

# Global Education Goes Local: Actively Engaging Citizens towards Sustainable Development

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## I. Introduction

The purpose of this policy paper is to explore the concept of Global Education in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, discuss its contribution to processes of sustainable development, highlight current challenges and formulate specific recommendations for stakeholders in Cyprus.

The paper is developed within the framework of the EU-funded project “Global Education Goes Local”.

Global Education Goes Local is a project that aims to foster commitment of European citizens to take an active role towards meeting the challenges of the interdependent world we live in, based on awareness and critical understanding of their two-way relations with the issues of global development.

## II. Conceptualising Global Education in the context of the SDGs

### A Global Agenda for Sustainable Development

In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainability<sup>1</sup>. This new global framework was developed following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, and involved a comprehensive process of consultations, engaging citizens and actors from all over the world. At the core of the 2030 Agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, unlike previous goals, are of universal and transformative character, they apply to all countries, regardless of their level of economic or social development. They aim to secure a sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable life on earth for everyone now and in the future. It is the universality of these goals that sets current development

debates apart from those in the past. All countries are asked to report on their progress regarding the 17 Goals, which encompass a total of 169 targets.

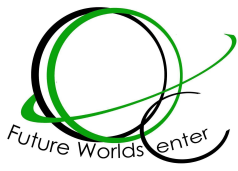
Built on the principles of Sustainable Development and its key dimensions (economic dimension, social dimension and the environmental dimension), the Goals can be categorised into five ‘P’s: People; Planet; Prosperity; Peace and Partnership. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals recognise that the global challenges are interlinked and cannot be solved in silos – they can only be achieved through policy coherence between the SDGs.



### Global Education as Path towards Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved if all actors do their part. This does not only include governments, but a wide range of stakeholders, such as the private sector, local authorities, civil society, youth and individual citizens. Sustainable development needs informed and engaged citizens, critical and aware, empowered to act and knowledgeable of their impact and of

<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/>



the global interdependencies. Whether we want to address Gender Equality, Sustainable Cities and Communities or Responsible Consumption and Production, we will not be successful if we do not include citizens in this process.

Global Education offers a holistic and transformative approach that actively engages the learner with the final goal to take action leading to positive social change. While there are many different understandings of the term '**Global Education**', the most commonly used across Europe is the definition of the North South Centre of the Council of Europe, which is based on the Global Education Charter of the North South Centre of 1997, developed further and reaffirmed in the Maastricht Declaration in 2002:

*'Global Education is an education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all.*

*Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimension of Education for Citizenship.<sup>2</sup>*

Engaging citizens in global learning processes enables them to:

- Understand and make sense of the complexities and interdependencies of today's globalized world;
- Understand the causes and consequences of global inequalities;
- Develop a critical understanding of the global interdependencies and of their own role, responsibilities and lifestyles in relation to the globalised society;
- Strengthen values such as solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation;
- Foster positive attitudes towards diversity, the respect for human rights, and commitment to social justice and equity;
- Reflect on what has been learned and how their own world view shapes their learning;
- Move from basic awareness to responsible and informed actions.

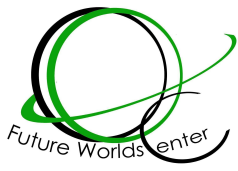
While in Cyprus, the term Global Education as defined in the Maastricht Declaration is used among civil society and within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, there are other terminologies and concepts that relate very closely to Global Education – or are overlapping in parts, which are all used by various groups of stakeholders. The most prominent one is **Education for Sustainable Development**<sup>3</sup>, which has been actively promoted within the formal education system since the Cyprus National Action Plan for Environmental Education with a Focus on Sustainable Development was approved in 2004. As such, Education for Sustainable Development is part of the formal school curriculum, which offers great opportunities for Global Education approaches. Other concepts that exist within the formal and non-formal education sectors are: **Citizenship Education/ Active Citizenship Education** (with a focus primarily on EU integration and diversity); **Intercultural Education; Peace Education; Anti-Racism Education** and **Human Rights Education**.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 2008: Global Education Guidelines – A Handbook for Educators to Understand and Implement Global Education

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd>

<sup>4</sup> GENE (2017): Global Education in Cyprus. The European Global Education Peer Review Process. National Report on Cyprus. <https://www.gene.eu/peer-reviews>



### III. Challenges

While an increase of Global Education initiatives can be observed across different sectors in Cyprus, there are several challenges that come with its implementation.

#### **Lack of international standards on Global Education**

There are currently no set standards as to what Global Education entails, the key notions, elements and teaching methodologies. There are international guidelines and policy documents, which provide a crucial basis for practitioners, however the concept of Global Education is interpreted differently in every context. Looking at it from a European perspective, apart from the joint definition of the Maastricht Declaration, there are numerous different definitions and terminologies used to describe the overall concept of Global Education or Global Citizenship Education.

While the concepts most used in Cyprus are 'Education for Sustainable Development' and 'Global Education' as per the definition above, each practitioner and each actor may interpret them differently and put them into action differently.

#### **Danger of Reproducing Existing Stereotypes**

One of the biggest challenges when exploring global issues and their interdependencies is for educators and learners to critically reflect on their own assumptions and understandings of the world. What is the motivation to engage in Global Education? Is it the idea to help the poor, to help raise awareness and find solutions to fix existing issues? Is it to challenge systemic inequalities and post-colonial power structures? A 'soft' rather than a 'critical' approach to Global Education often addresses global issues without critically analysing the structures that lead to these global challenges in the first place. In order to practice a truly transformational Global Education, it is imperative for the facilitators and learners to reflect not only on what they have learned throughout their learning journey, but also to reflect on their very own view of the world and on how that view shapes their ideas for actions – and how their world view has changed as part of a learning journey. As Vanessa Androtti puts it, if *'educators are not 'critically literate' to engage with assumptions and implications/limitations of their approaches, they run the risk of (indirectly and unintentionally) reproducing the systems of belief and practices that harm those they want to support.'*<sup>5</sup>

#### **The Sustainable Development Goals appear Distant and Disconnected from Learners' Daily Realities**

When talking about global issues and challenges, it is often difficult for learners to see the relevance to their own reality. How can a youth organisation make a difference with regards to Gender Equality? What can a local youth group do to achieve more sustainable cities and communities? The SDGs are many times looked at as development goals for countries of the Global South, and this can easily lead to a feeling of disempowerment, making any effort seem pointless. However, the universal nature of the SDGs implies their relevance for every local context, and as such it is up to the facilitator within the global education context to engage learners into exploring the issue through their very own lens. Especially SDG 5, 11 and 12 have a great potential to be explored locally.

#### **Lack of Stable Funding Sources**

While there is a growing base of stakeholders implementing Global Education activities and actions towards achieving the SDGs, there is still no stable source of funding. Civil society organisations, including youth organisations, largely rely on project grants, which means there is often no

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<sup>5</sup> Androtti, V. 2006: Soft versus Critical Global Citizenship Education. Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review, Vol. 3, Autumn, pp. 40-51.

continuity in actions as funding cycles come to an end and funding/ project priorities and objectives change. Local authorities have been increasingly engaged in Global Education activities, however, for the most part also rely on European funding to implement these additional activities. Stable sources of funding from government sources would aid a more coherent and long-term oriented approach.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

##### **Recommendations towards the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports**

- Continue the important work of the Interdepartmental Committee on Global Education, bringing together stakeholders and coordinating actions among them;
- Continue the efforts on Education for Sustainable Development and further the integration of Global Education principles and learning concepts across the curriculum of formal education at all levels;
- Dedicate specific resources to Global Education and build on existing opportunities to foster its integration across the schools, such as the Global Education Week<sup>6</sup>;
- Integrate the different dimensions of Global Education into the pre-service (initial) and in-service education of teachers;
- Enhance coordination and partnership with other actors, mainly civil society organisations and academic institutions to further promote and integrate Global Education into teacher training and teacher education, as well as with regards to developing relevant teaching resources;
- Based on the Maastricht Global Education declaration, dedicate funding for Global Education activities.

##### **Recommendations towards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

- In the context of the commitment of the Republic of Cyprus to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, recognize the potential of Global Education as a way to strengthen the achievement of the SDGs;
- Based on the Maastricht Global Education Declaration and European Consensus for Development Education, develop structures for funding, support and policy-making in Global Education within a funding scheme for civil society organisations and as part of the Cypriot ODA budget, according to the target of 3% of ODA, as suggested by UNDP<sup>7</sup>;
- Enhance coordination with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport within the framework of the Interdepartmental Committee on Global Education.

##### **Recommendations towards Local Authorities**

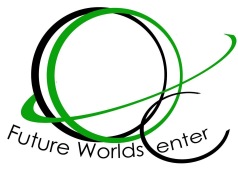
- Local authorities that have already participated in Global Education activities are encouraged to continue their work in this area, and to share their good practices with other local authorities;
- Involve the community in learning action processes around issues relevant to the Sustainable Development Agenda that are also pertinent within the community;
- Dedicate specific resources for Global Education and active learning processes within the local community;

##### **Recommendations towards Civil Society Organisations**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/north-south-centre/the-global-education-week>

<sup>7</sup> European Consensus on Development: The Contribution of Development Education and Awareness Raising, 2007: p.16



- Establish and strengthen partnerships and collaborations with other practitioners, decision-makers, academia and media in order to enhance Global Learning journeys towards reaching the SDGs and increase public participation in these processes;
- Establish and sustain genuine partnerships with practitioners and researchers on a global level, linking the global development challenges to local realities and contribute to more sustainable development practices;
- Critically reflect on Global Education practices and processes and on their impact within the organization and the society;
- Engage citizens beyond the 'usual suspects' in Global Education processes relevant to their local reality (with specific attention to small and rural localities) and thus contribute to a more sustainable and justice-oriented civil society;

#### **Recommendations towards Youth Organisations**

- Within the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda, enable active Global Learning processes to raise awareness about the SDGs among young people and encourage their active engagement in these processes;
- Establish and strengthen partnerships and collaborations with other practitioners, decision-makers, academia and media in order to enhance Global Learning journeys towards reaching the SDGs and increase public participation in these processes;
- Take ownership of the SDGs as they appear relevant in the local context and address them through Global Education activities.

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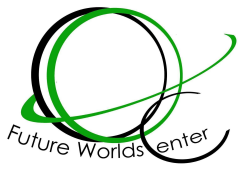
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