

MANIFESTO

**Global Citizenship Education
(GCE) as a Political Right:**

**The transformative potential
of Education and Lifelong
Learning for democratic
societies**



Manifesto on Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as a Political Right

The transformative potential of Education and Lifelong Learning for democratic societies

Over the past years, Europe and the world have faced parallel and mutually reinforcing challenges, such as democratic backsliding, shrinking civic space, war, the climate crisis, rising intolerance and discrimination, and a weakened commitment to freedom of speech. Additionally, we are witnessing the increasing popularity of digital technologies like AI, which provide incredible opportunities but also pose significant risks if not used correctly.¹ These crises underline the pressing need for education to prepare all learners to develop transversal competences, such as critical thinking, and a sense of belonging to the global community, while promoting a culture of democratic participation and democratic values.

SOLIDAR Foundation, therefore, calls for taking the upcoming **European elections as an opportunity to increase efforts for Global Citizenship Education (GCE)**,² and for the **recognition of education and lifelong learning** as crucial to democratic and inclusive societies as they empower individuals to grow personally and professionally, while actively participating in society. Education and lifelong learning help transform society by creating social connections, collective awareness, emancipation and personal and collective growth. The European Elections in 2024 provide a chance to shift the European Commission's perspective on education. Instead of viewing it primarily as a means to prepare workers for the job market and address skills gaps, we can recognise its transformative potential for both professional and personal development of individuals as a whole. In this regard, the importance of transversal competences is unmistakable, as they enable citizens to actively participate in society.³ A **more holistic approach to education and learning** aimed at **fostering democratic participation in society** is needed to face the current global challenges.

For this endeavor it is vital to allocate **adequate resources for formal, non-formal, and informal learning**. **Sustainable** and **public funding** is essential for the provision of inclusive and accessible formal, non-formal and informal education which includes GCE. In the case of GCE, there are on the one hand, not enough funds allocated to GCE in formal education. On the other hand, non-formal education providers like CSOs are not acknowledged as important stakeholders and heavily rely on project-based public funding, either at the national or EU level. This negatively impacts the sustainability of long-term Global Citizenship Education (GCE) initiatives.⁴

In the light of the 2024 EU elections, SOLIDAR underlines the importance of a **renewed political will to make GCE accessible to all**. Strong political support is necessary because, currently, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is not given priority by decision makers. While there is some progress, such as the recognition of citizenship competency by the Council of the European Union, the integration of GCE into curricula is still limited and often treated as a subtopic within other subjects. This slow pace and scattered

1 Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education. (2023). Learners First: Education for today's and tomorrow's democratic societies. <https://rm.coe.int/education-strategy-2024-2030-26th-session-council-of-europe-standing-c/1680abee81>

2 GCE is understood by SOLIDAR Foundation and its members and partners as political education on a global scale which prepares learners to develop a sense of belonging to the global community, to get involved and to take an active role in society in order to contribute to a peaceful, just world in which ecological resources are preserved. (De Andreotti, 2014).

3 Lifelong Learning Platform (2023). Position Paper 2023: Key Competences for all. A lifelong learning approach to skills.

4 Santibanez, Barbara. (2023). We all belong: The role of GCE in supporting democratic participation and addressing current global challenges. SOLIDAR Foundation.

approach hinder the accessibility of GCE for all. Therefore, a renewed political will is crucial to prioritize and promote GCE, ensuring its widespread availability and impact.

SOLIDAR advocates **for a whole school approach and multi-stakeholder strategy to promote GCE**, including not only schools, teachers, and students, but also CSOs. A paradigmatic shift towards a GCE that is accessible to all, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, origin, etc. is paramount. This can be done only if all actors of the school community and stakeholders in society collaborate and cooperate to achieve this. Moreover, **further cooperation between Civil Society Organisations and formal education institutions** would allow for better pedagogical adaptability and as a result, increased uptake of learning opportunities related to GCE.

SOLIDAR highlights that it is pivotal **to promote the recognition and validation of skills obtained in informal and non-formal education**. In the case of GCE, it is not a topic only for formal education and requires a lifelong and lifewide learning approach.⁵ **Non-formal and informal education remain the stronghold of GCE provision**, as CSOs provide essential actions to educate learners and prepare them for a globalised world with globalised challenges. CSOs play a fundamental role in filling the gaps left with regards to GCE provision for all and in particular systematically marginalised groups.⁶ Moreover, CSOs impact advancing GCE in formal education spaces significantly, by e.g., supporting teachers in terms of provision of training and awareness raising workshops.⁷

In addition, also in the digital realm, education and learning for democratic societies play an important role. The pervasive use of digital technologies has become an integral part of our daily lives, profoundly impacting our participation in society. As we navigate the twin green and digital transition, digital technologies enable us to connect, communicate, and access information with unprecedented ease. However, it is crucial to ensure that digital inclusion and equitable access to these technologies are prioritised and ensure that all citizens can fully participate in the digital age and contribute to the sustainable development of our society. SOLIDAR stresses the importance of **ensuring high quality, accessible and inclusive digital education and training for all**. In order for learners to fully and effectively participate in (digitised) society, critical thinking and media literacy are essential.⁸ In this regard, more efforts must be made to close the digital divide and increase basic digital skills among European citizens. Moreover, SOLIDAR emphasises that digital technologies which are introduced to education, such as AI, must be guided by a human rights-based approach and that surveillance capitalism must be combatted and not be tolerated in the education sector.⁹

The 2024 EU elections serve as the perfect opportunity to put in the limelight the crucial role education and lifelong learning play in making societies democratic and inclusive. Increased public funding for education and investment in its diverse stakeholders providing GCE is pivotal to build a more informed, engaged and globally responsible citizenry. Ultimately strengthening the democratic foundations and evolutions of our societies and the European project as a whole.

5 <https://www.solidar.org/en/publications/policy-paper-global-citizenship-education>

6 SOLIDAR. (2021). [Citizenship and Lifelong Learning Monitor 2020](#); Santibanez, Barbara. (2023). We all belong: The role of GCE in supporting democratic participation and addressing current global challenges. SOLIDAR Foundation.

7 CONCORD. (2018). [Global citizenship education in Europe: How much do we care? Concord Europe Brussels](#).

8 European Union (2020). [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#).

9 SOLIDAR (2020). [Position Paper on Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#).