

Tired of living in “unprecedented times”? Global citizenship education actions at local and regional levels can help

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GCE/DEAR

“Learning is fundamental to the process of developing better policies in development cooperation and acting against injustice,” writes Lur Fernandez Salinas, Officer – Development education & Awareness raising at PLATFORMA.

Global interdependencies matter in development cooperation. If done properly, programmes approved by Member States, by the European Union Delegations, and by local and regional governments can be useful tools to support human development in partner countries. However, development cooperation programmes can also have unintended and negative effects if they are thought of in isolation by institutions, don't involve local stakeholders, reply only to donors' interests, and don't take into consideration the needs of the communities.

To find solutions and try to work better together, the EU institutions have started a series of initiatives like the [Team Europe approach](#) and the so-called [Joint programming](#). What other tools do practitioners in the development cooperation sector have to develop better policies? Global Citizenship Education can give some hints: more cooperation with academia from the global south and questioning current practices, behaviours, and institutions of the development cooperation sector could help.

No surprise that Global Citizenship Education is recognised as a fundamental pillar for greater coherence in development cooperation policies. In the words of **La Salette Coelho**, educator, researcher, and activist in Development Education and Global Citizenship: *“International cooperation without the lenses of Global Citizenship Education can do real harm. So, it's really important to connect these”*^[1].

But what do we refer to when talking about Global Citizenship Education? According to the newly approved [Dublin Declaration](#), Global Education – another concept that includes Global Citizenship education – is: *“an education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level.”*

The Declaration also states: *“It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future.”*

Global Education encompasses a broad range of educational provision: formal, non-formal and informal; life-long and life-wide. We consider it essential to the transformative power of, and the transformation of, education.^[2]

From the local perspective, awareness-raising campaigns, public consultations, and funding from governments to grassroots movements on projects against hate speeches and fake news are some of the few practical examples of what cities and regions have been doing for decades. From the global citizenship education perspective, innovative projects and actions would be those that enable people to think, relate, and work together to address the root causes of systemic global problems while attempting to alleviate their symptoms in ethical and historically accountable ways.

To conclude, learning is fundamental to the process of developing better policies in development cooperation and acting against injustice. Besides the strategies and frameworks at the European level, there are also regions in the European Union like the

Basque Country that have been developing strategies for social transformation, another concept included in the theoretical and conceptual richness of Global Citizenship Education.

The [\(H\)abian 2030 strategy](#), started in 2017, aims to generate transformations and changes in the concept of education for social transformation, in the educational practices, in the people and collectives engaged in actions for social transformation, and in the public institutions. Therefore, the strategy invites actors working in the formal and informal education sector and relevant organisations and institutions to adhere to the strategy, read it, understand it, and reflect on what can be done at their level to contribute to active global citizenship.

Next Monday, 27 November, European, local, regional, grassroots, educational, and youth stakeholders will [meet in Bilbao](#) and discuss one year after the adoption of the new European Declaration on Global Education to 2050, how to overcome the unprecedented times.

(Picture by [Aaron Burden](#) on [Unsplash](#))

[1] [Municipalities and Regions take action on Global Citizenship Education](#), PLATFORMA, 2021, p. 16

[2] [Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050](#), approved in November 2023, process led by Global Education Network Europe (GENE)

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