

Opportunities and Challenges of Implementing Global Citizenship Education Policies in Poland

Marta Gontarska, Ph.D
Elżbieta Olczak

July 2025



Global
Education
Time

From school curricula
to youth actions
for sustainable development

globaleducationtime.eu

STUDIES

GCE
in policy





List of Abbreviations

- GCE - Global Citizenship Education
- GE - Global Education
- The two terms can be used interchangeably.
- Concord Europe/Concord - European confederation of NGOs working on development and global justice.
- DAC Peer Review - Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Peer Review, a process conducted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, a key mechanism for monitoring and improving the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation policies among DAC member countries.
- DEEEP - Development Education Exchange in Europe Project. It was a major initiative coordinated by CONCORD Europe, the European confederation of NGOs working on development and global justice. DEEEP ran from 2003 to 2015, across four phases, and aimed to strengthen global citizenship education (GCE) as a key instrument for social transformation in Europe and beyond.
- EU - European Union
- MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- MoE - Ministry of Education
- NGO - non-governmental organisation
- OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- ORE - ORE stands for Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji, which translates to the Centre for Education Development in English. It is a national public institution in Poland that operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej) and is a central institution responsible for supporting the professional development of teachers and education staff, implementing national education policies, and developing educational resources and programs.



Table of content

List of Abbreviations.....	1
1. Global Citizenship Education in Poland: state of the art.....	4
1.1 Timeline: initial moments.....	4
1.2 Key actors: Non-governmental Organisations	4
1.3 Timeline: favourable times for GCE	5
1.4 Polish definition of GCE	5
1.5 Key governmental actors: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education	5
1.6 Timeline: marginalisation of GCE.....	5
1.7 Literature on GCE: official monitoring	6
1.8 Critical evaluation by NGOs	6
2. Global Citizenship Education in Poland: key policy documents.....	7
2.1 Porozumienie w sprawie wspierania rozwoju edukacji globalnej w Polsce / Memorandum of understanding to support GCE development in Poland (2011); and following Raport z procesu międzysektorowego na temat edukacji globalnej / Report on multistakeholder process for GCE (2011) Grupa Zagranica.....	7
2.2 Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej 2021-2030. Solidarność dla Rozwoju / Multiannual Programme for Development Cooperation for 2021-2030 (2021), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.....	8
2.3 OECD Development Cooperation Peer Review POLAND 2023 (2023)	8
2.4 Plan współpracy rozwojowej 2024 / Development Cooperation Plan for 2024 (2024), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.....	9
3. Stakeholders input.....	10
3.1 Brief description of the methodology	10
3.2. Integration of GCE in formal education – policies	11
3.3. Integration of GCE in formal education – implementation.....	12
3.4. Limitations and obstacles for the introduction and implementation of GCE in formal education	13
3.5. Opportunities for the introduction and implementation of GCE in formal education	15
3.6. Importance given to GCE and global issues and its relationship with the curriculum.....	17



3.7. Recommendations from the actors	17
4. Conclusions and recommendations	19
6. Bibliography.....	20



1. Global Citizenship Education in Poland: state of the art

The current state of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) policies in Poland is rather weak. To understand this situation, it is essential to provide contextualization, including both historical and political perspectives, which are outlined below.

1.1 Timeline: initial moments

Aside from few theoretical reflections on education for world citizenship after the Second World War (see: Kuleta-Hulboj, 2020), Polish GCE is considered to be rooted in international development cooperation. Before 1989, Poland followed a Soviet-aligned development policy. After the transition, a growing pro-European sentiment emerged along with efforts to join international organizations, particularly the EU. In the pre-accession phase, there was a strong focus on increasing public awareness of global socio-economic issues and securing support for funding EU-focused development policies. During this period, NGOs backed by foreign aid emerged and launched a range of early initiatives. The milestone - Poland's 2004 EU accession - marked its transition from aid recipient to donor of international assistance. It was formalised in the Government Strategy on Polish Development Cooperation (Strategia polskiej współpracy na rzecz rozwoju, 2003). While GCE became part of development cooperation, it was not a national priority, largely due to limited resources and competing EU-related tasks. GCE introduction was a response to international needs rather than as a locally initiated effort. Transnational advocacy networks, such as the North-South Centre and CONCORD, were instrumental in bringing GCE to Poland. These organizations led initiatives to integrate GCE into the Polish context through initiatives like Global Education Week and the DEEEP project, which actively engaged local NGOs and supported their participation in promoting GCE. These initiatives, along with various grassroots activities by Polish NGOs, helped GCE gain momentum.

1.2 Key actors: Non-governmental Organisations

GCE emerged as a focus for Polish NGOs in civic education, following earlier initiatives since 1989 that addressed citizenship, society, and democracy. These early efforts included multicultural education and human rights education, filling educational gaps left by schools during the transformation period (Rudnicki, 2015). After Poland's EU accession, increased funding allowed NGOs to launch more structured, long-term projects. NGOs played a key role in Poland's formal education reform by advocating for the inclusion of GCE content in the new national curriculum implemented in 2009. This made GCE a required component in subjects such as civics, geography, biology, history, and entrepreneurship (Piszel et al., 2010). Crucially, this progress was made possible by political backing, with the Ministry of Education becoming more supportive after 2008, following a change in leadership. The successful integration of GCE, alongside five years of collaboration between various stakeholders, was recognized as a major achievement by Global Education Network Europe (GENE) peer review (O'Loughlin, Wegimont, 2009).



1.3 Timeline: favourable times for GCE

The favourable climate in 2009 led to the launch of a multistakeholder GCE process, initiated and coordinated by Grupa Zagranica, a Polish NGDO platform active in humanitarian aid, development, and GCE. Grupa Zagranica, a key advocate for GCE since its inception, aimed to formalise collaboration between ministries and NGOs while strengthening GCE's role in Poland's formal education and development policies. The process began in December 2009 and concluded in May 2011 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Strengthening Global Education (Porozumienie..., 2011), officially endorsed by the government. It is important to notice that the Memorandum was not formally recognized as an official strategy.

1.4 Polish definition of GCE

Five meetings between 2009 and 2011 were held to define GCE in Poland, establish its official term and definition, identify key actors, and determine its role in the education system. These meetings involved representatives from 30 NGOs and varied institutions, including ministries. It was also agreed that GCE would be referred to as "global education" (edukacja globalna) in Poland. According to the Report of the process, GCE is: "the part of civic education and upbringing, which broadens their scope by raising awareness of the existence of global phenomena and interdependencies. Its main objective is to prepare the learners to face the challenges faced by all humanity. (...) Global education puts special emphasis on: explaining the reasons and consequences of the described phenomena; presenting the perspective of the Global South; presenting the world as a complex and dynamically changing system; shaping critical thinking and influencing the change of attitudes; breaking existing stereotypes and prejudices; presenting influence an individual can exert on global processes and the influence of global processes exert on the individual" (Grupa Zagranica, 2011, p. 3). Although there have been growing demands to update this definition, most stakeholders continue to use it.

1.5 Key governmental actors: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education

Following the adoption of the Development Cooperation Act in 2011 (Ustawa o współpracy rozwojowej, 2011), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially assumed coordination of GCE. While primarily focused on development cooperation, it also acknowledged the importance of GCE. The Ministry of Education was given a supporting role, promoting GCE within formal education. Through its Education Development Center (ORE), the Ministry of Education launched various GCE initiatives, including creating a network of regional coordinators, hosting workshops and conferences, and providing educational resources for teachers online.

1.6 Timeline: marginalisation of GCE

After the 2015 election and 2017 educational reform, support for GCE began to diminish. "Political situation and aforementioned education reform" (CONCORD, 2018, p. 95) caused schools to become increasingly hesitant to collaborate with NGOs on GCE issues. Governmental institution, Education Development Center (ORE), discontinued its GCE activities and no longer maintains its GCE website. Since the 2011 Memorandum, no official policy documents solely focused on GCE have been developed. The Polish Ministry of Foreign



Affairs periodically issues Multiannual Development Cooperation Programmes with annual plans, which briefly mention GCE. The latest multiannual programme for 2021-2030 includes a short, non-specific section on GCE, along with a vague commitment to developing a future GCE strategy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021, pp. 37–39).

1.7 Literature on GCE: official monitoring

The only official evaluation and recommendations regarding governmental GCE activities were issued in the report "Ewaluacja polskiej współpracy rozwojowej: Program 'Wolontariat Polska pomoc' i działania w obszarze edukacji globalnej" (2021), prepared by the external evaluator Ecorys and commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The report assessed the effectiveness of interventions, their impact on Poland's image, and the adaptability of initiatives to external changes, emphasising relevance, consistency, and tangible outcomes. The recommendations covered various areas, including voluntary service, cooperation with various partners, funding, materials, and, most importantly, formal education. These recommendations included creating long-term GCE activities and actions, strengthening GCE-focused organisations and their networks, and mentioned that "the place of global education in the core curriculum of all educational stages should be identified and emphasised. It is also recommended that global education be mandatorily introduced into the curricula of pedagogical studies" (ibidem, 55).

1.8 Critical evaluation by NGOs

The role of GCE in the Polish development cooperation programs and strategies delivered by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been also carefully monitored by Polish NGOs associated with Grupa Zagranica. Since 2011, Grupa Zagranica has published annual monitoring reports analysing data regarding development cooperation and the situation of GCE in Poland. The following issues have been the subject of analysis over the past years: 2023 - GCE in Poland from NGOs perspective (conclusion from qualitative research) by Magdalena Kuleta-Hulboj; 2022 - new challenges in GCE in Poland according to Declaration on Global Education to 2050 by Magdalena Kuleta-Hulboj; 2021 - A critical pedagogical reflection after 15 years of the presence of global education in the Polish formal education system by Paweł Rudnicki; 2019 - Good practices of global education strategies: analysis and recommendations from selected European countries by Elżbieta Świdrowska.

The preparation of annual monitoring reports is a kind of advocacy and monitoring activity to put pressure on decision-makers to promote GCE and create space for its development in Poland. It also provides a critical analysis of data from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and related documents, offering the perspective of civil society organizations and complementing government information with qualitative insights. All the above-mentioned chapters highlight the role of civil society organisations as crucial in promoting GCE in the formal and non-formal education system, as well as the shortcomings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Education in providing systemic support and funding for GCE activities. Each of the chapters included up-to-date recommendations for systemic changes, such as the preparation of a GCE strategy, a multi-year framework for financing projects or the preparation and implementation of a partnership-based plan for cooperation with NGOs. Between 2015 and 2023, NGO representatives also noted a radically shrinking space for GCE activities due to increased scrutiny, as well as the politicisation of the concept of GCE.



2. Global Citizenship Education in Poland: key policy documents

In terms of the project's comparative policy document analysis, there are currently no documents that meet the required criteria. No governmental or public entity documents specifically address GCE in a strategic manner. The documents presented below are general in nature and are aimed at the broader public. They are relevant to education, but they do not focus exclusively on formal education and they are not specifically targeted at students aged 11 to 15/16.

Some documents not included in this analysis, though not directly aligned with the project's criteria, present opportunities for future GCE inclusion. These include local educational strategies like the "Climate Katowice" Municipal Climate Education Program, planned for implementation in Katowice's schools in 2024/2025. Initiatives like these should be closely monitored and advocated for to incorporate more GCE in the future.

2.1 Porozumienie w sprawie wspierania rozwoju edukacji globalnej w Polsce / Memorandum of understanding to support GCE development in Poland (2011); and following Raport z procesu międzysektorowego na temat edukacji globalnej / Report on multistakeholder process for GCE (2011) Grupa Zagranica

The "Memorandum of Understanding on Supporting Global Education Development in Poland"(2011), alongside the "Report of the Multistakeholder Process for Global Education" (2011), represents a collaborative effort by 30 NGOs and institutions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Education. These documents were produced to summarise a multistakeholder initiative aimed at enhancing the role of GCE in Poland's education and development policies.

This process led to the establishment of a national term and definition for GCE, identified key actors, and clarified GCE's role within the education system. The report sections covered topics like understanding global education, setting quality criteria, incorporating GCE into formal education, engaging both existing and new stakeholders, and examining funding and future opportunities.

Objectives for integrating GCE into formal education included raising teacher awareness, enhancing their competencies, providing quality educational resources, and improving overall GCE quality in the formal system. Ultimately, the process concluded with a "Memorandum of Understanding" signed in 2021 between Grupa Zagranica, the MoE, and the MFA.

While the need for monitoring GCE implementation was noted, the report did not elaborate on specific methods for tracking progress. A comprehensive list of potential collaborators was included, organised into categories such as long-term partners, event-focused participants, and future allies, ranging from international organisations to local non-formal groups.



Because the recommendations from the report were not tied to a specific funding source, the government implemented only a few of them. Meanwhile, NGOs concentrated on training teachers and developing high-quality educational materials for all levels of education.

2.2 Wieloletni program współpracy rozwojowej 2021-2030. Solidarność dla Rozwoju / Multiannual Programme for Development Cooperation for 2021-2030 (2021), Ministry of Foreign Affairs

This program reflects Poland's foreign policy priorities in development cooperation and aligns with the Development Cooperation Act of September 16, 2017. Its objectives support Poland's commitments as a member of international organisations and a signatory of major global agreements, such as Agenda 2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Funded by the MoFA and other public bodies engaged in development cooperation, the program is primarily implemented through cooperation projects. It includes Global Citizenship Education (GCE) activities targeting children, adolescents, and adults across all levels of formal education, from schools to academic institutions. The program also commits to creating a strategic and operational document specifically focused on GCE.

The program mentions the need for evaluation but does not provide detailed mechanisms for this process. The document identifies NGOs, local government units, universities, research institutes, and the Polish Academy of Sciences as key implementers of development cooperation projects, while NGOs, the academic community, and media are listed as partners for GCE educational activities.

2.3 OECD Development Cooperation Peer Review POLAND 2023 (2023)

The OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Poland 2023 was conducted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), a forum comprising 32 aid providers that shapes development cooperation policies and standards. The DAC reviews the development cooperation efforts of its members every five to six years, aiming to improve the quality and effectiveness of policies, programs, and systems.

In Poland's review, it was identified that there is potential to scale up collaboration with CSOs to strengthen efforts in delivering Poland's commitment to GCE. The review emphasised the importance of establishing a framework for cooperation between sectors and government institutions, which would better support progress in this area. One key recommendation was to include global education as a permanent agenda point in the Policy Council meetings: Establishing a framework for co-operation between sectors and government institutions would support progress in this area and better enable Poland to deliver on its own commitments and priorities. Including Global Education as a standing agenda item within the Policy Council's regular discussions could be one way of helping to advance this cross-sectoral and stakeholder work (p. 44).

As the MFA lacks an external, qualitative, and continuous evaluation mechanism for its programs, the DAC peer review serves as a crucial tool for analysing government documents and offering recommendations for improving development cooperation, including in the area of GCE. The role of CSOs is recognized as a key factor in advancing Global Education within Poland's development efforts.



2.4 Plan współpracy rozwojowej 2024 / Development Cooperation Plan for 2024 (2024), Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The 2024 Development Cooperation Plan was introduced as a continuation of the goals set out in the Multi-Year Development Cooperation Program for 2021-2030. It is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs along with other public bodies involved in development cooperation, with the plan primarily implemented through development cooperation projects.

For GCE, the document outlines the second module of GCE projects under the MFA grant program "Global Education 2023." While the plan did not specify evaluation methods, it included a matrix of expected outcomes that align with the SDGs.

The document lists NGOs, local government units, universities, research institutes, and the Polish Academy of Sciences as the primary executors of the development cooperation projects, specifically mentioned in the section dedicated to these initiatives.



3. Stakeholders input

3.1 Brief description of the methodology

Based on an analysis of available documents mainly concerning development cooperation, which referred to GCE, we proceeded to analyse the discourse on this educational perspective in Poland. At the document level, we found no mention of GCE in strategic documents concerning formal education at any level (neither national nor regional).

Given the specific context of GCE initiatives in Poland—particularly those led by Grupa Zagranica, a federation of organizations, and the Concord National Platform — as well as insights from previous qualitative research involving NGOs and third-sector experts, this section focuses on two key criteria used to select individuals for in-depth interviews (IDIs):

1. knowledge of the formal education system in Poland and active engagement within its structures;
2. familiarity with the concept of Global Education in Poland and hands-on involvement in related activities (such as teaching lessons, conducting workshops, implementing projects, etc.).

The selection of interviewees was grounded in Grupa Zagranica's established network of contacts, developed through years of advocacy and educational work targeting policymakers, schools and universities. All participants were already acquainted with Grupa Zagranica's GCE-related activities, and several had taken part in previous initiatives carried out by the research team — a fact that emerged from references and digressions made during the interviews.

In total, six in-depth individual interviews were conducted with representatives from various educational sectors: teacher training centers in Gdańsk and Gorzów Wielkopolski; teachers at both primary (Warsaw) and upper secondary (Lublin) levels; a university faculty member involved in teacher education; and a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the ministry currently coordinating work on GCE in Poland).

Additionally, data were collected during three working meetings held as part of Grupa Zagranica's advocacy efforts—these included sessions with the Ministry of Climate and Environment, the Center for Education Development (a national teacher training institution), and a regular multi-stakeholder meeting on Global Education hosted by the Ministry of Climate and Environment.

Despite repeated efforts, it was not possible to secure an interview with a representative of the Ministry of Education, the body formally responsible for global and climate education. Weeks of unresponsiveness culminated in a missed online meeting, a lack of engagement which we also consider diagnostic and relevant to the findings of this study.

The IDIs followed a semi-structured guide aligned with the reporting framework set by the research coordination team of the GET project. Interviews were conducted both online and in person, recorded, automatically transcribed, and coded according to thematic areas and research questions relevant to this section. All participants were informed that their responses would be anonymized and that no direct quotes would be used without explicit consent.

Throughout this report, we use the terms Global Education and Global Citizenship Education interchangeably, abbreviated as GCE. In Poland, the official term is Global Education, but due to the introduction of citizenship education as a subject from the 2025/2026 school year, it seems reasonable to reconsider the terminology.



3.2. Integration of GCE in formal education – policies

One of the key topics raised during interviews with stakeholders from various sectors of the formal education system was the integration of GCE into education policy. The primary issue identified by respondents was the core curriculum—specifically, the extent to which GCE-related themes are included across different subjects. Although topics relevant to GCE—such as climate change, migration, and socio-economic inequalities—are present in the core curriculum, their inclusion is not explicit. This means that while such themes may be mentioned, they are neither clearly defined nor consistently addressed. Moreover, this content is often absent from textbooks, which are a central resource for lesson planning. As a result, incorporating these issues into classroom practice becomes significantly more challenging. The inclusion of GCE themes in both the core curriculum and educational materials, such as textbooks is essential. It provides a necessary framework for teachers to introduce GCE topics and offers justification when faced with concerns from parents who may question the relevance of such topics, particularly in the context of external exams. However, respondents—especially teachers—emphasized that curriculum content alone is insufficient. A fundamental requirement is that teachers understand what GCE entails, recognize which global issues are central to this educational approach, and possess the skills, knowledge, and motivation to effectively engage students. Without a clear reference to GCE in the curriculum, there is a risk that these themes will not be addressed in schools at all.

Apart from the core curriculum, there are other mechanisms useful for GCE implementation. The educational policy priorities of the state are strategically defined goals and focus areas that the Ministry of Education identifies as key for a given academic year or long-term educational development. These priorities aim to enhance the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of education. Updated annually, they reflect current societal and educational challenges—such as the development of digital competences, support for Ukrainian students, and the promotion of civic education. As one teacher noted, these policy priorities could serve as a valuable entry point for integrating GCE into the formal education system. Since these documents shape, to some extent, the activities of educational institutions, the inclusion of global themes would allow schools to reflect GCE in their internal strategies—particularly in documents such as school prevention and education programmes. Since 2017, under educational law, every school is required to develop a comprehensive prevention and education programme. This document, tailored to the specific needs of the student population, combines educational efforts (e.g. fostering values, social norms, and attitudes) with preventive actions (e.g. addressing threats, supporting mental and physical health). Developed in collaboration with parents and informed by local needs assessments, these programmes could—at least in theory—serve as vehicles for implementing GCE at the school level.

Unfortunately, the inclusion of GCE themes in these documents remains rare. Despite their potential, school programmes have so far not been widely utilized to promote GCE.

According to the Development Cooperation Act of 16 September 2011, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for implementing development cooperation policies, which include GCE. As such, the MFA coordinates national activities related to GCE, guided by the Multi-year Development Cooperation Programme (currently covering 2021–2030) and associated annual plans. The Ministry of Education, responsible for pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, collaborates with the MFA on GCE initiatives. It also holds an advisory role in funding decisions—particularly within the national GCE grant programme implemented by the MFA under the Polish Aid scheme. Following the adoption of the Development Cooperation Act, a cross-sectoral agreement on GCE was developed and signed in 2011. The agreement involved the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs, academic institutions, and NGOs. It included a definition of GCE that continues to guide activities in this area across all levels of education. This definition



underpins the MFA's grant-making criteria and serves as a key reference for advocacy efforts aimed at promoting global perspectives, including integration into national curricula.

In November 2022, the European Declaration on Global Education 2050 was adopted, providing a strategic framework for enhancing GCE across Europe. The Declaration aims to foster public awareness of global challenges, promote positive social attitudes, and encourage commitment to a more just and sustainable world. As part of the preparatory process, extensive consultations were conducted involving ministries, NGOs, and partners from the Global South. A new definition of GCE emerged from these consultations and was translated into Polish by the MFA. This updated definition is available on the official websites of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, it has yet to be fully adopted in practice. In Poland, the 2011 inter-sectoral agreement still serves as the primary reference for defining and implementing GCE.

Polish ministries are also engaged in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to education. The Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs contribute to reporting on national progress in achieving the SDG Agenda, with a specific focus on Goal 4 and Target 4.7, which relates directly to GCE, sustainable development, and global awareness.

Despite these efforts, GCE is not yet widely integrated into systemic educational development in Poland. There is a need for more consistent reflection of these global objectives in policy, curricula, and everyday school practice.

3.3. Integration of GCE in formal education – implementation

From a historical perspective, interview participants frequently referenced the long-standing commitment of the Center for Education Development—a national teacher training institution accredited by the Ministry of Education—to promote Global Citizenship Education (GCE) across Poland. Between 2013 and 2019, the Center played a pivotal role in fostering GCE through the creation and support of a national network of GCE leaders, located within regional teacher training centers and among educators across all levels of education. GCE-related activities were delivered both at the national level—through comprehensive professional development programs for trainers and leaders (including coaching, critical thinking, and design thinking)—and at the regional level, with a particular focus on Global Education Week. These regional initiatives, which included dedicated budgets and awards for outstanding schools and teachers, were especially impactful. They not only legitimized GCE within the formal education community but also encouraged ongoing engagement with the topic. Additionally, events such as free teacher training sessions with experts and local conferences provided further motivation for educators to participate. At the most recent multistakeholder meeting on GCE, both the Center for Education Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed interest in resuming similar collaborative projects, and working meetings have been planned, including those involving NGOs such as Grupa Zagranica.

The endorsement of GCE by the Center significantly elevated its credibility and served as an important justification when facing scepticism from parents, fellow educators, or monitoring bodies. However, once GCE programming ceased at the regional centers, related training disappeared from their offerings. Since then, activities in this field have been sustained only by individual enthusiasts. At present, no regional or national teacher training centers offer dedicated GCE programs, although global themes may occasionally appear in



other training contexts—depending more on the initiative and knowledge of the trainer than on official guidelines or curricula.

Some projects led by NGOs, though not enjoying the same institutional prestige, also successfully engaged teacher training institutions and schools by drawing attention to GCE. While teacher training centers rarely initiate such projects themselves, they are often willing to participate—particularly if the projects enrich their training portfolio at no additional cost for teachers. As confirmed repeatedly during interviews, the primary driving force for introducing GCE into teacher training comes from NGOs, although their reach remains limited. This limitation is further exacerbated by the broader challenges facing the teaching profession in Poland—such as low salaries, an aging workforce, and declining interest in the profession—which leave few educators willing or able to engage in additional professional development.

While the national curriculum plays a key role in shaping education, its implementation depends heavily on textbook authors, publishers, and Ministry-appointed reviewers. Interviewees emphasized the importance of these actors in translating curriculum points into concrete educational content that aligns with GCE standards and avoids reinforcing stereotypes about the Global South. Since many teachers rely on textbooks and publisher-provided materials for lesson planning, the inclusion of high-quality, globally informed content in these resources is critical.

Educators and teacher trainers also underscored that successful GCE implementation requires mainstreaming this perspective. This doesn't mean that GCE must be taught as a standalone subject; rather, it can be integrated into various existing topics, such as migration, climate change, working with children from migrant or refugee backgrounds, or civic engagement. This approach opens new pathways for GCE and aligns with the real-world challenges teachers currently face.

Interestingly, interviewees also reflected on the extent to which one needs to explicitly "know" GCE in order to implement it. Many teachers incorporate GCE-related elements in their teaching without labelling it as such. As an educational perspective, GCE shares common ground with anti-discrimination, equality, intercultural, and environmental education, suggesting strong potential for synergy and cross-thematic integration.

In terms of pre-service teacher training, GCE is absent from the formal education standards governing teacher education programs. As a result, its inclusion in academic instruction depends entirely on the interests and initiative of individual lecturers or faculty members. Consequently, GCE is sometimes introduced during university classes—but this depends heavily on who is teaching the course, making students' exposure to Global Education inconsistent and potentially non-repetitive across academic years. Some notable examples include optional GCE courses offered at institutions such as the University of Lower Silesia (DSW) in Wrocław and the University of Warsaw. However, integrating GCE is even more challenging in the context of subject-specific teacher education, where pedagogical training tends to focus on fundamental competencies and often lacks value-based instruction on global issues.

3.4. Limitations and obstacles for the introduction and implementation of GCE in formal education

One of the most significant challenges to implementing and developing Global Citizenship Education in Poland lies in how the concept is defined and communicated. This issue emerged strongly in interviews with stakeholders and is increasingly recognized by those engaged in advocacy for this educational perspective.



For educators—particularly subject teachers—who do not work with GCE on a daily basis, both the Polish definition from 2011 and the one developed under the 2023 Dublin Declaration on Global Citizenship Education are perceived as overly complex. These definitions contain abstract terms such as global interdependence, which are difficult to grasp, let alone explain to students. Additionally, they are seen as overly academic or “over-intellectualized,” and some of the included topics are considered controversial within the Polish socio-political context. The controversial nature of GCE was highlighted in a 2021 study conducted by Grupa Zagranica. The authors wrote: *“Many issues related to global education are considered controversial and difficult or even political in Poland—such as migration, the climate crisis, gender, and even equality, social justice, minority rights, and human rights. All participants in the workshop emphasized that these topics are increasingly difficult to address in schools. At the same time, omitting them trivializes global education and undermines its very spirit”*¹. (Kuleta-Hulboj, M., Kielak, E., 2021)

As a result of this dual pressure—complexity and controversy—teachers show declining interest in addressing global topics in their classrooms. In the current political climate in Poland, and considering the dominant narratives during events such as the 2025 presidential election campaign, certain themes (e.g., migration from a global perspective, or women’s rights) are often seen as *taboo* in the school setting. Teachers are understandably reluctant to provoke conflict with parents, especially when such topics may trigger ideological opposition or parental complaints. There is also a widespread perception that GCE is aligned with left-wing political ideologies, further discouraging teachers from engaging with it. This perception contributes to a chilling effect, resulting in the virtual absence of Global Education in schools.

Another major obstacle to implementing GCE is the insufficient preparation of teachers—both pedagogues and subject-specific educators. This distinction is important in the Polish context, as the two groups follow different educational pathways: pedagogues’ complete education-focused degrees and usually teach in early education settings, while subject teachers pursue academic studies in a specific field, with optional teaching specializations. According to interview respondents, neither group is exposed to GCE during their university studies. They are not introduced to the concept, nor are they trained in how to incorporate a global perspective into their teaching. Global Education is absent from national education standards for teacher preparation and largely overlooked in academic discourse, despite the legal autonomy of higher education institutions, which would allow for such content to be included. As a result, if pre-service teachers are not introduced to the principles and methods of GCE during their training, it is highly unlikely that they will apply it in their professional practice.

The situation is no better in in-service teacher training and professional development. While some teacher training centers do offer activities related to GCE, these are scarce and fragmented—especially considering Poland’s size, population (38 million), and the number of schools (around 14,000 primary and 7,000 secondary schools of all types). Where training is available, it is usually delivered through externally funded NGO-led projects, not institutionalized within the training centers themselves. These centers often lack the capacity, funding, and awareness to initiate and sustain such programs independently. This brings us back to the issue of the core curriculum. If GCE is not referenced in this foundational document, there is no systemic incentive to raise such topics in schools or educational institutions.

A further systemic barrier to the integration of GCE is the instability and unpredictability of the Polish education system, which has undergone near-constant reform since 1989. These changes—typically driven by successive education ministers—are often implemented without meaningful consultation. Even when

¹ Kuleta-Hulboj, M., Kielak, E., 2021., “Zrównoważony rozwój i edukacja globalna w kształceniu i doskonaleniu nauczycieli oraz nauczycielek. Raport z badań”. Warszawa, Grupa Zagranica



public consultations occur, they are frequently perceived as symbolic rather than substantive. This creates a climate of uncertainty and low trust among educators, who are often left confused or dissatisfied with ongoing policy shifts. The recent ban on homework in primary schools, for example, was widely criticized and poorly understood. Reform fatigue is high, and new initiatives are introduced before previous ones have been fully implemented. Such volatility is demotivating for teachers, discouraging innovation and leading to attrition within the profession. Those who remain in teaching often restrict themselves to delivering only the mandatory content found in the curriculum, avoiding additional or controversial topics—including GCE.

Global Citizenship Education represents a specific and value-driven educational perspective. Teaching about global interdependence, social inequalities, or fostering active citizenship cannot be done mechanically. It requires that teachers themselves internalize the content, demonstrate authenticity, and engage in critical self-reflection. Unlike more technical subjects such as mathematics or biology, GCE demands that teachers confront questions of identity, ethics, and worldview.

To teach GCE effectively, educators must ask themselves: Who am I as a teacher? What is my place in the world? What can I influence or change? This introspective process is demanding and requires emotional, intellectual, and ethical maturity, along with the knowledge and skills that should be developed during initial or in-service teacher training. Unfortunately, this type of professional formation is lacking in the Polish context, making it even harder to implement GCE in schools.

One final observation from the research relates to the transformative nature of GCE. It is not just about transmitting knowledge—it is about shaping attitudes, promoting behavioral change, and fostering social transformation. This vision requires teachers to be not only educators, but also facilitators of change—both in their students and within the broader community. Therefore, successful implementation of GCE cannot be confined to isolated lessons. It calls for a holistic approach to education, spanning early childhood through higher education. It demands a shift in perspective—toward a more values-based, reflective, and dialogical model of education that embraces complexity, ambiguity, and global interconnectedness. The depth and multidimensionality of this approach may be one reason why GCE has struggled to gain a foothold in Polish universities—particularly in those responsible for training future teachers. It is a demanding but necessary shift, one that requires not only institutional commitment but a cultural change within education itself.

3.5. Opportunities for the introduction and implementation of GCE in formal education

During the interviews, several opportunities emerged for incorporating GCE into school life, particularly in light of its limited and fragmented presence in the national core curriculum. One such space is the tutor's hour—a flexible, non-subject-specific time slot dedicated to addressing the current needs of the class or group, as well as to implementing the school's prevention and education programme. While tutor's hours are traditionally associated with classroom management and student welfare, they also provide room for introducing new ideas, piloting innovative activities, and responding to emerging issues within the peer group. Promoting active global citizenship—through discussions on values, attitudes, and global awareness—could be meaningfully integrated into this time.

Another potential setting is day-care classes, particularly relevant in the lower grades of primary school. This space allows for more flexibility in learning, as it is not tightly bound by curriculum constraints or rigid time slots. It emphasizes play, movement, and group work, which presents an ideal context for early-stage exposure to GCE in a way that is developmentally appropriate and experientially rich.



Beyond the classroom, school-wide or inter-school competitions—often developed in collaboration with teacher training centers—represent another mechanism for introducing GCE. While currently treated more as optional enrichment or extracurricular content, such competitions still reach a significant number of students and foster the development of key global competencies and skills.

Interviewees highlighted several institutional mechanisms that can facilitate the integration of GCE into school structures. One is the staff training meeting, a mandatory session for all teachers, often focused on short-format professional development (typically no more than two sessions). These meetings can serve as a first exposure to GCE themes, with the option for more in-depth engagement through follow-up courses or workshops.

Another important vehicle is the school's prevention and education programme, a strategic document informed by a local diagnosis and shaped in collaboration with the entire school community, including the parents' council. If GCE themes are incorporated into this programme, schools gain a formal basis for implementing both one-time activities (e.g. Global Education Week) and ongoing initiatives (e.g. thematic tutor's hours, cross-curricular projects, or community events such as school festivals and family picnics).

Some respondents also discussed the planned introduction of a new subject—Civic Education—which is intended to be practical in nature. This new subject presents a valuable opportunity to introduce global citizenship topics and to renew teacher interest in GCE, particularly through interactive, inclusive, and student-centered pedagogical methods.

At the systemic level, interviewees pointed to the potential for GCE to be included in the broader framework of teachers' professional development—specifically through activities that encourage community engagement or cross-disciplinary collaboration. Teachers involved in sustainability efforts or local civic initiatives could receive professional development credits, especially when their work aligns with key GCE themes such as migration, climate change, global inequalities, or gender equality.

The Center for Education Development (ORE) was repeatedly mentioned as a key institutional actor capable of reinforcing the role of GCE in teacher education. One major opportunity lies in reintroducing GCE as a formal program or project, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for funding) and NGOs (for narrative and methodological support). Given the ORE's strategic influence, strengthening the internal GCE competencies of its staff would help ensure that global perspectives are incorporated across other training initiatives, such as leadership courses for school principals, and workshops on intercultural education, ecology, anti-discrimination, or climate change.

NGO collaboration is especially important in light of the training and conference packages being developed for the rollout of the new Civic Education subject—which already includes references to global themes. Another key platform is the Integrated Education Platform (Zintegrowana Platforma Edukacyjna), a national hub of free online resources for teachers. Including GCE-related materials in collaboration with the CED would significantly enhance their reach and visibility.

It is important to note that, while national authorities define core curricula and general policy frameworks, educational programming and implementation are the responsibility of local governments acting as school authorities. Some cities and municipalities—especially in the face of conservative national education policies—have chosen to supplement state guidelines with more progressive local education strategies. These localized policies offer a promising entry point for incorporating GCE into strategic planning and operational education documents at the municipal level.



This decentralized approach could become an important lever for promoting GCE—especially if local authorities are encouraged to see it as a valuable tool for shaping globally aware, socially engaged, and civically active young citizens.

3.6. Importance given to GCE and global issues and its relationship with the curriculum

When considering the importance attributed to GCE within the formal education system in Poland, it is first necessary to reflect on the broader goals assigned to education as a whole and the extent to which education features in public discourse. Although we lack specific studies on this matter, observations of the Polish public debate over the past decade—especially in the context of frequent reforms—suggest that education has not been the subject of a broad, inclusive, and socially supported discussion. It is therefore difficult to argue that GCE holds a prominent position when education itself is rarely treated as a societal value or as a subject of strategic reflection regarding its overarching goals.

Nevertheless, interviews with key stakeholders revealed several critical points:

- The core curriculum lacks direct references to GCE, and while some globally relevant topics (e.g., climate change, migration, inequality) do appear, they are not explored in a sufficiently in-depth or multidimensional manner.
- The core curriculum serves as a kind of “scripture” for teachers—it is the main basis on which teachers are evaluated, including by parents, who are primarily concerned with their children achieving high results in external examinations.
- Due to the absence of global themes in the curriculum, such topics are also missing from school textbooks, further reducing their visibility in the classroom.
- The inclusion of global topics in the curriculum, although necessary, is not sufficient to ensure the integration of GE into the education system. Teachers must understand what GCE is and why this educational perspective is important in today’s world.
- Teachers lack methodological training in GCE—such training is not provided during their initial teacher education, nor is it systematically offered through in-service professional development programs.

These observations highlight that the marginalization of GCE is not only a curricular issue but also a systemic and cultural one. Meaningful integration will require coordinated efforts in curriculum development, teacher training, and broader societal engagement with education as a public good.

3.7. Recommendations from the actors

Based on the analysis of the interviews conducted as part of this study, we present below several key recommendations aimed at enhancing the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into the Polish formal education system:

- Establishing a dedicated position of Rector’s Plenipotentiary for Sustainable Development at universities. This role would be responsible for coordinating actions related to sustainable development broadly understood, including GCE. Such a position would help mainstream the GCE



perspective across university departments and support institutional change in alignment with the principles of sustainability.

- Implementing centrally coordinated GCE projects through national education institutions, clearly articulating regional priorities. This would follow the model of previous initiatives by the Center for Education Development (Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji, ORE), and provide structured, strategic support for the implementation of GCE at the regional and local levels.
- Embedding GCE content explicitly into the national core curricula across various school subjects. Including these themes directly in curriculum documents would make their implementation mandatory and unavoidable in school practice.
- Engaging school principals in the GCE implementation process, ensuring that they recognize the relevance and value of GCE from a whole-school perspective. Their leadership and support are essential for meaningful and systemic integration of GCE into school life and educational planning.

These recommendations highlight the importance of a multi-level, cross-sectoral approach that involves higher education institutions, national policy bodies, local school leadership, and curriculum developers in promoting a coherent and sustainable vision of GCE.



4. Conclusions and recommendations

- Intensify advocacy efforts towards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to implement the provision on the preparation of a GCE strategy in a process that takes into account the role of Non-Governmental Organisations as well as the Ministries of Science and Higher Education and Education.
- Strengthening provisions on GCE in the new core curricula for subjects such as geography, history or as a cross-curricular theme.
- Establish long-term cooperation with the Center for Education Development (ORE) to ensure the continuity and institutional support for GCE within the national education system by in-service-teacher trainings.
- Engage in advocacy and provide strategic support for the reactivation of ORE-led projects focused on GCE, reinforcing their relevance and value for formal education.
- Collaborate with selected academics to integrate GCE into university-level teacher education programmes, ensuring that future educators are introduced to global perspectives during their initial training.
- Initiate advocacy efforts targeting the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, with the long-term goal of amending national teacher education standards to include GCE content.
- Promote synergies between GCE and related educational perspectives, such as climate education, by identifying shared values and developing joint pathways for promotion and implementation.



6. Bibliography

- Europejska deklaracja w sprawie edukacji globalnej do 2050. Deklaracja dublińska. Europejskie ramy strategiczne na rzecz poprawy i wzmocnienia edukacji globalnej w Europie do 2050 rok. (2022). GENE.
- Ewaluacja polskiej współpracy rozwojowej: Program „Wolontariat Polska pomoc” i działania w obszarze edukacji globalnej. Raport końcowy. (2020). ECORYS Polska.
- Global Citizenship Education in Europe: How Much do We Care? (2018). CONCORD Europe.
- Kuleta-Hulboj, M. (2020). Critical and Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Education: The Case of Poland. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 19(4). <https://doi.org/10.4119/jsse-3467>
- Kuleta-Hulboj, M. (2022). Edukacja globalna w Polsce w obliczu nowych wyzwań. W *Polska współpraca rozwojowa. Raport 2022* (s. 18–29). Grupa Zagranica.
- Miejski Program Edukacji Klimatycznej „Klimatyczne Katowice”. (2024). <https://www.katowice.eu/dla-mieszka%C5%84ca/ucz-si%C4%99/miejskie-programy-autorskie/klimatyczne-katowice>
- O’Loughlin, E., & Wegimont, L. (2009). Global Education in Poland. The European Global Education Peer Review Process National Report on Global Education in Poland. Global Education Network Europe (GENE).
- OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Poland 2023. (2023). OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews.
- Piszal, A., Paluszek, A., Szczygieł, P., & Witkowski, J. (2010). Treści edukacji globalnej w podstawie programowej kształcenia ogólnego. Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, Polska Akcja Humanitarna.
- Plan współpracy rozwojowej w 2024 roku. (2024). Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych.
- Porozumienie zawarte dnia 26 maja 2011 r. W Warszawie pomiędzy Ministerstwem Spraw Zagranicznych, Ministerstwem Edukacji Narodowej a Grupą Zagranica w sprawie wspierania rozwoju edukacji globalnej w Polsce. (2011).
- Projekt podstawy programowej do edukacji obywatelskiej. (2024). <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/edukacja-obywatelska-i-edukacja-zdrowotna---projekty-rozporzadzen-ministra-edukacji-skierowane-do-konsultacji-publicznych>
- Raport z procesu międzysektorowego na temat edukacji globalnej. (2011). Grupa Zagranica.
- ROZPORZĄDZENIE MINISTRA EDUKACJI zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla liceum ogólnokształcącego, technikum oraz branżowej szkoły II stopnia. (2024). Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej. <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/uszczuplone-podstawy-programowe--rozporzadzenia-podpisane>
- Rudnicki, P. (2022). O potrzebie edukacji globalnej w polskiej szkole i roli edukujących organizacji pozarządowych (perspektywa krytyczna). W *Polska współpraca rozwojowa. Raport 2021*. Grupa Zagranica. https://zagranica.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/GZ_raport_2021_final.pdf
- Solidarność dla rozwoju. Wieloletni Program Współpracy Rozwojowej 2021-2030. (2021). Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych.
- Świdrowska, E. (2019). Analiza strategii rozwoju edukacji globalnej i i stosowanych rozwiązań w wybranych państwach członkowskich Unii Europejskich. W *Polska Współpraca Rozwojowa. Raport 2019*. Grupa Zagranica.
- Ustawa o współpracy rozwojowej z dnia 16 września 2011 r. Dz.U. 2011 nr 234 poz. 1386. (2011).



From school curricula
to youth actions
for sustainable development

globaleducationtime.eu

Lead Partner



Project Partners



Associated Partner



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This document was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its content is the sole responsibility of the project partners and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.