

Global Citizenship Education in Ireland and the Wider World - A Policy Guide





This report is funded by Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs. Irish Aid is the Government's overseas development programme which supports partners working in some of the world's poorest countries. Irish Aid also supports global citizenship education in Ireland to encourage learning and public engagement with global issue. The ideas, opinions and comments herein are entirely the responsibility of IDEA and do not necessarily represent or reflect DFA policy.

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Introduction

For Global Citizenship Education (GCE)¹ advocacy to be impactful and effective at multiple levels, advocates need to have a broad understanding of the institutional and policy landscape that is relevant to the sector. This knowledge should help GCE advocates to better direct their advocacy at the correct institutional and policy targets. It will also help them to identify key entry points and opportunities to influence improvements in GCE policy, programmes and funding, as well as connect dots between policy frameworks at global, EU and national level.

The next section maps out:

- who the key institutions and entities are, at global, European, national and local level;
- why they are important for GCE policy and institutional practice;
- relevant policy processes, documents, frameworks, events and advocacy targets linked to these institutions/entities that shape and influence GCE down to national and local level.

The section after that focuses on elections as a key entry point for GCE advocacy, and the final section is a compilation of top tips when engaging with policy processes.



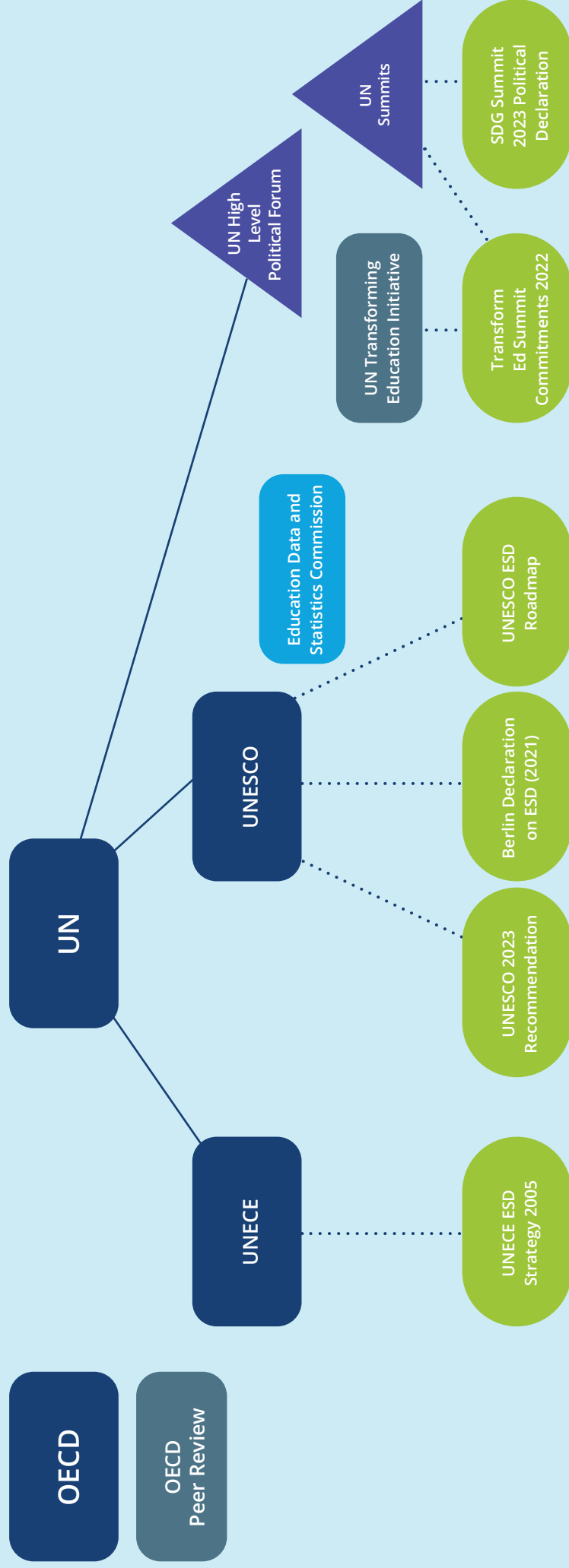
¹. For note on choice of terminology and a list of acronyms and initialisms used in this document, see Background Note on GCE Advocacy Toolkit and Policy Guide.

Map of the Policy Landscape²



². Accurate at the time of writing (Dec 2024). Political contexts and policy environments can change quite frequently and require constant monitoring.

GLOBAL LEVEL MAP



GLOBAL LEVEL



The global policy landscape for GCE has evolved significantly over the past decade. The inclusion of Target 4.7, incorporating GCE and Education for Sustainable Development, within Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (Inclusive Education) of the global SDG policy framework gives GCE huge legitimacy at global level and reflects the persistent efforts of progressive governments, international institutions and civil society organizations to actively promote GCE in international policy development. Moreover, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, highlighted the critical importance of Transformative Education in enabling achievement of the SDGs at the 2023 SDG Summit and the Transforming Education Summit of 2022, placing GCE and ESD top of mind for stakeholders eager to meet SDG Targets by 2030.

1.1 United Nations

1.1a UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) works with countries to improve and reshape their education systems so that they support creativity, innovation and commitment to peace, human rights and sustainable development.

UNESCO is relevant to GCE advocates for three main reasons:

1. It sets global standards on GCE;
.....
2. It is the leading UN agency on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD);
.....
3. It monitors implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.7. via its Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Framework and Reports and the Education Data and Statistics Commission (EDSC).

UNESCO and Global Citizenship Education

UNESCO supports the development of curricula and learning materials on global citizenship themes tailored for diverse cultural contexts. Among many examples are the recommendations on integrating social and emotional learning principles in the education process.

A key document underpinning UNESCO's work on Global Citizenship Education is the 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, **Global Citizenship Education** and Sustainable Development.

KEY POLICY DOCUMENT



UNESCO 2023 Recommendation (revised 1974 recommendation) on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development

It was adopted by all 194 UNESCO Member States, including Ireland, in November 2023. It is the **only global standard-setting instrument** that lays out how education should be used to bring about lasting peace and foster human development through 14 guiding principles.

It is a non-binding guidance document that focuses on how teaching and learning should evolve in the 21st century to bring about lasting peace, reaffirm human rights and promote sustainable development in the face of contemporary threats and challenges.

It was developed over a two-year period as a revision process of the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, which was considered a **landmark legal instrument** at the time because it connected peace, international understanding, human rights, and education for the first time.

The goals of the 2023 Recommendation align closely with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Targets 4.7, 12.8, and 13.3. UNESCO has been a champion for GCE since at least 2014, and since 2015 UNESCO has included SDG Target 4.7 as a priority focus, as reflected in the **Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for SDG 4 (2015)**, the **Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development (2021)**, and its **Futures of Education report (2021)**.

For more information on GCE policy by UNESCO, see [here](#). For further information on UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development, see [here](#).



IDEA made a submission to the consultation process of the revision of the UNESCO 1974 Recommendation. Many of the 14 guiding principles of the 2023 Recommendation align well with the values and ethos of Development Education as per IDEA's Code of Good Practice for Development Education.



WHY IS THIS UNESCO RECOMMENDATION SO SIGNIFICANT FOR GCE ADVOCACY?

1. It is the **only global standard-setting instrument** and **visionary tool** that lays out **how education should be used to bring about lasting peace and foster human development through 14 guiding principles, centring the importance of global citizenship education and education for sustainable development.**
.....
2. It will be used to monitor progress towards SDG Target 4.7., replacing the 1974 Recommendation which was used for country reporting previously. Member States will submit reports every four years on implementing the Recommendation to UNESCO. These reports will then be analysed and shared with other agencies. The country reports are then used to compile the Target 4.7 chapter of the annual GEM reports and tables of statistics on indicator 4.7.1.

UNESCO & Education for Sustainable Development

UNESCO is the United Nations (UN) leading agency for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). It is responsible for the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development – A Roadmap to 2030, the current global framework for ESD, which takes up and continues the work of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the Global Action Programme on ESD (2015-2019). Acting as a global advocate and aiming to strengthen capacities of governments to provide quality climate change education, as the main thematic focus of ESD, UNESCO produces and shares knowledge, provides policy guidance and technical support and implements projects on the ground.

UNESCO role in monitoring SDG Target 4.7

UNESCO monitors implementation of SDG 4, via its GEM Framework and Reports and the Education Data and Statistics Commission (EDSC), previously called the 'Technical Cooperation Group on the SDG 4 indicators' from 2016 to February 2024. The EDSC provides a platform to discuss and develop SDG 4 indicators in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner. It also issues periodic benchmark, scorecard and country progress reports on SDG 4 indicators, including indicator 4.7.1, which is the



main indicator for progress on Target 4.7. This Quick Guide to Education Indicators for SDG 4 (pp. 36-7) helps to explain indicator 4.7.1.

The monitoring data for indicator 4.7.1 is drawn from four-yearly reports by Member States to UNESCO. As of 2026, these reports will be compiled based on a self-reporting questionnaire that aims to monitor national level implementation of UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development. This replaces the 1974 Recommendation which was used as a barometer for measuring progress towards Target 4.7 previously. These country reports are used to compile the Target 4.7 chapter of the annual GEM reports and to update EDSC data and reports. It is useful for GCE advocates to keep abreast of GEM reports and EDSC updates as a source of monitoring data and analysis to use in their GCE advocacy at national or international level.

What is SDG Target 4.7 and why is it important?



SDG Target 4.7 commits governments to ensuring that: "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".

It is important because it is a key global policy commitment through which increased investment in GCE can be advocated for nationally and internationally. SDG Target 4.7 is considered a key enabler and accelerating force to achieve all SDGs and therefore requires commensurate funding.

UNESCO's work on ESD and GCE focuses on six main areas:

- ➔ Advancing policy; providing guidance and standards
- ➔ Providing data on the status of ESD and monitoring progress on SDG Indicator 4.7.1, on the extent to which GCE and ESD are mainstreamed in national education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment
- ➔ Transforming learning environments
- ➔ Building capacities of educators
- ➔ Empowering and mobilizing youth
- ➔ Accelerating local level action

1.1b UN Transforming Education Initiative

The UN **Transforming Education Initiative** is a key relevant **global policy initiative for GCE advocates**. It was identified during the UN SDG Summit in September 2023 (the midway point of the SDGs) as one of the priority transformative approaches needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030, in particular **SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**.

The initiative was kicked off in September 2022 at the UN **Transforming Education Summit**, which aimed to tackle the twin crises in education – equity and access; quality and relevance – and to mobilise solutions to accelerate national and global efforts to achieve SDG 4. Five Thematic Action Tracks were identified as ‘key levers to transform education’ (UN, 2022): (i) inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools (ii) learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development (iii) teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession (iv) digital learning and transformation (v) financing of education.

Why is this initiative relevant for GCE advocates in Ireland?

The Transforming Education Initiative can be used as a resource in GCE advocacy in Ireland. It underlines the **importance of national level action, policy change, and scaling-up of good practice**. It represents a **significant development in prioritising education and recognising it as an enabler of all the SDGs**. It also recognises that: “Transforming education means empowering learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to be resilient, adaptable and prepared for the uncertain future while contributing to human and planetary well-being and sustainable development”³.

The policy priorities of the Transforming Education Initiative are also applicable to Ireland and GCE advocates can use them to advocate for a **prioritisation of funding for transformative education (i.e. GCE)**.

Important GCE Advocacy Messages from the Transforming Education Initiative

The following messages, taken from Transforming Education Initiative policy documents are important GCE advocacy messages relevant for policy makers and political stakeholders at national and local level in Ireland **to advance understanding that GCE is a lynchpin to enable all SDGs**.

- Ireland needs to take **collective, focused, and urgent action and prioritise funding for transformative education**. As the UN Secretary General has said, transformative education must be elevated to the top of the political agenda.
- To do this, **policies on transformative education, particularly global citizenship education and education for sustainable development**, must be central to government policy, ensuring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to achieving the SDGs.
- **Ireland needs to scale up existing global citizenship education and education for sustainable development**, building on the work and expertise of educators throughout lifelong and life-wide learning.
- This requires **more support for holistic learning** that includes **global citizenship education, education for sustainable development**, socio-emotional learning, civic education, and peacebuilding.

Ireland presented its second **Voluntary National Review (VNR)** of the SDGs to the UN HLPF in July 2023. It reviewed Ireland’s progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 17 SDGs, including the commitment to Leave No One Behind.

IDEA member, Coalition 2030, published a “shadow” or parallel VNR in May 2023 called **Furthest Behind First, or Falling Behind Further?** to provide a counter-view to the Irish government’s assessment of how Ireland is doing on the SDGs.



³. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/turning-point-why-we-must-transform-education-now>

- Transforming education **requires a power shift and significant investment** along with the **meaningful participation of learners** in **decision-making** and **accountability processes**.
- Education needs to become **radically inclusive** and **prioritise the knowledge, skills, and competencies that matter most to learners** as they fight for a more sustainable, equal, and just world.
- **In Ireland, this requires us to scale up and build on existing good practice, and to prioritise transforming education.**

1.1c The UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UN HLPF) **is the main UN platform on sustainable development**. It is a subdivision

of both the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. The UN HLPF usually meets every July in New York for eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment.

As part of the follow-up and review mechanisms linked to the SDGs, UN member states are encouraged to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven” (paragraph 79). **The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the UN HLPF and should be undertaken by all countries**, and provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. **SDG 4** on Universal Education (*which includes Target 4.7 on GCE*) is reviewed by the UN HLPF every few years.

How can civil society organisations (CSOs) use the opportunity of the VNR process for GCE Advocacy?



The official review by the UN HLPF of the SDG progress reports submitted by national government (i.e. VNRs) offers **a powerful opportunity for civil society to hold national governments to account**. Governments **present their VNRs at the UN HLPF in front of their peers** (i.e. other UN member states), describing the progress, or otherwise, that has been made in the implementation of the SDGs in their countries. There are several ways in which CSOs can promote their GCE advocacy messaging as part of the UN HLPF review processes.

GCE advocates can:

- **Join wider CSO coalitions which engage in advocacy on the SDGs.** Broad CSO coalitions dedicated to working on the SDGs exist at the national level (e.g. *Coalition 2030, which IDEA and several IDEA members are already part of*), EU level (*SDG Watch Europe*) and international level (*Action for Sustainable Development, Forus International, Together 2030*). These CSO coalitions engage in collective SDG advocacy and the combined strength of their membership increases the pressure for change on national governments, relevant EU institutions and specific UN agencies and processes.
- **Advocate to have civil society’s inputs to official national VNR consultations included in the final VNR report which is shared by their government with other UN member states at the UN HLPF.** Some progressive governments (e.g. the Finnish Government) have asked their CSOs to write a specific section of their VNR before submitting it to the UN HLPF.



EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY:

Ireland’s second VNR published and presented at the UN HLPF in July 2023 included a stakeholder assessment by IDEA member Coalition 2030.

Produce a CSO “shadow” or “spotlight” report to disseminate before, during, and after the UN HLPF. CSO shadow/spotlight reports are alternative CSO accounts of national progress on SDG implementation. Typically, these CSO reports are developed in the months leading up to the presentation of the official SDG progress report (VNR) by the national governments to the UN HLPF. A CSO shadow report generally focuses on progress on the implementation of all 17 SDGs. Such reports are usually produced by wider coalitions of CSOs possessing the relevant expertise between them to comment on all the SDGs. A CSO spotlight report on the other hand usually focuses on a specific thematic area linked to the SDGs. CSO spotlight reports carry out a deep dive into the progress made on SDG implementation in a particular thematic area (e.g. GCE). These reports contain clear and specific advocacy proposals and are **most effective when shared with national policymakers and the national media in advance of the UN HLPF each year.** These reports can also be disseminated to relevant UN officials, other UN member states and other CSO networks. For guidance on how to develop a SDG shadow or spotlight report, see [here](#).



EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY:

IDEA member Coalition 2030 published a shadow VNR called Furthest Behind First, or Falling Behind Further? in May 2023 ahead of Ireland’s presentation of their second VNR at the UN HLPF in July. Coalition 2030 provided data and case studies to show where there are significant gaps in Ireland’s action on the SDGs nationally, and advocate for the adoption of five key structural asks to address these gaps.

- **Volunteer a representative from their CSO network to be part of a national delegation to the UN HLPF led by the national government.** National governments have the discretion to nominate representatives of civil society and other sectors to be part of their national delegation to the UN HLPF. Some governments have begun to include a civil society representative in their national delegations along with national officials, public representatives, and representatives of the business sector. Members of the national UN HLPF delegation can be given an opportunity to make a short oral input when their government presents the VNR to other UN member states at the UN HLPF. As members of the official delegation, CSO representatives can monitor the exact public commitments made by governments on SDG implementation to the UN HLPF. They can also report back to civil society and to other stakeholders when they return to their countries.



EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY:

Coalition 2030 and IDEA attended the UN HLPF in July 2023 and the SDG Summit in September 2023 as part of the Irish delegation. At both events, Coalition 2030 and IDEA further advocated for improved policy, budgeting and action by the Irish government on the SDGs.

- **Organise public meetings, write media articles and carry out interviews, and social media campaigns at local and national levels after the UN HLPF is over.** Share with other CSOs and the wider public what the government reported to other UN member states about its progress with national SDG implementation.

1.1d UN Summits and Conferences

High-profile UN summits and conferences are held periodically on world governance issues and within the scope of Agenda 2030. The current events include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit in **2023**, the Summit of the Future (SOTF) in September **2024**, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in June **2025** and the World Social Summit in November **2025**.

These Summits provide opportunities for high-level GCE advocacy because they are generally attended by heads of state, foreign affairs ministers and other high-level policymakers. CSOs can **request to be part of a national government-led delegation to these Summits**, which allows for closer dialogue with policymakers or policy influencers. For example, IDEA participated in the SDG Summit in 2023 as part of the Irish national delegation and carried out lobby meetings with key Irish political stakeholders on GCE policy priorities.

Another influencing opportunity within the scope of these UN Summits, is to **make a submission as part of any CSO consultation process on the outcome documents of the summits**, generally called Summit Declarations or Pacts. For example, IDEA made a submission to the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future, which was signed by all countries attending the SOTF on 22 September 2024. The Pact for the Future’s “ambitious aim is to present actionable commitments for fast-tracking the SDGs, fortifying global peace and security architecture, pioneering digital cooperation, redressing yawning governance gaps, and catalysing the revamping of the UN’s main bodies”⁴. Given that the final versions of these declarations or pacts are usually negotiated in the run-up to the summits, there is an influencing opportunity for **CSOs to send any official submission made to their respective foreign Ministers and other political stakeholders engaging with the summit and request that the recommendations made be used in their negotiations and representations regarding the final version of the text.**

⁴. <https://una.org.uk/news/un-briefing-navigating-path-summit-future>

1.1e UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was set up in 1947 by ECOSOC. It is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations. UNECE’s major aim is to promote pan-European economic integration. UNECE includes 56 member States in Europe, North America and Asia. In 2005, it developed and published a Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, adopted by ministers and other officials from education and environment ministries from across the UNECE region at a high-level meeting in Lithuania.

The Strategy is a flexible framework for implementing ESD that pre-dates UNESCO’s Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap to 2030. It is relevant for GCE advocates in Ireland to be aware of because Ireland is a UNECE Member State, and as such, is obliged to periodically report to UNECE on progress made at a national level towards the UNECE ESD Strategy. For example, in October 2024, the Irish ESD Advisory Group on Further and Higher Education, of which IDEA is a member, issued a call to members of the Advisory Group to provide inputs to a national implementation report to reflect progress made in ESD in Ireland from 2019 – 2024. For more information on UNECE’s national ESD implementation reports, see [here](#).

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS AT UN LEVEL



- ➔ [UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education](#)
- ➔ [The Office for Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development](#) of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs serves as the Secretariat of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
- ➔ [Former Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General for the Transforming Education Summit](#)
- ➔ [Irish Permanent Representative to the UN, New York](#)
- ➔ [Irish Permanent Representative to the UN, Geneva](#)





1.2 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

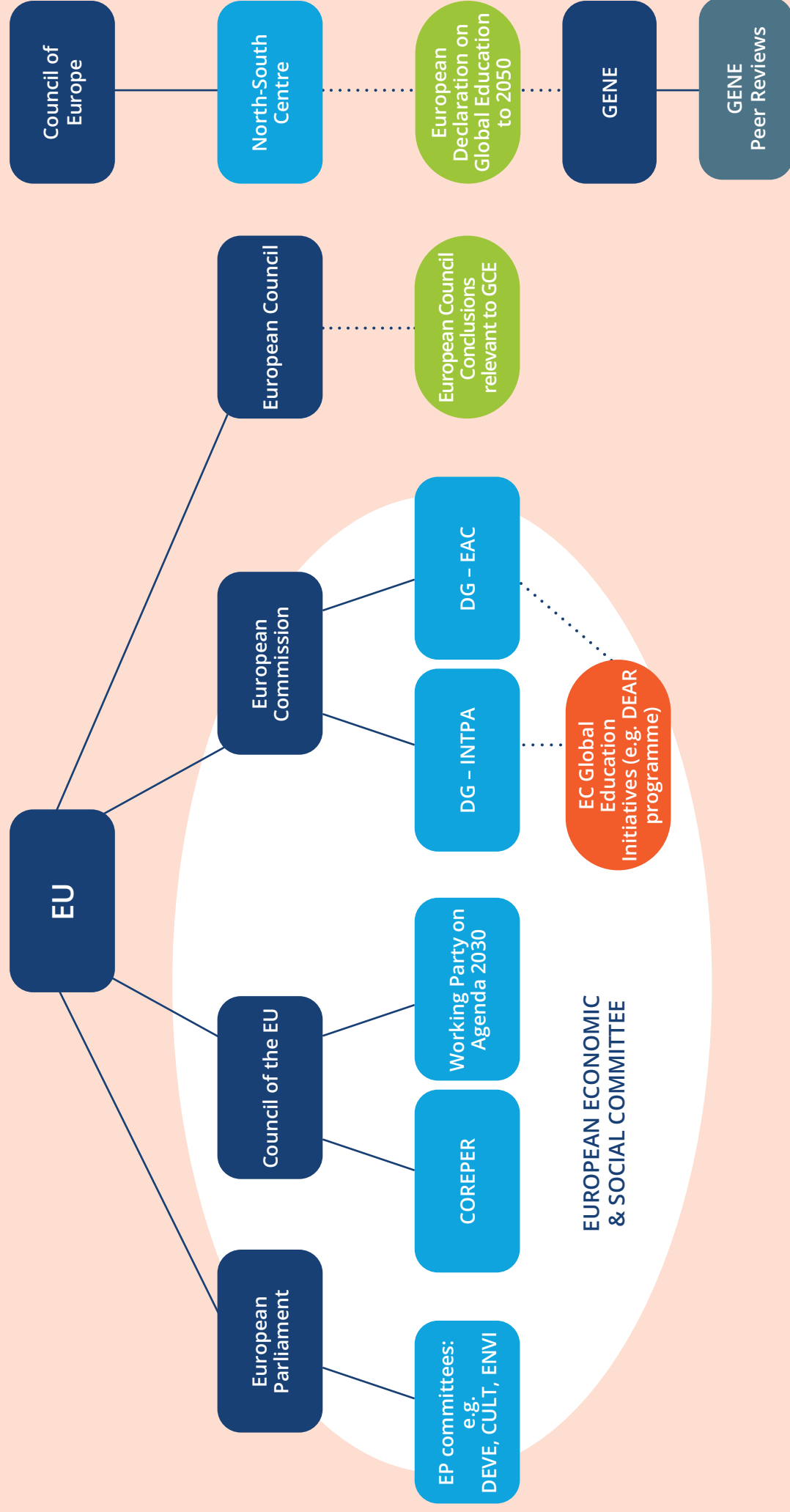
The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental organisation that was founded to advise governments on best practices in public policy. The Development Co-operation Directorate provides data, analysis and advice on development cooperation and finance. It works with members through the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The DAC carry out peer reviews of member states' policy and performance in development cooperation every six years, to hold them to account against their commitments and international standards. Peer reviews also enable DAC members to give feedback and learn from each other's experiences. A mid-term review is also carried out to track progress in between. Recommendations provide members with key actions to make the most of their strengths and overcome challenges.

GCE advocates can influence OECD DAC Peer Review reports by participating in consultations carried out by the Peer Review team during the review process, and use the recommendations made by the OECD DAC in their advocacy with national policymakers. For example, IDEA engaged with the OECD DAC Peer Review of Ireland in 2020. Furthermore, IDEA has referenced the recommendation from the OECD DAC Peer Review of Ireland in 2020 for more investment in development education in its advocacy documents, such as its pre-budget submissions from 2022, 2023 and 2024.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



EUROPEAN LEVEL MAP



EUROPEAN LEVEL



Influencing GCE policy at the European level is challenging because there are two principal intergovernmental institutions – the European Union and the Council of Europe – each with their own complexities, ways of working and dynamics. The European Union has been the main focus for IDEA for GCE advocacy at European level and thus this Guide gives more detail on engaging with EU policy processes. Bond, the UK equivalent of Dóchas, published an excellent [advocacy guide on influencing the European Union](#) in 2011. Most of the contents of the guide are still valid and useful and can be easily adapted to GCE advocacy. Therefore, it is recommended to consult that guide when planning EU advocacy. The next section is a summary of the main EU institutions, policy documents and entry points for GCE advocacy.

2.1 The European Union

2.1a European Council

The [European Council](#) is one of the seven EU institutions. Its main role is to determine the EU's general political direction and priorities - essentially setting the policy agenda for the EU. The European Council consists of heads of state of every Member State. It does not negotiate or adopt EU laws.

European Council conclusions are adopted **during each European Council meeting**. They are used to **identify specific issues of concern** for the EU and outline **particular actions** to take or goals to reach. European Council conclusions can also set a deadline for reaching agreement on a particular item or for the presentation of a legislative proposal. In this way, the European Council is able to influence and guide the EU's policy agenda.

The most recent European Council conclusions relevant to GCE are:

- [EU Council Recommendation on Education and Training contributing to strengthening of European Values and Democratic Citizenship C/2023/1339](#)
.....
- [EU Council Conclusions on the Transformative Role of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship as an Instrumental Tool for the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) C/2022/10345](#)
.....
- [EU Council Recommendation on Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development C/2022/243/01](#)

These Council conclusions are useful to draw upon for GCE advocacy both at a national and EU level. For example, in September 2024, IDEA wrote to MEP Barry Andrews, Chair of the DEVE Committee, to request he ask the new EU Commissioner for International Partnerships to clarify how he would prioritise achieving SDG Target 4.7, using the wording in C/2022/10345 to remind the Commissioner of existing EU policy on the matter.





2.1b Council of the European Union and the rotating EU Presidencies

The European Council is not to be confused with the Council of the European Union (Council of the EU), where national ministers and experts from each EU country meet to:

- negotiate and adopt EU laws;
- conclude international agreements on behalf of the EU;
- adopt the EU budget;
- develop the EU's foreign and security policy; and
- coordinate member states' policies in specific fields.

The ministers attending Council of the EU meetings have the authority to commit their governments to the actions agreed on in the meetings.

The work of the Council of the EU is supported by the **committee of permanent representatives of the governments of the member states to the European Union (COREPER)** and by more than **150 highly specialised working parties and committees**, known as the 'Council preparatory bodies'. The **Council of the EU's Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** addresses cross-cutting issues related to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and takes stock of progress made in implementing the SDGs at EU level in an integrated and coherent manner. EU & national-level CSO networks are invited to speak at this Working Party on Agenda 2030 from time to time and to address specific issues or topics which relate to the SDG framework.

The presidency of the Council of the EU **rotates among the EU member states every six months**⁵. During this six-month period, the presidency **chairs meetings at every level in the Council**, helping to ensure the continuity of the EU's work in the Council.

⁵. The rotation schedule until 2030 can be found [here](#).

Member states holding the presidency **work together closely in groups of three, called 'trios'**. The trio sets long-term goals and prepares a common agenda with the topics and major issues that will be addressed by the Council **over an 18-month period**. Based on this programme, **each of the three countries prepares its own more detailed six-month programme**.

Holding the rotating Council Presidency includes both **advantages and disadvantages** for member states; The **advantages** include:



1. Presiding member states have the possibility to **show their negotiating skills**, as "honest brokers", thus gaining influence and prestige.
2. Presiding member states gain **privileged access to information**: at the end of their term, they know other member states' preferences better than anyone else.
3. The Council programme may enable presiding member states **to focus Council discussion on issues of particular national/regional interest**.

However, the **disadvantages** include:



1. **Lack of administrative capacities and experience**, especially for small and new member states
2. **Expenses in time and money**, needed to support the administrative machine
3. **Not being able to push through their own interests**, as the role of Council Presidency is seen as an impartial instance; member states trying to push for initiatives of their own national interest are likely to see them failing in the medium run, as they need consensus and do not have enough time to reach it. This disadvantage is substantial and **may outweigh the advantages** listed. In addition, it could **also limit the scope of influence for GCE advocates** when appealing to their presiding member states.

CONCORD Europe participates in a **European Presidency Project** which involves civil society from a national and European level **working with the current EU Presidencies on promoting global solidarity, Agenda 2030, development co-operation, human rights and the inclusive participation of civil society**. Ireland will next assume the EU Presidency role from **July-December 2026**.

Targeting the Council of the EU with GCE Advocacy

Given that the Council of the EU represents the interests of member states at the EU, in order to influence decision-making processes at the Council it is best to begin at the national level. It may be useful to know that Permanent Representatives sitting on COREPER and Working Group officials agree their positions with their own national governments. So, GCE advocates with no office in Brussels nor the capacity to engage in front-line advocacy in Brussels, can still put their views and recommendations across to decision-makers in their own government. **Even if you do have a Brussels presence, national level advocacy is vital.**

- GCE advocates could join EU Brussels-based networks such as [CONCORD Europe](#), [SDG Watch Europe](#), [SOLIDAR](#) and the European Lifelong Learning Platform. Through these Brussels-based European CSO networks, GCE advocates can work to highlight both the important role that GCE can play in advancing the implementation of the SDGs and the urgency of mainstreaming access to high quality GCE across all countries and societies. They can also join EU GCE-related advocacy campaigns by these European CSO networks (e.g. [CONCORD's EU for Global Justice campaign](#)).
- Via membership of EU CSO networks, GCE advocates can try to secure a **speaking opportunity** with the **EU Working Party on Agenda 2030**. This would allow GCE advocates to educate the Working Party members about the public value of GCE and the need to mainstream it across all EU Member States and in international cooperation policies.
- Through these networks, GCE advocates can also call for the adoption of EU Council Conclusions which commit EU Member States to mainstreaming GCE across their societies and making it available to all (e.g. C/2023/1339) (European Council competence).

KEY COUNCIL OF THE EU ADVOCACY TARGETS



- EU Working Party on Agenda 2030, especially any Irish representatives
- COREPER, in particular the Irish representatives (the Irish Permanent Representative and the Irish Deputy Permanent Representative)
- [Irish Permanent Representation to the European Union](#)

2.1c European Commission

The European Commission is part of the executive of the European Union. It operates as a cabinet government, with 27 members of the Commission headed by a President. It includes an administrative body of about 32,000 European civil servants. **The Commission alone is responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation.** The EU Commission promotes the general interest of the EU by proposing and enforcing legislation as well as by implementing policies and the EU budget.

The Commission is organised into **policy departments**, known as **Directorates-General (DGs)**, which are responsible for different policy areas. DGs develop, implement and manage EU policy, law, and funding programmes. **The DG that has been the most relevant to GCE is DG International Partnerships (DG INTPA)⁶. DG Education Youth Sport and Culture (DG EAC)** is responsible for EU education and youth policy but has had less involvement with GCE to date. Ireland has had a Commissioner on the EU Commission since Ireland first joined the EU.

Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)

DG INTPA formulates the European Union's development policy abroad. Its mission is to help reduce and ultimately eradicate poverty in developing countries through the promotion of sustainable development, democracy, peace and security. It works on policy formulation at a global and sectoral level.

⁶. The DGs undergo periodic restructuring and the DG responsible for GCE could change in the future.



The Global European Neighbourhood Development and International Co-operation Instrument (NDICI) is the main financial tool of the EU's international cooperation for the period of 2021-2027. With an overall allocation of €79.5 billion, it is divided as follows:

- €60.38 billion for geographic programmes
- €6.36 billion for thematic programmes (Human Rights and Democracy; Civil Society Organisations; Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention; and Global Challenges)
- €3.18 billion for rapid response actions

Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR)

The European Commission's Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) Programme is the main EU funding stream for GCE projects by EU-based CSOs. It is financed under the Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations within NDICI. The overall budget allocated to the DEAR programme for 2021-2027 is €151.18 million, which represents 10% of the overall budget for the Thematic Programme for CSOs. With the change in policy direction of the new European Commission, it is unclear what the future of the DEAR programme will be. DG INTPA has noted the Global Gateway initiative for sustainable and infrastructural investments is the framework through which the EU will tackle the most pressing global challenges.

The DEAR programme supports cross-country projects by **CSOs and local authorities** that engage Europeans in worldwide issues of social, economic and environmental development and promote global justice, human rights, sustainable development and democratic participation. At any one time, the DEAR Programme funds up to 30 projects across the EU. These projects contribute to

raising the European public's understanding and engagement in development by:

- **advocating** for citizens in developing countries
- **campaigning** for change of inequitable global systems
- working with **Local Authorities** to strengthen existing structures
- supporting **education** to inform the next generation about development issues

An Irish CSO applying for DEAR funding **can apply to Irish Aid for DEAR co-funding**. DEAR co-funding is open to **Irish-based CSOs only**. A CSO may apply for DEAR co-funding in addition to other GCE grants. DEAR grant applicants should write to Irish Aid's GCE unit informing them that they intend to apply for DEAR funding, provide a short description of the project being developed and the proposed budget. The maximum grant available under this grant modality is up to 10% of total funds received from the EU. **Applications for DEAR co-funding can be submitted at any time of the year.**

Key advocacy targets

- EU Commissioner for International Partnerships
- Head of Unit of Youth, Education and Culture, DG INTPA
- Irish EU Commissioner
- The European Commission Representation in Ireland



Capacity4dev – DEAR Programme Group

Capacity4dev is the knowledge-sharing platform created by DG INTPA to connect development professionals around the world so they can collaborate and share knowledge and lessons learned about their work. There is a DEAR programme group on the Capacity4dev platform that allows for the **sharing of events, calls for partnership, resources and news/information** that are relevant to the DEAR community.

Other EU funding streams for cross-country GCE projects within the EU are the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes.

The European Commission Representation in Ireland

Based in Europe House, Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2, the Representation of the European Commission in Ireland has the mandate, among other things, to:

- Engage with citizens, academia, civil society, social partners and other stakeholders via communication, dialogue and other activities about EU priorities and policies.
- Provide country knowledge, analysis and advice on the political, economic and social developments in Ireland to the President and the Commission with a view of informing EU policy making and political communication.
- Provide information on EU funding programmes.

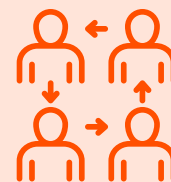
It works closely with the European Parliament Liaison Office (EPLO) in Dublin, also based in Europe House (see more about EPLO under the section on European Parliament).

2.1d The European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) is one of the legislative bodies of the EU. **Together with the European Council it adopts and amends legislation and decides on the EU budget, following proposals by the European Commission.** It also holds the Commission and Member States to account. It is composed of 720 **members of European Parliament** (MEPs), who are elected by European citizens. Ireland currently has 14 MEPs in the European Parliament.



Targeting the European Commission with GCE Advocacy



- The EU Commission sets its agenda of priorities and political guidelines at the start of a new 5-year legislative cycle. The current cycle was set in motion with the EU Parliament Elections in May 2024 and with the appointment of the new European Commission (November). **The period leading up to the appointment of the new European Commission (June-November 2029) is the best time for GCE advocates to lobby national government to try to ensure that the national candidate for European Commissioner is someone who will advance GCE within the Commission where possible once appointed.** The candidates for EU Commission President must also campaign and engage in public hearings before they are appointed to the Commission. **IDEA and its members can work through EU CSO networks like CONCORD Europe to ensure that the topic of GCE is raised with all the candidates for the position of Commission President.**
- Another entry point for GCE advocacy is to work through EU CSO networks to try to **influence the “mission letters” for the individual Commissioners that the new Commission President develops** once appointed. These mission letters provide guidance and direction to the new Commissioners on how best to implement their new portfolios. The new Commissioner for International Partnerships (head of DG INTPA) is the most important commissioner to ensure that GCE becomes a priority for the EU Commission as a whole. In addition, the new Commission President and Vice Presidents could be lobbied to ensure that **policy coherence for sustainable development mechanisms and processes** are put in place for the College of Commissioners to ensure coherence across all Commission portfolios. Furthermore, DG INTPA, should be encouraged to collaborate with other DGs such as DG EAC, DG CLIMA and DG ENVI to ensure sufficient policy coherence for sustainable development and support for global citizenship education across these DGs.
- GCE advocates can cultivate relationships with the EU Commission Representation in Ireland to advocate for better GCE policies and legislation at EU level.

During its plenary sitting, **Parliament can decide to express its opinion on any matter which it considers important** (via Resolutions). It can also ask the Commission to submit a proposal on issues, which, in the Parliament's view, require a legislative act to be adopted.

Members of the EP are divided up among **20 specialised standing committees**. A committee consists of between 25 and 81 full members. These committees influence legislative proposals through the adoption of reports, proposing amendments to Plenary and appointing a team to conduct negotiations with the Council on EU legislation. **They also adopt own-initiative reports, organise hearings with experts and scrutinise the other EU bodies and institutions.** Parliamentary committees normally meet in Brussels, and their work is supported by a secretariat. Their debates are held in public and are web streamed.

The **European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland** provides information on the European Parliament's role and powers, on the Irish MEPs and their activities and on issues currently being considered by Parliament which are of significance for Ireland and for Europe as a whole. It shares

an office building with the European Commission Representation in Dublin.

The web portal of the [European Parliament](#) provides all the practical information needed to inform GCE advocacy with MEPs. There are links to:

- [MEPs](#) individual pages with contact details and information on parliamentary questions and reports.
- Political Groups pages with information on political co-ordinators on all parliamentary committees.
- [European Parliament Committees](#) homepages with detailed information on mandates, members and work programmes.
- [European Parliament online press service](#) including the latest information updates on what's new at the European Parliament plenary sessions including agendas.

HOW CAN MEPs SUPPORT THE WORK OF GCE ADVOCATES?



- Your MEPs can submit questions for written answer to the European Council, the Commission, the External Action Service and the Commission Vice Presidents and receive a written reply from the Commission.
.....
- Your MEPs can submit parliamentary questions, raise issues in EP Committee meetings, propose amendments to upcoming EU legislation, champion key issues within the parliament and speak at public events.
.....
- Your MEPs can issue press releases or public statements, organise press conferences, do media interviews on given topics, write opinion pieces in the media, join campaigns on social media, and write online blogs.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS AT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEVEL



- [Irish MEPs](#), especially those chairing or sitting on EP committees relevant to GCE:
 - [DEVE – Committee on Development](#)
 - [CULT – Committee on Culture and Education](#)⁷
 - [AFET – Committee on Foreign Affairs](#)
 - [DROI – Sub-Committee on Human Rights](#)
 - [BUDG – Committee on Budgets](#)
 - [ENVI – Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety](#)
 - [FEMM – Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality](#)
- [European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland](#)

⁷ At the time of writing, there were no Irish MEPs on this EP Committee. When contacting MEPs from other Member States, it is advised to coordinate with the CONCORD Europe Policy Advocacy team.

2.1e The European Economic and Social Committee

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is a **consultative body** that gives representatives of Europe's interest groups, such as employer organisations, trade unions, and civil society a **formal platform to express their points of view on EU issues**.

The EESC is a strong institutional ally of CSOs at the EU level. It is often called “**a bridge between Europe and organised civil society**”. The EESC regularly issues opinions and papers on a wide range of different areas and plays a significant role in promoting policy issues and approaches to other EU institutions, e.g. the Commission and Parliament.

The EESC has 329 members. The number from each EU country is in proportion to the size of its population. For example, at the time of writing, **Ireland has ten members on the EESC, five of which sit on the Civil Society Organisations' Group**.

The EESC fulfils three key missions:

- ensuring that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground;
- promoting the development of a more participatory European Union which is in touch with public opinion; and
- promoting the values on which European integration is founded and advancing the role of civil society organisations.

The members are nominated by their national governments, but they work in complete political independence. They are appointed for four years and may be reappointed. The Committee meets in plenary assembly, and its discussions are prepared by six subcommittees known as 'sections', each dealing with particular policy areas. Members are not based full-time in Brussels; most continue to do their jobs in their home countries, which means **GCE advocates seeking to engage with them could request to meet them in either location**.

The EESC issues between 160 and 190 opinions and information reports a year. It also organises **several annual initiatives and events with a focus on civil society and citizens' participation** such as the Civil Society Prize, the Civil Society Days, the Your Europe, Your Say youth plenary and the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Day.

There are **a range of EESC publications which are relevant to GCE, although a lot of work remains to be done**. These publications include:

- (i) Empowering youth to achieve sustainable development through education.
- (ii) Towards an EU Strategy for enhancing green skills and competences for all.
- (iii) Modernisation of Higher Education.

The Sustainable Development Observatory of the EESC facilitates dialogue and partnerships between civil society and EU institutions in the field of sustainable development by organising public hearings, conferences, platforms for exchanging good practices, as well as workshops and impact studies, and by contributing to Committee Opinions.



How can GCE advocates work with the EESC to promote GCE in EU policymaking?



- **National CSOs can ensure that they are invited to relevant EESC events and discussions through getting themselves included on the EESC's lists of recognised CSOs.** This can be best facilitated through becoming members of EU CSO platforms and alliances such as CONCORD Europe, SOLIDAR, SDG Watch Europe and the European Lifelong Learning Platform .
- The Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) of the EESC is also a strong ally of CSOs at EU level and is very focused on the EU's implementation of the SDGs. There are opportunities to promote GCE and SDG 4.7 advocacy priorities through participating in SDO-initiated events and processes.
- Irish GCE advocacy groups can also reach out to the EESC members appointed by Ireland and encourage them to promote and advance a GCE agenda across the EESC and the wider EU institutions (e.g. Commission & Parliament).

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS:



→ Irish members of the EESC Civil Society Organisations Group

EU ADVOCACY CHECKLIST

- ✓ What is the problem that you want to address?
- ✓ How is the problem relevant to you (your organisation) and what credibility do you have (i.e. how does it relate to your mission and what evidence do you have)?
- ✓ How is the EU part of the solution to the problem?
- ✓ What do you want to change? (concrete policy and practice outcomes)
- ✓ Is there existing EU policy/legislation on your issue? – if so, do you feel that it is adequate?
- ✓ If so, is it being implemented or not?
- ✓ If there is no adequate EU policy on your issue, how can you raise awareness and put your issue on the EU agenda?
- ✓ If you have identified a specific document or legislative proposal that you want to influence, you will need to determine:
 - what kind of document is it (e.g. a legislative proposal, council conclusions, a policy document or guidelines, etc.)?
 - at what stage is the decision-making process and is there still time to influence it?
 - what is the role and weight of the different institutions in the procedure?
 - should you be influencing the decision at the national level or in Brussels, or both?
 - who will make the final decision?
 - who are your allies and opponents (both in terms of peer NGOs, MEPs and EU member states)?
 - what resources (human and financial) will your advocacy campaign require?

2.2 Other Stakeholders in the European GCE Ecosystem

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) is a multilateral organisation based in Strasbourg, with the goal of upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It currently has 46 member states, including Ireland. It has a Committee of Ministers, which Ireland's Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Irish Permanent Representative to the CoE sit on. Ireland is also represented in the CoE Parliamentary Assembly by a delegation of four representatives and four substitutes.

The CoE contributes to GCE policy and practice mainly through its North South Centre, the mission of which is to “promote an active global citizenship among governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society by raising awareness of global interdependence through intercultural dialogue and global education”.

Their global education activities are supported by their Global Education Network, include an annual Global Education Week and are co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe under the iLegend III “Intercultural Learning Exchange through Global Education, Networking and Dialogue” joint programme. A useful reference document for GCE advocates is their Global Education Guidelines – Concepts and Methodologies for Educators and Policymakers, updated in 2019.

The **fifth-ever European Congress on Global Education** took place in Dublin from 3-4 November 2022. It was a **joint initiative of the CoE's North South Centre** and the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) with the aim of building broader and deeper political support and commitment to global education.



Global Education Network Europe (GENE)

GENE is the **European network of Ministries and Agencies with national responsibility for policymaking, funding and support in the field of Global Education**. GENE started in 2001 with 6 national structures from 6 countries and has grown to include over 50 Ministries, Agencies and other national bodies, from 25 countries, including Ireland. Its purpose is **to support national structures in their work of improving the quality and increasing the provision of Global Education in Europe**. GENE achieves this purpose through networking, peer review and learning, strategy sharing, policy advice to Ministries and policy research. In Ireland, GENE engages mainly with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid and the Department of Education and Youth.

GENE is a key GCE player in the European context and is relevant to GCE advocates in Ireland for several reasons:

- 1. GENE has strong ties to Ireland.** Its secretariat is in Dublin. Its current executive director is Irish, based in Ireland, and has decades-long experience of the Irish educational system as a teacher-educator, school principal and curriculum developer.
- 2.** Although GENE does not carry out lobbying or advocacy work in the conventional sense, due to its role of providing GCE policy advice to Ministries, it has **privileged access to Irish policymakers** with responsibility for GCE.
- 3. IDEA and GENE have a robust allyship and GENE is very supportive of IDEA.** The IDEA Code of Good Practice in Development Education received a GENE Award for Quality in Global Education in 2021.

4. GENE “works to ensure that **GCE policymakers have access to the best and latest comparative research base for policymaking**”. They do this by producing their own policy research, by supporting the [Academic Network on Global Education & Learning \(ANGEL\)](#), and through the [European Educational Research Association \(EERA\)/GENE Fund](#). They co-founded ANGEL, which now has more than 600 members in 70 countries, to strengthen GCE policy research and to form a bridge between GCE policymakers and researchers. The EERA/GENE Fund **supports new GCE policy research**, focused on themes identified by GENE Ministries and Agencies as crucial to the increase and improvement of GCE.
5. GENE carries out periodic **Global Education Peer Reviews** of participating countries. It carried out a Peer Review of Ireland in 2015 and is set to carry out another peer review of Ireland in 2025. **GCE advocates can participate in stakeholder consultations** carried out within the peer review process. For example, IDEA and its members participated in the stakeholder consultations carried out for the 2015 peer review, making written submissions on GCE in the formal education, adult and community education, and youth sectors, respectively. These submissions influenced the policy recommendations of, and were included in, the final 2015 [Peer Review report](#).
6. GENE and the CoE’s North South Centre co-convened the **fifth European Congress on Global Education**, which took place in Dublin from 3-4 November 2022, hosted by the **Government of Ireland** and co-chaired by the Government of Luxembourg and at which the **European Declaration on Global Education to 2050**, also known as the Dublin Declaration, was signed and ratified. GCE advocates can use the Declaration in their advocacy with the relevant political stakeholders to inquire about progress on specific commitments made. GENE also actively monitors implementation of the Dublin Declaration via twice-yearly policymaker roundtables.

The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050

The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 was the **culmination of an 18-month process to develop a new framework on GCE to 2050**. Signed and ratified by 25 EU Member States, **they committed themselves to a Europe where access to quality global education is a right**. The Declaration also sets out how education will encourage the public to act, individually and collectively, to help build a fairer, more tolerant and more sustainable world for all. It includes several policy commitments for all signatories, within their respective mandates, at national and EU level. Other signatories include stakeholders across youth organisations, civil society, local governments, academia, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the OECD, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and UNESCO. The EU Commissioner for International Partnerships also strongly endorsed the Declaration process.

Bridge 47

Bridge 47 is a global network of GCE practitioners/ CSOs/associations, of which IDEA is an active member. It grew out of a four-year European Commission-funded project from 2017 – 2021 called **Bridge 47: Building Global Citizenship**, co-created by 15 European and global organisations. The project brought GCE practitioners, CSOs, academics and other stakeholders from across Europe and beyond together to network, to engage in cross-sector partnerships to advance the mission of GCE and to create a roadmap and policy papers towards achieving SDG Target 4.7.

The **Envision 4.7 Roadmap** is a useful tool for GCE advocates as it describes clearly what needs to happen on a policy level for SDG Target 4.7 to be achieved, organised according to policy recommendations for six thematic areas: transformative education, lifelong learning, cross-sectoral cooperation, indicators, competencies and resources for SDG Target 4.7.

The **Envision 4.7 Policy Papers** build on and delve deeper into the six policy recommendations listed in its Envision 4.7 Roadmap: (i) [Transformative Education](#), (ii) [Cross-sectoral Co-operation](#), (iii) [Indicators for SDG Target 4.7](#): (iv) [Lifelong Learning](#), (v) [Competences for SDG Target 4.7](#), and (vi) [Resources for SDG Target 4.7](#).





"Even though our world is increasingly interconnected, too great a proportion of the global population lacks an understanding of global challenges, such as inequality, poverty, human rights violations and injustice which continue to threaten peace and sustainability. In times of crisis, values like respect, solidarity and inclusion tend to be further weakened. That's why Global Citizenship Education plays an important role in building consensus towards a truly sustainable future based on human rights, gender equality, justice and democracy. However Global Citizenship Education needs greater recognition, political support, policies and decent funding"

Concord Europe website

CONCORD is the **European Confederation of NGOs working on sustainable development and international cooperation**. It is made up of 57 member organisations representing more than 2,600 NGOs and supported by millions of citizens across Europe. It is the **main CSO interlocutor with the EU institutions** on sustainable development policy and international cooperation. From 2025, Global Citizenship Education is a mainstreamed topic across CONCORD's priority work areas. IDEA was a member of the CONCORD GCE Working Group, which was discontinued in late 2024. However, a parallel working group was set up by Solidar Foundation in January 2025 to continue the GCE advocacy work at European level.

SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a **European network of CSOs with a global reach working to advance social justice** through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR's over 50 member organisations are based in 24 countries (19 of which are EU countries) and include national CSOs in Europe and abroad. It also partners with international and local organisations spread across 40+ countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Although not a member of SOLIDAR, IDEA engages with SOLIDAR as allies in GCE advocacy.

It organises its **work for lifelong and life-wide learning** through the **SOLIDAR Foundation for progressive education and citizenry participation**. It engages citizens in EU decision-making processes, and carries out research, policy monitoring and advocacy. Global Citizenship Education has been a **central topic of its work across Europe and beyond**. What unites the members of SOLIDAR Foundation is the fact that **each one of them is striving to achieve social justice through education**, ensuring that all learners have access to quality, public education that is done in a lifelong and life-wide learning manner.

SOLIDAR Foundation's **definition of GCE** is that "it is understood as **political education on a global scale** which prepares learners to develop a **sense of belonging to the global community**, to get involved and to take an active role in society in order to contribute to a **peaceful, just world in which ecological resources are preserved**".

SOLIDAR Foundation's 2023 Policy Paper

"We All Belong: The Role of GCE in supporting democratic participation and addressing current global challenges" discusses recent GCE policy developments at European level and the relevance of GCE delivered in informal and non-formal education for **supporting democratic participation and addressing the current global challenges**. It also underlines **"the need to shift towards a 'critical' GCE, emphasising**



social justice and giving space for a truly transformative learning experience, rather than risking sliding into an uncritical, self-complacent version of GCE.” It further asserts that **“GCE should be a practice that is unafraid to address the political and controversial, and to put into question power relations in order to address inequality and oppression.”**

It therefore encourages GCE advocates and practitioners to take transnational, intersectional and decolonial/postcolonial approaches. The policy paper also includes several broad policy and practice recommendations that Irish GCE advocates can refer to in their own advocacy.

SOLIDAR Foundation also launched a digital “Policy Pill” on GCE in 2023, that serves as a learning tool to explore the main findings of the GCE policy paper, as well as a Joint Declaration of Advocacy for GCE and other relevant policy documents such as the Dublin Declaration.

The EU Lifelong Learning Platform



The European Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL)

(LLL) is an umbrella platform that gathers 44 European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth. These networks represent more than 60,000 educational institutions and associations covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning. **The Platform aims to voice citizens’ concerns about lifelong learning with European institutions**, such as the EU and the CoE. The platform’s vision is that no one should be left out and that bridges should be built across sectors to increase access to quality education for all. It **shares its views on various issues related to education and facilitates participation of civil society in public debates** on lifelong education.

In 2023, LLLP published a comprehensive **position paper called Key Competences for ALL: a lifelong learning approach to skills**, which could be useful for GCE advocates based in Ireland when engaging Irish political stakeholders on the importance of **adapting education practices and policies to learners’ needs** in preparation for future societal challenges. The paper’s recommendations encompass, among others, the responsibilities of education and training stakeholders and policymakers and the need for a whole-of-government approach.

SDG Watch Europe



SDG Watch Europe

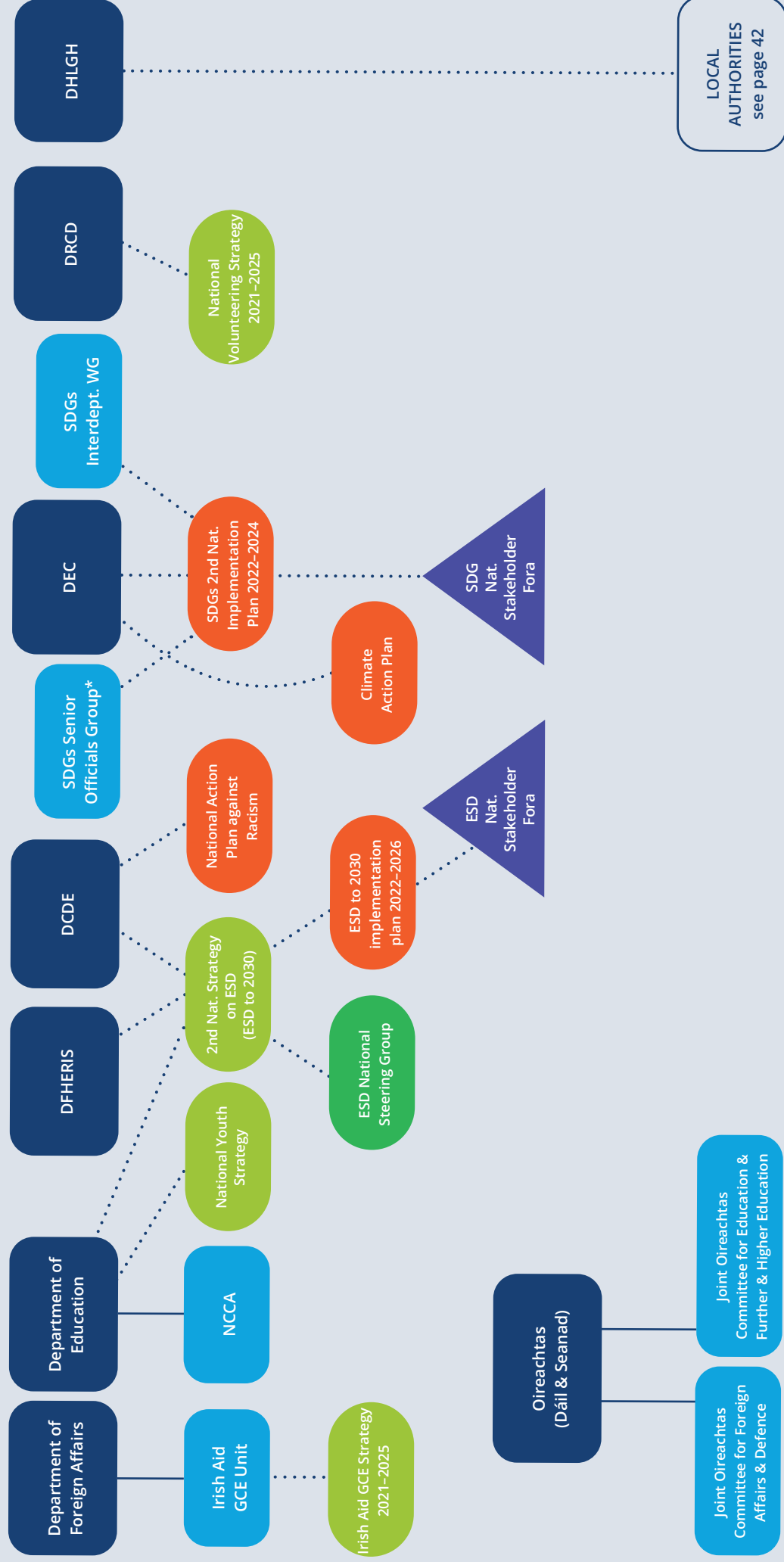
supports national CSOs from different sectors to come together and collaborate more effectively on the monitoring of the correct implementation of the SDGs by the EU and its Member States.

The coalitions and alliances that are members of SDG Watch Europe bring together organisations from very different backgrounds to work for the same 17 common goals so that they can have a stronger voice. **Through events, position papers and articles, CSOs express their views and hold governments accountable for what they promised on SDG implementation.** SDG Watch Europe members also help to inform public opinion about sustainable development challenges and opportunities.

Under its work area, **Joint Advocacy & Policy Co-ordination**, SDG Watch Europe **examines the adequacy of existing EU strategies, policies and practices** in light of the need to achieve the SDG targets. This involves a “gap-analysis” of EU policy frameworks and processes and calling for their revision or replacement where appropriate. Policy proposals based on common principles and cross-cutting issues, once developed together, **are advanced through joint high-level advocacy and through members supporting each other with more technical advocacy.** Coalition 2030 is both a member of SDG Watch Europe and IDEA, and IDEA is a member of Coalition 2030.



NATIONAL LEVEL MAP



NATIONAL LEVEL



Institutional responsibility for GCE is expanding at Irish government level, new targets for GCE advocacy are emerging and a lack of familiarity with them can lead to practical difficulties for advocates. In Ireland, GCE advocates may have well-established relations with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Irish Aid and tend to be familiar with the policy entry points and funding opportunities available. However, several other government departments have begun to assume some responsibility for GCE – including the Departments of Education & Youth (DoE), the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science (DFHERIS), the Department of Environment and Climate (DEC) and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

3.1 The Department of Foreign Affairs

Historically, the main source of government policy and funding for Global Citizenship Education/ Development Education has come from Irish Aid, within the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The Development Cooperation and Africa Division (DCAD) is the division within the DFA that manages

Irish Aid, the Government of Ireland's development cooperation programme and implements Ireland's whole-of-government policy for international development: A Better World. A Better World provides the framework for Ireland's expanding development cooperation programme, in line with the government's commitment to reaching the UN target of allocating 0.7% of our GNI to Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2030.



It outlines Ireland's vision of a "more equal, peaceful and sustainable world". It is framed within Agenda 2030 and how its work contributes to the SDGs overseas and is focused on reaching those furthest behind first. It also commits to a strengthened focus on global citizenship and public engagement, stating that **global citizenship education is an important element of Ireland's evolving approach to reaching the furthest behind first**, and includes a commitment to **dedicate more resources** to achieving Ireland's objectives in this area.

To support this strengthened focus on global citizenship, Irish Aid published its latest Global Citizenship Education strategy in 2021. [Irish Aid's Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025](#), is of key significance to GCE advocates in Ireland, and in particular IDEA members, for several reasons, including the following:

1. It gives global citizenship education in Ireland **strengthened legitimacy** for all stakeholders, and in turn, lends legitimacy to GCE advocates.
.....
2. It **names IDEA as a partner** in implementing its strategy.
.....
3. It **commits to "support, as appropriate, the delivery of 'Vision 2025'⁸, An IDEA Vision for the Development Education Sector"**.
.....
4. It sets out **clear commitments and priorities** for each sub-sector of the GCE sector (e.g. early childhood education, primary education, post-primary education, third level education, post-primary education, youth work, adult and community education) that advocates can monitor and use in their engagement with political stakeholders.
.....
5. The commitments and priorities set out in the strategy have a **high degree of alignment with IDEA's Vision 2025**, which can be highlighted when engaging in GCE advocacy.
.....
6. It acknowledges the **important role that other government departments have to play** in promoting GCE and commits to working closely with six other Departments and relevant institutions, including DoE; DFHERIS; DCDE; DEC; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH); the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD); the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Teaching Council.
.....
7. It acknowledges the need for policy coherence and **commits to working to strengthen cross-government policy coherence on both GCE and ESD**.
.....

Examples of commitments made in Irish Aid's GCE Strategy (2021-2025)

- Increase funding for GCE to €10 million per year over the lifetime of the strategy.
- Launch a revitalised Community Initiative to engage people from the broadest possible range of backgrounds, including those marginalised from mainstream education.
- Strengthen engagement with local government, using their Public Participation Networks (PPNs) to engage with communities.
- Develop a new strategic partnership for the third level sector and for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in post-primary education - building on its work with DICE, SUAS and the Ubuntu programme.
- Increase funding for research on Global Citizenship Education and the use of digital learning and new technologies to advance our work, reach new learners and communities and build links with schools, institutions, youth groups and the Global South.



⁸. IDEA will update Vision 2025 in 2025.

Opportunities to shape Irish Aid's GCE policy and/or institutional practice



- IDEA's annual members survey (July) and feedback letter to Irish Aid on the GCE grants application process.
- Periodic consultations carried out by Irish Aid. For example, during the mid-term review or end evaluation of their strategy or during the development of a new strategy.
- Making submissions to peer review processes such as the OECD DAC Peer Reviews and the GENE's Country Peer Reviews.
- Invitations to speak or interventions from the audience at Irish Aid events.
- IDEA's annual pre-budget submission (June-July).

KEY GCE ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & IRISH AID



- Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora
 - Deputy-Secretary of the Political Division
 - Director-General of DCAD/ Irish Aid
 - Director of Global Programmes and GCE Unit
 - Deputy Director of Global Programmes and GCE Unit

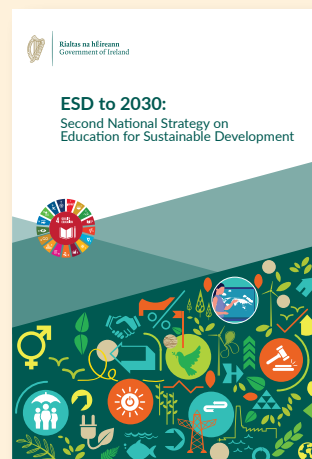
3.2 The Department of Education and Youth

The mission of the Department of Education and Youth (DoE) is to facilitate children and young people, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development. It is a ministerial department, supported by various agencies and bodies. The department's goals are set out in its Statement of Strategy 2023-2025. The **Irish National Commission for UNESCO** is a Unit in the DoE, and works to associate Irish governmental and non-governmental bodies in education, sciences, culture and communication with the work of UNESCO.

The DoE is co-responsible, with DFHERIS and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) for Ireland's ESD policy and strategy implementation.

Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development: ESD to 2030

ESD to 2030 is the Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and is aligned to **UNESCO's ESD to 2030 agenda** and **SDG Target 4.7**. It provides a framework to steer and support the education sector in contributing towards a sustainable future by 2030. It **spans the continuum of education in Ireland, from early learning and care to third level education and research**, and extends beyond to engage with local communities, and youth groups through lifelong learning. The strategy aims to "ensure that all learners are equipped with the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will motivate and



empower them throughout their lives **to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future.**” It is accompanied by an **Implementation Plan 2022 - 2026**, and it published its first **ESD to 2030 Progress Report (covering January 2022-June 2023)** in November 2023.

The strategy recognises the “*huge amount of ESD expertise in civil society and other sectors*” built over many years delivering ESD in formal, non-formal and informal settings, as well as its role “*as key contributors to ESD*” and states it “*will ensure that civil society is included in the design, delivery and monitoring of policies and programmes on ESD*”.

ESD to 2030 strategic priorities

There are five priority areas in the strategy: advancing policy, transforming learning environments, building the capacity of educators, empowering and mobilising young people, and accelerating local level actions. There are several commitments under each priority area. Examples of commitments that are particularly relevant for GCE advocates to monitor and engage the three co-responsible departments on:

PRIORITY 1: Advancing Policy



- **Collaboration:** Strengthen... interdepartmental...coordination, to facilitate information sharing, accountability and engagement on ESD.
- **Policy alignment:** Support policy alignment and coherence across government and among government agencies, in areas linked to ESD.
- **Mapping and monitoring:** Develop existing and new frameworks and tools to monitor and evaluate progress on ESD and enhance accountability.
- **Research:** Create an enabling environment for research to inform effective policy and best practice for ESD.

“A crucial role is identified for research-led policy development throughout the duration of this...strategy. This is in line with UNESCO’s recommendations that research at country level ought to underpin and



examine the impact of policy advancement across the decade. It specifically recommends that countries: Conduct thematic research related to ESD and the SDGs, based on the key issues, trends and questions raised in relation to the five priority action areas. Higher education and research institutions should play a key role in this type of research activity, which can be included as a part of country initiatives on ESD for 2030” (p. 19)

“Research should...include areas such as...identifying and assessing the outcomes of ESD practices across formal and nonformal education contexts so as to identify ESD interventions that successfully develop agency and bring about social and behavioural change for transformative action within the Irish context.” (p. 20)

PRIORITY 2: Transforming Learning Environments



- **Embedding ESD:** Further embed ESD in curricula and programmes at all levels to ensure learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to promote, advance and take action for sustainable development.
- **Whole institution approaches:** Transform Early Learning and Care settings, Schools and Campus environments into places and educational spaces for sustainability.

PRIORITY 4: Empowering and Mobilising Young People



- **Youth-led initiatives:** Create policy and participation opportunities for young people to engage, upskill and use their voice for sustainable development online and offline, through youth-led and youth-focused groups, organisations and networks at local, national, and global levels. Encourage and support peer-to-peer learning, as part of this approach.

PRIORITY 5: Accelerating Local Level Actions



- **Local authority engagement:** Local authorities, in coordination with enterprise and all concerned stakeholders in the community, should consider and develop an action plan for how the whole community can become a learning laboratory for sustainable development and an important element of ESD for 2030 country initiatives, providing opportunities for all citizens and learners to become change agents.

Opportunities to shape policy and/or institutional practice under ESD to 2030



- Via participation in the **ESD National Steering Group** and/or the **ESD Advisory Group for Schools** or the **ESD Advisory Group for Further and Higher Education** meetings. IDEA represents the GCE sector on the *ESD National Steering Group*, as well as on two of three sectoral advisory groups (*ESD in Schools* and *ESD in Further and Higher Education*). We advocate on an ongoing basis with all relevant policymakers **for better policy coherence across ESD, GCE, and all transformative education initiatives**, collectively contributing to achieving SDG Target 4.7.
- Via **stakeholder consultations** on the design, monitoring or evaluation of **national ESD strategy and plans**. E.g. IDEA made a submission to the first national ESD strategy mid-term review, and the IDEA Formal Education, Adult and Community Education and Youth Education working groups made submissions during the design phase of ESD to 2030.
- Via **active participation in the National ESD stakeholder Forum**. Every year since 2015 there has been an annual National ESD Forum, and IDEA has been involved as a panellist, facilitator or moderator at almost every forum. For example, IDEA and members facilitated, presented and participated in sessions during the 2023 Forum, discussing transforming learning, partnerships for ESD, sustainable and inclusive learning environments and creative thinking for climate action and sustainability. The IDEA CEO participated in the closing panel, discussing the current state of ESD and where ESD needs to go in the future.



National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is a statutory body of the DoE. The NCCA advises the Minister for Education on (i) curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and (ii) assessment procedures used in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. The DoE and the NCCA **are responsible for ensuring that ESD principles are integrated into all relevant primary and post primary curriculum areas** as the curriculum is reviewed, where this is appropriate.

GCE advocates can participate in public consultations by the NCCA during reviews of curricula for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools. For example, the IDEA Formal Education Working Group has made submissions as part of public consultations on Aistear - the Early Learning and Care curriculum, several primary school subjects, the Transition Year curriculum and several post-primary senior cycle subjects, including the new Leaving Certificate subject on Climate Action and Sustainable Development that is to be introduced across all post-primary schools in 2025.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH & NCCA



- Minister for Education and Youth
 - Assistant Secretary of Curriculum, Assessment and Teacher Professional Learning – Head of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit
 - Rotating Chair of the ESD National Steering Group
 - Chair of the ESD Advisory Group for Schools
- NCCA directors for primary and post-primary education
- NCCA Council, Boards and Development Groups

3.3 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) **funds and creates policy for the higher and further education and research sectors**. It also oversees the work of the state agencies and public institutions operating in these areas. Its role is to make sure that these sectors support and encourage Ireland's social and economic development. As mentioned above, DFHERIS is co-responsible for implementation of ESD to 2030, together with DoE and DCDE. DFHERIS provides funding for ESD through the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to ensure that educators are supported in bringing the latest thinking and innovations to bear in transforming our learning environments to make them more inclusive and sustainable.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN DFHERIS



- Minister for Further and Higher Education
- Minister of State for Further Education, Apprenticeship, Construction and Climate Skills
 - Rotating Chair of the ESD National Steering Group
 - Chair of the ESD Advisory Group for Further and Higher Education
 - Assistant Principal – Lead on ESD



3.4 The Department of Children, Disability and Equality

The mission of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) is to enhance the lives of everyone in Ireland from childhood onwards by upholding rights, promoting equality of opportunity, recognising diversity and delivering supportive legislation, policies and services. Up until 2024, the Departmental Divisions most relevant to GCE advocates were the **Early Years Division** and the **Equality, Participation, Youth, International and Adoption Division**. The latter was responsible for funding, oversight, reform and policy development of youth work services, while the former is responsible for operational, policy and legislative developments relating to improving access to high quality and affordable Early Learning and Care, School-Age Childcare and for First 5, a whole of government, 10-year strategy for babies, young children and their families. With responsibility for Youth passing to the Department of Education in 2025, youth-related GCE advocacy should be addressed to the Department of Education and Youth.

As mentioned above, DCDE is co-responsible for implementation of ESD to 2030, together with DoE and DFHERIS. It is also responsible for a number of initiatives that aim to introduce ESD themes during early childhood such as the **First 5 Garden of Wonder**, the **Wild Child Award**, and a number of actions in the **First 5 Implementation Plan 2023-2025**. In addition, it is responsible for the **National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027** (NAPAR) and provides the secretariat for the independent **National Anti-Racism Committee**, which designed and oversees implementation of the Plan. Furthermore, on 2 July 2024, as key actions under the NAPAR, it announced the appointment of a **Special Rapporteur for the NAPAR**, the setting up of an **Advisory Group on Racism and Racial Equality** and the launch of the 2024 round of funding under the **Ireland Against Racism Fund**.

Opportunities for influencing GCE/ESD policy and funding within DCDE policy



- Via stakeholder consultations on the design, monitoring or evaluation of policies, strategies and plans. For example, IDEA made submissions to the Department's Statement of Strategy 2021-2023, the NAPAR and the National Youth Strategy.
- Via engagement with relevant advocacy targets (see below) on ESD/GCE funding available from DCDE budgets, such as under the Ireland against Racism Fund and as part of youth services funding.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN AND RELATED TO DCDE



→ Minister for Children, Disability and Equality

- Assistant Secretary of the Early Years Division
 - Special Rapporteur for the National Action Plan Against Racism (also Chair of the Advisory Group on Racism and Racial Equality)
 - Chair of the independent National Anti-Racism Committee
 - Rotating Chair of the ESD National Steering Group
 - Chair of the ESD Advisory Group for Children and Youth

3.5 Department of Environment and Climate

The Department of Environment and Climate (DEC) is responsible for the delivery of policies and programmes on the environment, climate and energy. Its Statement of Strategy 2024-2025 defines the department's mandate, mission and strategies for a two-year period. The DEC is relevant to GCE advocates for two main reasons:

1. It is the co-ordinating department for Ireland's SDG national implementation plans.
2. It is responsible for Ireland's climate action plans.

SDG National Implementation Plans

In Ireland, a whole-of-government approach was adopted for implementation of the SDGs, with each minister having specific responsibility for implementing individual SDG targets related to their ministerial functions. Although DEC has overall responsibility for promoting the SDGs and overseeing their coherent implementation across government, two cross-government governance structures were set up to support implementation and the whole-of-government approach: The **SDG Senior Officials Group (SOG)** and the SDG Interdepartmental Working Group (IDWG) both play a key role in identifying priorities, overseeing and monitoring progress, and ensuring officials from across government departments work together to incorporate the SDGs into their work and stakeholder engagements. Each government department has an SDG point of contact, which generally coincides with the members of the SDG IDWG.

The second National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the SDGs, valid from 2022-2024, was developed in collaboration with all government departments, key stakeholders, and based on input from two public consultation processes. It includes five strategic objectives, of which the following three provide entry points for ESD/ GCE advocates:

It is under strategic objective 3 that the NIP sets out several specific actions related to ESD, as well as emphasising the partnerships with DoE, DFHERIS, DCDE and DFA on ESD and GCE, under its commitments to achieving SDG Target 4.7. See heading 7.4.4 Youth empowerment in Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (pp.144-145) and heading 7.5.1 Collaboration for SDGs, ESD and GCE (pp. 146-149), of the NIP 2022-2024, respectively. Progress of the SDG NIP is reported under the Voluntary National Review (VNR) mechanism, which can be complemented by Voluntary Local Reviews. The identification and management of national data needed to meet Ireland's SDG reporting requirements is undertaken by the Central Statistics Office. Data on progress towards SDG Target 4.7 is supposed to be reported on the dedicated page for SDG 4 of Ireland's SDG data hub, GeoHive. However, at the time of writing, no data on the measurement indicator for SDG Target 4.7 was available.

TO NOTE!

In Ireland's SDG VNR 2023, it states that the two national policies that contribute to achieving Target 4.7 are:

- Irish Aid's GCE Strategy 2021 – 2025
- Ireland's ESD to 2030 Strategy



Strategic Objective 1:

To embed the SDG framework into the work of government departments to achieve greater policy coherence for sustainable development

Strategic Objective 2:

To integrate the SDGs into local authority work to better support the localisation of the SDGs

Strategic Objective 3:

Greater partnerships for the Goals



Climate Action Plan

The **Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24)** is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan. The purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to lay out a roadmap of actions which will ultimately lead to meeting Ireland's national climate objective of pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. The Climate Action Plan is relevant for GCE advocates in that it references ESD to 2030 as a means to advance climate literacy.



Opportunities to influence GCE/ESD policy within SDG NIP or Climate Action Plan



- Via **stakeholder consultations** on the design, monitoring or evaluation of **national SDG plans**. For example, IDEA made a submission to the first and second SDG National Implementation Plans, and to [Ireland's SDG VNR 2023](#).
- Produce a spotlight report on SDG Target 4.7 in the framework of Ireland's SDG VNR.
- Via **active participation in the National SDG Stakeholder Forum**. This forum was established in 2018 to provide a mechanism for stakeholders to discuss innovative ideas and solutions for further development of the national SDG framework. There has been between one and four convenings of the National SDG Stakeholder Fora each year, and IDEA has been actively involved in most of these. E.g. in the June 2024 SDG Forum, IDEA co-facilitated a workshop on GCE with IDEA member, Concern Worldwide.

- By being a **member of the SDG National Stakeholder Forum Committee**. An SDG Forum Committee, consisting of representation from all stakeholder groups, was established following a commitment made in the second SDG National Implementation Plan 2022-2024 (SDG NIP). As the responsible department for coordination of SDG NIP implementation, DEC issues a call every October to [receive expressions of interest](#) from any SDG stakeholder group to be a committee member for the following year.
- Via Coalition 2030 advocacy initiatives that have an ESD entry point or angle.
- Via **stakeholder consultations** on the design, monitoring or evaluation of annual **climate action plans**. For example, IDEA made submissions with policy recommendations for the Climate Action Plans for 2022 and 2024, respectively.
- Via direct engagement with relevant advocacy targets (see below) on ESD/ GCE funding available from the Climate Action Plan budget.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN AND RELATED TO DEC AND/OR SDG IMPLEMENTATION



- [SDG Officials Group](#)
- [SDG Interdepartmental Working Group](#)
- [SDG Points of Contact](#)
- [Minister for Climate, Environment and Energy](#)
 - [Assistant Secretary, Environment - Climate](#)

3.6 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

The mission of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) is to support the sustainable and efficient delivery of well-planned homes and enabling democratic, responsive and effective local government. It is relevant to GCE advocates in relation to the latter role and particularly in relation to the **Public Participation Networks** within local authorities, as they enable participation of community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups in local council decision-making. Irish Aid, in its GCE Strategy 2021-2025, committed to strengthening its “*work and coherence with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and their Public Participation Networks*”.

The DHLGH is further relevant to GCE advocates in relation to local government’s role in implementing the SDGs and the Climate Action Plan.

Opportunities to influence GCE/ESD policy within the remit of DHLGH



- Via stakeholder consultations on the design, monitoring or evaluation of sections of national local government policy as it pertains to GCE/ESD funding at local level.
- By encouraging Irish Aid to engage with its counterparts in DHLGH on GCE.
- See more about how GCE advocates can influence decision-making about GCE policy and funding via participation in Public Participation Networks under the local section.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN DHLGH



- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister of State for Local Government and Planning
 - Assistant Secretary for Local Government

3.7 Department of Rural and Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) promotes rural and community development and supports vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland. It is relevant to GCE advocates working at local government and community level, in relation to its **strategy for the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland** and **Ireland’s National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025**, which includes a commitment to “promote ethical and skills-based international volunteering to deliver results for beneficiaries and to **enhance global citizenship in Ireland**”. Irish Aid, in its GCE Strategy 2021-2025, committed to working with the DRCD in relation to both strategies.

Opportunities to influence GCE/ESD policy within the remit of DRCD



- Via stakeholder consultations on the design, monitoring or evaluation of sections of community development policy as it pertains to GCE/ESD strategy and funding.
- By encouraging Irish Aid to engage with its counterparts in DRCD on GCE.
- See more about how GCE advocates can influence decision-making about GCE policy and funding at community development level under the local section below.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN DRCD



- Minister for Rural and Community Development
- Minister of State for Community Development and Charities

3.8 Oireachtas

The Oireachtas is Ireland's Parliament, comprising the President of Ireland, Dáil Éireann, the lower house of representatives, and Seanad Éireann, the upper house of representatives. The main function of the Oireachtas is to make laws for Ireland. The Oireachtas also elects the government and approves funding of government departments. Another function is to hold the government to account. The Dáil and Seanad delegate certain aspects of their work to Joint Oireachtas Committees, allowing for more detailed examination of a topic to be debated or legislated on. Dáil and Seanad debates and Oireachtas Committee meetings can be watched live and recorded on Oireachtas TV.

Oireachtas Committees

There are several Joint Oireachtas Committees; some are Standing Committees, which shadow the work of corresponding government departments. Some are Special Committees, created to address a special topic for a certain period. Membership of Oireachtas committees usually comprises TDs and Senators from across parties and political factions. The Oireachtas committees most relevant to GCE advocates are:

- [Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence \(JCFAD\)](#)
- [Joint Committee on Education and Further and Higher Education \(JCEFHE\)](#)
- [Joint Committee on Environment and Climate \(JCEC\)](#)

Opportunities to influence GCE policy via the Oireachtas



- By making a written submission to a relevant Oireachtas committee. Anyone who wishes to raise a matter with a committee may write or send a submission to the committee at any time. In addition, submissions may be made as part of a public consultation on a specific matter and/or an individual or an entity might be invited to appear before a committee. For more information on the procedure, see [here](#).
- Via a meeting with relevant Oireachtas committee members by virtue of requesting a meeting or by being invited to appear before a relevant Oireachtas committee. Requests for meetings are made via the relevant Committee Clerk and guidance on appearing before a relevant committee can be found [here](#).
- By making a petition. Anyone can petition the Oireachtas on matters on which it has the power to act. Submitted petitions are considered by the Committee on Public Petitions. For more information, see [here](#).
- By inviting members of relevant Oireachtas committees to GCE events.
- By sending GCE policy recommendations to members of relevant Oireachtas committees.

HOW CAN TDs SUPPORT THE WORK OF GCE ADVOCATES?



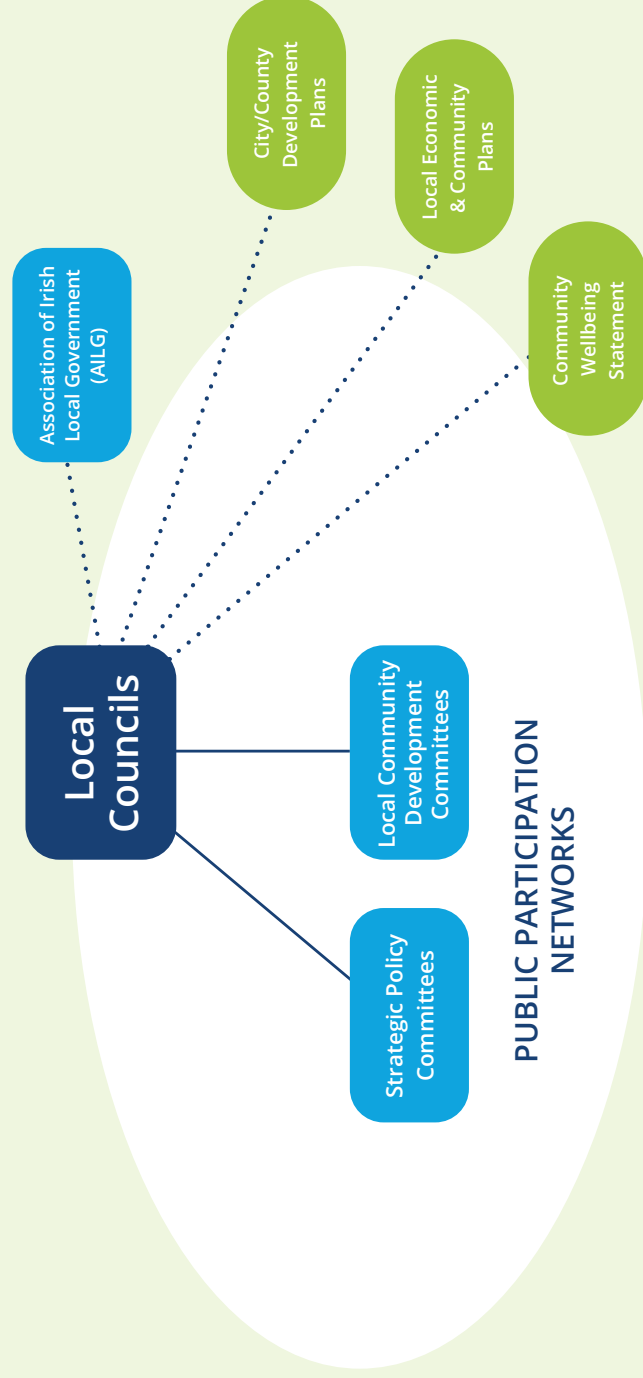
- Your TDs can submit questions on your behalf in relation to GCE policy and funding to any government minister and receive an official written answer.
- Your TDs can submit parliamentary questions and raise issues in the **Dáil** or during Oireachtas committee meetings, propose amendments to legislation, champion key issues within the **Dáil** and speak at public events.
- Your TDs can issue press releases or public statements, organise press conferences, do media interviews on given topics, write opinion pieces in the media, join campaigns on social media, and write online blogs.

KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN THE OIREACTHAS



- ➔ Chair (Cathaoirleach), Vice-Chair (Leas-Cathaoirleach), other members of the JCFAD
- ➔ Chair (Cathaoirleach), Vice-Chair (Leas-Cathaoirleach), other members of the JCEFHE
- ➔ TDs or Senators that have shown interest in GCE, the SDGs or transforming education
- ➔ TDs or Senators whose vote in GCE-relevant legislation is critical

LOCAL LEVEL MAP



LOCAL LEVEL



Local Authorities have an important role to play in ensuring GCE and ESD is available in informal and non-formal settings at local level. The importance of local leadership and the comprehensive action needed to achieve sustainable development and to ensure no-one is left behind **means that the active engagement of local government and other local actors is essential.** 'Global' issues framed within the SDG framework are now being translated in very local ways by stakeholders and are very relevant to what needs to happen next to advance local sustainability. Recognising the importance of local as well as national leadership to **enable coordinated action for sustainability** and for **GCE**, means focusing greater attention on **local "governance"** as well as **local government to empower a range of local actors to collaborate.** This can and should include **local actors and organisations working on GCE.**

4.1 Local Authorities

Ireland has **31 local authorities** that are responsible for a range of local services and govern over seven different programme areas. Most (26) local authorities are **county councils**. There are also **3 city councils** (Dublin, Galway and Cork) and **2 councils that oversee a city and a county** (Limerick and Waterford). Local authorities are relevant for GCE advocates focusing on improving GCE policy and funding at the local and community level. Specifically, local authorities have a role in **citizen/community engagement, community development, implementing the SDG NIP** and the **Climate Action Plan at local level**. For more information on how local authorities work, see [here](#).

Multiple opportunities exist for GCE to become integrated into **City and County Development Plans, Community Wellbeing Statements, and PPNs of local authorities**. Irish Aid's GCE Strategy 2021-2025 states the intention to expand its support to local authorities **to encourage the inclusion of global citizenship themes in city and county development plans**, building on its work with **PPNs** through **Saolta**.

The **Association of Irish Local Government (AILG)** is a national representative body that represents and supports all 949 elected city and county councillors across Ireland. It is an interesting stakeholder for GCE advocates to engage with, as it provides an entry-point for GCE advocacy through education of local councillors. The AILG provides training and education for local councillors on a range of topics, including the SDGs, climate action and environment protection, local and community development and arts and culture.



4.2 Embedding Global Citizenship Education in the work of Local Governments



The **Saolta programme**, is a strategic partnership of five organisations including Irish Aid, its primary funding partner. It was launched on 30 January 2020 **with the strategic goal of embedding Development Education/ GCE into the adult and community education sector across Ireland**. Development Perspectives is the lead partner in the consortium, the other partner organisations being Aontas, Concern Worldwide, Irish Rural Link, and The Department of Adult and Community Education at Maynooth University.

In 2021 Saolta produced a report on strategic next steps for the consortium called **“How can Saolta best embed GCE within Local Authorities and Associated County Plans?”**

The introduction states:

*“It is at the overlap between Government of Ireland reform, Government of Ireland policy on sustainability, government commitments to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the importance of using GCE to inform both local and elected officials, and members of the public, where Saolta can play a crucial, functional and impactful role in **achieving a better future through GCE by informing and influencing Local Authority decision making**.” (p. 4)*

“...this report sets out to investigate and make recommendations on where Saolta might best focus its resources and energies to create meaningful impact at a Local Authority level

*across Ireland through the delivery of GCE. **GCE is regarded in this context as a means to provide an informed route into the public participation pathways set out by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (LGRA, 2014).**” (p. 5).*

The Saolta publication identified the following local authority structures as potential GCE **“entry -points”** into local government:

- **Public Participation Networks (PPNs)** are structures that bring together **community & voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups** in each local authority area. The primary purpose of the PPN is to enable the PPN member groups to **input into and have their voices heard within the formal decision-making structures of the local authority**. The PPN is the ‘go to’ for all local authorities who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise in their area. Saolta’s 2021 publication describes PPNs as follows: *“PPNs play a crucial role acting as a hub through which members of the public and community organisations within each local authority area can network and input into the flow of decision making from a grassroots level.”*
- **Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs)** were created under the 2014 LGRA “for the purposes of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.” The LGRA indicates that it is the responsibility of each LCDC to incorporate an agenda of sustainability into their respective Local Economic and Community Plans and in relation to their input into County Development Plans.



- **County Development Plans** are led by the National Development Plan. Each county development plan is specific to the individual county's needs but must remain in line with the commitments laid out in the National Development Plan and the National Climate Action Plan in relation to sustainability.
- **Community Wellbeing Statements**
Although wellbeing is often thought about in terms of good physical and mental health, it can also describe the wider conditions that people need as individuals and communities to have a better quality of life, healthier environment and increased prosperity. Considering all the aspects of community wellbeing together helps to identify actions that can be undertaken by communities alongside local and national governments to achieve sustainable communities where people's needs are met. Community Wellbeing Statements are aspirational and represent what participants would like for their communities. They can inform the discussions and consultations of the local council. They also inform local councillors who are mandated to speak on behalf of the PPN membership on various council committees. They are living documents that should be revised annually.

Further entry points for GCE at local authority level are the **Strategic Policy Committees** and the **Linkage Groups** of local councils.

As well as joining the LCDs, individual members of PPN member groups can be nominated (and elected if needed) to represent the PPN on **Strategic Policy Committees or one of the Linkage Groups** within the local councils. The **Strategic Policy Committee** is considered the Committee with the most policy-influencing agenda, followed by the LCDC and then the **Linkage Groups** (as they make policy recommendations to the PPN Reps to take forward within the Strategic Policy Committees).

Furthermore, **PPN Representatives on Strategic Policy Committees have the same agenda-setting, motion-proposing and voting rights as local councillors**, and therefore it is an **excellent opportunity for GCE policy influencing within local council without being an elected public representative**. Most local non-profit orgs/groups are member groups of a local PPN, even if they are not active, given the requisite of most local authority grants to provide a PPN number on grant applications. It is an **opportunity for IDEA members who are already member groups of their local PPNs to have a seat at the decision-making table in their local council**.

These committees and groups are set up after every local election, when new local councils are formed, and a number of seats are allocated to PPN members. In the run-up to local elections, PPNs around the country invite member groups to put forward nominations, to be ready to assign/elect those members to these committees and boards when they are being formed. For more information on PPNs and how they work, see [here](#).



4.3 Opportunities to build awareness and advance Global Citizenship Education at Local Level



- Contact your local public library and see if you can organise a public talk with a catchy title on Global Citizenship Education.
 - Search online for the contact details of the PPN of your local council and see if your organisation can make a presentation to it about GCE.
 - Find out if your local council has a Community Wellbeing Statement and when it will be reviewed. Make sure your organisation provides GCE inputs into this review process.
 - Research when your local council is due to produce its next County Development Plan. Make sure your organisation provides GCE inputs as part of the advertised public consultation processes.
 - Send a short GCE briefing document to all your local councillors with a short cover letter asking them to promote and integrate GCE into their work as councillors where possible.
 - Invite councillors to speak about the importance of making connections between local and global issues as part of GCE talks being held in local schools and public libraries.
 - Ask your local council if a public space in its premises can be used temporarily by your organisation to display GCE projects and initiatives. This could be done as part of a “Global Citizenship Education” week each year when the council might agree to host talks and displays of GCE-related videos, case studies, art, etc.
- If your organisation’s research highlights that your local council has not integrated GCE into its relevant policy frameworks and processes, consider writing to the Council’s CEO, and its current Chairperson, Vice Chair and the Chair of its PPN suggesting that the council should adopt a GCE strategy and implementation plan.
 - In consultation with IDEA, write a letter to the DHLGH and to the umbrella body of Local Development Companies, the Irish Local Development Network, and ask them to use their influence with local councils to ensure that every council adopts a GCE strategy and plan of implementation in consultation with all stakeholders.
 - Join the PPN of your local council and in turn nominate a person from your organisation to join the Strategic Policy Committee, the LCDC or a Linkage Group.



KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS WITHIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES



- ➔ **Chairperson (*Cathaoirleach*)** and vice-chairperson (*leas-Cathaoirleach*) of the local council
- ➔ CEO of the Local Council
- ➔ **Chair of the PPN**
- ➔ Councillors that have shown interest in GCE

Elections as a key entry point for GCE advocacy



Local, European and general elections in Ireland, which take place every five years, **provide welcome entry points for GCE advocacy**. Election campaigns for local and EU elections, which take place on the same day, usually start in earnest six-eight weeks before the elections. Election campaigns for general elections can be shorter. The policy manifestos of political parties are usually developed well before this and are publicly launched closer to election time.

For GCE advocates in Ireland, there are two main opportunities to influence GCE political positioning in the context of elections:

1. During the phase of parties developing their election manifestos
2. During the election campaign

In terms of seeking to influence the content of parties' election manifestos, GCE advocates can send their own GCE election manifesto to political party leaders by email and request that their policy recommendations be adopted by the party in their election manifesto. GCE advocates should bear in mind that multiple interest groups, including civil society groups, will be sending their own election manifestos to political parties on issues that might be considered more urgent or important, such as housing, cost-of-living and health, and as such, GCE advocates are competing for the attention of political parties on an issue that may not be high on their list of priorities. An election manifesto should therefore be brief and to the point, with simplified, jargon-free messages that can grab the readers' attention. The election manifesto should include a sentence or two on why GCE is so important and needed, injecting a sense of urgency where possible, followed by one clear policy ask.⁹

TOP TIP WHEN WRITING AN ELECTION MANIFESTO



Imagine you are writing the paragraph on GCE in the next Programme for Government. Your word limit is 150 words. What you write will be the core of your election manifesto.

Example: IDEA's election manifesto for General Elections 2024



Ireland in a changed and turbulent world: A manifesto for a society equipped to tackle the local and global challenges of our time

Ireland's strategies to achieve education for sustainable development and global citizenship are at the heart of equipping us all with the knowledge, skills and values to tackle the unprecedented challenges of these turbulent times. They help foster awareness, understanding, and cooperation for peace, democracy and the protection of the natural world around us. They are making a difference, but the scale and intensity of the challenges require an urgent doubling down of efforts. With multiple intersecting crises in Ireland and globally, and only five years before we reach the point of no return in terms of climate breakdown, we urgently need to prioritise and scale up this kind of transformative education through increased investment and a whole-of-government approach.

In the next Programme for Government, Ireland must significantly increase our investment in Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development while instituting a whole-of-government approach.

⁹ See Tools 1.7 and 2.7 of the IDEA Advocacy Toolkit.

During the election campaign, GCE advocates can use the messaging in their election manifesto and re-package it in different communication materials. For example, it can be inserted into an email to election candidates or used as the basis of developing an electoral pledge that candidates can sign up to. A longer briefing document can be provided as a supporting document but a short main message that communicates why GCE is so important and needed and a clear policy ask is key to getting the candidates attention and interest. It can be printed as a flyer and used during election hustings, public meetings or on your doorstep. Asking election candidates to sign an electoral pledge can be an effective tactic to enable an opportunity for follow up engagement after the election.

GCE advocates active in their local communities could seek to engage informally with local elected representatives that they may already know as members of the community or by sitting on

TOP TIP WHEN COMMUNICATING TO ELECTION CANDIDATES



In today's world of shortened attention spans, and in particular during the frenzy of an election campaign, candidates will likely not spend much time reading documents. Therefore, a general rule of thumb is that any advocacy action that attempts to engage with them, whether in writing or verbally (on the phone or at an online or in-person meeting), should aim to grab their attention and take no more than 60 seconds of their time.

the same community boards or committees. Being mindful of existing local networks and looking for opportunities to engage and make connections through local links is very worthwhile.

Top Tips when Engaging with Policy Processes



1. Know what policy change you want (be as specific as possible).
2. Gather evidence and arguments as to why the change is needed.
3. Draft your position paper – background, messages and asks.
4. Understand the change process (the step-by-step decision-making process, know when relevant decisions are made and by whom, identify the windows of opportunity and their timeframe to influence decisions in that process).
5. Know who can influence that change (who influences the decisions needed).
6. Identify influencing opportunities or how to create an opportunity.
7. Design the best strategy for influencing decision-makers or decision-influencers:
 - identify who you have access to or allies that have access to who can influence the change you want;
 - do your homework on your advocacy targets (what are their interests, priorities, positions on GCE/ESD?);
 - be prepared ahead of influencing opportunities with your position paper and/or talking points.
8. Use your window of opportunity – don't miss it (some opportunities are time-sensitive).
9. Joined up efforts are better - don't go it alone.
10. Build on previous efforts- don't duplicate.
11. Follow up is key. Getting commitments from advocacy targets are a first step. Follow up to ensure they keep their word is essential.
12. Establishing rapport and building relationships is key.

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