

BUDGET 2025

IDEA Pre-Budget Submission
for the **Global Citizenship**
Education sector

July 2024 | An **IDEA** Publication



IDEA
IRISH DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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Acknowledgements

IDEA acknowledges funding received from Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trócaire and Concern. 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 issues. The ideas, opinions and comments herein are entirely the responsibility of IDEA and do not necessarily represent or reflect those of our funders.



Introduction

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is the national network for Development Education, also known as **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)**, in Ireland, and a leading voice for the sector. We represent 120 members involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen GCE in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role it plays in fostering global citizenship and achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

OUR BUDGET 2025 ASKS

- Increase GCE funding to 3% of the Official Development Assistance budget to meet the European benchmark and fulfil the ambition of the Irish Aid GCE Strategy 2021–2025
- Increase funding allocated for GCE/ESD projects under ESD to 2030
- A dedicated funding stream for GCE/ESD projects under the next SDG National Implementation Plan
- Dedicated funding streams for GCE/ESD projects under the Climate Action Plan and the National Action Plan Against Racism
- Increase the Official Development Assistance budget to get closer to the target of 0.7% Gross National Income
- Adopt Coalition 2030's budget recommendations to reach the Furthest Behind First

Development Education, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development are all terms used by our members depending on the nature of their work or their areas of specialism. For the purpose of this submission, we use the term Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to encompass all relevant terms and approaches within the area of education for global citizenship and sustainable development.

Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights the importance of GCE in achieving all the SDGs:

"By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."

Target 4.7 is considered a key enabler and an accelerating force to achieve all SDGs.



Image: This icon represents SDG Target 4.7: Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship

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.

Global Citizenship Education enables people to explore key issues such as equality, climate justice, discrimination and human rights, through creative, innovative and interactive approaches. It gives them the opportunity to examine the impact of these issues globally and locally, including how their own lives are affected. It also supports them in considering how their values, choices and actions can contribute to or mitigate an issue and in exploring what action they can take to create positive change. As GCE focuses on the interconnectedness of the world, it empowers people to create a more just and sustainable future for everyone.

Global Citizenship Education is delivered by a range of actors in Ireland, including international development NGOs, community and voluntary organisations, educational institutions and networks, trade unions, educators, researchers, and activists. It engages hundreds of thousands of people of all ages and communities throughout the island of Ireland each year.



Image: A volunteer SDG Workshop taking place in Gormanston Park (Meath Partnership's project Connecting Cultures: Sustaining Our World.)

Ireland has a high impact GCE sector, informed by values of equality, diversity, sustainability and human rights. We are recognised at European and international level as a leader in GCE due to the support structures in place and the quality of the organisations and programmes.

In its recent Development Assistance Committee report¹, the OECD noted that "Ireland has received international recognition for its development education strategies" but called for more resources to be devoted to Development Education/GCE:

"Mobilising more funds for development education would allow Ireland to reap the benefits of its strong approach to promoting global citizenship. Ireland has received international recognition for its development education strategies...However, without additional investment, Ireland cannot seize the opportunity to help turn development-aware children into development-aware adults who could then contribute in their communities, as consumers, or in politics... While Ireland remains an average DAC funder of development awareness, it commits in A Better World to mobilising more resources. This responds as well to strong calls by Irish civil society for greater resources for this." ²

Our sector has the potential to bring about large-scale positive societal change to create a just, equal and sustainable society and help fulfil Ireland's commitments to delivering on the SDGs. Achieving these goals is of utmost importance for our society to combat the escalating threats to democracy, the rise of racism and anti-immigrant sentiments, and to swiftly transition towards a sustainable way of living. IDEA has developed a roadmap for GCE in Ireland in our policy brief [Vision 2025, Towards a society of Global Citizens](#) to ensure that we make GCE available to everyone and reach SDG Target 4.7 as a key enabler of achieving all SDGs.

¹ OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, Ireland 2020

² Ibid. p. 30

Recent Policy Developments

In recent years, there have been significant advancements in policy regarding GCE. Notably, the *Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy (2021–25)* has laid a robust foundation for the sector's growth until 2025. Additionally, the *Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050*, endorsed by 25 EU Member States, at Dublin Castle in 2022, is a substantial milestone in shaping the future trajectory of GCE throughout Europe.

At global level, the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation (revised 1974 recommendation) on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship Education and Sustainable Development is considered the global GCE standard.

Other important policy advances regarding GCE include:

- SDG National Implementation Plan 2022–24
- 2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2022–2030
- Climate Action Plan 2024
- EU Council Recommendation on Education and Training contributing to strengthening of European Values and Democratic Citizenship
- 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)
- EU Council Recommendation on Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development
- UN Transforming Education Summit commitments (2022)

Links to the above documents, can be found in the [References on page 10](#).

However, Ireland's ambitious plans have not been matched with sufficient levels of funding to fulfil their objectives. Insufficient funding for GCE poses risks to our society, as it hampers our ability to equip citizens with the necessary information, tools, and choices to navigate an interconnected world that demands transversal skills and a comprehensive understanding of key global challenges. The GCE learners of today are the tax-paying citizens, policymakers and development cooperation workers of tomorrow. Reaching SDG Target 4.7 is critical to meeting the other SDGs. Commensurate investment is required.



Image: Roundtable Discussion in the European Parliament between IDEA, Irish MEPs and other stakeholders and allies, on the importance of Global Citizenship Education in building competencies for a sustainable world. May 2023

Budget 2025 Recommendations

1. Increase GCE Funding to 3% of the Official Development Assistance Budget

The European benchmark for Global Citizenship Education funding is 3% of the national Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget. The Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021–2025 commits to an increase in funding for GCE to €10 million per annum by 2025. This figure would represent just 1.28% of the current Irish Aid ODA Budget (€775.3 million) and falls far short of the projected €26 million per annum that should be allocated to GCE if the 3% target were applied. According to the latest figures available to us, 0.96% of the Irish Aid ODA budget was allocated to GCE in 2023³, and 1% was allocated to GCE in 2022⁴.

We are concerned that the funding proposed for the GCE Strategy does not match the ambition of the Strategy. Global Citizenship Education suffered considerable cutbacks during the years of the financial crisis (2008–2016). While acknowledging that funding is slowly being restored, we would point out that in 2023 the GCE allocation was still 7% lower than in 2008. The sector is still grappling with the aftermath of significant funding cuts endured over the years, and now faces the additional challenge of coping with rising costs amidst record-high levels of inflation and a cost-of-living crisis.

A commitment to 3% of ODA for GCE would also enable the sector to reach many hard-to-reach groups, including second chance learners, unemployed people, disadvantaged young people, adult basic education learners, older people, migrants, and the Traveller Community.

For Budget 2025, we request that 3% of the 2025 ODA budget be allocated to Global Citizenship Education. This is the current Government's last opportunity to reach the European benchmark⁵, enable Irish Aid to achieve the ambition of its Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021–2025 and facilitate Ireland meeting SDG Target 4.7 by 2030.

The Dóchas Pre-Budget 2025 Submission echoes this request in its recommendation: "Increase funding for Global Citizenship Education in Ireland to meet our commitment to SDG Target 4.7"⁶

2. Increase funding allocated for ESD/GCE projects under ESD to 2030

IDEA members are key actors in the implementation of the Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2022–2030 — ESD to 2030, and it is crucial that adequate funding is allocated to ensure the new strategy's successful implementation. We welcome the July 2023 allocation of €267,595 and the May 2024 allocation of €250,000 for ESD projects by organisations, as well as the September 2023 allocation of €500,000 and the May 2024 allocation of €250,000 for ESD projects in schools, by the Department of Education and Skills.⁷ We would also welcome an increase in this funding as well as a dedicated funding stream through the Department of Higher and Further Education, Research, Innovation and Science for ESD/GCE projects.

For Budget 2025 we request increased funding for ESD/GCE projects allocated for this Strategy.

³ €7.1 million was allocated to GCE by Irish Aid in 2023 of an overall €743 million ODA budget. Sources: ESD to 2030 1st Progress Report (Nov 2023) and Irish Aid note to Dóchas on OECD ODA statistics for 2023.

⁴ €8.59 million was spent on GCE by Irish Aid in 2022 of an overall €849,925,000 ODA budget. Source: Irish Aid Annual Report 2022.

⁵ In line with Bridge 47's Envision 4.7: Roadmap in support of SDG Target 4.7 (2019)

⁶ Dóchas Pre-Budget 2025 Submission, p.5

⁷ ESD to 2030 Funding webpage

3. A dedicated funding stream for GCE/ESD projects under the next SDG National Implementation Plan

The National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires a specific budget line for GCE/ESD. A broad public education and outreach implementation plan is essential if the ambitious objectives of the NIP are to be achieved by the government and the general public. Global Citizenship Education / Education for Sustainable Development programmes and projects can help achieve these objectives; the expertise is there. The importance of this work is highlighted in SDG Target 4.7. This public education and outreach plan needs to be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal education. Global Citizenship Education / Education for Sustainable Development must be a core element of Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan.

For Budget 2025 we request a dedicated funding stream for ESD/GCE projects allocated to achieve the SDG NIP.

4. Dedicated GCE funding streams for GCE/ESD projects allocated to the Climate Action Plan and the National Action Plan Against Racism.

Global Citizenship Education/Education for Sustainable Development projects are key to implementation of the next iteration of the Climate Action Plan, as well as the National Action Plan Against Racism. This will require dedicated funding streams from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, respectively.

5. Increase the Official Development Assistance budget to get closer to the target of 0.7% Gross National Income

IDEA supports the call by Dóchas for Ireland to increase ODA by €292 million in Budget 2025 to make real progress towards fulfilling its promise in the Programme for Government to reach the UN target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA by 2030.

6. Follow Coalition 2030's budget recommendations to reach the Furthest Behind First

IDEA signed up to the Coalition 2030 "Furthest Behind First"⁸ campaign and we endorse its Budget for the SDGs recommendations.⁹

⁸ Coalition 2030, Furthest Behind First, or Falling Behind Further? (2023)

⁹ Coalition 2030, Budget for the SDGs webpage (2023)

Related Policy Recommendations

7. Precarious work

IDEA members have highlighted concerns about the working conditions of GCE practitioners, noting that many experienced practitioners are being lost to more secure positions outside the GCE sector. The principle of Decent Work in SDG 8 should apply to all GCE practitioners. Precarious conditions disproportionately affect staff in smaller and specialist GCE organisations.

When funding projects from public money we believe that the relevant Government Department should at the very least:

- (a) Ensure that GCE grantees are adequately resourced so that their employees have, in line with SDG 8, decent and secure work.
- (b) Provide guidelines to funded organisations in relation to ensuring pay and conditions for grant-approved employees are benchmarked against comparable roles in the public service/civil service.

8. Strategic cross-government prioritisation and policy coherence for Global Citizenship Education

IDEA members work across a broad spectrum of Irish society and in many different institutions and settings. Global Citizenship Education requires a supportive and coherent policy context. Coordination is needed between relevant government departments, along with integration of GCE into their policies and programmes. These include the Department of Education, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and other relevant departments.

Coordination is also needed between key policies, including the Irish Aid Strategy on Global Citizenship Education, National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, National Youth Strategy, Further Education and Training Strategy, The Climate Action Plan, The National Action Plan Against Racism, and the National Volunteering Strategy.

Integration and prioritisation of GCE in relevant institutions and networks is also necessary. These include Education and Training Boards, schools' networks, youth sector bodies and third level institutions.

Make GCE a strategic priority in the Government's policy agenda, with a coherent, integrated approach that reaches across relevant departments, including the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment and the Department of Finance.

Consolidate coordination mechanisms to enhance cross-departmental coordination of GCE-related policies, and for integration into key institutions and networks.

Conclusion

We value the enhanced policy framework at national and international level that embeds the importance of GCE further in Ireland. We acknowledge and are proud of the advances so far. At the same time, it is clear there is much more to do, and Ireland's stated ambition in its Global Citizenship Education Strategy, the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and the GCE/ESD components of other relevant policies require considerable additional resources to be achieved.

Reaching hard-to-reach communities through a revitalised Community Initiative, additional supports for small and specialist organisations, ensuring GCE expertise in Education and Training Boards across the country and robust investment in research for learning and accountability are some examples of areas that require more resourcing. In addition, it bears repeating that GCE suffered considerable cutbacks during the years of the financial crisis (2008–2016), and while we acknowledge that funding is slowly being restored, in 2023 the GCE allocation was still 7% lower than in 2008.

As mentioned, Ireland has a high impact GCE sector, informed by values of equality, diversity, sustainability and human rights. We are recognised at European and international level as a leader in GCE due to the support structures in place and the quality of the organisations and programmes. Ireland has an ambitious GCE growth strategy. Yet how can we continue to be leaders, spread and deepen the impact of GCE, and reach SDG Target 4.7, if investment does not meet the European benchmark of 3% of ODA?

"...how can we continue to be leaders, spread and deepen the impact of GCE, and reach SDG Target 4.7, if investment does not meet the European benchmark of 3% of ODA?"

Image: After a Roundtable Discussion in the European Parliament between IDEA, Irish MEPs and other stakeholders and allies, on the importance of Global Citizenship Education in building competencies for a sustainable world (May 2023).



References

Vision 2025, Towards a Global Society

Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy (2021–25)

Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050

UNESCO 2023 Recommendation

SDG National Implementation Plan 2022–24

2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2022–2030

Climate Action Plan 2024

EU Council Recommendation on Education and Training Contributing to Strengthening of European Values and Democratic Citizenship

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)

EU Council Recommendation on Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development

UN Transforming Education Summit commitments (2022)

ESD-to-2030 Funding

Envision 4.7: Roadmap in support of SDG Target 4.7

Dóchas Pre-Budget 2025 Submission

Coalition 2030, Furthest Behind First, or Falling Behind Further? (2023)

Coalition 2030, Budget for the SDGs (2023)

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