments, trade unions and individuals involved in education work in Ireland.

IDEA was created in 2004 but several of our members have been educating children and adults in schools, colleges, universities, youth clubs and other learning spaces since the 1970s.

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 who are frontline educators do this by using GCE content, methodologies, resources and approaches to education with a **range of learners of different ages and backgrounds** in a **range of places of learning**. These include schools, universities, youth clubs, adult literacy classrooms, community centres and other learning spaces. IDEA members who are educators of educators do this in all places of learning for educators-in-training and by producing quality GCE resources for educators to use. IDEA and its members also support this by advocating for quality GCE to be available for as many learners as possible and for adequate investment in it as a public good by relevant Government departments so that it may be embedded in formal and non-formal educational structures, policy and practice.

IDEA members have also played a significant role in building, energising and delivering on shared approaches such as the Sustainable Development Goals, 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.

The role of IDEA in cultivating, strengthening and championing Global Citizenship Education throughout the island of Ireland

- IDEA plays a vital convening and support role in cultivating, strengthening and championing Global Citizenship Education by fostering collaboration across CSOs, amplifying effective practices, driving quality GCE, influencing policy, and supporting professional development. It acts as a unifying voice, promotes coherence, and provides opportunities for shared learning and strategic development.
- IDEA creates spaces for dialogue between practitioners in the sector to actively engage in making GCE more accessible, impactful, and structurally embedded across the Irish education landscape. Members come together to discuss thematic issues from a policy and programme perspective via the IDEA working groups: Formal Education Working Group, Adult and Community Education Working Group, Quality and Impact Working Group and the Development Education on Palestine Working Group. These groups are member-led spaces, convened by members.
- IDEA helps to embed GCE in organisations, builds capacity, fosters collaboration and ensures quality standards in the sector through its in-person and online engagement with members of the IDEA Code of Good Practice for Development Education. Fifty-four IDEA members (70% of organisational members) are signatories of the Code. This offers members an opportunity to reflect on and self-assess their GCE work according to a set of 12 principles and 27 indicators, and to set goals to improve for the future.
- IDEA delivers funding clinics for Irish Aid funding applications, which some members build on, e.g. Youth 2030 builds on these clinics to support youth organisation applications.

What is Global Citizenship Education?

Global Citizenship Education enables people to understand the world they live in and their place in it. In our globalised world, where the local and the global are intertwined and mutually affecting each other, our consciousness needs to be global too.

Irish Aid describes 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.”³

This definition complements the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 description of GCE as “education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts, and minds to the reality of the world at **local and global level**. It involves imagination and hope, respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future.”⁴

GCE goes beyond transmitting knowledge from educators to learners. It engages learners in a process of interaction, reflection and action that equips them with the **knowledge, values, skills and confidence** needed to become active global citizens in today’s world. An essential part of GCE is to promote **meaningful individual and collective action for change**. The following graphic⁵ outlines this process further:

Components and Characteristics of Global Citizenship Education



Contributes to Knowledge and Understanding

Explores cultural, environmental, economic, political and social relationships and challenges local and global power inequalities, including those caused by patterns of production, distribution and consumption.



Strengthens Values and Attitudes

Seeks to bring about positive change, informed by values of equality, diversity, sustainability, democracy and human rights and responsibilities.



Enhances Skills and Competencies

Equips people to explore multiple perspectives and to engage critically with links between local and global issues, using participative and creative approaches.



Promotes Action

Enables people to make connections between their own lives and global justice issues, and empowers them to make a positive difference in the world.



Global Citizenship Education is about understanding the world, how it works and how we can impact it. It supports people of all ages to critically examine the systems underpinning global and local injustices and inequalities. Rather than looking at issues like climate injustice, inequality, and human rights violations as isolated challenges, it encourages learners to explore their historical roots and systemic drivers. Through creative, participatory, and transformative approaches, GCE supports individuals and communities to reflect on how their values, choices, and positions are shaped by, and in turn shape these systems — and how they can act in solidarity to transform them. Grounded in a vision of global justice, GCE nurtures the collective imagination and action needed to build a fairer and more sustainable future for all.

Global Citizenship Education complements and overlaps with other education priorities with a different starting focus, including education for sustainable development, peace education and human rights

education. This is exemplified in the scope of **Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals**:

“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.”

Our pioneering **Code of Good Practice for Development Education** provides a framework for quality GCE. Co-developed by IDEA members and staff, it outlines 12 core principles central to GCE:

Code of Good Practice for Development Education

12 Core Principles

Educational Practice



01 Contribute to **Knowledge** in Ireland about global development



02 Explore the **Root Causes** of local and global injustices and inequalities in our interdependent world



03 Be explicit about the **ethos** of Development Education



04 Encourage **Critical Thinking** in our exploration of local and global justice issues and seeking of solutions



05 Use **Participatory, Creative** approaches in our educational practice



06 Produce and use **Quality Resources and Materials**, based on continuous learning



07 Build **Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes** for informed action that is collective in nature



08 Imagine and Explore **Solutions** for a better world



09 Actively and consistently **Reflect and Learn** from our own Development Education practice and participants' feedback

Organisational Practice



10 Have a clear **Development Education Strategy and Action Plan**



11 Reflect the **Key Values** of Development Education



12 Advocate for **Quality Development Education**

Why is Global Citizenship Education needed now more than ever?

We live in an interdependent world, where global challenges such as the climate crisis, war, human rights violations, systemic inequality, systemic injustice, racism, and poverty are threatening our very existence. We are at a critical juncture, where we are trying to deal with multiple interconnected crises both at the global level and at a national level, where their impacts are being increasingly felt.



The **climate crisis is threatening our planetary ecosystems** with the impacts being felt across the planet, and the 10 hottest years on record all occurring within the last decade.⁶ 2024 was the hottest year on record, with global temperatures exceeding the critical 1.5°C threshold.⁷ In Ireland, we have begun to feel the impacts of the climate crisis with an increase in extreme weather events⁸ and widespread climate anxiety reported among young people.⁹



Colonialism and unjust global trade, tax, debt and financial systems have led to an unprecedented concentration of wealth, resources and power among billionaires and a few states¹⁰. Meanwhile, in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) almost 50% of wealth is held by the wealthiest 10%¹¹.



Inequality between countries is deepening, with UNDP reporting in 2024 that high income countries are attaining record human development while half of the low-income countries have become more impoverished.¹² The impact of the Covid pandemic on economies globally and the resulting rise in living costs has led to 84% of people in ROI worried about the cost-of-living crisis.¹³ Meanwhile in 2024, almost 12% of the population in ROI were reported as at risk of poverty,¹⁴ and in Northern Ireland, 14% were living in absolute poverty in 2023.¹⁵



Wars are upending millions of lives. Intra-state mass killings of civilians are on the rise,¹⁶ e.g. in Sudan and Congo. The number of forcibly displaced people has reached an unprecedented level: more than **1 in every 67 people on Earth** have been forced to flee their home.¹⁷ The widespread coverage of conflict and violence across multiple platforms is leading to a sense of overwhelm in countries not directly affected, with over 60% of people reporting news fatigue.¹⁸ Routinely being exposed to traumatic events in the media can also contribute to anxiety, sleep disturbances, feelings of helplessness, and even PTSD.¹⁹



Impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide is on the rise, and there has been a breakdown of the international rule of law, in relation to human rights and humanitarian law.²⁰ This is most evident in the live-streamed genocide in Gaza, which has continued unhindered since October 2023, despite the world's highest court ordering Israel to stop.²¹



Racist and anti-migrant narratives, the rise of authoritarian and far-right politics, and the spread of **misinformation** and **disinformation** threaten democracy, civil society, human rights and peace.²² We are seeing a rise in these trends in Ireland, with an increase in far-right

activity through online activism, street protests and violence.²³ This is moving society towards polarisation and threatens social cohesion.



With only five years left to achieve Agenda 2030, only 17% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are on track globally.²⁴ The impact of failing to achieve the SDGs, such as widening economic inequality, increased poverty, accelerated global warming, and spread of infectious diseases,²⁵ will be felt at a local as well as a global level.



There has also been a noticeable shift in terms of how people absorb and retain information due to the rapid increase in engagement with technology, such as the internet, social media, and the growing use of Artificial Intelligence. This is impacting critical thinking, considered analysis, and informed opinion.²⁶

The current juncture requires everyone to urgently work together at a local and global level.

In the current climate of uncertainty and instability, recognising **quality, transformative education as a right** of all people and **a public good that pays vast dividends²⁷ for society is more important than ever.** UN Secretary-General, António Guterres called for increased investment in quality transformative education as a matter of urgency ahead of the 2022 UN Transform Education Summit,²⁸ recognising that if investment and support for this kind of education is not maintained and increased, it is unlikely that Agenda 2030 will be achieved. These crises require citizens who understand their roots and drivers, who have critical media literacy,

who can imagine, design and propose solutions, who will take collective action in their communities, places of learning, work and worship, and who will advocate for the policy changes needed.

Global Citizenship Education gives people a supported, structured way to engage with these challenges in an interactive, reflective environment that helps them determine what steps they can take to change things for the better. It acts as an antidote to the societal overwhelm we are experiencing in the face of the sheer volume of crises outlined above. GCE equips people of all ages with the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence needed to navigate today's complex world, and promotes meaningful individual and collective action for change. It builds civic trust, participation, and resilience in a time of political disinformation and polarisation.

In a world where the local and the global are intertwined and mutually affecting each other, our consciousness needs to be global. Without a society of engaged, active global citizens, it is unlikely that there will be the change in policies, practices, attitudes and behaviour needed to address the global and local challenges we face. With the right knowledge, understanding and skills, the people on this island can come together to play their part in creating a better future for all.

In this time of turbulence and intensified global and local challenges, Global Citizenship Education is not a “nice to have” but an essential component of lifelong education on the island of Ireland.

Why Ireland Must Lead on Global Citizenship Education



Ireland is uniquely placed to lead on Global Citizenship Education (GCE). It has already been recognised across Europe as a leader in this field through the GENE Peer Review, which has highlighted the quality, reach and innovation of Irish GCE practice. This leadership is based on strong foundations and is rooted in Ireland's own history: a nation shaped by colonialism, famine, migration, conflict and division.

These experiences have fostered a deep understanding of injustice, solidarity, and the importance of peacebuilding. They underpin Ireland's international reputation in development cooperation, humanitarian response, peacekeeping, and education - areas where GCE provides the framework to connect local and global realities.

At the same time, Ireland has a strong cultural and historical appreciation of the transformative power of education. It has long been the engine of our progress as a society, from lifting communities out of poverty to advancing peace on this island.

Yet today, Ireland faces new challenges to its social fabric, with polarisation, inequality and disinformation threatening cohesion at home. There is an urgent need to strengthen educational structures, foster resilience, and ensure people and communities can flourish.

GCE offers the tools to do this while also enabling Ireland to reach outward to the world at a time when principled international leadership is so badly needed.

By investing in GCE, Ireland can both reinforce its own cohesion and resilience and provide global leadership rooted in its history, values, and experience.

The current state of play

IDEA represents Global Citizenship Education practitioners across the island of Ireland. The current state of play in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) compared to the North is starkly different. This section first outlines the context in ROI, followed by the Northern Ireland (NI) context. We have included a focus on the situation in NI in Vision 2030 as several of our members operate or are based there, given that IDEA is an all-island network.

Building on successive Irish Aid strategies, the current Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021–2025 has established strong foundations and support structures that are driving progress towards the stated outcomes. For example, between 2021 and 2024, Irish Aid-funded GCE programmes

and projects engaged with over 1.2 million people²⁹ on this island. This investment and commitment by Irish Aid, along with the dedicated work of GCE practitioners, such as IDEA and its members, has achieved solid advances in embedding GCE across formal, non-formal and informal education settings and within policy, structures, curricula and teacher education. Ireland has a reputation as a leader in GCE internationally, and GCE practitioners in Ireland are highly skilled and knowledgeable.

We have also seen greater coordination between relevant government departments, such as the Department of Education and Youth (DEY), the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) in their roles as co-leads on the Second

National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, ESD to 2030. Via the National Steering Group and the Advisory Groups on ESD to 2030, there has also been collaboration on this strategy with Irish Aid, the Department of Climate, Energy, and the Environment (DCEE) and other relevant stakeholders, such as IDEA. This is a welcome development that points to the interconnectedness and overlap between these two areas of education that are key to achieving SDG Target 4.7.

Currently in the Republic, there are:



- Four nationally-funded GCE programmes in primary and post-primary schools: Our World Awards, Global Village, WorldWise Global Schools and An Taisce Green Schools Programme.
- Three nationally-funded programmes to embed GCE in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland: DICE (primary), the Ubuntu Network (post-primary), and Saolta (further education tutors).
- A nationally-funded GCE programme for Youth: Youth 2030.
- A nationally-funded GCE programme for Adult and Community Education (ACE): Saolta.
- A nationally-funded GCE programme for third-level students: STAND.
- 50+ organisations providing GCE to children, youth and adults in formal, non-formal and informal settings, including small and specialist organisations and ACE providers.
- An open curated digital repository for GCE resources in Ireland, developmenteducation.ie, and a biannual, peer reviewed, open access, online journal dedicated to GCE, *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*. Both are in widespread use across the education community throughout the island.

In addition to that, significant advances and impact have been achieved. For example:

- There was an exponential rise in the number of young people reached by Global Youth Work from 2021 to 2024. In 2021, Irish Aid-funded youth organisations engaged with 1,599 learners from a broad range of backgrounds including those who are often most marginalised from formal, mainstream education and society. By 2024, 12 organisations were being funded to provide GCE to 13,685 young people.³⁰ This has created great momentum towards reaching many more of the 400,000 young people engaged with by the youth work sector each year.
- Elected representatives, executive staff and members of Public Participation Networks in all 31 Local Authorities in ROI have participated in Saolta-led GCE workshops since 2020.
- Learners are reporting increased knowledge, confidence and capacity to act on global issues in recent years. E.g. the Youth 2030 Mid-Term Review³¹ 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 are reporting increased understanding and knowledge on global issues: For example, in 2024, developmenteducation.ie engaged with 863 teachers and student teachers and 94%³² of them reported improved understanding, knowledge, or potential behaviour change regarding global issues.
- 45 youth workers have achieved a Level 8 Certificate in Global Youth Work and Development Education delivered by NYCI in partnership with Maynooth University.

- STAND, in partnership with [The Union of Students of Ireland \(AMLÉ\)](#) and the [Board of Irish College Societies \(BICS\)](#) is embedding GCE in national and campus-level student leadership. AMLÉ represents over 360,000 students across the island of Ireland and BICS represents 800+ societies across 11 higher education institutions (HEIs).
- Since 2022, all new student teachers must study GCE as part of their initial teacher education (ITE) programme through the inclusion of GCE in the Céim Standards.³³
- Over 3,000 pre-service primary teachers were trained in GCE by DICE in 2024.
- The Ubuntu Network engages circa 3,500 pre-service post-primary teachers and 70 teacher educators annually in GCE ITE, GCE professional development and other activities in 12 HEIs. The number of participants in Ubuntu Network activities increased by 31% from 2021 to 2024.
- WorldWide Global Schools has worked with over 70% of post-primary schools to make GCE an important part of their school life since 2013.
- Key GCE concepts and approaches have been integrated into curricula in ROI and NI. For example, in ROI, 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. In NI, Local and Global Citizenship is part of the GCSE subject Learning for Life and Work, and the primary curriculum emphasises cultural understanding, including developing respect for others.
- Students can now earn GCE and Global Youth Work related degrees, diplomas and certificates at HEIs.
- National Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Further Education and Training (FET) courses now have accredited or non-accredited GCE education opportunities in every local authority area.



- IDEA's award-winning³⁴ Code of Good Practice for Development Education in Ireland is driving improvement in quality and mainstreaming of GCE practice across the wider education and community sector.³⁵ Currently, 54 organisations and networks are members of the IDEA Code of Good Practice. These range from large international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) such as Concern and Trócaire to educational entities such as Educate Together and the Department of International Development at Maynooth University, and from nationwide networks such as the National Youth Council of Ireland to small and specialist organisations, such as Afri, Comhlámh and Financial Justice Ireland.
- IDEA's [submission](#) to the [GENE Peer Review](#) of Ireland 2025 provided many examples of Irish GCE initiatives that involve high quality practice, strategy and approaches that other countries might learn from, as well as many examples of significantly increased reach and quality (see pp. 5-16). For example, STAND's reach increased from seven higher education campuses in 2020 to 17 in 2024, now engaging over 20,000 third-level students with their annual festival exhibition and events.

Despite these significant advances, there are still gaps in terms of geographical spread, depth of education and ensuring GCE is available in all education settings equitably. There is also a need for more sector-specific research to refine GCE and drive evidence-based GCE policy, and though considerable progress has been made, insufficient and unpredictable funding levels are still an issue in the sector.

Given the current political context globally and locally, there is also growing concern about the prospect of losing hard-earned gains if investment and support is not maintained and increased. Not only are we facing intensifying global risks, but we are running out of time to reach our SDG targets by 2030.

Northern Ireland³⁶



IDEA has several members that are providing quality GCE projects in Northern Ireland, such as Trócaire, Concern, Children in Crossfire, the Centre for Global Education, Tools for Solidarity, and Habitat for Humanity. However, the situation there is in stark contrast to the current situation in the Republic, due to the operating context for GCE in NI. There is very rich experience, a body of expert GCE practitioners and previously there was impressive systematic programming for many years, e.g. Global Learning Programme and Connecting the Classroom Programme. However, since 2021, there has been no state investment in GCE from the British government or the Northern Ireland Assembly. In addition, one of the impacts of Brexit was that GCE practitioners in NI can no longer access EU funding. Because of these drastic funding cuts, the GCE sector there has been hugely impacted. Furthermore, with no GCE policy or strategy for NI and very few alternative funding opportunities, the sector is contracting.

Positively, the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025 is an all-island policy and therefore, IDEA members operating in NI have been able to access Irish Aid funding. However, this funding is very limited. Another important factor to consider is the significant differences between formal and non-formal education systems north and south of the border. More investment in GCE programmes, capacities and structures is urgently needed. GCE is an all-island priority as it is a key response to all-island challenges. As such, GCE in NI should continue to be a feature of the next national Global Citizenship Education strategy and a central component of the Shared Island initiative of the Department of the Taoiseach, with strong coordination between relevant government Departments north and south of the border.

VISION 2030

Our vision for
quality Global
Citizenship
Education for all

Our vision is for everyone on the island of Ireland to have access to quality Global Citizenship Education. We believe this is a key catalyst in creating a society of active global citizens that strives “to create a world where every single person – especially the most vulnerable and the most marginalised – can live a decent life, with fairness, peace, and respect for their rights guaranteed...a healthy planet and understanding between different cultures and nations and respect for all forms of diversity.”³⁷ Our vision includes the following outcomes:



Transformed learners: Learners of all ages and backgrounds become equipped with the **knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes required to become active global citizens**. This gives them the confidence and agency to take individual and collective action for change, in solidarity and collaboration with oppressed communities.



Supported and Equipped Educators: Educators regularly reflect on their educational practice and receive adequate feedback, support and supervision. They refine practice when needed and use learner-centred methods. They also have access to **high quality professional learning and teaching materials**, and the tools, time and space required to facilitate quality GCE with learners.



Global Citizenship Education embedded in formal education curricula and settings: GCE is fully and appropriately integrated into education curricula and settings in ROI and NI and includes methodologies for **critical Global Citizenship Education**.



Global Citizenship Education embedded in Adult and Community Education: GCE is fully integrated into the adult and community education (ACE) sector north and south of the border. In ROI, this includes grassroots ACE offerings and within the scope of the Further Education and Training (FET) aspect of current Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) policy. In NI, this includes grassroots ACE and Further Education Northern Ireland offerings.



Young people and those who work with young people are co-creators of the global citizenship agenda: with dedicated funding streams and platforms amplifying youth voices in policy development, youth work practice, and programme design.



A vibrant all-island GCE alliance: that brings together a diverse range of civil society organisations (CSOs), educational institutions, and government bodies, operating on **principles of mutual support, trust and shared resources and capacity**. This collaborative approach allows for cohesive responses to global challenges, transforming GCE from a peripheral concern to a central feature of education and civic life. It also enables smaller organisations to thrive and contribute their unique expertise.



More GCE and ESD cooperation: Stronger and more strategic cooperation between GCE and ESD stakeholders to achieve more synergies between GCE and ESD within formal and non-formal settings.



Programme-based funding is prioritised: allowing for longer-term planning and deeper impact through a mix of government support, private partnerships, and innovative financing models.



Digital Futures: Digital platforms facilitate collaboration between practitioners and learners across the island and beyond and the positive potential of technology is harnessed to improve GCE content, delivery and learning.



Research: Ample funding for various kinds of GCE research is available, including longitudinal and participatory approaches; there are multiple research partnerships between universities and practitioners; and the evidence-base for the effectiveness of GCE is stronger.

VISION 2030

**What is needed
to make our
vision a reality**

There are many enabling factors and conditions needed to make our vision a reality. The first of these is **long-term commitment** and continued strategic coordinated efforts among all stakeholders, in **partnership with the Governments** on the island of Ireland. Other key factors include **increased public investment** providing sufficient, predictable resources and bolstered capacity, as well as a supportive and **coherent policy context** with a **cross-departmental coordinated approach**.

Policy Coherence and Investment

Policy coherence and cross-government strategic prioritisation and coordination

IDEA members' work contributes to many different government policy areas, including international development, education, climate action, justice, youth, community development, volunteering and more. They are already engaging with a broad, diverse spectrum of Irish society and with many different institutions and settings. To harness this, a supportive and coherent policy context and a cross-departmental coordinated approach are needed to achieve cohesive and strategic implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in all relevant national policies and across all sectors.

While there have been significant advances in achieving this, further steps are needed to ensure that there is a truly **whole-of-government approach** to GCE. This entails **strategic prioritisation of GCE** across relevant government departments and the **sustained and dynamic engagement** of those involved in Government and state institutions. It also requires **stronger and more strategic coordination** within and between relevant Government departments, along with integration of GCE into their policies and programmes, in relation to ESD and GCE. These include but are not exclusive to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DEY, DCDE, DFHERIS, DCEE, Department of Rural and Community

Development and the Gaeltacht, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

It also requires stronger coherence between key existing policies, such as the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy, National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan, National Youth Strategy, Further Education and Training Strategy, the Climate Action Plan, the National Action Plan Against Racism, the National Volunteering Strategy and the National Counter Disinformation Strategy.

A **multi-stakeholder GCE advisory group** would be welcome and supportive towards achieving stronger and more strategic coordination among stakeholders and stronger coherence between relevant policies.

Investment and funding

Investing 3% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in GCE combined with further investment across relevant departments

While Ireland represents one of the biggest investors in Global Citizenship Education per capita in Europe, it is still far from reaching the target of 3% of ODA, in line with the "Envision: 4.7 Roadmap in support of SDG Target 4.7."³⁸

The current Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy, which expires at the end of 2025 has provided strong support for the delivery of GCE across different settings in Ireland since 2021. IDEA acknowledges the significant increase in investment over the lifetime of the strategy, from 0.6% of ODA in 2021 to 1.2% of ODA in 2024, representing €9.8 million per year. Moving forward, commensurate investment is required to protect the gains that have been achieved, to ensure that public support for global justice does not diminish as it has in other countries and to ensure the vast potential of GCE as a

vehicle for social change is harnessed. At the same time, in NI, there has been no funding at all for GCE from the British Government since 2021 and therefore requires extra support.

Coherent, multi-annual and long-term funding strategies designed from a whole-of-government approach are needed to achieve our vision (and SDG Target 4.7). Such funding should be predictable and accessible to small, medium and large CSOs and other projects/partners north and south of the border.

Investment for GCE throughout Ireland should be significantly increased to meet the target of 3% of ODA by 2030, combined with more investment from other relevant departments, for example, the education, community development and environment budgets. A phased approach, with manageable annual increases of between 0.2% and 0.7% of ODA from Budget 2026 would see that the 3% target is reached by 2030.

An increase in investment would enable the sector to expand on the existing capacity and expertise in order to achieve the ambitions and potential of this Vision.

Funding via ESD to 2030, the Climate Action Plan and the National Action Plan Against Racism

The second National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD to 2030) provides another major opportunity for the advancement of Global Citizenship Education in Ireland. IDEA members are key actors in the implementation of this strategy, and it is crucial that adequate funding is allocated to civil society educators, further education tutors, schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) to ensure the strategy's successful implementation.

In addition, GCE would benefit from being included as funding lines in the **Climate Action Plan and National Action Plan Against Racism**, and all relevant public policies to strengthen policy coherence.

Funding Approaches

Within the investment approach, a range of funding modalities are needed, including a continuation of strategic partnerships and multi-annual funding to create a stable sector configured for strategic thinking and long-term planning. **Flexible funding needs to be tailored to the specific requirements** of the formal education, youth, and adult and community education sectors. A continuation of annual grant programmes for newer applicants is encouraged. In addition, flexible funding should enable small and specialist organisations to cover governance, administration, and monitoring and evaluation costs.

Future funding landscapes are uncertain and many members, particularly smaller or more specialist organisations, face challenges in securing sustainable resources. As a sector, it is important that we continue to explore opportunities to diversify funding sources where possible and ensure there is not an over-reliance on any single donor or source. While this is not easy, especially given current pressures, it remains vital that we find new sources of funding and cultivate new opportunities to ensure the sustainability of Global Citizenship Education in Ireland.

Research and Impact

Research

There have been some advances in funding for GCE and ESD research projects in recent years. Currently there are seven GCE and ESD research projects funded through the New Horizons programme by Research Ireland. To build on this, **an ambitious and effective research agenda must be included in any new national GCE strategy** to inform and enhance GCE delivery and practice in the GCE sector.

A key focus area for the sector is research into the long-term impact of GCE, and how it influences values, attitudes, systems, and behaviours. The broader GCE sector can

draw and build on existing good practice, such as [Aontas' 2025 research on measuring the impact of adult education](#) and the annual [Dóchas Worldview Survey](#). Research in this area needs to include longitudinal and participatory approaches and be appropriate to the activity and adaptable to the context. This will strengthen the evidence base for GCE, and in so doing, will address one of the challenges of short-term funding, which makes it difficult to measure change over a longer period. It will also enable policymakers and practitioners to improve both overall Global Citizenship Education strategy and the practice of GCE.

- Increase funding for a wide range of important research on GCE including longitudinal research, sector-specific research, GCE approaches, and participatory research.
- Provide additional funding/personnel to avail of opportunities for secondary analysis of the data Irish Aid has obtained from partner reports over the years.
- Establish a working group to develop a research agenda and to partner with Irish Aid on areas for research within the sector.
- Work with Research Ireland to improve the research funding stream for Global Citizenship Education.
- Provide grant funding for research and policy officers within selected organisations so research can be completed at a local and national level.
- Establish and support a learning network for Global Citizenship Education researchers.

Impact and quality

Measuring and communicating impact of Global Citizenship Education is a key priority and commitment for IDEA and our members. As a sector, we have been collectively working towards a shared understanding of the difference that GCE can make in the lives of learners and educators and within systems and policies, as well as a shared

framework for capturing and communicating the collective impact of GCE. Over many years IDEA has built sectoral capacity in using Results Frameworks and through the IDEA Quality & Impact Working Group engaged extensively with Irish Aid on their Performance Measurement Framework. After a literature review and workshops on impact measurement for GCE, from mid-2024 to mid-2025, IDEA and its members co-developed and tested a theory of impact model for GCE for the whole sector in Ireland. In August 2025, IDEA developed an accompanying impact measurement tool for the 14 intermediate outcomes and three long-term outcomes of the model that will be piloted by members in 2026. Our vision is to see the IDEA Theory of Impact used by IDEA and members to map and communicate the collective impact of GCE work across the island of Ireland over the coming years.

In parallel to the above process, IDEA with eight other Irish Aid strategic partners for GCE³⁹ developed a study in 2025 that interrogates how impact can be defined and communicated without reducing education to narrow outcomes, and how evidence can be mobilised for both policy and practice. The study explores the challenges inherent in demonstrating long-term impact and proposes hybrid approaches that blend quantitative indicators with participatory, reflective, and narrative-based approaches that capture both “stories and statistics.” The study also synthesises sector-wide evidence collected by the nine Irish Aid GCE strategic partners, complemented by evaluations and independent reviews. Mixed methods were used, combining quantitative reach data (educators trained, schools engaged, resources distributed) with qualitative case studies, learner testimonies, reflective practice, participatory evaluation, and outcome mapping.

Adequate resources and support are required to progress our work in impact measurement. This would enable us to considerably increase our capacity to map and communicate the collective cross-sectoral and sector-specific

impact of our GCE work by 2030. It is crucial to our sector's work towards a consistent approach to impact measurement, through shared frameworks and methodologies, and to our ability to strengthen our communication around the impact of GCE as a sector.

In terms of quality, we will continue to promote adherence to the IDEA Code of Good Practice as the barometer of quality GCE. At the time of writing, there are 54 members of the Code of Good Practice, each self-assessing their progress yearly in applying the principles of the Code in their educational and institutional practice. We will also build on the success of our Erasmus+ Project with Latvia to continue to expand the Code beyond Ireland in the coming years.

Expand reach, deepen engagement and embed Global Citizenship Education further

In addition to the above enabling factors and conditions to achieve Vision 2030, IDEA and our members have identified the following core priorities for the GCE sector to 2030:

All-island

- **Consolidate important partnerships** (strategic, annual, multi-annual and those with Ireland's Civil Society Partnership for A Better World) with Irish Aid and **increase collaboration and coordination** with each other to urgently reach more learners, ensure a more even geographical spread of GCE opportunities for learners across formal, non-formal and informal settings, deepen engagement, and embed GCE further in systems and policies.
- **Continue and expand provision of GCE programmes** in primary and second level schooling and in youth and adult and community education settings, as well as GCE in ITE and CPD for educators.
- **Reach marginalised communities and those with less access to educational opportunities** through existing education infrastructure and meaningful and relevant initiatives.
- **Harness the positive potential of digital technologies** in GCE programmes and projects to foster collaboration, coordination and bridge existing gaps of inequality.



- **Enhance our engagement with the Global South** and integrate more representative and diverse voices into GCE policy and practice.
- **Make GCE methodologies and content available as tools for all educators.** Educators in every setting are increasingly engaging with misinformation, disinformation, and polarisation as well as questions of ecological and social injustice in learning spaces. Continuous Professional Development is also needed to support educators to engage with learners in relation to “difficult knowledge” and discomfort using GCE-informed approaches, which might not be part of the formal curriculum.
- **Build multistakeholder partnerships** across CSOs, trade unions, government departments, statutory bodies, and corporate entities to advocate for and work together to ensure the following key policy and investment outcomes:
 - Government long-term commitment to maintain and increase investment in GCE as a critical public good that is an essential part of the solution to unprecedented and grave challenges.
 - Global Citizenship Education providers are adequately resourced so that employees can receive better pay and conditions, towards cultivating and retaining talent among GCE practitioners.
 - Global Citizenship Education is a visible component of future policy development in education.
 - Global Citizenship Education is an all-island priority as it is a key response to all-island challenges.⁴⁰ As such, the next national Global Citizenship Education strategy should continue to have an all-island scope, and funding for all-island GCE initiatives should be increased. Moreover, it should be a principal component of the Shared Island Initiative of the

Department of the Taoiseach, with strong coordination between relevant government departments north and south of the border.

Republic of Ireland

- Together with Irish Aid, develop and implement an effective multistakeholder **communications strategy** to increase the visibility of and demand for GCE from educators and learners, e.g. initiatives to attract, support and incentivise educators and institutions.
- In parallel to the above, advocate that institutional barriers and time constraints to participating in existing GCE offerings are addressed so educators can engage with offerings in a meaningful way.
- Advocate for the **integration and prioritisation** of Global Citizenship Education in **relevant institutions and networks**. These include, but are not exclusive to, Education and Training Boards, schools’ networks and patron bodies, youth sector bodies, volunteer centres and third-level institutions.
- Advocate for creation and funding of posts for regional coordinators within CSOs to coordinate with institutional actors to ensure comprehensive and sustained GCE delivery, inspired by the [One World Network](#) promoters’ programme.
- Advocate for continued sustained funding and support for small and specialist organisations, given their critical importance in the wider GCE eco-system.

Northern Ireland

As mentioned under the current state of play, the starting point for expanding and deepening GCE in NI in the coming years is vastly different to the current context in ROI. Therefore, we acknowledge that it will take longer to achieve our vision for quality GCE for all learners in NI, and thus we must take a differentiated approach to GCE in NI in the coming five years. Beyond the all-island priorities mentioned above and the shared island priorities mentioned below, we also commit to the following specific priorities for NI:

- Map the educational policy landscape in NI, as well as where GCE is currently provided, to which learners and in which educational settings.
- Continue to support the CADA GCE Working Group as a space for collaboration, coordination, and advocacy for improving the reach and depth of GCE in Northern Ireland.
- Expand IDEA membership in Northern Ireland and increase support to NI members.
- Engage with NI Education Bodies, including the Council for Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA), Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and Further Education in Northern Ireland (FENI) as key stakeholders.
- Engage with the NI Department of Education and advocate for integration of GCE into its mainstream education policy in Northern Ireland.
- Support the [Case for Global Learning](#) campaign, which advocates for UK state funding for GCE.
- Increase cross-border cooperation on GCE between IDEA members north and south of the border.
- Engage more with the Shared Island Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach on the issue of cross-border cooperation on GCE and the North South Ministerial Council in cooperation on education.

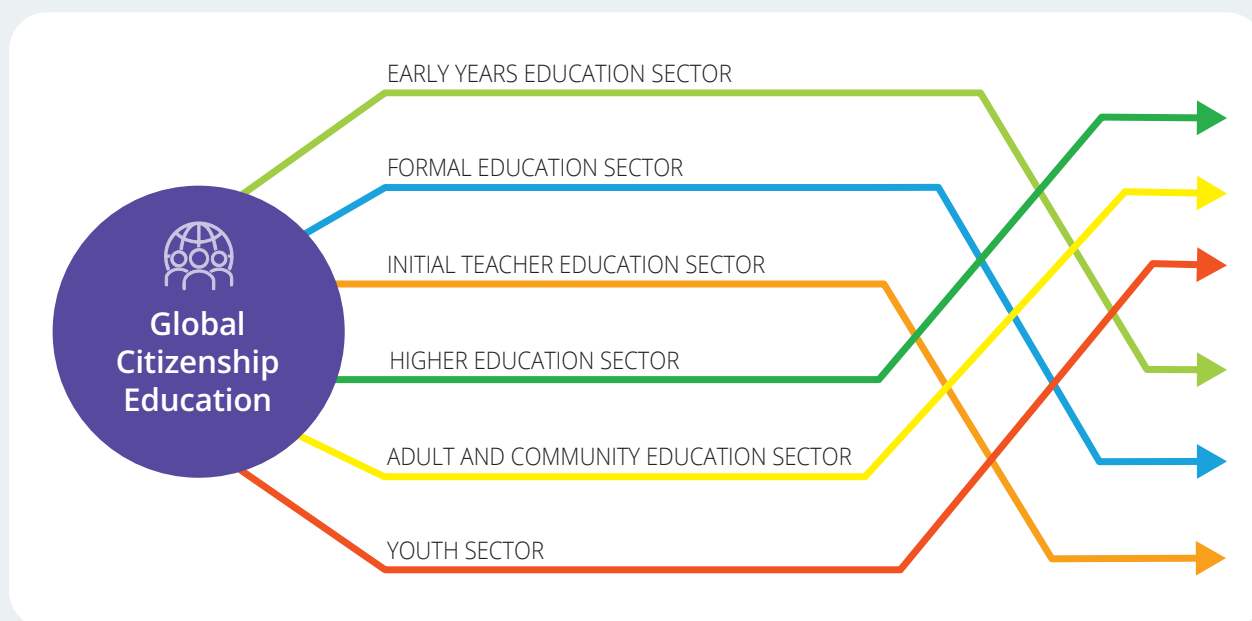
- Engage more with relevant cross-border stakeholders such as the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South, Centre for Cross Border Cooperation, etc.
- Advocate for and work with relevant stakeholders towards increased Irish Aid funding to NI and cross-border GCE projects. This can be done via existing or new funding mechanisms that build on the work of local organisations and networks (CADA, and IDEA members working in NI), such as a possible strategic partnership for NI, or through current strategic partnerships World Wise Global Schools, Youth 2030, Global Village and Saolta.

Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future



is a collaborative project between **Dóchas**, **CADA**, and **IDEA**, aiming to enhance cross-border cooperation on **Global Citizenship Education** across Ireland. Running throughout 2025, the initiative brings together development, humanitarian, and GCE organisations from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to explore challenges, opportunities, and best practices in GCE implementation. By fostering dialogue, sharing learning, and using IDEA's **Code of Good Practice** as a framework, the project seeks to bridge gaps between the two regions, particularly in border communities. Through workshops and events, the project aims to generate shared insights and recommendations for advancing GCE across the island, with hopes that this work will catalyse further cross-border collaboration and action in the years to come.

What is needed across specific education sectors to 2030



1. Early years education sector

Overview

Early childhood is an important time for young children's learning and development. While early years educators have long supported the knowledge, skills and values of global citizenship, the formal concept and language are relatively new. The focus for the coming five years therefore is on embedding the concept, building on existing practice, and providing resources and professional development to strengthen educators' understanding and practice.

Challenges and Opportunities

There are many links between Global Citizenship Education (GCE) concepts, such as justice, equality and global citizenship, and Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. The updated Aistear (NCCA, 2024) speaks directly to this linkage with the first and second principles of the framework directly focusing on children as 'agentic global citizens' and on the importance of 'diversity, equity and inclusion'.⁴¹ Another new Aistear principle, Transitions, is also worth considering in the context of global

citizenship.⁴² Transition between early learning and care settings to primary school is a particularly important time for GCE, as it is a time when children encounter new environments, relationships and expectations that can shape their sense of identity, belonging and participation in a diverse world. In addition, the introduction of mandatory training on the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines (Department of Children, 2016) to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) settings is an opportunity for early years educators to create more inclusive environments for all children to strengthen their sense of identity and belonging in a diverse world.

Key policy and investment priorities

- Develop GCE Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for early years educators.
- Promote GCE in early years and primary Initial Teacher Education, aligning with Aistear's updated principles of children as "agentic global citizens".

Key priorities for GCE practitioners

- Greater promotion and use of current GCE resources to support early years educators' understanding related to global citizenship.

2. Formal education sector

Overview

Currently there are well-developed Global Citizenship Education (GCE) capabilities in the mainstream school system in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), particularly at post-primary level. WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS) has engaged with 70% of post-primary schools in ROI since 2013. Over many years, it has successfully deepened engagement with, and strengthened the support available to, schools, especially through the promotion of whole-school approaches, such as the Global Passport framework.⁴³ This is in addition to the vast reach of the An Taisce Green Schools Programme, which has a specific global citizenship component, and many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) engaging with schools on GCE at primary and/or post-primary level, such as Trócaire, Concern, GOAL, and A Partnership for Africa.

The establishment of the Global Village strategic partnership between Irish Aid and a consortium of four partner organisations – Trócaire, INTO, IPPN and DCU has made a critical contribution to supporting GCE in more primary schools across the island. The successful pilot programme in 2022/2023 was followed by a full three-year programme for 2023-2026, which at the time of writing was making clear progress towards increasing the reach, accessibility, quality and effectiveness of GCE across primary education.⁴⁴ It adds to the significant contributions of pre-existing primary school GCE programmes offered by several IDEA members.

Whole school approaches are strategic frameworks that seek to embed GCE within schools in a systemic and structural way to ensure deeper GCE engagements and the longevity of GCE in schools and help overcome setbacks when ‘champion teachers’ with GCE interest and experience move on. IDEA members use a range of strategies to promote whole school



approaches, such as via the WorldWide Global Schools (WWGS) Global Passport framework and Global Village's whole staff in-school training and reflection tools. They also support school policy development and promote and support **GCE communities of practice** in and among schools.

Building the capacity of educators to integrate GCE into their teaching, through Continuous Professional Development (CPD), one-to-one supports, whole school supports, and teacher education, is vital towards ensuring access to high quality GCE for learners at all levels. It is key to recognise the whole school as a comprehensive learning environment, with learning opportunities for GCE inside and outside the classroom, which can be supported by senior leaders in a whole school approach.

Recent advances

The revised primary curriculum framework provides opportunities to further embed GCE in primary schools, particularly as 'being an active citizen' is one of the seven key competencies in the new framework.

In 2024, WWGS began offering grants for GCE projects in secondary schools in Northern Ireland (NI), expanding the scope of its work to an all-island basis. In addition, a focus on GCE outside of Transition Year, in ROI, and many opportunities to embed GCE within the post-primary curriculum, arising from the Junior and Senior Cycle reform process, have led to further integration of GCE at post-primary level in ROI in recent years.

In ROI, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) operates an open consultation process that invites submissions from both individuals and organisations on subject specifications and curriculum frameworks. The IDEA Formal Education Working Group has used this valuable avenue to propose integration of GCE into subjects and curriculum frameworks, such as the primary curriculum framework, Aistear curriculum, different post-primary subject specifications and the Transition Year programme. Key competencies in the new senior cycle framework include GCE relevant competencies such as 'participating in society', and GCE-related concepts are evident in the Junior Cycle statements of learning.

Global Citizenship Education within Formal Education in Northern Ireland

As described in the current state of play, in Northern Ireland, since British state funding was cut and Brexit excluded NI GCE practitioners from applying for EU funding, the scope of GCE there has been reduced in recent years. However, significant programmes and projects are still available in a range of primary and post-primary schools, such as Educating the Heart by Children in Crossfire, Gamechangers by Trócaire and the Concern Debates.

The Department of Education in NI ran an open consultation process in early 2025 on a review of the NI curriculum at primary and secondary level. IDEA made a submission to this consultation aiming to emphasise the critical importance of maintaining existing GCE-related content and aspects and addressing GCE gaps in the curriculum. The final report, in June 2025, recommended that the subject that focused most on GCE content, concepts and competencies (Learning for Life and Work) be disbanded as a standalone area of learning. However, it is recommended that citizenship be taught as part of 'Environment and Society' and other strands be taught in 'Employability and Wellbeing'. IDEA and our members will continue to engage in the follow-up process to the curriculum review to ensure GCE stays on the agenda.

Challenges and opportunities

There is ample scope for GCE to be provided in more primary schools in ROI, mainstream schools at primary and secondary level in NI, and in alternative education settings across the island. In addition to this, there is a teacher supply crisis⁴⁵ in ROI at primary and post-primary level. Furthermore, educators, governance bodies and leaders in formal education settings north and south of Ireland experience immense time pressure due to various factors, including but not exclusive to curriculum overload, competing priorities, and demands to implement a wide range of school policies.

As a result of these barriers, many educators may be unable to avail of existing offers of GCE-related CPD in ROI. Beyond overcoming these barriers, it is the value given to GCE in schools, the curriculum and associated CPD provided by Oide that largely determines the level of engagement with CPD offers. Meanwhile, in NI, there are few opportunities for GCE-related CPD.⁴⁶

Key policy and investment priorities

Irish Aid:

- Continue investment in Global Village and WorldWide Global Schools, the strategic partnerships for GCE in primary and post-primary schools.
- Expand reach and depth of GCE within Formal Education with a focus on whole school approaches.
- Increase access for educators and school leaders to more GCE.

Department of Education and Youth:

- Include GCE on the agenda of the National Convention on Education.
- Increase access for educators and school leaders to more GCE.
- Address time constraints and competing priorities at departmental level. This would enable teachers and school leaders to engage in CPD, and other capacity-strengthening supports on GCE.

Key priorities for GCE practitioners

Expanding reach and depth of GCE within Formal Education

- Expand the reach and depth of GCE in schools and alternative education settings in ROI and NI by working with a higher number and diverse range of schools in rural and urban areas across each county on the island of Ireland, with a particular focus on including traditionally underserved schools, e.g. Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí, special education classes and schools, alternative education settings such as Youthreach (ROI) and Pathways (NI), etc.
- Continue to promote and support whole school approaches to GCE with a focus on facilitating pilot communities of practice in and among schools and replicating good practice approaches from schools that have already embedded GCE.

Increasing access for educators and school leaders to more GCE within Formal Education

- Continue opportunities for primary and post-primary educators and school leaders to engage in GCE-related CPD and other capacity-strengthening supports in ROI. Priority focus: supporting teachers to enhance the opportunities for GCE within their subjects at post-primary level and in a cross-curricular manner at primary level, incorporating the key competency of 'being an active citizen'.
- Increase opportunities for primary and secondary teachers/educators and school leaders to engage in GCE-related CPD and other capacity-strengthening supports in NI. Priority focus: areas of learning called the World Around Us and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (and the strand on Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4), as per the 2025 NI curriculum review report.⁴⁷

- Develop capacity building opportunities for schools' management, including school leaders and boards of management.
- Promote current GCE resources by IDEA members, to support primary school and post-primary/secondary teacher CPD, and to collaborate with IDEA members in integrating GCE into relevant toolkits and training programmes. This process can be done in partnership with Oide, in ROI, and with the Education Authority and the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.

Within the primary school sector

- Engage with NCCA and Oide on the enactment of the revised primary curriculum framework.
- Support primary educators to embed the key competency of 'being an active citizen' across the curriculum and through whole school approaches.
- Further strengthen the connections between Initial Teacher Education and in-service professional development programmes for primary schools.
- Deepen collaboration between GCE practitioners supporting learners at transition stages e.g. early years to primary, primary to post-primary/secondary.
- Strengthen the research base for GCE in the primary sector, linking and embedding research with practice and policy.

- Support primary educators to engage in critical reflection on GCE approaches and actions, with a focus on the distinction between soft and critical GCE, between charity and solidarity-based actions, and to apply their learning to practice for critical GCE action in the school and wider community settings.

Within the post-primary/secondary school sector

- Continue to make submissions to relevant curriculum review processes in ROI and NI.
- Engage with NCCA and Oide in ROI on the roll-out of the new Junior and Senior Cycle subjects.
- Engage with the NI Department of Education on the follow up process to the 2025 curriculum review and the roll-out of their new comprehensive strategy to transform teaching and learning in Northern Ireland (TransformED NI).
- Avail of the opportunity to further integrate GCE in the Transition Year curriculum in ROI by developing and offering specific GCE modules for Transition Year students.
- Engage with NCCA and CCEA for curricula to include more emphasis on socio-emotional learning linking to global justice.

3. Initial teacher education sector

Overview

Initial Teacher Education straddles both the formal education and the higher education sectors. In the Republic of Ireland (ROI), significant progress has been made over the past two decades to integrate Global Citizenship Education (GCE) within primary and post-primary teacher education programmes. Much credit is due to “GCE pioneers and visionaries who advocated tirelessly for the importance of integrating global, justice and intercultural perspectives into teacher education.”⁴⁸ This led to the establishment of important programmes for GCE in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), namely the DICE (Development and Intercultural Education) project in 2004 and the Ubuntu Network in 2006. Currently, both are Irish Aid strategic partners. The DICE project is a nationally coordinated initiative that embeds GCE within primary ITE offered at four publicly funded HEIs and two private HEIs, while the Ubuntu Network supports the integration of GCE in ITE at post-primary level through collaboration with 15 HEIs. Both initiatives address GCE in ITE curriculum, professional development of educators and support for academic research.

Recent Advances

One of the most significant achievements to support this integration of GCE in ITE was the inclusion of GCE as a core element in the Céim Standards (Teaching Council, 2020). This decision highlights a national commitment to embedding global awareness, sustainability, social justice, and intercultural understanding in teacher education, aligning with broader educational and societal goals. This is in addition to and built upon the substantial advances made by DICE and the Ubuntu Network in embedding GCE within primary and post-primary ITE in ROI. For example, aligning

with national curriculum reform (e.g. Aistear, Social Personal Health Education), DICE has been ensuring that GCE is not an add-on, but integrated into pedagogy, planning, and critical reflection within ITE at primary level. DICE-supported modules have focused on critical literacy, social justice, and sustainable development, influencing 3,000+ pre-service teachers annually. Meanwhile, Ubuntu Network has supported the integration of GCE into ITE post-primary programmes, directly engaging circa 3,500 pre-service teachers and 70 teacher educators annually. Both DICE and the Ubuntu Network have deepened the pedagogical confidence of lecturers to teach and model GCE to pre-service teachers via continuous professional development (CPD) workshops and communities of practice for ITE staff.

Challenges and opportunities

While there has been noteworthy progress in GCE in ITE, stakeholders must create and avail of opportunities to assure its sustained integration in Ireland. Many teacher educators still grapple with conceptual clarity around GCE, particularly in navigating the balance between promoting critical perspectives and avoiding ideological bias. Embedding GCE meaningfully across diverse subjects and within the constraints of overloaded curricula remains a challenge, especially when institutional priorities favour core academic content. There is also a persistent hesitancy among educators to address global issues that are perceived as sensitive or emotive, often due to fear of judgment or perceived lack of expertise. Moreover, creating inclusive, dialogic learning environments that foster critical self-awareness, and social responsibility demands significant time, training, and emotional labour, resources not always available or prioritised within ITE structures. Systemic constraints also exist, and policy alignment, institutional support, and sustained funding are required to ensure GCE is not treated as a peripheral add-on but as a central, transformative dimension of ITE.



Key policy and investment priorities

Irish Aid:

- Continue to invest in DICE and Ubuntu Network to consolidate progress and advance systemic embedding of GCE across all ITE programmes by aligning it with curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and institutional culture.
- Support communities of practice among ITE providers, such as the Ubuntu Network, DICE and Saolta to share resources, methodologies, and innovations in GCE.

Higher education institutions:

- Commit to a whole institution approach to GCE, with leadership buy-in, aligning with national policy frameworks, such as Céim standards, and investment in long-term structural supports.

DEY, DFHERIS and DCDE:

- Integrate GCE initial teacher education priorities into ESD to 2030 and the National Action Plan against Racism.

DCEE:

- Integrate GCE ITE priorities into the Climate Action Plan.

Key priorities for GCE practitioners

- Strengthen teacher educator capacity to model inclusive, critical, and globally responsive pedagogies through sustained professional development, reflective practice, and communities of practice.
- Strengthen links between ITE providers and GCE-focused networks (e.g. GENE and ANGEL).
- Promote transnational GCE teacher exchanges or joint modules with Global South partners to deepen solidarity and co-learning.
- Continue to encourage staff in education to improve the diversity of educators in the design and delivery of teacher education by proactively seeking representatives from minority groups, voices from the Global South and migrant-led GCE providers.

4. Higher education sector (excluding Initial Teacher Education)

Overview

Over the past few years there have been growing efforts to ensure GCE is embedded at higher education level in ROI, across academic research and publications, integration into other disciplines in higher education institutions (HEIs), Initial Teacher Education (ITE), educational modules and qualifications, and non-formal and informal education provision for students and academic staff.⁴⁹

These include the establishment of important Irish Aid-funded strategic partnerships for GCE at higher education level, namely those in support of ITE (DICE and the Ubuntu Network), Global Youth Work (Youth 2030), Adult and Community Education (Saolta), and third-level students (STAND). Beyond festivals, workshops and leadership programmes for students, STAND embeds GCE in national and campus-based student leadership structures and offers professional development opportunities for academic and professional staff across disciplines in collaboration with teaching and learning units. Further examples include curriculum integration projects such as the Praxis Project in UCC, and the Proudly Made in Africa project based at UCD. University College Dublin Volunteers Overseas' work around GCE and volunteering in University College Dublin and the Creativity and Change project at Munster Technological University are other noteworthy initiatives. Though there are few Level 10 study opportunities available, in addition to the ITE opportunities, some Level 8 and 9 programmes are offered through various departments and centres, e.g. Mary Immaculate College's M. Ed in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship; Maynooth University's Certificate in GCE; and studies offered by the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education at DCU. This work in GCE complements that undertaken on ESD and other critical global education, such as peace education and human rights education, as

well as HEI sustainability initiatives as part of their ESD commitments. In Northern Ireland, there are also some examples of GCE in academic research, Initial Teacher Education and non-formal and informal educational opportunities for students and academic staff.⁵⁰

Recent Advances

A significant achievement has been the embedding of GCE across national and campus-based student leadership structures through a partnership between STAND and AMLÉ, the national student union network, formerly known as USI, and the Board of Irish College Societies (BICS). This includes annual leadership training and targeted capacity building, recognition of student leadership on global justice themes through annual national awards, and a dedicated digital badge for student societies across Ireland. The collaboration between STAND and the national student bodies has positioned global justice as a core element of student leadership and engagement across Ireland's higher education landscape.

Another significant achievement has involved the Youth 2030 Programme working with the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS), which is responsible for the professional endorsement of youth work programmes on the island of Ireland. Global Youth Work is now included in the learning process requirements for HEIs on the island of Ireland.

Challenges and opportunities

Despite progress, GCE in the higher education sector presents challenges, contradictions and opportunities.⁵¹ For example, while some research funding is available for GCE through Research Ireland's New Foundations and Coalesce schemes, and there are excellent publication opportunities through the Centre for Global Education's *Policy and Practice: A*

Development Education Review, there are substantial gaps in research funding and support for the development of GCE as an academic discipline in Ireland. In addition, beyond teacher education, there is a huge opportunity to develop GCE pedagogy at Higher Education level. This is especially important in the current global climate, where students and staff are looking for education that responds to war, colonialism, racism, inequality, and climate injustice in meaningful and transformative ways.

There are also constraints related to the operating environment for GCE practitioners. The space for critical GCE seems limited in a context where HEIs are becoming more commercialised and “influenced by broader neoliberal, business-driven and skills-oriented HE policies.”⁵²

Another constraint mentioned by some GCE practitioners in Higher Education is competing priorities on every campus, the siloed nature of departments and disciplines at certain HEIs and the emphasis on research and publications over deep and critical learning opportunities. The experience of other GCE practitioners in Higher Education is that GCE is currently part of the ‘policy’ aspect of universities and not necessarily a priority for integration across disciplines. Added to this challenging operating environment is the move by universities, especially corporate and technological universities, to promote physical sciences over social arts and humanities. Furthermore, many of the HEI sustainability initiatives are perceived as tokenistic by students and academic staff alike. Some IDEA members working at HEIs have also observed lesser attendance in classes and lower engagement with lectures and campus activities in recent years. This could be due to many factors including the pressure on many students to work alongside studying to afford living costs.⁵³

Key policy and investment priorities

Irish Aid:

- Develop a strategic partnership with key stakeholders for GCE at higher education level.
- Scale non-formal integration through continued investment in STAND to further embed GCE in national and campus based third-level student leadership structures and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to reach a diverse and cross-disciplinary student body.
- Scale formal integration by building on the Praxis project in UCC as a model to be replicated across HEIs. This model comprises a rigorous approach to integrating GCE into a HEI, and includes a GCE digital badge, a community of praxis, research and case studies.
- Scale Global Youth Work focus and curriculum throughout all the HEIs working in the field of youth and community work on the island of Ireland.
- Increase research funding, to be available within GCE projects and programmes, and for practitioners in the wider sector, including non-academic CSOs.⁵⁴

Higher Education Authority:

- Request secondment of a GCE expert to integrate GCE across HEIs, similar to the initiative to integrate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across HEIs,⁵⁵ linking non-formal and formal efforts.
- Develop and invest in a national GCE digital badge through the Higher Education Authority's National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and the integration of GCE in ESD and SDG badges.



Key priorities for GCE practitioners

- Establish an IDEA Working Group on Higher Education to increase coherence and coordination among GCE stakeholders and initiatives at higher education level towards consolidating and strengthening progress made in embedding GCE at higher education level to date. It will work towards the following:
 - Engage in structured dialogue and collaboration with Irish Aid and other policymakers and donors, towards development of a strategic partnership with the Irish Government for GCE at higher education level.
 - Map HEIs to establish where GCE engagements are taking place and to identify the gaps and opportunities and what is needed to have an institution-wide approach.
 - Map GCE research conducted in HEIs in ROI over the past few years.
 - Explore partnerships for research with other networks such as Development Studies Association of Ireland and the ANGEL network.
- Learn from successful projects already established within and across HEIs.
- Explore connections and seek synergies between ESD and GCE; non-formal and formal curriculum projects; research and publications and between and across institutions.
- Jointly apply for networking and research grants.
- Increase coordination and cooperation with ESD stakeholders to achieve more synergies between GCE and ESD within HEIs, e.g. via the ESD Advisory Group on HE-FET.
- Educate relevant higher education policymakers in understanding and supporting the complementary roles of academic and policy development of GCE in HEIs.
- Centre more explicitly critical GCE scholarship and political engagement for global justice as a key priority for advancing GCE at higher education level, and advocate for this focus to be included in the next Global Citizenship Education strategy.

Key priorities around research

Irish Aid:

- Significantly increase research funding, to be available within GCE projects and programmes, and for practitioners in the wider sector, including non-academic CSOs, with emphasis on the following:
 - Provide funding for professional development and research posts for faculty to build expertise in GCE pedagogy, especially those outside development-related or global studies.
 - Improve access to appropriate research facilities such as Coalesce funding for academics at mid and advanced career level as a way to advance academic research in GCE. While the New Foundations Research Grant is a welcome facility, it has limited parameters and restricted access: grant amounts are maximum €10,000 per grant within an overall fund of €50,000, applicants must have a PhD and be linked to a research institute that partners with a network, and it is aimed at academics early in their careers.
 - Provide more open access funding to support production and dissemination of GCE publications, such as *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, which is essential to building a stronger GCE research culture.
 - Support the establishment of a research cluster that takes a strategic approach to a topic area and a more cohesive approach to research outputs.

5. Adult and community education sector (including Further Education)

Overview

Global Citizenship Education takes place across a wide range of formal and non-formal spaces of Adult and Community Education (ACE) settings in both the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI). These spaces include community development projects, international volunteer projects, national volunteer centres, community education centres, further education centres, NGOs, Local Development Companies, women's groups, men's groups, trade unions, family resource centres and community gardens. Many ACE providers can reach marginalised groups, including second chance learners, unemployed people, marginalised young people, adult basic education learners, one-parent families, older people, migrants, and the Traveller and Roma communities.

The current GCE in ACE sector comprises many actors, including Saolta - the Irish Aid strategic partnership for GCE in Adult and Community Education, as well as Donegal Changemakers, Afri, Comhlámh, Development Perspectives, Lourdes Community and Youth Services, Meath Partnership and Síolta Chroí, to name but a few. These education providers are geographically diverse and help to keep the social fabric alive and evolving. Many of them are at the heart of local communities that have been historically marginalised and most negatively affected by global issues. Providing lifelong GCE learning opportunities in these settings can play a pivotal role in empowering these communities to respond to the challenges and to be part of the solutions.

Global Citizenship Education actors in the ACE sector have expertise in methods and approaches to lifelong learning, Adult and Community Education, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), critical information literacy, human rights, and global social justice, and can provide coherent responses

to policy commitments from the government and various relevant sectors. GCE adds value to ACE by bringing critically informed global dimensions and strengthening the values base of ACE programmes; developing skills for a rapidly changing, interconnected and unequal world; encouraging active citizenship and empowering learners to take informed action for a more just and sustainable world; and building a sense of solidarity, inclusiveness and resilience in local communities. As such, the ACE and Further Education and Training (FET) sectors are vital routes to reach adult and community groups and marginalised learners on a large scale, in values and practice-based learning settings that are an excellent fit for GCE.

Recent Advances

Over the past few years, there have been important advances made in embedding GCE at a structural level within policies, curricula and education for educators in ACE settings, as demonstrated in the [report of the second mapping of Global Citizenship Education in the Adult & Community Education 2022](#) by Saolta. For example, all local authorities have mentioned and included the SDGs in their most recent County Development Plans (CDP) and much of the work carried out by Saolta with Local Authorities and Public Participation Networks (PPNs) in recent years has been related to Target SDG 4.7, which focuses on GCE and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). In addition to policy dialogue with Local Authorities and PPNs, Saolta has run GCE workshops for PPN members, local elected representatives and members of the executive in all 31 local authorities since 2020. Beyond this, 13 Local Government staff and/or PPN members and locally elected representatives from 11 Local Authorities have participated in and completed SDG advocate training by Development Perspectives over the last number of years.

In terms of curriculum integration, several modules have been created. Among others, Cork Education and Training Board (CETB)

developed two module descriptors for Climate Justice and Active Citizenship, while Saolta created one for a QQI compliant level 4 module on Migration for FET and Community Education.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the growing engagement with ACE and FET initial teacher education providers on integrating GCE input and materials for FET lecturers and student teachers shows how needed GCE is at this level of education. Educators require teaching material and tools that can respond to the world's concerns. These concerns manifest themselves through all social science studies, and GCE can help educators address them through their work, and make their classes relevant to learners, their lives and the lives they impact.

There have also been interesting advances in promoting depth education for adult learners, such as the DEFY project, a three-year collaboration between Comhlámh, STAND, Finep and Zavod Voluntariat.

Challenges and opportunities

The sector covers an enormous breadth of activity, and it is subject to and fits under a wide range of policies that are formulated by diverse actors and are implemented by multiple bodies. However, there is a lack of coherence in policy and practice at national level to coordinate the various actions and initiatives effectively. Integrating GCE into this type of environment presents both opportunities and significant challenges in terms of coordination.

The Programme for Government 2025 provides notable commitments that clearly align with the principles and aims of both ACE and GCE and therein provide great opportunities for GCE and ACE. In addition to this, Future FET: Transforming Learning, the National Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024, includes important commitments to ACE that we hope will continue to feature in the next iteration of this strategy (under development in 2025), such as the much-needed focus on climate and sustainability. There is a recognition of

the rapidly changing nature and continued globalisation of our world within the context of the need for skills development. This is an important part of sustainability, socio-cultural development and good health and wellbeing. However, without social justice, equality and awareness of global issues and how we impact each other, these skills and employment cannot bring the socio-economic changes needed for a healthier and fairer society. To this end, Saolta has been advocating for the FET Strategy from 2025 to have a far greater focus on social justice, equality, and awareness of global issues. For this to be functionally embedded into FET from 2025, these important learning frameworks and contexts need to be accommodated. Coherence among policies and better coordination among implementation bodies is key to embedding GCE in ACE and FET policy and institutional practice. Linking into European initiatives to foster policy coherence is also important, e.g. AONTAS are National Coordinators of the New European Agenda for Adult Learning - a European Commission initiative to promote adult learning across Europe.

Moreover, the Community Education Framework - Transforming Learning is another important national policy framework that GCE contributes to. There are also multiple important opportunities for GCE under the national ESD to 2030 strategy and the National Counter Disinformation Strategy and for GCE to be embedded within Local Authorities and PPN strategic documents and Well-being Statements, Local Community Development Committees' plans, as well as in Local Development Companies' policy, strategy and planning documents. Both the Irish Government and the European Commission are putting much emphasis on the need to decentralise more power to Local Authorities, which presents an opportunity to upskill PPN representatives, locally elected representatives, and staff within County Council executive branches. This would strategically build on the work that has been carried out within Local Authorities, PPNs, and the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) to date.

Key policy and investment priorities

Irish Aid:

- Continue investment in Saolta, the Irish Aid GCE strategic partnership for GCE in ACE, and in the ACE sector more generally.
- Provide funding and support to roll out the Global Compass Framework across the FET sector.
- Increase funding and support for accredited and non-accredited capacity building programmes and activities for adult educators and facilitators. This would include continued resourcing of accredited Continuous Professional Development (CPD) pathways for GCE practitioners working with adult learners. For example, Saolta's Training of Trainers is a tri-annual dynamic training programme that evolves with current global affairs, and the needs of ACE practitioners.
- Provide funding for ACE-specific GCE research, such as a third mapping of GCE in the ACE sector, with an all-island scope.

Irish Aid, DFHERIS, DCDE, Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht:

- Greater engagement between Irish Aid, DFHERIS, and Solas, to ensure GCE is included in policy goals and departmental objectives for the FET sector.
- Cross-departmental support and funding for GCE for underserved communities and groups, including those that are marginalised from mainstream education and society. This includes communities and groups targeted by actors using disinformation to misrepresent global issues to foment division and build misinformed political capital.

DFHERIS:

- Secondment of a GCE expert into Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) to integrate GCE across ETBs and the creation of a GCE facilitator post in each of the 16 ETBs. This will ensure capability for delivering GCE throughout the ETBs nationally.

Key priorities for GCE practitioners

Policy and Research

- Join strategic multi-stakeholder ACE and FET committees and working groups.
- Build partnerships with migrant-led organisations to promote GCE as an effective approach to building socio-cultural resilience for communities against racist and discriminatory behaviour and attitudes.
- Act as key stakeholders in embedding critical global literacy as a core component in FET courses and programmes (QQI levels 1 to 6) via events, workshops, materials, and module creation.
- Advocate for funding to review existing policies in education, Local Development Companies, local government/PPNs, FET institutes, grassroots and community organisations, etc., to contribute to emerging policies, identify synergies with GCE and identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration.
- Act as key stakeholders in implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism and the National Disinformation Strategy.

Curriculum development and integration

- Consolidate and maintain collaborative partnerships between GCE practitioners and the FET sector, towards the following aims:
 - increase the number of FET actors adopting the Saolta Global Compass as a framework for embedding GCE in FET settings, and roll-out a possible sub-granting scheme, pending funding.
 - continue to support the development of QQI accredited programmes at levels 1–6 that integrate GCE.
- Develop and/or update existing educational resources to enable integration of GCE into existing accredited and non-accredited programmes.

Capacity building

- Continue and improve provision of quality GCE training and CPD on GCE for students and lecturers in ITE programmes in the Adult and Community Education sector north and south of the border.
- Working in partnership with relevant stakeholders to develop further undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in GCE for ACE, and facilitation and accompanying teaching and learning approaches to embed GCE into ACE and increase capacity. This should include training in Technology Enhanced Learning.

6. Youth sector

Overview

Global Youth Work (GYW), which is Global Citizenship Education for youth, creates opportunities for young people and those who work with young people to participate in a learning space where together, learners and educators can explore and enhance their contribution to creating a better world for everyone. It creates spaces where people are encouraged to voice their opinions, be curious and learn about the world, and contribute to decision-making, which supports them to develop leadership and critical thinking skills. It also builds self-confidence, enhances their ability to manage relationships, and supports them as they transition through life.

Global Youth Work is a collaborative process where educators and learners come together to challenge inequality and address social and global issues. Global Youth Work encourages active

global citizenship and supports participants to shape a more just and inclusive society. Its values include equity, solidarity, empathy, community, sustainability, justice, diversity, fairness, human rights, empowerment, and active global citizenship.

The GYW sector includes youth workers and youth leaders, youth work managers, youth organisations, volunteers, trainers, researchers, higher education institutions (HEIs), educators/lecturers of youth workers, boards of management, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), ETB Youth Officers, local communities and local government, young people, partners, and policy makers.

The youth work sector engages 400,000 young people annually, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are 1,400 staff employed as youth workers and more than 40,000 volunteers carry out youth work across the country.⁵⁷ Indeed, volunteering is a critical component in the delivery of the work, as voluntary youth work organisations are often the sole providers of youth work services.



Recent Advances

Over the past few years, there have been significant advances made in expanding the reach of GYW and embedding GYW at a structural level within policies, curricula, capacity building opportunities and education for educators in youth settings. The Irish Aid funded Global Citizenship Education strategic partnership for the Youth Sector, Youth 2030, recorded significant positive impacts⁵⁸ in 2024, with 88% of youth workers surveyed reporting enhanced capabilities and 82.5% noting increased confidence to act on global issues. 92% of young people reported increased knowledge of global development issues. It has provided valuable resources, training, on granting, and networking opportunities that have enhanced the capacity of youth sector learners to incorporate global perspectives into their work and life.

In terms of reach, an increase in Irish Aid funding for Global Youth Work from 2021 to 2024 led to an exponential rise in the number of young people reached by 2024. In 2021, Irish Aid funded 3 organisations to engage with 1,599 learners from a broad range of backgrounds including those who are often most marginalised from formal, mainstream education and society. By 2024, 12 organisations were funded to provide GCE to 13,685 young people.⁵⁹ This has created great momentum towards reaching many more of the 400,000 young people engaged with by the youth work sector each year. The increase in reach should also be understood as a recovery towards pre-financial crash numbers.

There has been considerable progress made in curriculum integration and GYW study opportunities too. Youth 2030 worked with North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS), on their [Criteria and Procedures for the Professional Endorsement of Higher Education Programmes of Study in Youth Work](#) (2021), to include a focus on and reference to global citizenship, GYW,

environment, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is relevant to the six HEIs on the island of Ireland that deliver youth and community study programmes at undergraduate and post graduate levels each year.

In 2024, Youth 2030 completed a mapping of curricula across these six HEIs and are currently implementing recommendations with HEI educators, including regular online CPD inputs for lecturers, a 2-day residential training, and support for curriculum design to grow Global Youth Work at third-level. Youth 2030 has also made significant inroads in terms of engaging third-level youth and community students at undergrad, post grad, and master levels with workshops and training.

In terms of policy development, NYCI were members of the European-wide **ESD Youth Task Force** who informed and achieved the groundbreaking [Council of Europe Recommendation on Young People and Climate Action](#), which includes a focus on Youth Work, Global Youth Work, GCE and ESD. Furthermore, the new [National Strategy for Youth Work and Related Services 2024 – 2028](#) and the Young Ireland policy for children and young people now have an SDG focus.

Challenges and opportunities

Despite these significant advances, there are still gaps in capacity building for youth organisations and youth workers and policy development and coherence, as well as opportunities to embed GYW further at higher education level and to strengthen engagement with the Global South. Another key area for improvement is in capturing and communicating the impact of GYW.

Youth work organisations are reporting to NYCI that they are **increasingly in a space where dangerous and divisive narratives must be challenged by youth workers, and simultaneously where young people from minority groups are seeking safety**

and support. In some communities, youth work organisations are promoting social cohesion in increasingly difficult circumstances. The rise of dangerous hate-fuelled narratives, and the increasing economic struggle for young people are not occurring in isolation.

In addition, the **level of misinformation and disinformation is alarming** and the expansion of far-right groups utilising online spaces to share their opinions has exacerbated issues for those young people who are vulnerable to online abuse and bullying and influence. At a time when young people are spending even more time online, critical thinking and systems thinking, core components of GCE, should be emphasised to encourage objectivity online and to equip young people with the skills to understand and speak about what it is they are experiencing and the tools to have respectful dialogue with groups they are in disagreement with on particular issues. Young people and those in the Global South are increasingly at risk and targeted.

Furthermore, GYW is becoming ever more demanding as the key issues addressed by GCE educators are increasingly appearing as top news items or more centrally playing out in their everyday lives. Recognition of how this work can impact educators should be reflected in support and supervision, health and safety measures, etc. and upskilling opportunities provided.

Key policy and investment priorities

Irish Aid:

- Continue to invest in Youth 2030, Irish Aid's strategic partnership for GYW and for continued multi-annual and annual funding for GYW programmes and projects.
- Increase number of youth organisations funded to deliver GCE over the duration of the next strategic partnership and Irish Aid strategy.
- Provide more support for young climate activists and racial justice advocates through GCE engagements, so they may deepen their important work in drawing attention to and bringing about societal change. Youth 2030 runs the Climate Youth Delegate Programme in partnership with the DCEE and has a Youth Climate Justice Programme that involves both the DEY, and Irish Aid.
- Ensure adequate resourcing of youth organisations delivering GYW so that their employees have decent and secure work and to demonstrate recognition of the contribution that GYW makes through its skilled workforce and volunteers, through its reach into every community in Ireland, and through those it engages with through partnerships locally, nationally, and globally.
- Continue to request seconding of a GCE practitioner with knowledge and understanding of the non-formal youth sector to Irish Aid as a GCE officer.

Multiple stakeholders:

- Cross-governmental coherence and communication on how the Global Youth Work sector can contribute to overall coherence between GCE, ESD, racial justice and anti-racism education. More work is required on linking GYW with other strategies including the ESD to 2030 Strategy; Opportunities for Youth: National Strategy for Youth Work and Related Services 2024-2028; the National Counter Disinformation Strategy; National Action Plan Against Racism; Young Ireland: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028; and the National Volunteering Strategy.
- Provide funding for research/policy positions in Global Youth Work.
- Provide support for youth organisations to apply for and report on their funded projects.



- Provide adequate support for youth organisations delivering GYW to continue to create whole organisational approaches (including boards, CEOs, regional managers, staff, volunteers, students, and young people). For example, a Global Youth Worker in every funded youth organisation would contribute towards this.

Key priorities for GCE practitioners

Capacity building

- Build a closer working relationship with ETB Youth Officers across Ireland and within ETBI itself to support the growth of GCE within the youth sector, leveraging the Memorandum of Understanding that NYCI has with ETBI on Youth Work.
- Engage with the Department of Education and Youth to explore joint initiatives, learning and funding for all levels of the youth sector working in the GCE and GYW space.
- Provide GYW in more migrant communities and traditional white Irish communities. Education is key to responding to misinformation, disinformation and hateful narratives spread via social media platforms. GCE/GYW educators and organisations can play a central role in this work, to produce counter-narratives, address racial justice, and support learning and understanding.
- Continue to recognise the voluntary nature of young people engaging in youth work and the non-formal education approach, starting where young people/ youth workers/volunteers are at, and the value of deeper engagement with smaller groups leading to enhanced knowledge, understanding and confidence in talking about and dealing with GCE issues.
- Provide relevant upskilling opportunities to prepare educators and learners with the skills and training to deal with issues as they emerge e.g. on trauma informed approaches, self-care.

- Invest in the ongoing education and training of youth workers, leaders, volunteers and youth organisations to enable them to embed the work into their organisations.

Qualitative impact

- Support youth organisations to tell their story better, adopting appropriate methods for the cohort they are working with, which they can easily use to showcase their achievements. This can be done in collaboration with Youth 2030, IDEA, and Irish Aid.
- Support different levels of evaluation depending on scope and depth of GYW projects and programme capabilities.

Engagement

- Expand and deepen relationships with higher education institutions.
- Enhance engagement with the Global South through implementation of the Youth 2030 Global South Engagement Plan.
- Continue with a targeted communications strategy to improve brand differentiation and visibility.

Conclusion

The need for increased investment for Global Citizenship Education has never been greater. We are living through a period of immense turbulence and facing challenges that were unimaginable a few decades ago. These include polarisation, inequality and the impacts of disinformation, which threaten social cohesion at home and abroad. Global Citizenship Education gives people of all ages a supported, structured way to engage with these challenges so that they feel empowered to act towards a fairer and more sustainable future for all.

Vision 2030 outlines our vision for realising the full potential of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland to 2030. Our goal is to ensure quality GCE for all, towards creating a society of active global citizens, equipped with the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence required to navigate today's increasingly complex world.

To reach this goal we need long-term commitment and strategic coordinated efforts among all stakeholders on the island of Ireland. Investment for GCE throughout Ireland needs to be significantly increased to meet the internationally recognised target of 3% of Official Development Assistance by 2030. Funding diversification is needed, combined with greater investment from other relevant public funding sources, including the education, community development and environment budgets.

In addition, there must be a whole-of-government approach to strengthen policy coherence and coordination, as well as increased support for research and impact measurement to ensure future investment delivers clear, measurable outcomes for learners, communities and society as a whole.

This is not just about education. It is about safeguarding Ireland's democracy, strengthening social resilience, and shaping

a society that can respond confidently to global and local challenges. It is also about Ireland fulfilling its international obligations under SDG Target 4.7, ESD for 2030, and UN human rights commitments, and contributing to peace and justice worldwide.

This vision is rooted in the lived realities of learners, educators and communities, and reflects their determination to shape a better world. Through IDEA, over 100 organisations and individuals across the island of Ireland bring the expertise and ability needed to deliver Vision 2030, working together to shape policy, practice and impact. We have outlined what we, as a sector, can do, and the policy and investment commitments required to make this a reality.

At a time of intensified global and local challenges, the solid foundations achieved in embedding GCE across formal and non-formal educational settings must be protected and built upon across relevant government departments through sustained partnership with civil society. By further investing in GCE across the island, we can both reinforce social cohesion and resilience at home and demonstrate principled leadership internationally, rooted in Ireland's history, values and experience.

Endnotes

1. [Dublin Declaration on Global Education](#), 2022
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List of acronyms and initialisms

ACE	Adult and Community Education
CCEA	Council for Curriculum Examination and Assessment
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DCDE	Department of Children, Disability and Equality
DCEE	Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
DEY	Department of Education and Youth
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
GYW	Global Youth Work
HEI	Higher education institution
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NI	Northern Ireland
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

Image credits

- Cover Image:** The winners of Trócaire's Game Changers Primary Category in 2024, St. Mary's National School, Donnybrook, Dublin with their game 'The Courtroom' that is about human rights and getting to be in someone else's shoes.
Credit: Mark Stedman, Trócaire
- Page 5:** IDEA Annual Conference 2025 and inaugural Global Voice for Humanity Award. From left to right back row: Ruairí McKiernan, Elaine Mahon, Anya Sparynska, Bobby McCormack, Minister Neale Richmond, President Michael D. Higgins, Sabina Higgins, Ponke Danker, Jenny Gannon, Aoife Neasy. From left to right front row: Áine Boyle, Pierre Yimbog, Fiona Duignan, Claire Glavey.
Credit: Gansee Films
- Page 11:** Teachers taking part in Children in Crossfire's Educating the Heart Programme at The MAC Belfast. From left to right: Ciara McKenna, Alex McIlvenny, Katie Murray, Gordon Nicholl.
Credit: Enya Moore, Digital Media Co-Ordinator
- Page 17:** SDG Badge as part of 20 Objects Exhibition to mark IDEA's 20th Anniversary.
Credit: Gansee Films
- Page 26:** Participants in IDEA's Innovation Lab 2025. From left to right: Susan Cabezas, Charity Boateng, Claudio Nicosia.
Credit: IDEA
- Page 31:** Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ from Limerick City being declared All-Ireland Concern Debate winners 2025, as the programme celebrates its 40th anniversary.
Credit: Karen Morgan, Concern Worldwide
- Page 36:** A number of the authors included in *Global Citizenship Education: Curious Teachers, Critical Classrooms* edited by Dr Brigid Golden at its launch, which took place as part of the celebration of 20 years of DICE in 2024. Back row from left to right: Dr Laoise Ní Chléirigh, Helen Concannon, Dr Niamh McGuirk, Ryma Halfaoui, Dr Rowan Oberman, Claire Glavey, David Nyaluke. Front row from left to right: Dr Brigid Golden, Dr Aoife Titley, Vicky Donnelly, Dr Barbara O Toole, Kristina Moody.
Credit: Tadhg Nathan Photography
- Page 39:** STAND Global Solidarity Festival Exhibition 2025-26 launch in Dublin City University Glasnevin Campus, featuring the presentation of the large-scale outdoor exhibition.
Credit: Andrew Holt
- Page 44:** Habitat for Humanity Ireland's Community Connections Project at Habitat ReStore Newry. From left to right: Eva Torres, Ashley Ng and Vincent Campbell.
Credit: Rebecca Forgan
- Page 47:** Marwa Zamir, hosting one of the table discussions at the national consultation to create an Irish Youth Pact for the Future, March 2024.
Credit: Abe Neihum

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