

VISION 2030

Towards a Society of Active **Global Citizens**



SUMMARY

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

At [IDEA](#), 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 key driver of this change.

The primary purpose of Vision 2030: Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens is to set out our vision for quality GCE for all as a vital stepping stone towards creating a society of active global citizens across the island of Ireland. The secondary purpose is to outline what is required to achieve this vision and the strategic priorities IDEA and members will collectively pursue in the years ahead.

As IDEA is an all-Ireland network, Vision 2030 is an all-island vision, and it includes policy, programme and funding priorities on that basis. This is aligned with the all-island scope of the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025. It also aligns with the focus area of cross-border cooperation in education within the Shared Island initiative by the Department of the Taoiseach.

While the dominant policy and programme focus of this document relates to the Republic of Ireland, IDEA recognises the importance of strengthening and integrating work in the North of Ireland as part of a wider all-island approach. The terminology throughout reflects this evolving context, with terms such as “all-island”, “the Republic,” “Northern Ireland,” used to reflect different policy and jurisdictional realities.

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, toward deeper structural change and intergenerational impact.

Who are we and what do we do?

IDEA (the Irish Development Education Association) is the national network for Global Citizenship Education, also known as Development Education, on the island of Ireland and a leading voice for the sector.

Founded in 2004, we represent over 100 members involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

Our members include networks, non-governmental organisations, local development partnerships, coalitions, consortia, university departments, trade unions and individuals involved in education work in Ireland.

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 centres, and other learning spaces.

Beyond those in formal education, our members engage with young people and adult learners, including those in Local Authorities, the business community, and marginalised groups, such as second chance learners, unemployed people, marginalised young people, adult basic education learners, migrants, and the Traveller and Roma communities.

IDEA plays a key role in cultivating, strengthening and championing GCE throughout the island of Ireland.

The full Vision 2030: Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens is available [here](#).

What is Global Citizenship Education?

Global Citizenship Education enables people to reflect critically on the world they live in and their place in it. It equips people of all ages with the **knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence** needed to navigate today's complex world.

Irish Aid describes Global Citizenship Education 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.”¹

The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 describes GCE as “education that enables people...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.”²

Why is Global Citizenship Education needed now more than ever?

We are at a critical juncture, experiencing multiple interconnected crises. Global challenges such as the climate crisis, war, injustice and inequality are threatening our very existence. Disinformation is driving societal conflict and polarisation. At a local level, we are seeing the impacts of these global challenges: a surge in extreme weather events, a rise in far-right politics and racist attacks, climate anxiety and weakened social cohesion.

In the current context, we must remember that **quality, transformative education** is a right of all citizens and a **public good** that **pays vast dividends for society as a whole**. Global Citizenship Education gives people a supported, structured way to engage with these challenges in an interactive 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 many are experiencing in the face of the sheer volume of crises taking place globally. Global Citizenship Education acts as a bulwark against disinformation, racism and polarisation, and promotes meaningful individual and collective action for change. It builds civic trust, participation, and resilience. The need for GCE that equips the people on this island for today's fast-changing world is **more urgent than ever**.



1. [Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025](#)

2. Definition of Global Education in the [Dublin Declaration on Global Education](#), 2022

The current state of play

Building on successive Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education strategies, and the dedicated work of GCE practitioners, such as IDEA and its members, strong foundations and support structures are now in place to drive progress towards our vision. For example, between 2021 and 2024, Irish Aid-funded GCE programmes and projects engaged with 1.2 million people³ on this island. This has led to significant advances in embedding GCE within policy, curricula, teacher education and across formal, non-formal and informal education settings. In turn, it has also led to increased knowledge and skills among learners and educators.

More coordination between Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) stakeholders has been evident in recent times, such as between the Department of Education and Youth, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, in their roles as co-leads on the national ESD to 2030 strategy. These departments also exchange information with Irish Aid, the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment and other relevant stakeholders, such as IDEA, via the National Steering Group and the Advisory Groups on ESD to 2030. 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.

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. Moreover, the operating and policy context in the North is far less positive than in the Republic. Despite a wealth of experience, a strong community of expert GCE practitioners, and many years of strategic programmes, there has been no state investment in GCE from the British government or the Northern

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.

Ireland Executive since 2021. In addition, one of the impacts of Brexit was that GCE practitioners in Northern Ireland (NI) can no longer access EU funding. The GCE sector in NI has been hugely impacted by these drastic funding cuts. Furthermore, with no GCE policy or strategy for NI and very few alternative funding opportunities, the sector is contracting.

³ Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy Mid-Term Review Report, May 2025

Although considerable progress has been made in the Republic, insufficient and unpredictable funding levels are still an issue in the sector. This poses a risk to maintaining and building on the progress achieved. More sector-specific research to drive evidence-based GCE policy and practice and increased support for collective impact measurement is also needed. Worryingly, given the current political context globally and locally, there is 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 with adverse local impacts, but we are also running out of time to reach global SDG targets by 2030.

Our vision for quality GCE for all towards a society of active global citizens

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.”⁴

⁴ [Dublin Declaration on Global Education](#), 2022

Key outcomes within our vision include:



Transformed learners: Learners of all ages and backgrounds becoming equipped with the **knowledge, values, skills** and **confidence** required to become **active global citizens**.



Equipped Educators: Educators regularly reflecting on and refining their educational practice; educators receiving feedback, support and supervision; educators having access to quality professional learning and teaching materials, and the time and space required to facilitate quality GCE with learners.



Global Citizenship Education embedded in formal and non-formal education systems and settings:

- Global Citizenship Education fully and appropriately integrated into **formal education curricula and settings** across the island of Ireland.
- Global Citizenship Education fully and appropriately embedded in **Adult and Community Education** across the island of Ireland.
- **Young people as co-creators** of the global citizenship agenda with dedicated funding and platforms amplifying youth voices in policy development and programme design.



Research between universities and practitioners informing *evidence-based approaches*.



A vibrant all-island GCE alliance to deliver the vision 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**.

What is needed to make our vision a reality

There are many enabling factors and conditions needed to make our vision a reality. Among these are **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 funding** providing sufficient resources and bolstered capacity, as well as a supportive and **coherent policy context** with a **whole-of-government approach**.

Strategic Priorities to 2030

IDEA and members have identified the following strategic policy, funding and programme priorities for the Global Citizenship Education sector to 2030:

- 1. Increased investment:** Coherent, multi-annual and long-term funding strategies designed from a whole-of-government

approach that support programme work towards long-term impact. Such funding should be predictable and accessible to small, medium and large CSOs and other partners across the island of Ireland. This is also to ensure that GCE grantees are adequately resourced so that employees have better pay and conditions towards cultivating and retaining talented and experienced GCE practitioners.

Increased investment from state champions such as Irish Aid should meet the internationally recognised target of at least 3% of Official Development Assistance. Other relevant funds from, for example, the education, community development and environment budgets are also required. This would recognise and enable further CSO contributions to ESD to 2030, the Climate Action Plan and the National Action Plan Against Racism. Developing new pools of funding to unlock opportunities for increased collaboration would also demonstrate Ireland's leadership on GCE and commitment to the values of peace, justice, and global solidarity.



2. Stronger coherence between key existing policies: such as the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy, ESD to 2030, 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.

3. Whole-of-government approach to GCE: A cross-departmental coordinated approach to achieve coherent and strategic implementation of GCE in all relevant national policies. We need sustained and dynamic engagement with Government and state institutions and the urgent strategic prioritisation of GCE. Furthermore, more streamlined and more strategic coordination across and between relevant Government departments is required, in relation to ESD and GCE.

These include, but are not exclusive to, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Education and Youth, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Department of Children, Disability and Equality, 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.

4. Global Citizenship Education impact, quality and research: Communicating the impact of GCE requires strengthening evidence gathering and analysis at local, regional and national levels. Adequate resources and support are needed to increase our capacity to map and communicate the collective cross-sectoral and sector-specific impact of our GCE work. This is crucial to our sector's work towards a consistent approach to impact measurement, through IDEA's Theory of Impact for GCE and other shared frameworks and methodologies.

Additionally, continue to promote adherence to the IDEA Code of Good Practice for Development Education as the barometer of quality GCE. Furthermore, making more funding available for a range of important research on GCE is key. This includes longitudinal and participatory research which addresses its long-term impact, sector-specific research and research on GCE approaches. Establishing a working group to develop a research agenda and advise on areas for research within the sector is another crucial priority.

5. All-island approach: Strengthen cross-border cooperation on Global Citizenship Education through a coordinated all-island approach connecting IDEA members on both sides of the border. This can be advanced by engaging with the Shared Island Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach, relevant education bodies, and the North-South Ministerial Council, as well as through consultation with the Northern Ireland Executive, the UK Government, and GCE partners such as the Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies (CADA) in Northern Ireland.

6. Greater support for GCE in the North: Increase GCE funding for 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 (e.g. CADA, and IDEA members working in NI).

7. Working in partnerships: Continue to build on and invest in partnerships for GCE through coalitions, alliances, strategic consortia and bilateral activities that support stability and resilience across communities. From subject associations to teaching and learning networks and state bodies such as Irish Aid, as well as with other value-based movements, establishing and consolidating partnerships to 2030 is essential. One priority focus within this is the funding of posts for regional coordinators within CSOs or consortia to coordinate with institutional actors to

ensure comprehensive and sustained GCE delivery, inspired by the [One World Network](#) promoters' programme.

- 8. Curriculum development and integration:** Build on curriculum reform and frameworks across all education sectors by embedding GCE in assessment and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) across all levels of education and lifelong learning. In parallel, advocate for reduction of institutional barriers and time constraints to participating in existing GCE offerings, so educators can engage with them in a meaningful way.
- 9. A whole-of-society ecosystem:** Significantly expand the reach and depth of GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings, aiming for a more equitable geographic spread and a better balance between provision across different settings. Conduct mapping exercises based on current GCE provision, support school leaders, student teachers, youth workers and educators with access to CPD.
- 10. Communications:** Develop a multi-stakeholder communications strategy to increase GCE visibility for educators and learners, e.g. to attract, support and incentivise educators and institutions within the sector. This would also promote Ireland's GCE impact and leadership to diverse audiences in Ireland, and across European and international contexts.
- 11. Enhanced engagement with the Global South:** Enhance our engagement with the Global South and integrate more Global South voices into GCE in Ireland. Promote collaboration and partnerships with Global South partners to deepen solidarity, co-learning, and knowledge co-production.
- 12. Global Citizenship Education in a digital future:** Harness the positive potential of digital technologies in GCE to foster collaboration, innovation, and

inclusion, while bridging existing gaps of inequality. Promote digital literacy, critical awareness of media and Artificial Intelligence, and ethical engagement online as essential dimensions of global citizenship. Invest in accessible digital tools, platforms, and partnerships that connect educators and learners across borders, amplify diverse voices, and strengthen Ireland's contribution to a just and sustainable digital future.

Highlights of what is needed across specific education sectors

Early Years Education Sector

- Promote current Global Citizenship Education resources and develop GCE-related CPD opportunities for early years educators to support their understanding of global citizenship.
- Promote GCE in early years and primary initial Teacher Education, aligning with Aistear's updated principles of children as "agentic global citizens."

Formal Education Sector

- Continued investment in Global Village and WorldWide Global Schools.
- Continue to promote and support whole-school approaches to GCE with a focus on facilitating pilot communities of practice and replicating good practice approaches.
- Engage with the National Convention on Education and request that GCE be on the agenda.
- Expand the reach and depth of GCE in schools and alternative education settings in the Republic and in NI. This can be achieved by working with higher numbers and a more diverse range of schools in rural and urban areas across each county. Ensure a particular focus on traditionally underserved schools, e.g. Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí, as well

as special education classes and schools, Youthreach (ROI) and Pathways (NI), etc.

- Strengthen the opportunities for primary and post-primary/secondary educators and school leaders to engage in GCE-related CPD and other capacity-strengthening supports.
- Encourage Oide and NI counterparts to use GCE resources and integrate them into relevant toolkits and training programmes, to support primary school and post-primary/secondary teacher CPD.

Initial Teacher Education Sector

- Continue investment in DICE and Ubuntu Network to consolidate progress and advance systemic embedding of GCE across all Initial Teacher Education (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.
- Promote transnational GCE teacher exchanges or joint modules with Global South partners to deepen solidarity and co-learning.

Higher Education Sector

- 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.



- Scale formal integration by building on the Praxis project in UCC as a model to be replicated across higher education institutions (HEIs). This model comprises a rigorous approach to integrating GCE into a HEI, and includes a GCE digital badge, a community of praxis and research on GCE approaches and practice.
- Request secondment of an expert to integrate GCE across HEIs, similar to the initiative to integrate ESD across HEIs, linking non-formal and formal efforts.

Adult and Community Education Sector

- Continued investment in Saolta, the Irish Aid GCE strategic partnership for GCE in Adult and Community Education (ACE), and in the ACE sector more generally.
- Provide funding and support to roll out the Global Compass Framework across the Further Education and Training 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 CPD pathways for GCE practitioners working with adult learners.

Youth Sector

- Continued investment in Youth 2030 - Irish Aid's strategic partnership for GCE for youth.
- Increase the number of youth organisations funded through multi-annual and annual grants to deliver GCE and thereby reach more of the 400,000 young people that engage with youth work annually.
- Build a closer working relationship with Education and Training Board (ETB) Youth Officers across Ireland and within ETB Ireland (ETBI) itself to support the growth of GCE within the youth sector, leveraging the Memorandum of Understanding that the National Youth Council of Ireland has with ETBI on Youth Work.

Conclusion

Vision 2030 outlines our vision for realising the full potential of Global Citizenship Education in Ireland. The need for increased investment for GCE has never been greater. We are living through a period of immense turbulence and are facing challenges that were unimaginable a few decades ago. Global Citizenship Education gives people of all ages supportive and structured ways to engage with these challenges, so they are empowered to act towards a fairer and more sustainable future for all. At a time of intensified global and local challenges, the solid foundations achieved in embedding GCE across formal, non-formal and informal educational settings to date must be protected and built upon.

IDEA members are motivated, committed and have the expertise and experience needed to achieve Vision 2030 in partnership with relevant government departments, agencies, networks and community organisations, on all parts of our island. Our goal is to ensure quality GCE for all as a vital building block in the creation of a society of active global citizens.

To reach this goal we need long-term commitment and coordinated efforts among all stakeholders. 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 also required, combined with greater investment from other relevant public funding sources, such as from 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 impact measurement to be able to capture and communicate the difference GCE is making for learners, communities and society as a whole.

This is not just about education. It is about safeguarding Ireland's democracy 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 contributing to peace and justice worldwide. 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.

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 2:** 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 5:** 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 8:** 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

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