

IDEA Youth Task Group Submission

Irish Aid GCE Strategy Consultation July 2026

What aspects of the current Global Citizenship Education Strategy (2021–2025) have worked well?

- The growth in support for youth organisations, growing from 3 to 10 youth organisations. Allowing us to reach and engage with more young people across the island of Ireland.
- We have more trained and skilled staff delivering projects and understanding what Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is.
- The introduction and provision of multi-annual funding is hugely supportive in terms of staffing, programme planning, delivery, and embedding. This multi-annual funding allows for more depth of engagement. Organisations consistently reported that longer term funding has provided stability in staffing, programme planning, and delivery.
- The depth of work undertaken through youth work has grown with young people who voluntarily show up and engage on global issues, leading to enhanced knowledge, understanding and confidence in talking about, dealing with, and taking action on GCE issues.

What aspects of the current Strategy have been most relevant to your work or experience?

The current Strategy has proven to be highly relevant to the youth work sector, particularly in the following areas:

- The lifelong learning approach throughout the Strategy, which explicitly recognises and supports formal, non-formal, and informal education pathways. Sustaining this central focus in the new strategy remains vital.
- Active commitment and engagement with the IDEA Code of Good Practice.
- The strategic recognition of Youth 2030, which provides essential support for both the non-formal and informal education sectors.
- Reaching and involving individuals from the widest possible range of backgrounds, specifically focusing on groups marginalised from mainstream educational settings.

- The establishment of an empowering environment where critical global issues can be explored in meaningful and transformative ways.

How has the national and global context for Global Citizenship Education changed 2021–2026, and how should the next Strategy respond to those changes?

Since 2021, the context for GCE has changed considerably at both national and global levels:

- There are growing concerns around the rise of far-right narratives.
- There is recognition by the youth sector that misinformation, disinformation and the increasing influence of AI are reshaping how young people access and interpret information. As a result, critical media literacy is becoming an essential skill for young people and youth workers to gain¹.
- Climate change continues to be a major concern. While young people remain deeply committed to environmental issues, the youth sector has noticed growing climate fatigue, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness.
 - The next strategy should continue prioritising climate justice while ensuring that approaches remain hopeful, action-oriented and empowering. The annual ECO-UNESCO Youth Climate Justice Survey in 2024 found that 71% of young people are feeling anxious about climate change. The survey also highlights the concern that young people have for future generations².
- The ongoing cost-of-living crisis is increasing operating costs for youth organisations and creating challenges in keeping services accessible and sustainable. At the same time, workforce pressures, including staff turnover, recruitment difficulties, and rising living costs are significantly affecting organisations capacity to retain skilled staff and deliver high-quality GCE programmes, highlighting the need for a strategy that supports both organisational resilience and continued engagement with young people.
- State of democracy– Accessibility of democratic spaces is getting more volatile. Youth work provides pathways for leadership and democratic voice.
- Globally, the youth sector pointed to increasing geopolitical instability, conflicts and challenges to international solidarity.
- Diminishing aid budgets internationally was highlighted as a concern, creating additional pressure on public understanding and support for global development.

¹ [Stop Wait a Minute Resource](#)

² [ECO UNESCO Youth Climate Justice Survey p.04 & p.12](#)

- The youth sector stressed the importance of maintaining a strong focus on global solidarity, human rights and international cooperation within future GCE programming. The sector is striving to preserve a sense of optimism and prevent young people from becoming overwhelmed by the multitude of global adversities.

What actions could support increased uptake of GCE across formal, non-formal and informal education settings?

- The most important action identified by the youth sector is the continued investment in multi annual funding. Multi annual funding should remain a central feature of future support structures and, where possible, consideration should be given to extending funding periods beyond three years for established programmes. Youth organisations and workers consistently linked long term funding with improved quality, sustainability and impact.
- Protect and build on the strong foundations that have been achieved so far.
- Continue to work with and support youth organisations to deliver GCE over the duration of the next Irish Aid strategy.
- Continue to invest in Youth 2030, Irish Aid's strategic partnership for GYW.
- 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.
- Supporting and protecting democratic participation and decision making through GCE by supporting participants with critical thinking, media literacy and dialogue.
- Continuing to recognise that young people engage in youth work and non-formal education voluntarily is a good starting point to assessing what actions may support further uptake of GCE in this setting. We see that when we start where young people/ youth workers/volunteers are at, and investing in deep engagement with smaller groups, this leads to enhanced knowledge, understanding and confidence in talking about and dealing with GCE issues. Possible actions include:
 - Investing in youth worker training and capacity development so practitioners feel confident facilitating conversations on global issues alongside young people.
 - Opportunities for peer learning, youth leadership, and collaboration with community partners can further enhance participation and encourage sustained and impactful engagement.

- Retention and recruitment of highly skilled workers. Ensure adequate resourcing of youth organisations delivering GCE so that youth workers have decent and secure work and to demonstrate recognition of the contribution that GCE 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.
- Enhance reporting, research, and policy engagement to strengthen the evidence base for GCE. Strong evidence on the outcomes and impacts can demonstrate GCE's value to policymakers, funders, organisations and practitioners.

How can collaboration between Government, civil society and education stakeholders be strengthened?

- Greater recognition of Youth Work, Global Youth Work, and Global Citizenship Education across all government Departments, and recognition of its relevance to Irish society – local, national, European, and global – through policy and practice.
- Irish Aid has a role to play in promoting and recognising the value of youth work, GYW, and GCE within Irish society. Greater collaboration across government departments, particularly DFA and DEY, to strengthen recognition of GCE as an essential element of active citizenship would be particularly welcome.
- Introduce a GCE Forum (similar to the ESD National Steering Group), and an annual GCE national event that will showcase the work, issues, challenges, opportunities, and good practice within the sector.

What are the main challenges facing Global Citizenship Education stakeholders at present?

- Strengthening meaningful, impactful and sustainable Global South work and their voices within the sector. Despite progress that has been made, it can be a challenge to build and maintain relationships, identify partners and to create genuine, values led collaborations that reflect the principles of youth work.
- Ensure Global South perspectives are not just included but embedded in programme design, delivery and decision making is key.
 - Clearer guidance from Irish Aid on how organisations can engage with Global South partners in a way that is impactful, sustainable and not tokenistic.

- Youth organisations highlighted increasing complexity in young people's lives. Anxiety, social isolation, and feelings of powerlessness can create barriers to sustainability engagement. Organisations emphasised the need to create spaces that promote hope, agency, and meaningful action.
- Staff recruitment and retention emerged as a major concern. Organisations reported difficulties retaining experienced GCE workers, as many leave for sectors that offer better pay and conditions.
- While robust accountability mechanisms are important, the current application and reporting processes for Irish Aid funding can be highly resource intensive. For smaller youth organisations with limited staff capacity, these requirements may present challenges that reduce their ability to engage with and benefit from funding opportunities.

What new potential practice opportunities exist which could increase GCE reach and uptake in Ireland, and Ireland's GCE influence in Europe under the next Strategy?

- Building the capacity of those who choose to be part of the work (United Nations Youth Delegates, Climate Youth Delegates, Youth Representatives) and who attract other young people to be interested and involved in GCE.
- Cross-governmental coherence and communication on how the GYW 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.
- Work with funded organisations to explore greater European engagement/coordination / cohesion, policy influence, and funding opportunities.