CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION EXISTING: POLICIES IN 8 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Technical sheet

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1.Introduction

1.1 The GET project

The *GET – It's Global Education Time. From school curricula to youth actions for sustainable development*[1] project is a European Commission co-funded initiative, through the DEAR Programme (Development Education and Awareness Raising). It aims at enhancing the capacity of the formal education systems in eight European countries - Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain - to support students and teachers to develop a sense of co-responsibility for local and global sustainable development and the 4 Global Challenges - Climate Change, Gender Inequalities, Global Inequalities and Migrations - through the implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) approaches in schools.

It builds upon the importance of six key elements to effectively incorporate GCE into formal education: i) production and capitalisation of curriculum relevant teaching and learning materials; ii) training and support for teachers; iii) social media communication campaigns to disseminate teaching and learning materials; iv) active involvement of students in learning process and as active citizens in their communities; v) advocacy targeting education authorities based on evidence; vi) GCE assessment and evaluation systems designed specifically for schools.

One of the main problems highlighted by research conducted by co-applicants during a previous European project, *Get Up and Goals!,* is the lack of coordination between education authorities and other key actors who can make GCE strategies happen on the ground. For this reason, the GET project identified it as crucial to provide education authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) in the eight countries with more knowledge and recommendations on integrating GCE in formal education.

In that sense, a GET project activity was dedicated to researching the *Challenges and Opportunities of implementing GCE National Strategies and Policies* across the eight countries. This outcome was composed of three main sections:

- Research on the state of the art of existing GCE policies and identification of challenges and opportunities of implementation in the eight countries;
- Curriculum mapping for identification of GCE challenges and opportunities of implementation, specifically of the four main global challenges - Climate Change, Gender Inequalities, Global Inequalities and Migrations;
- Mapping the treatment of the 4 Global Challenges in school textbooks.

[1] https://www.globaleducationtime.eu/

1.2 The research

The research was coordinated by a team of two international research coordinators[2], in articulation with the project international coordinators[3] , and was carried out by nine national/regional teams[4], hired at national/regional level – one for each country, except the case of Spain, where two teams were created, one for North-Central Spain and the other for Andalusia –, which developed nine final national/regional reports.

This transnational report presents an analysis of the national/regional reports on the first section of the research - the state of the art of existing GCE policies in the eight countries, and identification of challenges and opportunities for implementation.

The Terms of Reference for the state of the art research identified two moments : i) desk-based research to identify and analyse existing policy documents in the country/region according to established criteria; and ii) content analysis of interviews/focus groups run by the national/regional team, with relevant stakeholders identified in the country/region also accordingly an interview schedule guide focused on existing policies and challenges and opportunities in their implementation. The teams' work across the 8 countries was coordinated through five transnational online meetings between July 2024 and February 2025.

The final national/regional reports are structured as follows: i) a 1st section of "state of the art", with reflections on the key concepts used in each country, the identification of the relevant actors in the field and some milestones of the policy elaboration; ii) a 2nd section presenting the key policy documents identified in the desk-based research undertaken and reflections on their context of elaboration, the role of the different actors, levels and forms of implementation, evaluation mechanisms; iii) a 3rd section devoted to the stakeholders inputs, with a brief description of the methodology undertaken, the existence of policies and levels of implementation, identification of implementation obstacles and opportunities and recommendations from the actors; iv) a final section with conclusions and recommendations or proposals.

This report proposes a shared reading of the nine national/regional reports. It does not aim to offer a comparative approach, but rather to provide an overview of the situation in the nine countries/regions, following the structure of the national/regional reports presented above.

This transnational report is conceived as a practical tool to inform decision-makers, education authorities, on how to improve GCE integration into formal education systems; to identify convergences, gaps and leverage points across countries to guide policy dialogue and programme design; and to support advocacy, by CSOs and other actors, with evidence on GCE implementation constraints and promising pathways.

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[3] Giordana Francia and Massimiliano Lepratti, from CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli.
[4] Bulgaria, Iva Boneva; Czech Republic, Lenka Pánková, Jana Poláchová Vašťatková and Dita Palaščáková; Greece, Diamorfosis team; Ireland, Valerie Lewis; Italy, Bianca Minotti, with Giordana Francia and Massimiliano Lepratti; Poland, Marta Gontarska and Elżbieta Olczak; Portugal, Hugo Cruz Marques, Jorge Cardoso and Sandra Fernandes; Spain - Andalusia, Luisa López; North-Central Spain, Rafael Moreno Catalán and Martha Liliana Ruiz Contreras.

2. Brief contextualization

2.1 Key concepts

Across the nine countries/regions, the conceptual framing of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) converges around SDG 4.7 and a cross-curricular view that blends human rights, sustainability, solidarity, interculturality and citizens' participation.

In most places, the idea GCE has grown out of development cooperation ecosystems and long-standing NGO partnerships, which explains why **Development Education** (Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain; in the Czech Republic, **Global Development Education**) is one of the predominant historical terms. **Global Citizenship Education**, consecrated in Agenda 2030, is evident in almost all the countries in our study (except for Greece), being the preferred term for some actors, mainly from civil society (e.g. NGOs, like in Portugal), or in the naming of policies (e.g. Italy). The concept of **Education for Sustainable Development** is the preferred term in Greece, where the roots of the field can be found in Environmental Education. It is interesting to note that in some countries, there is a growing convergence between the area of DE/GCE and the area of ESD (Ireland and Spain). **Global Education** is another term mentioned by countries, usually in eastern Europe, reflecting the influence of international organisations like the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe or GENE – Global Education Network Europe (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Poland). In many countries, the main entry point for integrating global issues into formal education is still **Civic** or **Citizenship Education** (Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain).

From the analysis of the nine reports, it is clear that terminology is contextual and depends very much on historical roots and national actors' entry points. Regardless of the term used, two common features are a lifelong learning focus and the alignment with SDG 4.7. It was also clear that a pragmatic approach is helpful in politically sensitive contexts, adopting more consensual concepts to avoid confrontations while allowing advancements in the work in the area.

2.2 Key actors

In terms of key actors, it is strongly recognisable that **Foreign Affairs,** ministries or agencies, leads (or co-leads) the GCE agenda in most cases, coordinating and funding national strategies, as the case of CZDA (Czech Republic), DFA/Irish Aid (Ireland), AICS (Italy), Camões (Portugal), MFA (Poland), and AECID at state level in Spain, with regions then adapting. **Education ministries**, via specialised agencies or departments, are responsible for curricular integration (NPI/MEYS, in the Czech Republic; IEP and Sustainability Centres in Greece; NCCA in Ireland; DGE in Portugal; regional education departments in Spain). **Other ministries**, or public institutions, were referred to – Environment (the Czech Republic and Italy), Youth (Bulgaria and Greece), Social Cohesion and Family (Greece), and Science/Higher Education/Research (Bulgaria and Italy). It is important to highlight that it is easily identifiable that **GCE moves faster when cross-ministerial cooperation is strong** (e.g. Ireland, Portugal and, regionally, in the south of Spain). Where **regional authorities** hold strong levers (Italy and Spain), commitment and capacity at that level largely determine uptake and consistency.

Civil society organisations, namely **NGOs**, have a GCE implementation role in all countries/regions, and frequently were - and in some cases still are - the ones advocating for the development and/or implementation of relevant policies. NGOs have taken on responsibility for designing resources, training teachers, and running school projects, especially where public leadership is weaker (e.g., Bulgaria, Poland). The existence of strong GCE **platforms** is essential for advocacy work, for international recognition and participation, and to amplify reach (FoRS in the Czech Republic; IDEA in Ireland; Grupa Zagranica in Poland; PPONGD in Portugal; and CAONGD in Andalusia, Spain). Some **multi-actor coordination structures** help move beyond projects to systems, as the Irish Aid ecosystem (WWGS, Ubuntu, IDEA) alongside Department of Education bodies (Ireland); the DE National Strategy Monitoring and Implementation Committees (Portugal); and the regional role as broker of the Andalusian Cooperation Agency (Spain).

Higher Education institutions are other relevant actors identified in all countries, assuming responsibilities for capacity building, research, resource co-creation and pre-service and in-service teacher education. **Teachers and teacher education bodies, and multi-actor partnerships** on this topic, were constantly referenced in the national reports.

Finally, participation in **international** networks (like GENE, Council of Europe, EC, etc.) was mentioned as necessary in informing terms and priorities (explicit, for example, in the Czech Republic, Ireland, and Portugal).

2.3 Key moments

The analysis of this section of the nine reports showed an expected, very national contextualised input. However, it is possible to find some 'types' of key moments that are recurrent and that can be identified as necessary in defining national GCE policies. It is also noticeable that the key milestones relate to the **general school system**, to **GCE** explicitly (wherever it exists), to the **development cooperation field** and its connection with GCE, and to **other related educational fields**, like environmental education, intercultural education, and citizenship education.

In all the countries, some key milestones are related to **legislative anchors (laws/acts),** usually from the educational sectors, that create the legal door for GCE/ESD (Bulgaria, Italy, Spain), or **curriculum revisions** that open spaces for turning strategy into classroom practice through cross-curricular themes and subjects (Czech Republic, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Spain). In some contexts, developing **national strategies/roadmaps** is the formalisation of longer-term commitments to the field (Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain). Usually, **these strategic frameworks come with the institutionalisation of governance bodies, like committees, secretariats, and inter-ministerial groups, which reinforces the setting and makes GCE more durable** (Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain). Implementing these policies sometimes comes with **dedicated funding lines, grant programmes** (Ireland, Portugal, and Spain), and **monitoring and evaluation** schemes (Czech Republic, Ireland, and Portugal). Regarding practices, it is important to highlight some relevant moments related to: key moments that establish and reinforce **NGO–state partnerships** (the Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal and Spain); the establishment of **whole-school/participation models** (Ireland and Portugal); and the launching of **teacher education guidelines** (Ireland and Portugal). In every country, **international milestones** were also reported, such as accession to the European Union (Poland) or EU policy alignment (Bulgaria), the Dublin Declaration and the connection with SDGs and the 2030 Agenda (across all). This international connection was pivotal for a broader aligned language and policy priority.

3. Reflections on Policy Documentation

In analysing the policy documents referenced in the national/regional reports, it is possible to identify some trends. First, it is essential to note that five out of the eight countries participating in this study have a **current GCE strategy** – Czech Republic (*Strategy for Global Development Education & Awareness on Global Interconnections 2018–2030*), Ireland (*Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021–2025*), Italy (*National Strategy for Global Citizenship Education,* 2020, and *National Action Plan*, 2023), Portugal (*National Strategy on Development Education*, since 2010) and Spain (*Strategy for Development Education & Global Citizenship*, 2017, and an updated law on Cooperation *for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity*, 2023).

In some cases, the field is reinforced with policies from other sectors, mainly from the **educational sector**, like the case of Ireland (*National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development: ESD to 2030*), Portugal (*National Strategy on Citizenship Education*) and Spain (LOMLOE, 2020, which incorporates key competencies and cross-cutting values—such as sustainability, equality, democratic citizenship, and global responsibility—that are directly related to the principles of GCE, although not explicitly mentioning it). Autonomous regions in Spain, like North-Central regions (e.g., Basque Country, Navarre, La Rioja, Cantabria, Castile and León) and Andalusia, have devolved powers to complement national frameworks through their own norms and plans (e.g., the Andalusian Plan for International Development Cooperation —PACODE— and education programmes such as CIMA, promoting partnerships with NGOs, teacher-training programmes, and project-based/service-learning). Italy also shows some steps in this cooperation between sectors, presenting some educational frameworks that integrate related topics into formal education. In addition, the Czech Republic is being presented with an opportunity to bring global themes into classrooms with a newly revised *Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education,* aligned with the SDGs. This constellation of documents ensures continuity, coherence, articulation and institutional memory.

As previously stated, Greece presents a strong documentary block centred on an **Education for Sustainable Development framework** (e.g. Law 4547/2018, the Directorate for Education for Sustainability, and Centres of Education for Sustainability) and recent curriculum reforms that create spaces - like “Flexible Zones”, “Skills Workshops” and “Active Citizen Actions” - where, even without naming GCE, are opportunities for its content and methodologies.

Bulgaria anchors itself in the *Pre-school and School Education Act* (2016) and *Ordinance No. 13* (framing Citizenship Education in upper secondary), complemented by **international references**. The main recent development, the *Programme for Global Education*, is awaiting approval by the Ministry of Education and Foreign Affairs. This *Programme for Global Education* was drafted with the Bulgarian Platform for International Development and proposes a national strategic framework for GCE.

Although Poland does not have a GCE strategy, it is important to highlight the existence of a Multistakeholder Group meeting regularly, and a call for proposals for activities in the formal and

non-formal education sector, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Poland relies chiefly on a *Multiannual Programme for Development Cooperation 2021–2030* that includes GCE and funds NGO projects, building on a multi-stakeholder *Memorandum of Understanding* promoted by Grupa Zagranica in 2011, finding in some **local policies** entry points for GCE.

Cross-reading the nine reports reveals a consolidating field, yet still heterogeneous. Broadly, it is possible to observe a spectrum ranging from **robust, inter-ministerial architectures** (Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain) to **more fragmented configurations** reliant on civil society actors (Bulgaria and Poland), with multi-level models where **territorial governance** is decisive (Spain: North-Central and Andalusia). Greece translates Global Citizenship primarily through an educational approach aligned with Education for Sustainable Development. **Agenda 2030 (SDG 4.7) can be identified as a common denominator**, promoting very different institutional arrangements.

The analysis of the **production contexts** of these documents reveal the importance of: i) inter-ministerial co-ordination between education and development cooperation policy (e.g. Italy, AICS/ministries; Portugal, Camões/Ministry of Education); ii) multi-level participatory and co-constructive contexts, usually involving NGDOs and universities (e.g., Czech Republic, with People in Need and academic partners; Ireland, with the centrality of Irish Aid and the likes of the Ubuntu Network and DICE, Global Village and the World Wise Global Schools programmes; Portugal, with the different actors responsible for the elaboration and implementation of the DE National Strategy; Spain, through regional working groups and platforms, like in Andalusia, with regional public bodies and participatory platforms working together, including AACID -public agency- and CAONGD's education working group; iii) curriculum reforms to provide entry points or reinvigorate the GCE field (e.g. Greece and Ireland); iv) European/international agendas (UN/UNESCO, Council of Europe, EU/GENE), as a matrix of reference and a source of national legitimisation (e.g. Bulgaria and Poland).

All reports confirm that GCE is inherently **multi-actor**, with varying degrees of involvement depending on the context: i) Education Ministries (or aligned agencies) define curricula and norms; ii) Foreign Affairs/Development Cooperation Agencies (e.g. AICS, Irish Aid, Camões, Polish MFA, AECID, AACID - Andalusia) provide funding, international coherence and partnerships; iii) NGDOs play a central role in advancing GCE, being amongst the key implementers, and advocating for better policies, sometimes compensating for limits in state frameworks; iv) universities and teachers' networks drive pedagogical innovation, resources, teacher education and independent evaluation.

Regarding levels and forms of GCE integration in formal education (specifically for students aged between 11-16 years), it is possible to identify a split between **cross-curricular integration** and **dedicated subjects**. Greece and Spain (North-Central and Andalusia), emphasise mainstreaming GCE themes across subjects and school projects, strengthened by teacher-education programmes and participatory methodologies (project-based learning, service-learning, skills workshops). Ireland, Italy and Portugal combine cross-curricular work with a compulsory subject (*Civic, Social and Political Education* in Ireland, *Civic Education* in Italy, *Citizenship and Development* in Portugal). Bulgaria has introduced Citizenship Education at the upper-secondary level, which aids in curricular predictability, although the openness to global perspectives depends on schools and projects. Much of the implementation in the Czech Republic and Poland occurs via NGO/academic projects (training, materials, clubs, campaigns), with territorial variation and dependence on the availability of funding. In all contexts, initial and continuous teachers' education is considered crucial.

The reports' analysis also reveals that policies and strategies **monitoring and evaluation** is the least consolidated and most uneven axis. Portugal stands out for a monitoring culture associated with

ENED (reports, indicators, oversight bodies), which enables policy learning and iterative adjustment. Italy prescribes indicators and mechanisms in its Action Plan, which is still maturing but has a clear design for governance and metrics. In Ireland, Irish Aid engages in mid-term reviews of the GCE strategy and evaluation is distributed across Irish Aid instruments (e.g., monitoring and evaluation using results-based frameworks for grantees), with regular feedback loops to schools and teacher-education institutions. The Czech Republic combines strategy updates with NGO/donor evaluations. In Spain, state-level evaluation is more diffuse and often regionalised (Andalusia, for example, gathers evidence mainly through projects and pedagogical reporting rather than through a consolidated, system-wide M&E framework specific to GCE). Bulgaria and Poland display fragmented evaluations dependent on international projects or ad hoc exercises (including external reviews of development co-operation).

4. Global Citizenship in formal education: stakeholders' inputs

4.1 Policy frameworks and their implementation

Across the nine countries/regions, actors consistently describe a familiar pattern - policy intent has outpaced everyday classroom practice. Strategic documents exist (and, in some cases, are robust), but translation into timetabled learning still relies heavily on teacher initiative, local leadership, and project funding cycles. However, there are pockets of different situations.

In **Bulgaria**, a legal base for citizenship/values education exists (*Pre-School and School Education Act; Ordinance 13*); however, stakeholder interviewees acknowledge that GCE is not integrated into the curriculum. *Citizenship Education* arrives late (11th–12th grades) and remains outside compulsory schooling. The long-anticipated national *GE programme* (co-developed with NGOs) is still pending, so classroom practice depends on motivated teachers, short funding cycles, and isolated projects rather than system support.

In the **Czech Republic**, strategic documents are identified (*Agenda 2030, Strategy 2030+*, *Dublin Declaration*), and educational reforms are currently in train. GCE appears in the *Framework Educational Programme* (cross-curricular and within Geography/People & Society/People & Nature), but provision is episodic, and continuity is weak. Fragmented terminology and split responsibilities across ministries further complicates curricular integration.

Greek stakeholders describe a broad, multi-dimensional treatment of GCE/ESD through environmental, social and political themes, with strong fit with Natural Sciences, Geography, Social/Political Education, History, Languages, Skills Workshops and Arts/ICT, building upon the system's comprehensive ESD architecture (new curricular reform from 2018, Sustainability Coordinators, Centres for Education for Sustainability, to highlight some). A reference was made to the implementation of the "Active Citizenship Actions" programme, implemented at all levels of education and mandatory from the 2024-2025 school year, which promotes a holistic approach, integrating the 17 SDGs, and giving students the opportunity to deal with complex social, economic and environmental issues. Nevertheless, implementation capacity varies, and schools and teachers need sustained training.

Ireland has one of the most aligned policy ecosystems, with several actors working in articulation, favouring implementation. Interviewees point to prominent system spaces for GCE as a result of junior-cycle reform since 2015 and the ongoing redevelopment of senior cycle. There are also "discrete spaces" via junior cycle statements of learning and key skills/senior cycle competencies, but the GCE sector has yet to fully capitalise on these. Despite an articulation at the normative level, there are still different levels of implementation at the school level, which are vulnerable to programme funding cycles.

In **Italy,** a clear national compass is pushing cross-curricular, multi-actor implementation, with regions and networks active in the field. GCE is valued in principle and most naturally embedded through Civic Education, History and Geography. In practice, school autonomy enables integration but produces unevenness tied to teacher motivation and training. A lack of structured interdisciplinary approaches and limited national coherence were seen as key obstacles to giving GCE a stable place in the curriculum.

Poland has no dedicated education-sector GCE strategy, with the main drivers being the MFA's *2021–2030 Programme* and the NGO work. Stakeholders consider GCE marginal within a standards- and exam-driven system, which makes global themes rarely present in lessons or textbooks. Initial and continuous teachers' education is considered crucial. It was highlighted that the OECD DAC review urged a cross-government cooperation framework and standing agenda status for Global Education.

In **Portugal**, there is a strong policy backbone with the national strategies and several documents from the development (e.g. ENED – National Strategy on Development Education) and the educational sector (e.g. ENEC – National Strategy on Citizenship Education). Actors expressed that most subjects have GCE potential, emphasising Geography, History and Natural Sciences. However, it was highlighted that implementation quality depends on school strategies, leadership goodwill, and teacher training.

Spain has robust national policies (LOMLOE and development cooperation frameworks) and regional instruments localise policies, like the CIMA innovation plan, Aldea and the Gender Equality Plan, in Andalusia. In Navarre, the Solidarity School program, regulated by the NGDO Coordination Committee and the Department of Education, stands out for integrating GCE into educational centres. In the Basque Country, the Basque Cooperation Agency's Plan for Education for Social Transformation is being implemented. In Castile and León, educational cooperation projects are channelled through the Regional Ministry of Education, and in La Rioja, there are experiences linked to educational innovation programs supported by the regional government. However, regional politics and school capacity determine delivery, leaving schools reliant on teacher initiative and NGDO-led projects.

4.2 Main obstacles and constraints to policy implementation

As seen in the previous section, stakeholders describe a consistent implementation gap, marked by better policy structures than classroom practices. This section explores the obstacles and constraints to integrating GCE in formal education across the nine countries/regions identified by the stakeholders interviewed as part of the research.

Some references were made to more **conceptual and content** issues, such as **terminology and conceptual confusion,** which can hinder coherence and planning (Czech Republic); GCE being a concept that requires some level of **complexity and abstraction**, not always easy to understand (Poland); and an idea vulnerable to **political sensitivity and social polarisation.** Topics such as migration, gender/equality, and climate change could be seen as ideological or "political," leading to or compounding teacher caution and risk-aversion (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal and Spain-Andalusia).

In terms of policies, **fragmented policy, institutional instability and weak cross-ministerial coordination** were often blamed for provoking unclear ownership/responsibility, slow implementation and creating inconsistency (Czech Republic, Greece, Italy and Spain). Nevertheless, even where national or regional frameworks exist, GCE is squeezed by **crowded and rigid curricula**, based on structural subject silos and assessment focus (Ireland), with a **late or non-compulsory placement of citizenship learning** (Bulgaria), and an often **unclear cross-curricular status** (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal and Spain). Moreover, it is identified by all countries that **limited teacher preparation**, especially for handling contested and sensitive issues, and **heavy workloads** constrain practice (Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain). **Shortage of age-appropriate materials** (especially for younger pupils) and **limited methodological guidance** were also often mentioned (Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal and Spain). **Few career incentives and limited recognition** in school evaluation were also pointed out to weaken motivation to embed GCE (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy and Spain). The **monitoring and evaluation systems** focus more on bureaucracy than impact, making the field even more unfriendly for curricular integration (Czech Republic, Ireland and Spain). Due to all the constraints, implementation often hinges on **individual champions** – teachers and directors - and **short-term NGO projects**, which produce an irregular coverage and a weak continuity once projects end (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal and Spain). It was clear that implementation varies widely between schools depending on leadership commitment, resources and networks.

4.3 Opportunities for policy implementation

Across the nine contexts, the clearest opportunity is to **activate existing policy anchors** and use them as practical levers for schools. *Strategy for Global Development Education & Awareness on Global Interconnections 2018–2030* and the new educational reform in the Czech Republic, Ireland's *ESD to 2030* and *Céim* standards for teachers' education, Italy's National GCE Strategy and Action Plan, Portugal's ENED/ENEC framework and DE Guidelines and Spain's LOMLOE, are examples of policies that provide legitimacy and direction. In more decentralised settings (Italian and Spanish regions, and Polish municipalities), local and regional strategies and municipal initiatives are practical entry points to seed and scale GCE within formal education. In Spain, for example, educational decentralisation allows the autonomous communities of the centre-north (Navarra, La Rioja, the Basque Country, Castile and León, and Cantabria) to develop regulations, innovation plans, or agreements with NGOs that adapt the application of global citizenship to their own context.

What is needed is a **translation into school-level guidance**, which is why the second cross-cutting trend is **curriculum-embedded and cross-curricular implementation**. Countries see momentum in weaving GCE into existing subjects via project-based and inquiry learning (Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal and Spain), **using whole-school** planning tools (Ireland's *WWGS Global Passport*; Portugal's *School Strategy on Citizenship Education*) and leveraging civic/competency-based subjects (Bulgaria's *Citizenship Education*; Italy's *Civic Education*; Poland's new practical *Civic*

Education). This implementation effort is paired with a strong emphasis on **teacher professional learning**, both in initial (Ireland's Ubuntu Network; Portugal's Higher Schools of Education; Italy's competence frameworks) and continuous teachers' education (Czech methodological hubs; Spain's regional training needs), so that GCE becomes everyday practice rather than an add-on. Focus on **school leadership** is often disregarded and identified as an opportunity for better policy implementation.

Third, there is broad recognition that **multi-actor partnerships** are the catalyst for scale and sustainability. **NGOs remain pivotal** in all countries, with calls to formalise dialogue spaces, align timelines and replicate proven models. In Greece, partnerships with Environmental Education Centres are crucial to mainstream practice. These partnerships directly feed **student agency** through service-learning, clubs, competitions and authentic projects (Bulgaria's *Citizenship Olympiad*; Italy's youth engagement; Spain's project-based learning/service-learning), often supported by **digital platforms** and **resource portals** (Czech user-friendly methodological portals; Irish existing national infrastructures; Polish Integrated Education Platform; Spain's eTwinning-style digital collaboration and *Connecting Worlds*).

Finally, **evaluation and funding** are seen as GCE enablers. Where monitoring and evaluation frameworks exist (e.g. Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain), they help move from isolated projects to systemic practice. Likewise, targeted grant programmes and co-funding mechanisms (Czech, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, nationally and regionally) can reinforce whole-school approaches and build knowledge repositories.

4.4 Recommendations

Stakeholders were asked to present recommendations for improved integration of GCE into national curricula. It is relevant that common trends can be identified among the national reports. They converge mainly on two main concerns: **moving GCE from projects to policy and from individual enthusiasm to systematic integration**.

1. Conceptual Clarity & Alignment

- Clarify terminology and align strategies under coherent existing frameworks, for policy and practice purposes (e.g. Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and Portugal);
- Address a more "critical", or decolonial, GCE perspective that questions the root causes of global challenges (e.g. Ireland and Portugal).

2. Strategy, Governance & Policy Coherence

- Create/Adopt/Update national or regional GCE strategies and anchor them in law or interministerial plans (e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Poland and Portugal);
- Create/strengthen inter-ministerial coordination and formal leadership roles (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Italy);
- Empower regional/municipal systems to plan and deliver GCE (e.g. Italy and Spain).

3. Partnerships & Multi-Actor Collaboration

- Institutionalise regular coordination spaces among governments (national and regional), NGOs, schools and HEIs (e.g. Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain);
- Stabilise NGO roles and move from isolated projects to co-designed, sustained initiatives (e.g. Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Spain).

4. Curriculum Integration

- Embed GCE explicitly across subjects with progression and vertical continuity (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Spain);
- Provide concrete methodological support for integrating GCE into the curriculum (units, tasks, cross-curricular maps, rubrics) (e.g., Czech Republic and Greece).
- Connect learning to assessment and national/state exams where appropriate (e.g. Ireland and Spain);
- Create certification models to recognise teachers' and students' engagement (Bulgaria, Ireland and Italy).

5. Higher Education and Teachers' Education

- Make GCE a core element of Initial Teacher Education, focusing not only on how to approach sensitive content but also on active, experiential and participatory methodologies (all countries);
- Ensure ongoing, school-embedded Continuous Professional Development with coaching, mentoring and model lessons (all countries);
- Integrate GCE more strategically within higher education (e.g. Ireland and Poland).

6. Whole-School Approaches

- Engage school principals and leadership teams so GCE becomes whole-school (e.g. Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain);
- Stabilise staff (school leaders, teachers) for a more continuous process (e.g. Czech Republic, Ireland and Portugal);
- Make student participation integral (councils, service-learning, project-based learning) (e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Spain);
- Bridge formal and non-formal learning, valuing lived experience and local action (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland and Portugal);
- Broaden school community capacity-building beyond teachers - leaders, non-teaching staff, families, and community (e.g. Greece and Portugal).

7. Resources

- Facilitate teachers' access to GCE with high-quality resources, adapted to each stage to support classroom practice (all countries);
- Invest in user-friendly resource hubs and digital platforms (e.g. Czech Republic, Greece and Portugal);
- Create open repositories of good practice (e.g. Ireland, Portugal and Spain).

8. **Monitoring & Evaluation**
   - Build evaluation frameworks with clear indicators and regular data collection that can improve policies and practices (e.g. Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain);
   - Sustain international engagement for peer-learning and external visibility and validation (e.g. Czech Republic, Greece and Portugal).

9. **Funding**
   - Develop predictable, multi-year funding mechanisms for GCE and multi-actor partnerships (e.g. Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain).

5. Final reflections

This report is designed as a practical instrument for decision-makers, and for the promotion of cross-actor dialogue and articulation. It shows how Global Citizenship Education (GCE) can be more deeply embedded in formal education systems, it highlights areas of convergence, gaps and leverage points to steer policy dialogue and programme design and equips CSOs and other stakeholders with evidence to strengthen advocacy by clarifying implementation limitations and constraints and viable routes forward.

A clear observation is that across the nine countries/regions, GCE is a recognised policy aspiration – with different levels of concretisation – anchored in SDG 4.7. Even so, policy goals remain a step ahead of classroom reality.

From the analysis of the national/regional reports, it is possible to identify **some lessons about what has a positive impact** on implementation. One aspect to highlight is the existence of a **clear policy anchor**. In all the contexts where we find an explicit GCE (or closely related) strategy and/or curriculum reforms, the whole-school, cross-curricular work is pushed and legitimised (e.g. Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain). These create a shared direction that influences schools and teachers. **The impact is even more substantial if the actors work in coordination.** In this regard, two different levels can be distinguished - at a first level, **cross-ministerial cooperation**, usually facilitated through the **institutionalisation of governance bodies**, is a strong driving factor; at a second level, **cross-actor coordination** is an ideal extension. **Where development cooperation agencies, education ministries, NGOs, teacher bodies, and HEIs operate in an articulated manner** (e.g., Ireland, Portugal and Spain), **there are more possibilities for continuity and scalability**. This path is reinforced if this work is complemented with **whole-school frameworks** (e.g. Ireland and Portugal), **teacher-education pathways** (e.g. Ireland), and **resource hubs** (e.g. Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland and Spain) which help turn abstract goals into teachable routines. Promoting **monitoring cultures** (e.g. Ireland, Italy and Portugal) supports policy learning and growing visibility and legitimacy.

On the other hand, it is possible to learn also from **what hinders the elaboration and implementation of policies**. A first shared concern is the **conceptual noise and policy fragmentation.** Multiple labels (GCE, DE, GE, ESD) and split mandates (where ministers share part of the agenda) slow coordinated action. Regarding implementation in schools, teachers complain about **overloaded subject silos** and the **optional placement of GCE**. Initial and continuous teachers' education are uneven, leaving **many teachers feeling under-prepared** for addressing **sensitive/complex themes**,

risking fewer active and experiential **methodologies**, and operationalising **cross-curricular proposals**. With few recognition levers, **practice relies on personal commitment rather than systemic expectation**. Partnership with NGOs is identified as positive, but **short funding cycles and reliance on NGO-led projects** generate more isolated cases rather than standard practices, hindering territorial consistency or progression across grades.

The main recommendations relate to **translating policy into teachable proposals,** by providing subject-mapped outcomes, tasks, rubrics and cross-curricular sequences so schools can embed GCE in routine lessons. This support could help move GCE from “add-on projects” to core learning. The engagement of school leaders and other school community actors within **whole-school planning tools**, improvement goals, and **recognition mechanisms** also pushes GCE to become a leadership priority and not depend on teacher goodwill. As teachers are the key actors for policy integration in the classroom, there was a clear call for investment in quality **teacher education**, strengthening GCE pedagogy in **initial teachers’** education and prioritising **school-embedded continuous professional development** (co-planning, coaching, model lessons). Another priority is to open the schools to other community actors, promoting **dialogue spaces and partnerships** – with youth services, municipalities, NGOs, higher education institutions, etc. – that can support classroom work and make learning more meaningful. A last word goes to the need to build **pragmatic monitoring frameworks** (few, clear indicators; regular data loops) that inform improvement rather than create a bureaucratic burden, linking school-level practice to more systematic learning and the possibility of scalability.

Although the analysis presented in this report is grounded in evidence from nine countries/regions, the lessons and proposals speak to authorities and practitioners across the EU-27 (and beyond). The national/regional cases serve as empirical anchors, but the intended use is broader - to inspire, guide and support public bodies and civil society throughout Europe in mainstreaming GCE within formal schooling.

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