

REPORT ON OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING GCE STRATEGIES IN ITALY

STUDIES

GCE
in policy

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September 2024 - May 2025



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1. Brief contextualization

1.1 The Italian educational system

The Italian educational system is structured into several stages and managed primarily by the Ministry of Education, today called “Ministry of Education and Merit”. This system has six stages of education here briefly presented:

1. **Preschool:** This stage is for children aged 3 to 6 and is non-compulsory. It focuses on social, emotional, and cognitive development through play and activities.
2. **Primary Education:** Compulsory for children aged 6 to 11, this stage lasts five years. The curriculum includes Italian, mathematics, science, history, geography, social studies, English, arts, physical education, and technology.
3. **Lower Secondary Education:** Also compulsory, this stage covers ages 11 to 14 and lasts three years. It continues with the subjects taught in primary school, adding more depth and complexity. At the end of this period, students must pass an exam to receive their lower secondary education diploma.
4. **Upper Secondary Education:** For students aged 14 to 19, this stage offers several pathways, including Liceo (focused on classical, scientific, linguistic, artistic, and human sciences studies), Technical Institutes, and Vocational Institutes. The chosen pathway determines the curriculum and prepares students either for higher education or direct entry into the workforce. This stage concludes with a State Exam, which is necessary to receive the secondary education diploma and to access university.
5. **Higher Technical Education and Training:** Post-secondary education aimed at providing high-level technical and vocational training. It includes higher technical institutes (ITS) and other specialized training programs.
6. **University Education:** Higher education is provided by universities and higher education institutions for arts, music, and other. The university system includes three main cycles: Bachelor's degree (3 years), Master's degree (2 years), and Doctorate (3 or more years). There are also single-cycle programs (5-6 years) for certain fields like medicine and law.

Since 2000, Italian schools have administrative, didactic, and organizational autonomy while adhering to national education standards. Each school creates its own Educational Offer Plan with input from parents and the school council, for which they can adjust teaching hours by up to 20% and introduce new subjects. In Italy, the process of decentralizing school competencies began in the 1970s with D.P.R. 10/1972, transferring vocational training responsibilities from the Ministry of Education to the Regions (which are 20). In 1997, Law 59 marked the start of school autonomy, shifting from a centralized system to one recognizing individual school management, introducing flexibility in teaching and organization. The development of GCE began with this decentralization process in the 1970s, which promoted democratic participation in schools, setting the stage for a more inclusive and participatory educational approach. However, bases at the level of content and methodologies are widespread in other disciplines taught in schools under different terms.

1.2 Key concepts - terminology and definitions

Since January 2018, Italy has an “Italian Strategy for the Global Citizenship Education” and an Action Plan published in May 2023 that will be thoroughly analyzed in the next chapter. The Strategy, a political guidance document, was formally approved by the CICS (Inter-ministerial Committee for Development Cooperation) with resolution 4/2020 of 11.6.2020. The PAN, an operational document for the implementation of the ECG Table, was formally adopted by the AICS with a resolution of the director in May 2023. In these fundamental



documents the GCE is defined as “an education capable of the future, which puts at the center human rights, common goods, sustainability” (p13) (definition from The Global Citizenship Education Charter drafted by Italian NGOs in 2010) and addresses both formal and non-formal education.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Italy emphasizes cultivating awareness and understanding of global issues among students. This educational framework aims to foster a sense of global responsibility and interconnectedness, promoting active citizenship and social justice. According to the new Strategy, within formal education, Italy prioritizes the integration of GCE competencies into school regulations and curricula. This involves revising curricula to include global citizenship principles and developing comprehensive training plans for teachers and school leaders. The Strategy states that “Global Citizenship Education is not one of the educations, nor an additional subject. It is a cross-curricular approach to all disciplines” (p09).

The focus is on fostering critical thinking, collaborative learning, and the ability to apply knowledge in practical contexts. GCE in Italy promotes a participatory and experiential learning approach, where all stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, and community members—are actively involved in the educational process. Schools are encouraged to become spaces for exchange, reflection, and socialization, turning learning into a collaborative and transformative experience.

The GCE political discourse in Italy has two main roots, one related to Development Education (“Educazione allo Sviluppo”) and one to Intercultural Education (“Educazione Interculturale”). The first one is historically led by NGOs and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the second one is headed by the Ministry of Education. Alongside these narratives but extremely influential in terms of content and methods is Environmental Education and Citizenship Education, the former under the Ministry of Environment, the latter directly managed by the Ministry of Education. The combination of content and methods promoted and carried out by all these different educations compose the fertile ground where Global Citizenship Education has developed.

Intercultural Education

Intercultural Education in Italy aims to promote an inclusive environment where cultural diversity is seen as an asset. This approach encourages mutual understanding and respect among students from various backgrounds, fostering social cohesion. Intercultural Education emerged prominently in Italian policy in the late 20th century, particularly with laws and circulars in 1989-90 that addressed the needs of foreign students in schools. These policies led to the development of numerous tools and practices designed to support the integration of foreign students into the Italian educational system.

A significant milestone was the 2007 document “The Italian Way to Intercultural Education and the Integration of Foreign Pupils,” which positioned Intercultural Education as a cultural response to the integration of foreign students. This document emphasized that Intercultural Education goes beyond simply accommodating foreign students; it is about fostering a general attitude of openness and understanding toward the world. This principle has been consistently reaffirmed in subsequent policies and documents. Intercultural Education in Italy involves a variety of strategies, including curriculum adjustments, teacher training, and the development of educational materials that reflect cultural diversity.

Citizenship Education

In Italy, the teaching of Civic Education was first introduced in 1958 for secondary education. The subject was then removed from the school programs as a standalone discipline in 1990. Today, Citizenship Education has been formalized under law n. 92 of August 20, 2019, becoming a comprehensive and mandatory component of the educational curriculum across all school levels, from preschool to secondary education. Implemented



from September 2020, this education aims to cultivate responsible citizens through a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating it into various subjects rather than treating it as a standalone course.

The curriculum is structured around three core thematic areas:

Constitution, Law (National and International), Legality, and Solidarity: This area emphasizes understanding the Italian Constitution, legal principles, and the importance of solidarity and civic duty.

Sustainable Development: Focuses on Environmental Education, promoting awareness about sustainability, and the protection of cultural and natural heritage.

Digital Citizenship: Aims to teach students about safe and responsible use of digital technologies, understanding digital rights and duties, and fostering critical thinking in the digital age.

The guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education on Citizenship Education stress the importance of integrating these themes across different subjects to create a holistic educational experience. Teachers are encouraged to adopt interactive and participatory methods, such as project work and discussions, to engage students effectively. The goal is to develop students' competencies in critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and active participation in democratic processes, thereby preparing them for the complexities of modern society.

Environmental Education

In Italy, Environmental Education has evolved significantly over the decades, reflecting a growing recognition of its importance. The first notable inclusion of Environmental Education in the Italian school system came with the 1979 Middle School Programs. These programs integrated Environmental Education in an implicit manner, primarily linking it to geography and focusing on teaching about the environment within classroom settings. The aim was to raise students' awareness of the relationship between humans and their surroundings. By 1985, the Primary School Programs placed greater emphasis on fostering a sense of environmental responsibility among students. Although the term "Environmental Education" was not explicitly used, the programs encouraged teaching "in the environment," promoting outdoor lessons and explorations as common practices.

The 1991 guidelines for Preschools introduced a structured approach to Environmental Education, with a focus on exploration and observation tailored to children's developmental stages. This shift marked a move towards more hands-on, experiential learning about the environment. A major milestone came in 1997 with the Fiuggi Charter, developed through a seminar by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Education. This document, the first of its kind in Italy, articulated the role of Environmental Education in enhancing ethical sensitivity and guiding public policies towards sustainable development.

The first National Conference on Environmental Education in Genoa in April 2000 reaffirmed the critical role of Environmental Education in fostering sustainable attitudes and behaviors. This was followed by the 2004 National Guidelines, which for the first time presented Environmental Education as an independent subject within the broader framework of Civic Education. The 2007 National Curriculum Guidelines further integrated environmental themes across various disciplines, emphasizing the importance of designing and reflecting on environmental experiences. In 2009, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Education signed the "School, Environment, and Legality" Charter, aiming to embed environmental topics into Citizenship Education. This initiative focused on understanding local environmental issues, promoting the protection and improvement of the environment, and valuing natural resources as common goods.

In 2015, the two ministries jointly developed guidelines for Environmental Education aimed at sustainable development, incorporating environmental themes into all levels of schooling. Finally, in November 2016, the



General States of Environmental Education in Rome saw a collaborative effort between institutions and civil society to promote a culture of environmental sustainability through a shared commitment to education and advocacy.

Education for Sustainable Development developed from Environmental Education. The most significant turning point occurred after 1992, with the Rio Conference and Agenda 21, which inspired many Italian stakeholders, including municipal and regional administrations, to develop educational projects grounded in the principles of sustainable development. However, it was with Agenda 2030, and Target 4.7, that Italy began to structure Education for Sustainable Development more systematically, progressively integrating it into school curricula and teacher training programs.

A central reference in this process is the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (SNSvS), adopted in 2017 and updated in 2022. The strategy explicitly recognizes education, training, and awareness-raising as key drivers of the sustainable transition. It promotes a transversal educational approach, capable of fostering systemic competencies, critical thinking, active citizenship, and democratic participation, while valuing the role of schools, universities, local authorities, and civil society. In this context, ASviS (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development) has played a crucial role in spreading a culture of sustainability in the educational field, encouraging synergies among institutions, academia, and the third sector.

1.3 Milestones for the Global Citizenship Education in the policy arena

Hence, when looking at the current Strategy and political discourse around GCE, it is important to look at several different milestones in several different educational sectors.

Milestones divided into:

Green: those related to Environmental Education

Light Blue: those related to Development Cooperation or Intercultural Education

Orange: those related to general school system

Violet: those related explicitly to GCE

1979: Programs for Middle School: First inclusion of Environmental Education in Italian school programs, primarily linked to geography.

1985: Programs for Elementary School: Emphasized environmental consciousness without explicitly using the term "educazione ambientale."

1987: Law 49/1987: Among Italian activities towards developing countries are also included the promotion of Development Education in the framework of the school system

1990: Law 39/1990: Introduction of the Intercultural Education into the Italian school system

1991: Guidelines for Preschool: Guidelines introduced exploration and observation of the environment in early childhood education.

1997: Fiuggi Charter: Formal recognition of Environmental Education through the "Carta di Fiuggi," focusing on sustainable development.

2004: National Guidelines for Personalized Study Plans: Included Environmental Education as an autonomous component within Civic Education.

2007: National Guidelines for the Curriculum: Integrated Environmental Education into various subjects with a focus on experiential learning.



2007: Document “The Italian Way to Intercultural Education and Education of Foreign Pupils” that promotes Intercultural Education as the cultural answer of the Italian school to the integration of foreign students

2009: Initiation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Education to coordinate educational activities on sustainability.

2009: Guidelines for Environmental Education and sustainable development: both subjects are included in the Citizenship Education curriculum.

2010: Charted of principles of Global Citizenship Education: written by a platform of Italian NGOs defines the principles of GCE and how to implement them.

2012: Guidelines for national curriculum: schools are seen as a space to create a new kind of citizenship that should be local, national, European and global.

2015: Guidelines on Environmental Sustainable Development Education: Guidelines incorporating environmental themes across all educational disciplines.

2014: Law 125/2014 “General rules governing international Development Cooperation”: defines Development Cooperation as an integral part of the Italian foreign policy and include education, awareness and participation as tools to achieve a sustainable development. The law reaffirms the central role of GCE for citizen participation in international solidarity and sustainable development.

2014: Guidelines for the inclusion of foreign students: here the intercultural approach is shown as the cultural answer to foreign integration. Intercultural is considered important both for Italian and foreign students to promote active citizenship.

2015: Law 107/2015 Integration of foreign students in the Italian School: citizenship here is intended as co-citizenship in the sense that “it should be linked to the national context but also open to a world that is increasingly big, interdependent and interconnected” (p1).

2015: Establishment of the Rete delle Università per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (RUS) by the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI).

2016: Document from the General States of Environmental Education: Strategic document from the conference on promoting environmental and sustainability culture.

2017: Establishment of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, emphasizing interdisciplinary and participatory education to promote sustainable development.

2019: Law n. 92/ 2019: Civic Education become a comprehensive and mandatory component of the educational curriculum across all school levels, from preschool to secondary education

2020: Adoption of the National Strategy for Global Citizenship Education (GCE), integrating GCE into the broader educational landscape alongside existing sustainability education initiatives.

2023: Adoption of the Action Plan related to the National Strategy for GCE

1.4 Institutional key stakeholders in GCE

The current national Strategy -which will be analyzed in detail later- was written in a participatory manner and established a multi actor table for the drafting of the action plan. The following actors sat at this table and thus actively contributed to the drafting of both documents. In fact, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) has played a crucial role in advancing GCE in Italy while coordinating a multi-stakeholder working group defined by the 2018 Strategy. This group includes local authorities, ministries, civil society organizations, and universities, all dedicated to advancing GCE initiatives. The multi-stakeholder working group was created to

welcome the voices of all those actors who work and have historically worked actively in the territories with projects and actions on GCE within policy work.



Fig.1: Composition of the multi-stakeholder working group that contributed to the ECG Strategy (source: Italian Strategy for Global Citizenship Education, p05)

Ministries and institutional agencies

AICS – Italian Agency for Development Cooperation: AICS is active in promoting closer cooperation between national institutions on Global Citizenship Education, sharing objectives and activities and recommending joint calls. AICS coordinates the multi-stakeholder working group involving all actors (Local Authorities, Ministries, Civil society organizations, Network of University, Conference of Regions) interested in GCE. AICS funds GCE projects in the country through calls for proposals, including through funding to Territorial Entities.

Ministry of Education and Merit: The Ministry of Education has played a key role in promoting Intercultural Education, an essential component of Global Citizenship Education (GCE). Through the Interministerial Committee for Development Cooperation, state administrations, universities, and public authorities have been actively involved in the process of updating the General Law on International Development Cooperation (Law 125/2014). Furthermore, the MIUR was among the members of the working group that participated in the drafting of the Strategy and the PAN ECG, even though it did not explicitly cite it in its own guidance documents.

Ministry of Environment and Energy Security: This ministry has collaborated with the Ministry of Education, particularly through a 2009 declaration of intent emphasizing "School, Environment, and Legality." This collaboration aimed to integrate environmental and Sustainable Development Education into Citizenship Education, emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches. In 2017, the Ministry launched the National Strategy for Sustainable Development which includes Sustainable Development Education in the system of so-called "sustainability vectors", defined as cross-cutting areas of action and key levers for initiating, guiding, managing and monitoring the integration of sustainability into national policies, plans and projects.



Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Labour and Social Policies: Promote programs for the integration/inclusion of third-country nationals or those with migration backgrounds that involve an intercultural approach.

Local Authorities:

Local authorities in Italy have played a significant role in promoting Development Education. The Italian Constitution grants regions and local authorities' considerable autonomy, especially concerning Development Cooperation and education. Additionally, Italian local authorities have successfully secured EU funding for Development Education projects, highlighting their active participation and effectiveness in advancing GCE; today then can also participate to AICS fundings through calls for proposal. Through these efforts, local authorities contribute to a more localized and context-sensitive implementation of GCE, reinforcing the importance of regionalism and autonomy in educational development.

National Multi-actor Table for ECG:

- ANCI - The National Association of Italian Municipalities
- Conference of autonomous regions and provinces - Permanent body for policy coordination and cooperation between the autonomous regions and provinces

Civil Society and Youth Platforms

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been instrumental in embedding Global Citizenship Education de facto within the Italian educational system, because of their strong role in international cooperation activities. Their multifaceted activities are pivotal in promoting and integrating GCE at various levels. NGOs historically engaged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to secure funding and gain recognition for Development Education activities, ensuring that Development Education is supported and prioritized within national policies. Through various campaigns and initiatives, they highlighted the importance of global citizenship and encouraged public and institutional support. Through AICS and EU fundings, NGOs also create and distribute educational resources tailored for schools, designed to support teachers and educators in effectively delivering GCE content to students. By equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, NGOs ensure that GCE is effectively integrated into the classroom. Furthermore, NGOs organize workshops, courses, and form partnerships with schools to facilitate the practical implementation of GCE, fostering a supportive environment for GCE. Managing regional and national platforms for GCE coordination allows NGOs to streamline efforts, share best practices, and ensure a cohesive approach to GCE across different regions.

Promoting the shift towards GCE in discourse and practice is a significant focus for NGOs, emphasizing a more comprehensive and interconnected understanding of global citizenship. In 2010, a group of Italian NGOs crafted the "Charter of Values about Global Citizenship", which underscores the necessity of moving beyond traditional Development Education towards a more holistic GCE approach. This charter serves as a guiding document, advocating for a broader and more inclusive perspective on global citizenship and has been used as a baseline for the 2018 GCE National Strategy.

For these reasons, they are an important actor in the multistakeholders working group.

National Multi-actor Table for ECG:

- Concord Italia (<https://www.concorditalia.org/>) – Italian branch of the European Confederation representing 2,600 NGOs and civil society associations involved in Development Cooperation and humanitarian aid.
- ASviS (<https://asvis.it/>) – Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS): The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) plays a central role in promoting Sustainable Development Education



(ESD) in Italy, contributing to the realization of the 2030 Agenda Goals. Founded to raise awareness about sustainability, ASviS works to integrate sustainability principles into school curricula and educational practices at all levels. Since 2016, ASviS has collaborated with the Ministry of Education through a Memorandum of Understanding that aims to incorporate ESD into school curricula and promote educational initiatives. The “Let's Make 17 Goals” competition, launched in 2019, engages students in projects on the themes of the 2030 Agenda, stimulating creativity and commitment to the SDGs. The recent amendment of Articles 9 and 41 of the Italian Constitution, proposed by ASviS, introduces sustainability principles at the legal level, representing an important step toward intergenerational justice.

- CINI (<https://www.cininet.org/>) - Italian Coordination of International NGOs composed of ActionAid, CBM, Plan International, Save the Children, Volontariato Interanzionale per lo Sviluppo VIS, SOS Villaggi dei Bambini, WWF, Action Against Hunger and Fondazione L'Albero della Vita, nine of Italy's leading Non-Governmental Organizations belonging to international networks.
- AOI (<https://www.ong.it/>) - Association of Italian International Cooperation and Solidarity Organizations
- Link 2007 (<https://link2007.org/>) - Consortium coordinating association that brings together 15 of Italy's most important and historic Non-Governmental Organizations: AMREF, CESVI, CISP, COOPI, COSV, ELIS, FONDAZIONE CORTI, ICU, INTERSOS, LE RÉSEAU, LVIA, MEDICI CON L'AFRICA CUAMM, SOLETERRE, WEWORLD, WORLD FRIENDS.
- RUS (<https://reterus.it/>) - Network of Universities for Sustainable Development is the first experience of coordination and sharing among all Italian universities committed to issues of environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

2. Key policy documents

2.1 List and summary of the main documents

The most important document directly and explicitly related to GCE to date is the National Strategy for Global Citizenship Education (2020) and the related Action Plan (which will be discussed in 2.3).

The document (National GCE Strategy) outlines Italy's Strategy for Global Citizenship Education, focusing on fostering awareness and active participation in global issues. It emphasizes promoting human rights, environmental sustainability, peace, and intercultural dialogue. The Strategy involves integrating GCE into formal education, enhancing teacher training, and collaborating with NGOs and international organizations, but also some recommendation on non-formal education and information and sensibilization. The ultimate goal is to prepare citizens to engage in a globalized world, addressing challenges like inequality and climate change.

Besides following UNESCO for which “the promotion of inclusive and global education is functional to the achievement of all 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda and that GCE is a functional meta-goal to prepare and trigger the cultural changes preparatory to the creation of a more just, equitable and sustainable society”, the document also states that “[...] GCE is not proposed as 'one of the educations', nor as a subject additional, but as a cross-curricular approach to all disciplines of formal education, as well as non-formal education activities” (National GCE Strategy, p.9).

At page 23, the Strategy gives some recommendations which are the core of the document:



“To be effective, it is essential that educational action: Involves multiple stakeholders in the area (educating community). It is articulated in interdisciplinary forms. It has a systemic approach that links social, cultural, economic, technological, environmental, political. Enables critical investigation of social norms and moral values. Actively seeks partnership with actors in other areas and, if possible, is built through an active exchange relationship with subjects from other territories and cultures. Goes beyond the episodic and project-based character, hinging itself in a structured way in the educational system.”

Something particularly important and interesting about this Strategy is the explicit reference to GCE in both formal and non-formal education, giving same importance to both contexts. “GCE covers the pathways of formal education, non-formal education, as well as education that is accomplished through information and awareness-raising activities. In these three areas, it is important to share common references regarding the competencies of global citizenship” (National GCE Strategy, p.16).

Regarding formal GCE, the Strategy suggests to

- Prioritize the integration of clearly defined global citizenship competencies into regulations, particularly in education, and revise curricula accordingly.
- Focus on training teachers and school leaders with a Strategy that aligns with this approach.
- Recognize that GCE (Global Citizenship Education) is lifelong and involves all citizens in strengthening active citizenship.
- Develop local strategies through inter-institutional territorial working groups involving regional/provincial representatives, educational institutions, businesses, media, civil society organizations, and foundations.
- Encourage continuous dialogue to share experiences and insights from local practices.
- Utilize the Rete delle Università per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (Network of Universities for Sustainable Development) to monitor and support higher education initiatives related to global citizenship.

While for non-formal education, “GCE covers the entire life span and involves all citizens in a learning journey aimed at strengthening active citizenship. The learning process is based on 3 main steps: information, change of perceptions and attitudes, and mobilization. The contexts of intervention are multiple and can involve different groups: young people, consumers, local authorities, policy makers, private sector and solidarity economy, civil society bodies, associations, etc.” (National GCE Strategy, p.16). It is hard to map and define what non-formal GCE is: many non-formal activities happen in the formal setting of the school but often not in relation to the curriculum. This does not make them less important or valuable, however, what the Strategy aims to achieve is a systematic and systemic change where non-formal actors can activate within formal and non-formal settings in collaboration with formal education.

The educational approach promoted is therefore innovative. The approach aims to focus on fostering critical thinking, active participation, and ethical responsibility. It advocates for an interdisciplinary method, combining formal and non-formal education, to develop a comprehensive understanding of global issues. The approach also encourages collaboration among various stakeholders, including schools, civil society, and local communities, to create an inclusive and participatory learning environment that empowers students to address global challenges, giving related pedagogies to apply. Metacognition, narrative thinking, reciprocal maieutic and games and simulations, are just a few of them.

2.2 Context of production of the documents

As shown in the first part of the document, the process of Global Citizenship Education is the result of a set of formal and non-formal steps taken over the years in different areas of education. Although it is effectively



delegated to the autonomy of individual schools and lacks an explicit connection to the Ministry of Education's new guidelines on Civic Education, spaces for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) have been referenced in various national guidelines issued over the years. These documents address relevant themes without explicitly mentioning GCE. Specifically, they include a set of national guidelines focused on climate change, gender equality, and intercultural and civic education. There are, on the other side, some guidelines produced over the years, that are related to the topic without mentioning GCE. It is a series of national guidelines that refers, particularly, to Climate Change, Gender Equality and to Intercultural Education and Civic Education.

In particular:

Climate Change Education

National Guidelines for Environmental Education (2015): The Italian Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Environment provided these guidelines that promote the integration of Environmental Education into formal and non-formal education systems to raise awareness about ecological issues, encourage responsible behaviors, and empower individuals to participate in environmental protection. The guidelines emphasize creating educational programs that address climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable resource management, and they encourage collaboration between schools, communities, and governmental bodies to achieve these goals.

Intercultural Education

National Guidelines for Intercultural Education (2007): These guidelines were introduced to promote cultural diversity and understanding within Italian schools. They emphasize the importance of recognizing and valuing different cultural backgrounds, promoting inclusion, and fostering dialogue between students from diverse communities.

National Guidelines for reception and integration of foreign students (2014): This document emphasizes creating welcoming environments in schools, providing initial reception and orientation services for students and their families. The guidelines highlight the importance of Italian language acquisition, recommending targeted language support programs to help students overcome language barriers. Schools are advised to adapt their curricula to be more inclusive, reflecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students.

Law 107/2015 ("Buona Scuola" Reform): This law aims to improve the Italian education system by enhancing student skills, addressing inequalities, and preventing dropouts. It promotes school autonomy, allowing schools to plan their educational offerings and involve local communities. The law emphasizes teacher professional development, family and community involvement, and regular evaluation of educational practices to ensure effectiveness. The goal is to create an inclusive, innovative, and dynamic educational environment. This reform includes provisions for Intercultural Education, aiming to create an inclusive educational environment that respects and promotes cultural diversity.

Gender Equality Education

National Guidelines for Gender Equality in Education (2015): These guidelines focus on eliminating gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality within the school environment. They encourage the inclusion of gender equality topics in the curriculum and promote respect for diversity and equal opportunities.

National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021-2026): Although broader, this Strategy includes educational measures to promote gender equality, ensuring that schools address gender issues and challenge traditional gender roles.



Civic and Citizenship Education

Law 92/2019 (Introduction of Civic Education as a Compulsory Subject): This law reintroduced Civic Education as a compulsory subject in Italian schools, starting from primary education and continuing through secondary education. The curriculum covers topics such as the Constitution, legal rights and duties, democratic institutions, digital citizenship, and environmental sustainability.

In June 2017, the National Council for Development Cooperation (CNCS)-a permanent body for participation and proposals on international cooperation issues, composed of ministries, regions, local authorities the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, and the main networks of civil society organizations, universities and volunteers - called for the establishment of a multi-actor working group tasked with developing the National Strategy for Education for Global Citizenship (GCE). In response to this solicitation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) initiated the formation of a table composed by multiple actors who could contribute, from their respective perspectives to the development of the Strategy. Dozens of stakeholders, local, national and international, contributed to the drafting and discussion of the document over the course of about six months. The coordination group organized the drafting of the text by alternating phases of consultation and gathering input with phases of drafting the document. Collaborating at the working table for the National Strategy were those in Figure 1, previously explained.

2.3 Levels and forms of implementation

The primary level of implementation of the National Strategy is the National Action Plan for Global Citizenship Education approved in 2023. It outlines objectives and strategies to promote global awareness, sustainable development, human rights, and intercultural understanding among citizens. The plan includes measures to integrate GCE into educational curricula, enhance teacher training, and collaborate with civil society and international organizations.

This Plan is considered to be the first level of implementation: “The National Action Plan is the reference for territorial plans. It requires a coordinated and consistent financial commitment to the implementation arrangements, provides a flexible but clear structure to the participatory process, which allows for ownership and commitment by different actors” (National GCE Action Plan, p.5).

The Plan defines the thematic areas included in the GCE and highlights the strong connection with Sustainable Development Education (SDE). Figure 2 reports the thematic areas that the Plan includes. As for the Strategy, the Action Plan includes recommendations both for formal and non-formal education, with coherent but different objectives. Regarding formal education, the objectives are (National GCE Action Plan, p.8):

“Promote quality, inclusive education, with relevant process indicators, to train individuals and groups capable of acting consciously in society to effect the change needed. Integrate, systematize, and enhance GCE in school curricula and within the teaching of Civic Education, supporting and enhancing the autonomous planning of the educational offering’s education of educational institutions.”

All institutional and school related actors are considered responsible for fulfilling these objectives by integrating and implementing a set of important policies and guidelines that include a multilevel governance framework and an interdisciplinary mindset.

While for non-formal education, the main objective stated in the Plan is to “Promote a change in perception and behavior through forms of learning lifelong learning, participation and forms of active citizenship that

promote the spread of GCE values” (National GCE Action Plan, p.9). To reach this objective, a great variety of actors are considered to be responsible for: the younger generation and associations, the private sector, consumers, diasporas, central, regional and local institutions, academia, communication professionals, and many more.

	CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY
GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (GCEB)	Interconnectedness and Global Citizenship	Globalization Global/international citizen(ship), global culture/ identity/community Global-local thinking, local-global, think global act local, glocal Multiculturalism)/intercultural(ism) Migration, immigration, mobility, movement of people Global Competition/competitiveness/globally competitive/ international competitiveness Global inequalities/disparities
	Gender Equality	Gender equality/equally/parity Empower (ment of) women/girls (female empowerment, encouraging female participation)
	Peace, Non-violence and Human Security	Peace, peace-building Awareness of forms of abuse/harassment/violence (school-based violence/bullying, household-based violence, gender-based violence, child abuse/ harassment, sexual abuse/harassment)
	Human Rights	Human rights, rights and responsibilities (children's rights, cultural rights, indigenous rights, women's rights, disability rights) Freedom (of expression, of speech, of press, of association/organization), civil liberties Social justice Democracy/democratic rule, democratic values/ principles
EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)	Health and Well-being	Physical health/activity/fitness Mental, emotional health, psychological health Healthy lifestyle (nutrition, diet, cleanliness, hygiene, sanitation, clean water, being/staying healthy) Awareness of addictions (smoking, drugs, alcohol) Sexual and/or reproductive health
	Sustainable Development	Economic sustainability, sustainable growth, sustainable production/consumption, green economy Social sustainability/environmentally sustainability Environmental sustainability/environmentally sustainable Climate change (global warming, carbon emissions/ footprint)
	Enviromental Science (geoscience)	Physical systems Living systems Earth and space systems

Figure 2: Thematic areas included in the GCE Action Plan (source: National GCE Action Plan, 2023, p.7)



Besides formal and non-formal, a third form of GCE is then cited, the one related to information and sensibilization for which the Plan highlights the following objectives (National GCE Action Plan, p.11): “To promote correct and broad information and awareness on issues related to education global citizenship and the 2030 Agenda by improving the quality of information and media communication, facilitating a reading of complexity (including local and global, highlighting different points of view). Providing people with the tools they need to become aware of their rights and raise awareness on issues of respect and diversity as a value. To foster individual and collective awareness regarding choices oriented toward the common good and the collective well-being”

The Plan suggests possible actions for all the actors involved in these different GCE forms, showing the need for a paradigm shift not only in the institutions and formal setting, but also in society as a whole. In fact, a fundamental part of the Plan is dedicated to “Governance and Participation” where the idea of a multilevel, multiactor and interdisciplinary governance is promoted. “The implementation of the GCE Strategy requires a multi-level, multi-actor and cross-sectoral approach that from the national level reaches out to support and strengthen coordination and collaboration mechanisms with the Regions, Autonomous Provinces, Metropolitan Cities and local authorities” (National Action Plan, p.12). The idea is to promote the establishment of cross-sectoral consultation tables at all levels of governments that work synergistically with the territorial level. For each level of government, indeed, the Plan establishes objectives (general, specific and attended results), examples of actions to be taken, tools and instruments.

At the national level, the Plan states that it is important to promote inclusive and sustainable education by developing mechanisms for coordination and active participation of civil society. Planned actions include strengthening multi-actor dialogue, organizing national events and campaigns, and promoting educational tracks on GCE and the 2030 Agenda. At the regional and local level, on the other hand, the plan calls for the creation of Territorial Action Plans (PAT GCEs) integrated into regional and local policies. Structured dialogue between institutions and civil society, support for training activities, and mapping of local actors involved in GCE are promoted.

The document stresses the importance of civil society and non-state actors' participation to ensure effective governance. Multi-actor coordination tables should be established at national, regional and local levels to facilitate dialogue and implementation of strategies. In addition, a national GCE event is planned every three years to promote participation and highlight experiences and achievements. Digital platforms will also be used to collect and share GCE-related experiences. Further important information is that the plan's funding comes from various institutional levels and the private sector, with the aim of creating a matrix of fundability of proposed interventions at the national and territorial levels.

There are some Regions that have started to implement territorial plans. One example is the initiative "Regione 4.7 – Territori per l'Educazione alla Cittadinanza Globale" in Piemonte which aims to promote global Citizenship Education by integrating it into local strategies and enhancing collaboration among educational institutions, local authorities, and civil society. The project, financed by AICS from 2023 to 2025, focuses on strengthening regional governance, implementing effective educational practices, and increasing the role of local communities in fostering sustainability and international solidarity. It involves 50 schools and aims to engage at least 4,000 students by 2025.

Another important example is the Marche Region which since 2020 has a Law (LR 23/20) on Global Citizenship Education (GCE) which promotes education that fosters awareness of global interdependencies and responsibilities. The Law aims to integrate GCE into the educational system, encouraging critical thinking, social justice, and sustainability. It also supports projects and activities that involve schools, local authorities, and civil society organizations to build a more inclusive and equitable society. The new Strategy and Action Plan gives additional tools and support to this already virtuous region for the development of interesting activities. For



example, in August 2024 the region promoted the "GlobalMente" initiative which encourages active participation in fostering awareness of global issues, sustainability, and social justice. The program involves educational activities, workshops, and collaborative projects aimed at empowering students and communities to engage with global challenges and contribute to a more just and sustainable world. The initiative is open to students, teachers, and local communities in the Marche Region. It encourages the involvement of educational institutions, civil society organizations, and local authorities to promote Global Citizenship Education through various activities, workshops, and collaborative projects.

2.4 Evaluation of the implementation

Since the very beginning of the National Action Plan, it is stated that, “the Plan, which originated from the National Multi-Actor Table, is proposed as a tool for coordination, guidance and monitoring of the strategies of national entities, regional, autonomous provinces and local authorities on GCE and their public policies in collaboration with all actors on the Italian territory” (National GCE Action Plan, p.5).

Monitoring and evaluation are considered fundamental to ensuring quality education. The need for a monitoring system that integrates both the measurement of learning outcomes and the evaluation of educational processes and impacts in the short, medium and long term is emphasized. According to the Plan, evaluation should follow a systems approach, considering the relationships between individuals, organizations and their context. The goal is to shift the focus from the effect on individual subjects to the interaction between them and their environment. Specific indicators will be defined to monitor the progress of GCE in relation to the goals of the National GCE Strategy. These indicators will measure change in context, individuals and organizations, particularly in relation to the feeling of belonging to a global citizenship. The Plan also recommends the use of diverse evaluation methods, combining traditional tools with reflective and experiential methods, such as self and peer evaluation. The goal is to understand learners' personal development and civic engagement.

All actors in the education system are involved in the evaluation process, including policy makers, administrators, trainers, universities, schools, NGOs and civil society. Evaluation will be shared among these actors to ensure an inclusive and effective process. However, the Plan does not assign specific responsibilities. The establishment of a body involving various actors to support the definition of actions and the evaluation of policies and activities at the territorial and national levels is proposed, but there is no trace of it to date.

2.5 Role of different actors in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the policy documents

As already mentioned, the Strategy and the Action Plan have been produced in a participative way with a set of key stakeholders (see Figure 1). The Strategy foresees a constant collaboration among these stakeholders stating that “the identification and enhancement of GCE policies and practices, require a structured dialogue between institutions, civil society, schools, universities, media information, the world of work and business, and social and health services committed to systemic change on issues of human rights, citizenship peace, sustainability, social equity, social solidarity, recognition of diversity as an opportunities” (National GCE Strategy, p. 19).



In particular:

Institutions: both at the national and local level they are considered as key players that need to collaborate with each other. At the National level, for instance, ministries such as MIM, MAECI, MATTM and some agencies such as the National Youth Agency and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Office for the Promotion of Equal Treatment and the Removal of Discrimination Based on Racial or Ethnic Origin (UNAR) and also some specific sectors of the Ministry of the Interior (especially the Civil Liberties Department), the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. At the local level, Regions, Autonomous Provinces, and Cities are all very important not only to cooperate with national institutions but also to collaborate with the territorial actors.

Formal educational system (Schools, Universities and Research): Schools are intended to promote a participatory and open environment, recognizing all community members as key players in the educational process. The Educational Offer Plan of each school is mentioned to be vital in promoting global citizenship and social transformation. Supporting and enhancing the professionalism of teachers and school leaders is fundamental as well in the Plan. On the other hand, universities should support GCE through research, monitoring, and evidence-based policy influence, ensuring the continuous revision of citizenship competencies. Research is essential as well, for monitoring and evaluating educational pathways, influencing policy choices, and contributing to the revision of curricula.

Civil Society: According to the Plan, civil society and third-sector networks play a crucial role in influencing public policies at local and national levels, promoting GCE values, social justice, and policy coherence. They are essential for implementing GCE strategies, proposing innovative approaches, and enhancing lifelong educational processes. Active involvement of civil society organizations is key to training and updating educators, supporting educational activities, and transforming schools into community hubs. They facilitate peer exchanges, amplify youth voices, and support multicultural identity growth. NGOs and local associations provide educational support through trained tutors and mentors.

Private sector: in the Plan, GCE is seen to be able to interact positively with the private sector, offering new perspectives for business policies, labor, and professional training. By collaborating on GCE initiatives, private and social sector actors can better understand the benefits of environmental and social sustainability and adherence to the Global Compact. GCE also encourages reflection on social dimensions related to work, especially policies and initiatives for disadvantaged groups.

Media: The media, especially public information services, should support GCE by providing access to verified information through independent journalism networks. They can challenge stereotypes and prejudices, offering high-quality content for critical public reflection, and ensure accurate and transparent global news coverage. Additionally, they can create spaces for in-depth discussions on GCE, sustainability, and Agenda 2030. Media activities, in collaboration with schools, universities, NGOs, and local entities, should help implement local-global citizenship practices in daily life.



3. Political discourse analysis - Stakeholders inputs

3.1 Methodology

The methodology employed for the political discourse analysis in the field of global Citizenship Education in Italy was based on a qualitative approach, leveraging semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. A total of 13 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders representing a diverse range of organizations, including governmental agencies, universities, regional administrations, and private entities.

The interviewees included representatives from the following organizations:

- AICS (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation)
- ASviS (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development)
- ASviS Giovani (Youth Group)
- Regione Marche
- CONCORD Italia
- Università di Bari and the RUS (Italian Network of Universities for Sustainability)
- Erickson Publishing House
- INDIRE (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation, and Educational Research)
- MASE (Ministry of Environment and Energy Security)
- MIM (Ministry of Education and Merit)
- Regione Emilia-Romagna
- Università di Padova
- Università di Bologna

To ensure consistency and comparability across responses, the same set of questions was posed to all participants. The interviews were conducted online, which facilitated the participation of individuals from different regions and organizations while maintaining flexibility and accessibility. This approach allowed for the collection of insights regarding the various actors' perspectives, priorities, and practices in the promotion and implementation of global Citizenship Education within their respective domains. The qualitative data obtained were subsequently analyzed to identify recurring themes, divergences, and the overall framing of global Citizenship Education in the Italian political and institutional discourse.

In each of the sections that follow, the questions posed to the interviewees will be listed, to better understand the context of the results.

3.2 Key results

3.2.1 The role of the different stakeholders

The integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Italy relies on the collaborative efforts of institutional actors, universities, third-sector organizations, and a part of the private sector (publishing houses in particular), each of which brings their contributions to the table. Thanks to the interviews conducted, it was possible to really understand the role of each type of actor to date and imagine their potential role in the future.



The question asked: Which is the role and responsibility of your institution vis-a-vis GCE? What is the term used by the institution when referring to the GCE concept?

Key answers:

Institutional Actors lay the foundation for GCE by shaping policies and strategies at both national and regional levels. To date, three are the main institutional actors that are playing a proactive role: AICS, MASE and some key regions. AICS and MASE have been instrumental in embedding GCE within the National Sustainable Development Strategy, ensuring a shared language and vision across different sectors. Regional governments, such as those in Emilia-Romagna and Marche, localize these frameworks by fostering grassroots collaborations with NGOs, schools, and local institutions. This, together with the autonomy of individual schools, provides the institutional legitimacy needed to embed GCE into formal education systems and ensures continuity, even amidst political changes. In particular,

MASE (Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security) has a critical role in coordinating sustainable development agendas, with education being one of its core pillars. The Ministry of Environment has not directly issued specific documents for the integration of GCE into formal education. However, their work aligns with international frameworks like the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which influence broader educational policies and frameworks. MASE's contributions are primarily related to shaping policies around environmental sustainability and promoting global perspectives in the educational system, especially focusing on SDG 4.7, which supports Global Citizenship Education. The ministry collaborates with AICS and various organizations within the framework of the Sustainable Development Forum. The ministry views GCE as central to connecting internal and external dimensions of sustainable development even if education is not their main focus of interest (which is direct competence of the Ministry of Education). MASE has helped build Italy's national sustainable development Strategy, in line with the European environmental code, and has worked to ensure that all regions have a corresponding regional Strategy. The ministry has recognized GCE as a key element in its Strategy. In the SNSvS review process started in 2021, thanks also to the collaboration and synergy with AICS, it recognized the ECG as central within Vector 2 "Culture for Sustainability". MASE regularly meets with regional actors to monitor how funds are allocated to formal education on sustainability. As part of its ongoing work, MASE participates in multi-stakeholder forums – including the one for the development of the GCE Strategy and Plan previously discussed- and collaborates on the creation of sustainable development plans, where GCE plays an increasingly important role.

MIM (Ministry of Education and Merit) ensures, starting from early childhood education, interdisciplinary and participatory pathways aimed at spreading knowledge and lifestyles that promote sustainable development. It invests in teacher training and the integration of sustainability principles into the school curriculum, also considering the recent Guidelines for the Teaching of Civic Education. This is an ongoing process, with the various general directorates of the MIM committed to promoting initiatives and reflections on key issues such as health, dignity, and the quality of life of people and nature, with particular attention to biodiversity and environmental protection. The connection between the environment and global issues such as conflicts, migration, and poverty is central to ministerial documents for schools, including the revised National Guidelines, the Guidelines for the Teaching of Civic Education, and the Guidelines for the Integration of Foreign Students. Based on these directives, schools, leveraging their autonomy, can develop programs that foster a culture of respect and solidarity, enabling young people to build a fair and inclusive future based on peace and tolerance.

AICS (Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development) coordinates the national multi-actor table on ECG and has worked closely with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Education to ensure the integration of ECG into national strategies for sustainable development. They coordinate the national multi-stakeholder table on GCE and have worked closely with the Ministry of the Environment, and Education to



ensure the integration of GCE into a National Sustainable Development Strategy. AICS is Italy's focal point for GENE (Global Education Network Europe) and has contributed to revising the national Strategy on sustainable development, incorporating GCE into the cultural dimension of sustainability. This inclusion has helped local entities reference the sustainable development Strategy in their GCE activities and integrate it into local development plans. AICS works to foster dialogue between educational institutions and local authorities and is one of the main founders of GCE activities on Italian territory.

The Region Marche has aligned its approach with international terms and trends, transitioning from Development Education to Global Citizenship Education (GCE). Over the years, they have supported the creation of the regional coordination for associations and NGOs working on GCE, which has been active for about 15 years. The region has continuously followed the national GCE framework and advocated for a stronger role for regions in the implementation of GCE policies. A significant achievement was the 2020 approval of the first and only regional law (Law 23/2020) on GCE, supported by regional networks, universities, and NGOs. This law has kept GCE as a priority, even though it has political changes. The region has been actively involved in national policy development, contributing to the creation of national GCE strategies and the development of indicators for formal education, as there are currently no standardized or quantifiable indicators for GCE.

The Region of Emilia-Romagna has integrated GCE into its international cooperation policies, linking it to the broader goals of peace and sustainable development. The region's 2021-2024 programming document for international cooperation included GCE as a unifying theme. However, the term "Development Education" was used previously, and the region's analysis of programming documents across various regions revealed that not all sectors of regional administration used the term "GCE." Some sectors preferred terms such as "education for sustainability." This discrepancy highlights the challenge of establishing a cohesive and consistent understanding of GCE across public administration sectors, which is seen as necessary for the further development and implementation of GCE initiatives.

Universities and research centers serve as hubs of knowledge generation and dissemination. They foster academic research on GCE, equip future educators and leaders with critical skills, and collaborate internationally to bring best practices into Italy. Despite facing challenges in institutionalizing GCE due to limited national directives, universities play a key role in advancing interdisciplinary approaches and fostering critical thinking on global issues among students and staff. The interviews stressed the disconnect between academic institutions and real-world educational practices, calling for universities to take greater responsibility in the realm of GCE. The current structure of university education, with its focus on performance-driven models, is seen as a barrier to meaningful learning and the promotion of GCE. The interviewees argue that universities should engage in more methodological reflection to ensure GCE is effectively integrated into teaching. There is concern that GCE initiatives are fragmented, with only isolated pilot projects being implemented, lacking long-term structural integration. Furthermore, the university criticizes both academic institutions and NGOs for not developing transformative, co-creative methodologies to advance GCE. It advocates for a radical renewal of pedagogy to align with the goals of GCE. Universities do not have specific institutional frameworks or policies dedicated to GCE, aside from its focus on Sustainable Development Education. As there has been no structured collaboration with the Ministry of Education so far, members of the academy interested in the ECG refer to UNESCO documents. They refer to UNESCO documents and new guidelines when faculty members show interest in GCE, although integrating such topics remains challenging due to a lack of institutionalization. While interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged, they are not formally recognized or rewarded within the academic structure. At the national level, the university refers to guidelines on Civic Education and sustainable citizenship, but these too have limitations. The introduction of the PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) has brought sustainability to the forefront in higher education, but there is little genuine interest from university leadership in pursuing related objectives beyond fulfilling funding requirements.



This problem is not only recognized by universities but also by other research centers such as INDIRE. INDIRE (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation, and Educational Research) has not had a significant focus on GCE in recent years, although it has previously worked with the Ministry of Education to establish national guidelines for Civic Education. Since then, there has been little progress on the national education plan. INDIRE's activities on GCE have been more extra institutional, focusing on engaging teachers through European projects. Through Erasmus+ initiatives, INDIRE works on internationalization projects linked to global citizenship, well-being, and Sustainable Development Education. The organization's contributions are largely through its units in eTwinning, EPALE, and Eurydice, focusing on the global dimension of citizenship and sustainability in education.

Third-Sector Organizations act as critical drivers of innovation and implementation in GCE since the first introduction of the topic in Italy. Through grassroots initiatives, community engagement, and direct collaborations with schools, these organizations make GCE accessible to diverse teachers and students: they are one of the main vehicles through which CGE gets into formal education.

ASVIS has played a significant role over the years in collaborating with the Ministry of Environment to develop and update the national Strategy for sustainable development. The most recent update, made last year, includes three key areas: education, participation, and culture. ASVIS has always emphasized the importance of education as essential for sustainable development but stresses that an integrated and functional governance system, along with a change in mindset, is necessary for meaningful progress. ASVIS uses terms such as global citizenship and active participation to highlight the interconnections between environmental, societal, and economic systems, which they view as essential components of a sustainable future. In terms of education, ASVIS underscores the need for deep awareness of intergenerational justice and the interconnectedness of humanity with the ecosystem.

Concord Italia works actively in the field of GCE and sustainable development, participating in forums and policy discussions, including those with European and Italian parliamentarians and members of the European Economic and Social Committee. Concord Italia also collaborates with organizations like GENE and focuses on connecting GCE with global citizenship policies. On the ground, they integrate GCE into local development plans, especially focusing on minors and families. They have also supported teachers through training programs for many years. The organization is involved in the Third Sector Forum, where it engages with local actors, including schools, social workers, and cultural organizations, to foster collaborative practices across both formal and non-formal education sectors.

ASVIS Youth Group views global citizenship as the ability to look beyond one's own culture and territoriality and to recognize the interconnectedness of all people. Their work includes participation in events and contests across Italy, often in collaboration with organizations of the territories. The youth group started non-formally but has grown in structure as the members recognized their potential and competence. They aim to engage with other groups on equal terms and organized a 2024 event in Bologna to discuss the transformative power of youth in sustainability and their unique ways of participating in social change, including through modern public figures like influencers.

The Erickson publishing house, which has a long tradition of producing ECG materials, complements these efforts by developing practical tools, training, teaching materials and inclusive resources. Their contributions ensure that educators have the means to implement GCE effectively in classrooms, fostering understanding and critical reflection on issues like social inclusion, sustainability, and intercultural dialogue. Erickson approaches GCE indirectly through its core mission of promoting inclusivity and diversity in education. Although GCE is not one of the organization's primary themes, Erikson focuses on creating an equitable representation of diversity in its educational products. The company has outlined five challenges that it aims to address, including centering the person in educational materials, ensuring representation for underrepresented groups,



avoiding stereotypes, and recognizing the power of marginalized groups to drive social transformation. Through its publishing and training products, Erickson seeks to give a fair and non-discriminatory representation of diverse communities. The organization has also developed educational resources on intercultural topics, peace education, and GCE, including a manual on geohistorical and an online course on interculturalism. While Erickson's innovations align with the values of GCE, recent regulatory changes pose challenges to its work in this area. It is important to say that although Erickson is a best practice in the Italian panorama, not many publishing houses that have this mindset and will can be found.

3.2.2 The integration of GCE in formal education: policies and implementation

The question asked: Can the actor identify some important policy documents that frame GCE integration in formal education? Can the actor identify the governmental actors that issued them? Is GCE policy being implemented in formal education? How? Are there any existing mechanisms that promote policies' implementation, for example? Can the actor share some good practice examples of implementation that mobilise these policy/policies?

Key answers:

The integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into formal education in Italy is still in progress, with institutional actors like AICS, ASviS, and regional governments working to promote GCE at the national and local levels, but the impact of the National Strategy and Plan is still to be seen as they are very new. Universities and third sector actors have made considerable progress in promoting these issues, while the Ministry of Education defers to the autonomy of individual institutions. Now, the interviews show that GCE in Italian school it is made through voluntary will and particularly interested teacher together with local organizations of the third sector.

The interview with the Ministry of Education (MIM) highlights how a series of regulations ensure the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) topics into formal education. For example, DPCM No. 208 of October 27, 2023, which regulates the organization of the Ministry of Education and Merit, establishes the new General Directorate for International Affairs and the Internationalization of the National Education System. One of its objectives is to strengthen the international dimension of teaching and multilingualism, fostering the development of individual potential and talents with a global perspective, also in relation to economic growth. Among the key MIM documents related to formal education are the 2024 Guidelines for the Teaching of Civic Education, the 2018 National Guidelines – New Scenarios, the National Plan for Education on Respect, the Guidelines on Bullying and Cyberbullying, and the DGPER notice on in-service teacher training, which explicitly includes training initiatives related to education for sustainability and global citizenship, as well as the Guidelines for the Integration of Foreign Students. Among the operational tools, it is worth mentioning the MIM-ASviS Memorandum of Understanding and the Protocol with VentotenEuropa, both aimed at supporting initiatives for conscious and participatory citizenship at the national and European levels—an essential foundation of educational and training efforts.

The Minister Valditara's Policy Address for the 2025-2027 triennium reaffirms the continuity of the previously stated objectives among its programmatic guidelines and strategic directions. These include respect for individuals and the fight against bullying, ensuring the right to education by promoting the inclusion of the most vulnerable students and the integration of foreign students, combating school dropout rates and regional disparities in learning outcomes, and facilitating early access to the integrated 0-6 education system. The document also emphasizes raising awareness about gender equality and overcoming prejudices, discrimination, and inequalities to combat all forms of violence, fostering a culture of participation and



solidarity, and promoting active and engaged citizenship to instill values such as solidarity, respect for others, peace, and tolerance. Additionally, it highlights the importance of encouraging healthy lifestyles, supporting Italian excellence, creativity, and entrepreneurship.

Among the key ministerial documents, it is important to highlight Ministerial Decree 9/2021, "School-Territory Collaborations for the Implementation of Extracurricular Civic Education Experiences," which implements Article 8 of Law 92/2019 on the "Introduction of Civic Education in Schools." This law states that "the cross-disciplinary teaching of Civic Education is integrated with extracurricular experiences, starting with the establishment of networks, including multi-year partnerships, with other institutional entities, the world of volunteering, and the Third Sector, with particular attention to those engaged in promoting active citizenship."

As the National Strategy for GCE is very new, its perception varies among the different actors interviewed, reflecting their roles, interests, and experiences in education and development. MASE and AICS see the National Strategy as an important element that aligns with their objectives on sustainability, Environmental Education and development cooperation. However, they have expressed that while the national Strategy is significant in the broader sense of sustainability, it could benefit from clearer guidelines to directly influence formal education systems. The Strategy is seen as a complementary framework rather than a direct, enforceable tool for integrating GCE into school curricula. They view GCE as integral to shaping a sustainable future but feel that its implementation in the educational context still requires more development. They note, however, that while the Strategy sets a direction, its impact will depend on its practical application and the coordination between various ministries and actors.

Regional stakeholders express a desire for more direct engagement with the national Strategy and clearer mechanisms to incorporate it within regional educational policies. The region has made strides toward aligning with the Strategy but notes challenges in translating national intentions into local realities. The Strategy is seen as valuable but not yet fully operational at the local level. There is a recognition that more work is needed to institutionalize the integration of GCE within local educational systems, and while the regional approach is being developed, there are still gaps in resources and support to implement the Strategy effectively.

Universities, on the other hand, express a positive yet cautious view of the National Strategy for GCE. They recognize the importance of the Strategy in shaping future generations, especially regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global citizenship. However, they also note that while the Strategy is ambitious, its impact on higher education remains somewhat indirect. Universities are already incorporating aspects of global citizenship and sustainability into their curricula, but they feel that a clearer direction from the national policy would help align these efforts with the broader national education goals.

From the third sector side, the interviewees are strongly supportive of the National Strategy for GCE, viewing it as an essential step toward incorporating global citizenship into formal education. They see it as a powerful tool to achieve SDG 4.7 (which focuses on Sustainable Development Education and global citizenship), but they also emphasize that implementation must be more consistent across Italy's education system. They believe that while the Strategy lays the foundational principles, it must be paired with concrete actions at the local level, such as teacher training and curriculum development. They are optimistic about the Strategy's potential but call for better coordination between the Ministry of Education, regional governments, and other stakeholders. They highlight that without resources, teacher training, and curriculum adaptations, the Strategy might struggle to gain full traction. They argue that the Strategy has great potential, but that it needs more clarity and broadening to encompass the true scope of global citizenship. Their hope is that the Strategy will evolve to integrate a more global perspective, and that the government will provide clearer frameworks for collaboration between sectors (education, government, civil society) to make the Strategy more impactful.



The publishing house employee interviewed, while not directly involved in government policymaking, acknowledges the National Strategy for GCE as a step in the right direction. They view the Strategy as conceptually valuable but are concerned about its practical implications for school curricula. They highlight that the Civic Education Law of 2019, which supports GCE, has been a positive move. However, they express concern that the integration of global citizenship into formal education might be undermined by new guidelines that focus too heavily on local or national citizenship issues, at the expense of global perspectives. Erickson views the National Strategy as a positive framework, but they stress that its success will depend on how well it is implemented in the classroom and whether it can be sustained in the long term.

To sum up, the recurring topics regarding the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in formal education, as highlighted by the various interviewees, revolve around several key challenges and opportunities:

- **Policy and Frameworks:** A central theme is the need for clear and consistent policies that support the integration of GCE into formal education. Several actors emphasized the importance of national strategies, guidelines, and the alignment of educational policies with broader international frameworks like the agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, there is also concern that current policies, particularly the new guidelines on Civic Education, might be too focused on national rather than global themes, limiting the broader scope of GCE.
- **Intersectoral Coordination:** There is widespread recognition that GCE requires collaboration between different sectors, including education, environment, youth, and sustainability sectors. Several interviewees stressed the need for coordination across ministries, regional governments, universities, and third-sector organizations to ensure that GCE is effectively integrated into formal education. However, there are concerns about a lack of institutionalized integration and resource allocation to fully support this coordination.
- **Teacher Training and Support:** A key challenge is the need for teacher training to effectively deliver GCE content. Many actors, including AICS and ASviS, highlighted that teacher preparation is crucial to integrate GCE into formal curricula. Teachers need both the skills and resources to address complex global issues such as sustainability, equity, and human rights within the classroom and adopt pedagogical approaches that are in line with GCE.
- **Curricular Integration:** While there is a broad consensus on the value of integrating GCE into formal curricula, there are concerns about how it fits into existing subjects, especially as the curriculum becomes more rigid with the introduction of new educational guidelines. Regional governments and universities noted that GCE is often seen as an additional layer rather than a core subject, which can lead to challenges in implementation. Additionally, subjects like history, geography, and Civic Education are seen as areas where GCE could be integrated, but structurally changing curriculums make it difficult.
- **Global vs. National Focus:** A recurring point of discussion is the tension between a global citizenship perspective and a focus on national Civic Education. Several interviewees expressed concern about the perspective of the latest guideline documents, e.g. the guidelines on civic education, which adopt a more nationally oriented view, neglecting the global and intercultural perspective essential for ECG.
- **Resource Allocation:** Many actors highlighted the need for resources to properly integrate GCE into formal education, including funding for training, curriculum development, and classroom resources. AICS and Concord Italia pointed out that the successful integration of GCE often depends on external funding and support, with NGOs and third-sector organizations playing a crucial role in providing resources and facilitating activities.
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** Several interviewees mentioned the importance of community involvement in supporting GCE, particularly through collaborations between schools and local stakeholders. Programs that involve local governments, NGOs, and community organizations are



seen as critical in fostering action-oriented learning that goes beyond the classroom and involves students in real-world problem-solving.

3.2.3 Challenges and opportunities

Main Challenges:

Question asked: Can the actor identify limitations and obstacles for the implementation of GCE? Which are the main elements that create obstacles for GCE introduction and implementation? Examples: assessment/examinations; monitoring and evaluation; format/length of the curricula...; lack of teachers' training (initial and continuing); school conditions (lack of spaces for active methodologies, etc.); the actors - school managers, teachers, parents...; lack of relationship with the local communities...etc Can the actor share any good practice examples of implementation that overcome the limitations and obstacles?

Key answers:

One of the main and most important challenges highlighted by most interviewees is the role of the Ministry of Education. In addition to the role that individual institutes can play through school autonomy, the interviewees demand that the Ministry of Education play a more pro-active role: providing clear guidelines and protocols for ECG, listening to and taking into account the best experiences of schools on the topic, facilitating teacher training by increasing coordination with other relevant ministries.

This lack of clarity leaves schools without a clear framework or consistent guidance and creates uncertainty about educators' responsibilities in integrating ECG into their curricula. Furthermore, the lack of integration of local experiences and feedback is a recurring concern. Many schools and regional offices have made great efforts to integrate ECG into their teaching practices, but their efforts often do not receive significant recognition or support from the Ministry. There is a demand for stronger feedback mechanisms, where the experiences and challenges faced by schools can be heard and considered in the formulation of national education policies. Without a structured process to incorporate these perspectives, the Ministry risks losing valuable insights that could improve ECG implementation.

In addition to this fundamental challenge, the interviewees highlighted some others:

- **Lack of Integration in Curricula:** Many schools face challenges in integrating Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into their curricula in a meaningful, structural way. Schools often struggle to include GCE without it becoming an isolated initiative. This results in overburdened educational systems that cannot accommodate additional themes in a cohesive manner.
- **Insufficient Training for Educators and School Leaders:** There is a gap in teacher training programs and school leadership development in addressing new approaches and methodologies for GCE.
- **Lack of Feedback Mechanisms:** A critical challenge noted by several actors is the absence of proper feedback mechanisms for understanding how GCE is being implemented on the ground. Despite efforts to introduce new initiatives, there's little listening to the actual experiences of schools and educators trying to incorporate these topics.
- **Fragmented Policy Landscape:** While there are various policies and initiatives related to sustainability and GCE, the approach often remains fragmented. The absence of a clear, comprehensive Strategy leads to missed opportunities for synergy across different actors and regions. This issue is particularly seen in the difference between national strategies and regional efforts.



- **Limited Funding and Resources:** Financial constraints are an ongoing challenge. Cuts to funding for education, particularly Environmental Education (e.g., INFEA program), and a lack of resources to support the integration of GCE into schools limit the ability to execute ambitious plans.
- **Political and Institutional Barriers:** Changes in political priorities and political instability can disrupt continuity in GCE policies, making it difficult to maintain momentum for long-term educational reforms. This also includes resistance from certain institutional actors who do not see the value in GCE education.

Main Opportunities:

Questions asked: Which opportunities does the actor currently find, at a national level, for the introduction and the implementation of GCE in formal education? Examples: other policies; teachers' training; the actors - school managers, teachers, parents, local associations...; strong relationship with the local communities... Can the actor share some good examples that made the most of the opportunities?

Key answers:

Several actors emphasized that the Global Citizenship Education (GCE) national Strategy and its implementation plans present significant opportunities to enhance education on global challenges and sustainability. AICS highlighted that the growing awareness and shared commitment at the national level, exemplified by the formation of the multi-actor table, offers a promising approach to advancing GCE. They also noted that this collaborative dialogue has already led to positive results, including efforts to develop a matrix that includes indicators for monitoring the ECG Plan. ASVIS also sees GCE as an opportunity to foster critical thinking and reflection on global issues like sustainability and international cooperation, aligning with the spirit of the SDGs. Regione Emilia Romagna recognized GCE as a chance to engage young people meaningfully and connect local and regional entities to the global sustainability agenda. Universities such as UniBo, UniPadova, and UniBari acknowledged the importance of integrating GCE into curricula to better align educational goals with sustainability and global development. Regione Marche pointed out that GCE has great potential, especially when supported by legal frameworks like the Civic Education law, which can help institutionalize it as a core part of educational systems. Overall, GCE is seen as an opportunity to promote critical thinking, raise awareness of global challenges, and integrate sustainable development into education, but the challenge lies in ensuring its systematic and effective implementation through policies, institutional support, and collaboration across various stakeholders.

Besides the Strategy being the biggest opportunity highlighted, the interviewees mentioned other interesting opportunities:

- **Youth Engagement:** A growing awareness among young people regarding sustainability and social issues presents a significant opportunity. As young people are already sensitized to these issues, they can take on leadership roles in advocating for GCE and influencing adults, which helps bridge generational gaps.
- **New Policy Developments:** The introduction of laws like Law 92/2019 on Civic Education and the formulation of updated guidelines offer an opportunity to align the curriculum more closely with sustainable development goals.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** The establishment of multi-stakeholder tables, such as the one led by AICS, enables dialogue between different actors (including governmental, civil society, and educational organizations). This collaborative approach facilitates better understanding, exchange of best practices, and joint initiatives that can drive GCE forward.
- **Research and Innovation in Pedagogy:** The growing interest in innovative educational methods, such as the work done by Erickson and Concord, shows that there is space for experimental approaches to



teaching GCE. These include engaging students in critical thinking, promoting metacognitive skills, and examining real-world issues through non-traditional learning methods.

- **Regional Initiatives and Local Support:** Regional programs, such as those in Emilia Romagna and Marche, highlight the importance of local government support in embedding GCE into the educational system. This support can provide necessary resources and create spaces for experimentation. Local actors can ensure that GCE becomes more than a theoretical subject and is practiced in meaningful ways.
- **International and National Networks:** Leveraging existing networks, like those facilitated by MASE and AICS, can help enhance the impact of GCE through collaboration with international actors and NGOs. The use of these networks can provide additional resources, knowledge, and expertise to strengthen GCE initiatives at the national level.
- **Tools for Evaluation and Impact Measurement:** The creation of a national system of indicators for ECG is a significant opportunity to track and monitor the implementation of the ECG NAP at different levels (national, regional, local) and in different contexts (formal, non-formal education and information and awareness-raising) and also evaluate ECG initiatives.
- **Teacher and Student Empowerment:** Empowering both teachers and students to experiment with new methods of learning and engaging with sustainability issues is crucial for the success of GCE. Educational institutions and local governments must provide safe, supportive spaces for such experimentation, allowing room for failure and growth.

3.2.4 Importance given to GCE and global issues and their relationship to the curriculum

Questions asked: How does the actor evaluate the importance given by the formal curriculum to GCE and global issues? What are the main global issues that are addressed by the curriculum? And, in practice, by the schools/teachers? In which subjects/school disciplines is it easiest to integrate and implement GCE and global themes? Why? Can the actor give some examples?

Key answers:

Although most interviewees declared that they were not experts in curriculum they all gave interesting insights on the topic which can be summarized in this short list:

- GCE is primarily integrated into Civic Education, history, and geography but has potential in other subjects like mathematics.
- The curriculum offers flexibility, but GCE's inclusion depends largely on teacher training and motivation.
- Lack of interdisciplinary approaches hinders the effective integration of global issues.
- Multi-stakeholder collaborations can enhance the quality of GCE educational resources.
- Climate change is well-incorporated into curricula, but topics like gender equality and social justice remain inconsistently addressed.
- Institutional efforts to provide structured programs are limited, leading to fragmented and superficial coverage of GCE topics.

The interview with the MIM also reminds us that school autonomy plays a key role in integrating various themes into the current curricula. This autonomy allows for the conceptualization and planning of different guidelines within the Three-Year Educational Offer Plan (PTOF), which the school adopts by considering both ministerial documents, adapting them to the local context, and proposals from the surrounding community. This process



ensures a targeted educational approach that does not overlook the many challenges affecting our society today.

To go more in depth:

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is widely recognized as a cross-disciplinary perspective that can be integrated into any subject, enhancing the global dimension of topics already present in the curriculum. Institutions such as the Università di Bologna and Regione Emilia Romagna agree that while GCE is often linked to Civic Education, it should extend across multiple disciplines. It does not necessarily require additional curriculum space but demands a global approach to teaching. A major challenge in implementing GCE is the dependency on teacher interest and training. While quality educational resources are essential, they are insufficient without proper teacher preparation. Many institutions, including Erickson and the Università di Bologna, emphasized that the flexibility of the curriculum allows room for GCE, but its inclusion depends largely on educators' motivation and competence. Without structured training, teachers may struggle to incorporate global perspectives effectively. The best educational materials often emerge from multi-stakeholder collaborations rather than solely expert-driven content, reinforcing the need for cooperative approaches in resource development.

The lack of interdisciplinary approaches in the curriculum is another significant barrier. The Università di Padova pointed out that subjects remain too specialized, preventing a broader integration of global issues. To address complex global challenges, cross-disciplinary perspectives must be embedded within education. Regione Marche highlighted successful collaborations with NGOs in revising curricula, particularly in subjects like geography and languages, though structural barriers persist. Certain subjects naturally lend themselves to GCE integration. Indire and ASVIS identified Civic Education, history, and geography as key areas where global issues, such as gender equality, sustainability, and governance, are discussed. While mathematics has potential applications -such as linking the concept of limits to sustainability-, this remains underexplored. Despite existing opportunities, GCE's presence in schools is often fragmented. MASE and Indire noted that while discussions on global issues are possible, they often remain superficial due to a lack of structured institutional commitment.

A recurring concern is the inconsistency in GCE's national implementation. Concord Italia and Erickson highlighted that while the curriculum is flexible, the depth of GCE coverage depends heavily on individual teachers' knowledge and interest. Although widely accepted topics like climate change are frequently included, issues such as gender equality, identity, and social justice are often neglected or treated superficially. Without a national framework ensuring coherence, these topics risk being overlooked or inconsistently addressed across different educational contexts.

3.2.5 Recommendations

Questions asked: Does the actor have any recommendations for improving implementation of the *national GCE Strategy(es)*? Which are the priorities the actor would like to see addressed in any future national GCE Strategy? Does the actor have any recommendations for the GET project in terms of where to direct activities in the next couple of years?

Key answers:



1. Collaboration and Coordination

- Establish stronger cross-ministerial collaboration, including between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment, and local actors. It is necessary for these ministries to work together for a more effective implementation of GCE
- Develop more inter-institutional, cross-assessment frameworks at both European and national levels, ensuring that GCE becomes part of interdisciplinary policies.

2. Decentralization and Regional Engagement

- Ensure a more equitable distribution of GCE activities across regions, avoiding concentration in major cities like Bologna. Focus on rural areas and underserved territories.
- Create regional territorial plans that facilitate the implementation of the National Strategy for GCE and involve multiple ministries for greater impact.
- Empower regional and local governments to take responsibility for spreading GCE, particularly in areas where NGOs are underrepresented.

3. Institutional Support and Structural Changes

- Strengthen institutional coordination at the national and local levels, ensuring that GCE becomes embedded in the educational, environmental, and social policy frameworks.
- Advocate for the formal inclusion of GCE in national curricula and ensure that relevant policies and strategies reflect this inclusion.

4. Teacher Training and Professional Development

- Integrate GCE and sustainability into teacher training programs, both at the initial and continuous education levels. Make experiences related to global citizenship and sustainable development mandatory for teachers.
- Develop specific competence frameworks for teachers related to GCE and sustainable development. Include GCE-related training in teacher certification and career development.
- Provide teachers with opportunities for field-based learning, such as exchanges and shadowing, to develop practical skills in teaching GCE.

5. Resources and Funding

- Increase funding for GCE initiatives, ensuring continuous financial support for long-term projects. Consider both co-financing and direct funding mechanisms to ensure sustainability.
- Improve resource distribution to ensure that schools, especially in rural areas, have the necessary materials and support to implement GCE effectively.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Develop indicators to measure progress in GCE and Sustainable Development Education, both in terms of content and methodology.
- Create comprehensive tools for long-term impact assessment, including social-emotional and behavioral aspects, not only cognitive ones. These tools should go beyond existing SDGs frameworks.
- Involve youth voices in the evaluation process to understand their perspectives and how they engage with GCE topics.
- Conduct research on the long-term impact of GCE initiatives in schools and other educational settings.

7. Integration of GCE in Policies and Curriculum

- Make GCE and sustainability part of the formal curricula and national educational frameworks. This should be done through a coherent policy approach that is consistent across schools, regions, and ministries.



- Develop frameworks for assessing how GCE and sustainability are being incorporated into schools and the educational system, with clear indicators of success and areas for improvement.
- Include GCE and sustainable development as part of the competencies that teachers must develop and evaluate them through clear operational standards.

8. Student Engagement and Involvement

- Greater interconnection between the curriculum and the expectations of young people, addressing new needs and involving them in participatory processes (also through youth councils) for curriculum decision-making.
- Involve students in the design and evaluation of GCE projects to ensure that their perspectives are central to the development of educational strategies.
- Ensure that students engage in practical, transformative learning experiences related to global citizenship, sustainability, and social responsibility.

9. Cultural and Systemic Change

- Encourage a cultural shift towards recognizing the importance of Global Citizenship Education and sustainable development across all sectors of society, particularly in the education system.
- Facilitate partnerships that go beyond symbolic cooperation and focus on addressing real educational needs, especially those related to cultural change and sustainability.

10. Governance and Policy Frameworks

- Establish a clear, structured policy framework for GCE, integrating it across multiple levels of governance and sectors. Ensure that it is reflected in the national and regional planning documents.
- Develop clear action plans and financial frameworks that support GCE, with a focus on creating structured, collaborative, and sustainable initiatives at all levels of governance.



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