

Global Citizenship Education

Conference

European Parliament & online, 16 November 9:00-11:00

Welcoming remarks

Elisa Gambardella, SOLIDAR Foundation, starts the conference by welcoming the participants, thanking the speakers, and introducing the topic of Global Citizenship Education (GCE).

Opening remarks

S&D MEP João Duarte Albuquerque begins by thanking SOLIDAR Foundation for initiating the discussion and organising the conference, as he is passionate about the topic, which is top priority as of 2024, prior to the EP elections. By asking the meaning of being a citizen, he remarks that we became consumers rather than citizens and we need to deconstruct this idea. He highlights the need to create space for discussion and dialogue and overcome bigotry and racist approaches by constantly looking into ways to include the concept of Global Citizenship Education in education, and to make schools a safe space, since schools are important places and have a key role in this topic.

Presentation of the Policy Paper: Main findings & Policy Recommendations

Before delving into the content of the Policy Paper, **Gabriela Sachetti, SOLIDAR Foundation**, takes stock of the global context in which we all belong, and also in which Global Citizenship Education is currently taking shape. There are several wars of aggression taking place in the world, and a triple planetary crisis, among inequalities, social disparities, and democratic backsliding. These challenges point to the need for education for political participation and to address the current global challenges. This urgency calls for Global Citizenship Education, the provision of which the EU institutions and the Council of Europe have decided to launch initiatives for.

Regarding the methodology, the Paper discusses recent policy developments connected to GCE at European level and reflects on the relevance of the topic delivered in informal and non-formal education. GCE is a central topic of the work of the SOLIDAR Foundation membership across Europe and beyond, who strive to achieve social justice through education, ensuring access to quality education done in a lifelong and life wide manner. The paper conclusions are evidence-based on the work of SOLIDAR Foundation's members, which is crucial in this context and for bringing operational perspectives in the policymaking process.

The Paper is further taking stock of the current provision of GCE in formal and non-formal education in recent years. Research shows that there is a scattered presence of GCE contents in the curricula, which supports the idea that it is gaining traction among policymakers, but at a slow pace. The main issue is represented by the diversity of approaches and definitions, which makes it difficult to track down and create a universal concept. At the curricular level, the trend is to integrate GCE as a sub-topic in other

subjects, such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Naturally, this is a fundamental aspect, included in but not limited to it, so SOLIDAR Foundation advocates for a GCE that goes beyond environmental education.

When it comes to teaching and teachers, the [Eurydice report on Citizenship Education at School in Europe](#) highlighted that countries are making progress to provide citizenship education through Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development. It is important to note that while teachers have an important role, they are not solely responsible for the provision of GCE in formal education, because it increases the risk of blaming educators for not achieving the goals, and it also overlooks the importance of emotion and lived experiences in civic learning. On similar lines, the paper consolidates the existing literature in the sense that non-formal and informal education remain fundamental for the GCE. This is because they enable the learners to select the information according to their personal interests. A holistic vision is essential, as it is thanks to the cooperation between formal, informal and non-formal learning spaces that the best results of GCE can be achieved.

The research for the Policy Paper echoes existing findings, namely the crucial role that the third sector plays regarding GCE provision for all. Moreover, CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) have a key influence on advancing GCE in any learning space, either by providing teacher training opportunities, by cooperating with schools or by advocating at the policy level, which is also a key step forward. This is why one policy recommendation is represented by an increase involvement of CSOs in the development of GCE strategies.

Referring to the GCE roundtable co-organised in June by SOLIDAR Foundation and the S&D group, Gabriela mentioned that one of the main outcomes was to foster a multi-stakeholder strategy to promote GCE, including not only schools, teachers, and students but also CSOs. Therefore, it is recommended that all actors of the school community participate in the implementation of GCE, through a whole school approach.

The main risk flagged by the scholarship is sliding into an uncritical, self-complacent version of GCE. To counter this, solid body of academic literature underlines the need for a shift towards a “critical” GCE, that emphasizes social justice and gives space to a transformative learning experience, which SOLIDAR Foundation also advocates for. In other words, GCE has an enormous transformative potential to address current challenges. Revealed in research, Rieckmann notes: “GCE is concerned with the transformation of the relationship between the individual and the world in a global perspective”, and “should provide suggestions to encourage learners to reflect on their own values and take a position in the debate on values towards sustainable development”.

Indeed, GCE should become a practice that is unafraid to address the political and controversial, and put into question powers relations in order to address inequality and oppression structures. What the paper does, in this regard, is to deconstruct the approaches for a critical GCE, categorizing them in the following: (1) a transnational stance, which proposes to overcome the “methodological nationalism” and develop innovative research designs that transcend the “nation-state” paradigm, (2) a decolonial/postcolonial approach, which develops pedagogical approaches that take up rather than gloss over the complexities of global issues. Moreover, environmental issues are deeply tied to social, political, cultural and economic inequalities – so it is essential to link such issues to historical and present-day colonial systems of power. Last but not least, (3) intersectional approach, which is an analytical framework that highlights structural

oppression and privilege on the basis of categories that comprise our identities such race, gender, class, sexual orientation etc. Following up on a critical perspective, review where we are, and to make sure we are keeping up with progress in literature but also on the field, with practitioners – there is interconnectedness between them and they both need to be taken forward, towards policy.

Outlining the main challenges, the paper highlights: contextual factors, policymakers' role, implementation and funding. The political and ideological divergences shape how values-based education is defined, delimited, and delivered. So instead of being part of those whose purpose is to build national identity, we need to promote cosmopolitan citizenship and global solidarity. Notably, most challenging areas for GCE work by SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners are represented by policymakers' role and implementation. There is a strong desire to increase awareness among policymakers, by continuing advocacy efforts and increasing relevance of this topic in the policy discourse. As for involvement, the GCE policies and pedagogies cannot be imposed in a top-down fashion and should be based on the involvement of ALL stakeholders of the school community. Essentially, vision needs to be translated into practice. Considering that non-formal and informal education are fundamental to GCE provision, CSO's play a crucial role in the field because of the following reasons: the promotion of new sensitivity towards GCE; efforts in advocacy and lobbying; teacher education; innovative school activities; creating and circulating teaching materials. Moreover, civil society fills in the gap of working with systematically marginalised groups, which formal education often fails to do. SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners work with groups excluded from formal education, such as migrants, refugees, Roma, unemployed adults etc.

CSOs also foster learning environments where learners can concretely develop skills and attitudes connected to the GCE, such as democratic participation, advocacy, active citizenship – because they actively pursue the knowledge through activities and lived experiences. Therefore, learners are encouraged to develop their individual and collective agency, and thus become active members of their communities. This being said, there is momentum. We have the possibility of going forward but we need to practice the exercise of looking inward – and for this, we cannot work in silos, we need to work together. There is a European space for GCE, avenues to explore and expand.

Roundtable discussion – GCE developments in Europe

Elisa Gambardella, SOLIDAR Foundation, starts the discussion by highlighting the North-South Centre's role to promote active global citizenship through citizenship education while also being a perfect observatory for looking at how the provision of GCE changes over the years and what challenges it faces. Therefore, she addresses Rocío Cervera and asks for her remarks on SOLIDAR Foundation's policy recommendations.

Rocío Cervera, Deputy Executive Director, North-South Centre, CoE, begins her speech by highlighting that the topic of GCE and SOLIDAR Foundation's Policy Paper has been at the core of the North-South Centre dialogue. Since 1899, their mission has been to raise awareness of global challenges and promote notions of solidarity by working on global education and intercultural dialogue. She informs the audience of the [Europe-wide Global Education Congress](#), which was held in Maastricht, the Netherlands in 2002 as a pioneering event for the topic.

On SOLIDAR Foundation's paper, Rocío comments that among several challenges, there are also developments. Part of the evolution is represented by the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), but

naturally a lot still remains to be done. Referring to UNESCO's [1974 Recommendation](#) and its recent update, she notes that progress is yet to be achieved, which could be seen throughout Europe. Rocío notes that values education and teacher education are highly important, and further stresses the importance of measurement and monitoring, since there is the question of measuring values. In this regard, the Council of Europe worked on putting forward a reference framework of competences for democratic culture. Yet another challenge is represented by digitalisation, given the digital divide. At the moment, the CoE works on digital citizenship and digital education and collaborates with the EU institutions to advance legal provisions. Linking this framework to the [Budapest Convention](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Council of Europe is currently drafting a guidance document.

Ms. Gambardella continues by remarking on DG EAC's work on coordinating different working groups in the frame of the European Education Area (EEA), to foster cooperation among member states on the different focuses and dimensions of the EEA. Among these, the WG on Equality and Values has focused also on citizenship education. She asks Daria Arlavi if she could share the outcomes of this work and comment on these recommendations from the perspective of DG EAC.

Daria Arlavi, Policy Officer, DG EAC, begins her intervention by summarising the framework of the European Education Area working groups. Members of the working groups are mostly representatives of ministers of education of the member states but also of other participating countries, among stakeholders. Daria notes that the Equality and values in education and training working group has focused on addressing discrimination and also on citizenship education. The way the working group organises its work is by planning a series of meetings, based on which messages are summed up into "issue papers". The most recent [issue paper, on Citizenship Education](#), was published in September, and it consists of many different tools and initiatives.

On the status of citizenship education in EU member states, Ms. Arlavi notes that it is often considered a side-topic. However, people present at the current conference do not see it the same way. At the Conference of the Spanish Presidency on Education in Madrid, the Spanish ministers highlighted that citizenship education is the "main dish" when it comes to education, and every teacher should be able to teach it. The important message is that there is no complication when it comes to identity, and materials for teaching should be relevant and up to date. She further notes that political, social and religious issues can be difficult to discuss, especially in classrooms, so there's the need for more innovative methods that put learners at the center. Moreover, teachers' preparedness is paramount as they should be the one linking learning with personal experience.

Ms. Arlavi comments that in bigger communities, there is the risk of propaganda, and there can be disparities between what people experience in the school community and at home. Moreover, assessment of the topic would be difficult in a cross-curricular approach. One particular point about the recommendation is about marginalised groups – the documents refer to "citizens", but the notion should be extended to "non-citizens". Normally, the focus is on the EU dimension of learning, but the challenges are not limited to the EU, and rather to the whole dimension of the globe.

Moving towards DG INTPA, Ms. Gambardella addresses Thaïs Leray, enquiring about the DG's work in the promotion of GCE through the DEAR programme.

Thaïs Leray, Team Leader, DG INTPA, starts by presenting the work of DG INTPA on the topic, as they look at international contexts, and how identities and societies are being built. In this context, education is becoming increasingly relevant and more present in political narratives. Referring to the global context characterised by conflicts, as mentioned in the presentation of the Policy Paper, Ms. Leray mentions that when they happen, they have repercussions across the world, as they enhance the feelings of insecurity, polarisation of our society, supported by tools such as misinformation and disinformation. Challenges can be tackled only by looking at the interconnectedness between our societies and cross-cutting concerns. In this regard, she notes that GCE is a powerful tool to embrace today's challenges but it is also important to expand on the existing practices.

In this context, Ms. Leray introduces the [DEAR programme](#), whose activities mostly take place outside of Europe, and it aims to form active citizens – not citizens that are tested for their competences, but rather that build up and develop in their own individual ways.

At the end, she remarks that facilitating spaces for dialogue is one relevant point revealed by the paper. However, the question that remains is how to reach out to the ones who are not convinced, and how to bring onboard the ones that seem further away and less sensitive towards these topics.

Ditta Trindade, Global Education Specialist, [GENE](#), shares that GENE is happy to celebrate the Global Citizenship Education Week, as it is important to cheer to all the events taking place during the week across Europe and beyond. GENE facilitates learning on global education among policymakers, inspiring them and also enabling access to quality education in Europe.

Moreover, GENE welcomes the approaches in line with the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050, known as the [Dublin Declaration](#), as there is a political perspective of what Global Education can do for people.

Ms. Trindade notes that as proposed by the Policy Paper, GENE welcomes the recommendation for a critical stance towards Global Citizenship Education and the transnational, postcolonial/decolonial and intersectional approaches.

GENE recognises and supports research in global education and has also worked on analysing national strategies on global education. Therefore, different models in Europe can be recognised. On funding, GENE currently works on the increase and diversity of funding sources.

Lana Jurman, Centre for Peace Studies, Croatia, presents the work of CPS on educating and empowering for social change through activities such as peace programmes, courses on Continuous Professional Development (CPD), training for teachers on intercultural communication and teaching controversial issues and toolkits for teachers and for formal and informal education. Moreover, CPS coordinates projects in schools, working with twenty schools nationwide. On an international level, they support advocacy events through the North-South Centre. Ms. Jurman notes that all the work of the organisation has been internationally funded. However, Croatia plays a key role in advancing GCE through activities such as providing training and organising awareness raising campaigns.

CPS welcomes the Policy Paper and acknowledges most findings of the paper. Moreover, Lana agrees with what was said before, that it is difficult to monitor GCE. In Croatia, this topic is one of the 7 cross-curricular topics, and there are challenges in its monitoring.

On another point of the paper, she mentions that the risk of slipping to uncritical GCE is due to teachers not feeling empowered and choosing not to work on topics that are controversial. Teachers face a lot of threats, one of them coming from parents' side.

Regarding GCE being a priority among the policymakers, Ms. Jurman remarks that the policymakers do not want active citizens that find them accountable for what they do.

Being inquired about ways in which cooperation between non-formal and informal learning promoters could take place, **Rocío Cervera** answers that their governance model enables the creation of spaces for dialogue between representatives of governments, local authorities and CSOs. The role of CSOs is fundamental to advocate for GCE, since most of the work is done at the non-formal and informal levels. Moreover, Rocío remarks on the lack of references to youth, since the leading providers for GCE are youth organisations. When looking at the rest of the world and talking about learners first, there is an immense challenge: most learners are not in schools. Therefore, one needs to think of alliances, unite efforts for advocacy and gain the ability to reach out to the people that are not acquiring formal education. One of the things that the Centre does, by being in the middle of the North-South dialogue, is to bridge the perspectives.

On the whole-school approach, **Daria Arlavi** notes that on paper, progress is made, but the need to support teachers remains. It is not about having a perfect community setting, but just to be involved. Particularly in the marginalised communities, sometimes these are the only opportunities to engage and enhance civic competences. For this reason, CSOs' work is greatly appreciated.

Thaïs Leray comments on conceptual fragmentation, as DG INTPA have several programmes and due to this reason, it might not help readability. At the same time, referring to the Dublin Declaration of GCE, it allows to focus on the core objectives rather than semantics and entry points. Looking at the DEAR programme, the international dimension is essential as it enables the building of international partnerships to address global challenges. One of the sad things is that many people working with GCE have not heard of the DEAR programme, so in this context, different synergies between programmers could be enhanced.

On the Dublin Declaration, **Ditta Trindade** notes that there has been a follow-up at the national policy level in many countries with various stakeholders, including CSOs, national and local governments and learning platforms. She further mentions the cooperation with CONCORD, and the importance of reflecting on the work and having an overview of it. Progress has been reported at the national level, in regard to how countries have been tackling the Declaration and their commitments to it. Moreover, Ms. Trindade gives information on the GENE Roundtable, which takes place twice a year; it took place in Greece the previous month, while the next one will take place in Madrid in April 2024. In terms of research, Dublin Declaration has created the dialogue, which can be viewed on the [ANGEL \(Academic Network on Global Education & Learning\)](#) website. GENE has also liaised with the European institutions and the OECD, and has now an Asia-Pacific network on Global Education, and is considering having an Asia-Pacific declaration on Global Education.

Lana Jurman would like to see how education is put at the forefront as a priority, within the next year. For this, pressuring the authorities to be more accountable about the strategies that they agreed upon is necessary. As for funding opportunities, DEAR programme can be inaccessible due to the sizes of the organisations. Peer support and mentoring, such as the work done by GENE, would be tremendous. From the EU institutions, more focus on providers of non-formal and informal education would be great to see. Moreover, Ms. Jurman would like to see research on the state of play on GCE across member states but also on citizenship competences. And continuing the efforts, they should result in evidence-based policy.

Rocío Cervera says that since the Centre has a pool of experts, it makes sure that intersectionality is at the basis of the work. When talking about theory and practice, we need to be aware that educational initiatives themselves are diverse and have to be embraced.

Daria Arlavi concludes that focus on the learners means embracing multi perspectives, including upon values.

Adoption of the Joint Declaration of Advocacy - Endorsement of Policy Recommendations on GCE

As the conference represents an opportunity to endorse the Joint Declaration of Advocacy launched by SOLIDAR Foundation, some participating organisations and S&D MEP João Duarte Albuquerque took part in the process and pledged their support. Therefore, The Policy Recommendations on Global Citizenship Education, presented in the Policy Paper, received support from partners and partner organisations.

Concluding remarks

S&D MEP João Duarte Albuquerque applauds the interesting discussion. The role of schools is the first aspect to focus on, as it is highly important. Referring to a meeting the day before in Madrid, where this issue was discussed, he mentions the necessity for equal access. For instance, if free food is offered, it should be offered to everyone. He points at the need for social workers, psychologists and tools for inclusion. Schools need to be providers of instruments related to equality and inclusion. Mr. Albuquerque stresses that we aggravated the issue because we introduced capitalist gains in learning experiences. The main concerns of the parents have become the average grades of the pupils to enter university, and similarly, people are not training competences such as problem solving anymore, but rather training for passing exams and fitting in the formal education system.

Mr. Albuquerque settles that he does not like *equality of opportunity* but prefers *equality of outcome*. Furthermore, he highlights the problem of not being concerned about poverty anymore, as it has become part of normality. To counter it, we must focus on ways to create strategies, allowing everyone to be active citizens. For this, we cannot separate key competences and citizenship education. Mr. Albuquerque reiterates that citizenship education should be at the core of the education system, which calls for the need to train teachers and to have the adequate competences to deal with the global issues. For this aim, we need to take into account the tools that we still have. We need to break the silos in which we live in, since people with low social-economic background might not have the same reality; there are various mindsets to the levels of education, and different approaches such as public versus private education systems.