National Curriculum mapping of Global Citizenship Education challenges and opportunities

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Introduction

The work carried out under Work Package 2 (WP2) of the *Global Education Time (GET)* project focused on curricula addressing the 11–16 age group, thus covering lower secondary education and the first two years of upper secondary school. The aim was to understand how the major global challenges under analysis – climate change, gender inequalities, global inequalities, and migration – are present in curricular documents and in the subjects considered strategic for developing global citizenship. In particular, the focus was placed on three subjects: Geography, Civic Education, and History.

For the analysis, the official documents relating to the relevant school levels were considered: the 2012 *Indicazioni Nazionali* (National Curriculum Guidelines), together with the draft of the new 2025 *Indicazioni Nazionali* for the first cycle of education. For upper secondary education, the *Indicazioni Nazionali* for *Licei* (general secondary schools), the guidelines for *Istituti Tecnici* (technical schools) and *Istituti Professionali* (vocational schools), as well as the 2024 guidelines for the teaching of Civic Education, were analysed.

State of the Art

The 2012 *Indicazioni Nazionali* remain the main reference point for lower secondary education, but they do not offer a truly systematic approach to issues related to global citizenship. Some references exist but are weak and fragmented. In 2018, the document *Indicazioni nazionali e nuovi scenari* ("National Guidelines and New Scenarios") attempted to update the framework by including references to the 2030 Agenda and citizenship competences, without, however, changing the basic structure.

The draft of the new 2025 *Indicazioni* confirms the European competence framework as a reference point but shifts the focus towards national identity and the promotion of Italian cultural roots, thereby reducing the emphasis on global issues. For upper secondary education, the curricula for *Licei, Istituti Tecnici* and *Istituti Professionali* reflect different approaches, but global citizenship is not addressed as a cross-cutting theme in any of them.

Civic Education represents the most significant innovation of recent years: introduced by law in 2019 and updated with the 2024 Guidelines. Although this subject diverges from the theoretical framework of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as conceptualised by UNESCO (2015) and Gene (2022), it stands out as the main vehicle for introducing related topics. The guidelines explicitly mention sustainability, rights, and digital citizenship, although the implementation of these themes remains weak in practice.

Analysis

The analysis of the three selected subjects (Geography, Civic Education, and History) was carried out with reference to the four major global challenges identified by the GET project:
a) climate change,

b) gender inequalities,
c) global inequalities, and
d) migration.

This approach made it possible to assess to what extent the curricula provide explicit or implicit references to these issues and to identify potential areas for further development.

- **Geography**: This subject remains the most responsive to environmental sustainability. The curriculum emphasises knowledge of natural systems and resource use, providing an entry point for addressing climate change. However, the treatment remains focused on physical and environmental aspects, without fully considering social and economic implications. Gender is virtually absent, global inequalities are only indirectly mentioned, and migration is presented mainly as a demographic phenomenon, without deeper intercultural exploration.
- **History**: The connection with sustainability is almost non-existent. Gender is absent and not treated as a cross-cutting perspective. Global inequalities could emerge, for example, in the study of colonialism or North–South relations, but curricula retain a descriptive and nationally focused approach. Migration is acknowledged as an important historical factor but is mostly treated as a phenomenon of the past. The new 2025 *Indicazioni* show a strengthening of identity- and patriotism-related dimensions, which risks further reducing openness to global and intercultural perspectives.
- **Civic** Education: With the 2024 Guidelines, this subject is the most up-to-date and potentially transformative. Sustainability is one of its central pillars, linked to the 2030 Agenda. Gender is addressed through the themes of rights and equal opportunities. Global inequalities are not explicitly mentioned but can be addressed indirectly through references to sustainability and social justice. Migration is considered primarily in terms of human rights and interculturality. However, significant limitations remain: the 33 hours per year allocated are insufficient, and implementation varies widely from school to school.

In summary, the analysis reveals a picture marked by significant asymmetries. Sustainability has relatively strong footing in Geography and Civic Education but remains marginal in History. Gender diversity is almost entirely absent from Geography and History curricula, while it appears in Civic Education in connection with rights. Global inequalities are not given structured attention, except for indirect references in Civic Education guidelines. Migration is present in all three subjects but approached differently: descriptively in History and Geography, more value-driven and intercultural in Civic Education.

This overall picture confirms a fundamental fragmentation: global issues are addressed inconsistently, with significant attention in some subjects and almost absent in others. Such a lack of coherence limits the possibility of building a unified and transformative pathway for global citizenship education. The introduction of Civic Education and the 2024 Guidelines represent an important step towards systematising these themes within the school context. However, the impact of this innovation remains limited, both due to the reduced time allocation (33 hours per year) and the uneven implementation practices across schools.

Finally, the curriculum revision process initiated with the 2025 *Indicazioni* undoubtedly opens up a crucial space for dialogue and redefinition. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this process is unfolding in the current political context, characterised by a right-wing government orientation that emphasises national identity and patriotism. This approach risks reducing openness to global and intercultural perspectives. Against this backdrop, the role of schools, teachers, and civil society in introducing a critical and transformative vision of global citizenship into curricula becomes even more urgent – one that goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and fosters competences, attitudes, and values oriented towards social justice, sustainability, and equity.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis of Italian curricula for the 11–16 age group portrays a system in transition. On the one hand, the 2012 *Indicazioni* and traditional curricula remain the reference point but are weak in addressing major global challenges. On the other hand, the 2024 Civic Education Guidelines introduce a more updated approach, which, if further developed, could serve as a model for other subjects.

The differences observed among Geography, History, and Civic Education confirm that the integration of global citizenship into curricula is still a work in progress. However, the opportunities offered by the role of educational organisations represent important signs of openness. For these opportunities to become reality, a shared commitment among institutions, schools, publishers, and civil society will be essential – one capable of translating major global challenges into a unified, coherent, and transformative educational project.

Italy

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Curriculum case studies

Case study #1:
Lower secondary (11–14 years) – Geography, 35–40 hours per year. Geography enables students "to interpret and analyse spatial systems at different scales, using geographical tools and representations" and to "recognise changes over time and evaluate human impacts on territorial systems." It also promotes "the comparison of one's own reality with the global one." (Indicazioni Nazionali 2012, p.47)

Case study #2:
Lower secondary (11–14 years) – Civic Education (Educazione Civica), 1-2 hours per week.
Civic Education, introduced as a compulsory cross-curricular teaching by Law No. 92/2019, is framed by the Linee guida per l'insegnamento dell'Educazione civica (DM-Ministerial Decree, 7 Sept 2024). It aims "to promote knowledge of the Constitution, the institutions of the State and the European Union, the fundamental principles of law, sustainable development and environmental education, in order to form responsible citizens aware of their rights and duties." The document emphasises "experiential and laboratory teaching, cooperation and participation," and identifies three main themes as key dimensions of civic competence: sustainability, digital citizenship and inclusion.

Case study #3:
Lower secondary (11–14 years) – History, 1/2 hours per week. The study of History "fosters understanding of change, permanence and diversity through sources, narratives and chronological tools." It helps students "connect past, present and future" and "develop critical and civic awareness." (Indicazioni Nazionali 2012, p.68–70)

Note: This poster focuses on lower secondary education (11–14 years), based on the Indicazioni Nazionali 2012 and the 2024 Civic Education Guidelines.

Main findings Climate Change

Civic Education shows the strongest alignment with GET Climate Change learning outcomes, followed by Geography and History:

- **Civic Education:** The curriculum explicitly promotes "sustainable development and environmental education" to foster "responsible and active citizenship." Environmental protection is a key value, though the focus is mainly ethical and civic, with limited reference to global or scientific dimensions of climate change.
- **Geography:** Students are expected "to analyse territorial systems and evaluate human impacts on the environment." Sustainability is a cross-cutting theme, and the 2025 draft strengthens interdisciplinarity and ecological awareness. However, learning remains largely descriptive rather than action-oriented.
- **History:** Climate-related issues are addressed indirectly through industrialisation and human–environment interactions. There are no explicit references to climate change or civic engagement, and teachers would need support to identify relevant opportunities

Main findings Gender inequality

Civic Education offers the strongest alignment with GET Gender Equality learning outcomes, followed by History and, lastly, Geography:

- **Civic Education:** The Linee guida include "equality between women and men" within the broader framework of human rights, respect, and inclusion. Learning objectives promote "responsible and respectful behaviour" and "rejection of all forms of discrimination." However, the focus is civic and ethical rather than structural or intersectional, with no explicit reference to gender equality or empowerment.
- **History:** References to women's experiences and social change appear when addressing 20th-century history, the Italian Constitution, and citizenship rights. Gender issues can be explored through human stories and the evolution of civil rights, although they are not explicitly framed as learning outcomes.
- **Geography:** Gender equality is largely absent. Some indirect opportunities exist in topics related to population, work, and social inequalities, but they are not clearly connected to gender perspectives.

Main findings International inequality

Civic Education shows the strongest alignment with GET International Inequalities learning outcomes, followed by History and, lastly, Geography:

- **Civic Education:** The Linee guida include references to "social justice, solidarity and equality," and encourage awareness of poverty, inclusion and human rights. However, the perspective is mainly national or European, with limited explicit focus on global or structural inequalities.
- **History:** There are indirect opportunities to address international inequalities through topics such as colonisation, industrialisation and migration. Discussions on the Italian Constitution and post-war reconstruction can foster reflection on social justice and citizenship, although the global dimension remains marginal.
- **Geography:** The term "international inequality" does not appear in the curriculum. Some connections can be made when studying globalisation, resources and population, but engagement with global disparities is limited and not systematically developed.

Main findings Migration

Civic Education shows the most alignment with GET Migration learning outcomes, followed by History and, lastly, Geography:

- **Civic Education:** Migration is not explicitly mentioned, but the curriculum includes related values such as inclusion, respect for diversity, and solidarity. The Linee guida promote "recognition and respect for the dignity of every person" and civic responsibility toward social cohesion. The topic can be approached through human rights and citizenship education, but without a global or historical framing.
- **History:** The curriculum refers to population movements and human transformations of the environment, allowing migration to be addressed indirectly through the study of industrialisation, colonisation and social change. However, there are no explicit learning outcomes devoted to migration.
- **Geography:** Migration is referenced briefly within population and demographic themes. While students analyse human settlements and mobility, the concept of migration is treated descriptively, with no link to global interdependence or contemporary migration challenges.



Conclusion and recommendations for education stakeholders

The Italian lower secondary curriculum shows an uneven and fragmented integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) themes. Environmental sustainability is the most visible dimension, while gender equality, global inequalities and migration remain marginal or implicit. vAcross Geography, History and Civic Education, global challenges are mainly addressed through ethical and civic values framed within national and European identity. Concepts such as social justice, power relations and global interdependence are rarely developed. The 2024 guidelines for Civic Education and the draft Indicazioni Nazionali 2025 strengthen references to sustainability and interdisciplinarity but maintain a nationally centred and sometimes prescriptive vision, with limited openness to global and intercultural perspectives. The Guidelines also redefine the concept of sustainability, shifting from environmental and social perspectives to an emphasis on economic growth and entrepreneurship. Advancing GCE in Italy requires a collective commitment from institutions, schools and the teaching community to:

- Reorient curricula towards explicit global citizenship aims, connecting civic, historical and geographical learning to global systems and justice-oriented competences;
- Invest in teacher education and professional development to equip educators with the knowledge and tools to integrate global, intercultural and sustainability perspectives across subjects;
- Develop learning and assessment approaches that foster reflection, participation and critical awareness rather than moral conformity or rote learning;
- Promote policy dialogue and collaboration among ministries, universities and civil society to ensure a coherent and transformative vision of global citizenship education;

Only through such shared engagement can Italian education move beyond ethical rhetoric toward a critical and globally connected model of citizenship learning.

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