



Policy Paper on  
Global Education: a global vision on  
education - an education for global  
citizenship

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## **Executive summary**

In this Policy Paper the European Youth Forum (YFJ) addresses two challenges our societies are facing; firstly the need to build a society that is socially just for everyone and is developed in a sustainable way, and secondly to do it in a world that is globalising at an ever increasing speed. Tackling these challenges in the field of education is one of the priorities of the YFJ work. The YFJ believes that a new approach to education is needed and with this Policy Paper, Global Education is put forward as such.

While inspired by various processes and definitions of Global Education, realising the complexity of our societies and respecting different realities around the world, the YFJ does not propose a definition but an understanding of Global Education, which is an open invitation for cooperation and discussions with all actors in Europe and other parts of the world to develop Global Education together. As outlined in this Policy Paper, Global Education is also closely linked to the UN Millennium Declaration and is one of the most important tools for reaching Gender Equality.

Global Education is understood by the YFJ as an educational concept with political, philosophical and pedagogical backgrounds; it is global citizenship education preparing people to fully take up their role as citizens of one world, by exploring world realities, providing information and by developing understanding and respect. Global Education enables people to develop empathy, a sense of belonging to the global community, and responsibility towards other people and the environment. Global Education, through developing awareness of the interdependence between people's local realities and the global context in which these realities exist, enables them to see their responsibility in bringing about a world of greater justice, solidarity, equality of opportunity and one enjoying the genuine universality of human rights.

Education has become a life-long and life-wide experience. As the YFJ stresses below, Global Education also includes a holistic vision on education, stressing the complementary natures of the three educational fields: formal education (FE), non-formal education (NFE) and informal learning. NFE as practiced in youth organisations is often already Global Education in one of its many forms. In this paper challenges for other NFE providers and for youth organisations are outlined. Next to NFE, FE needs to embed Global Education in the school culture through a genuine participatory learning process. Lastly, our societies can seriously enhance informal global learning by ensuring access to information and open exposure to a diversity of opinions.

Youth organisations as the main providers of NFE are key providers of Global Education but they can also make a difference by furthering Global Education through advocacy work, reaching out and global youth work development.

Globalisation - with its opportunities and its challenges - is neither simply a dream nor a nightmare. It is a reality that needs a new educational approach and Global Education can provide a good answer. The YFJ is confident that youth organisations together with other relevant actors and stakeholders can implement Global Education and turn the world into one big learning space for all citizens.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

This policy paper arises from the need to develop both a common understanding, within the European Youth Forum (YFJ), of Global Education as ‘education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world’, and of the vision held of it by the main provider of non-formal education (NFE): the youth field.

The policy paper sets out a framework for the YFJ and for other youth NGOs on how to develop further their educational work through the development of global awareness and understanding, and thus contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It contributes to the European and global debate on new forms of education, while increasing understanding of how global issues can be addressed through education. The policy paper aims also to look into the political necessity for a new educational approach.

### **1.2 A new education for a globalised world**

The world in which we live, is a world where violations of human rights still occur; where the unequal development and distribution of wealth is a reality that everyone faces - and most severely those, who as a direct result, live in extreme poverty; and where climate change threatens the environment and thus humanity.

The European Youth Forum feels responsible to get young people and youth organisations actively involved in changing this situation and making the world a place where human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected: a place, moreover, that is socially just for everyone and is developed in a sustainable way.

Following from this vision, equality, human rights and sustainable development become the basis for all the work of the YFJ: and one of the fields in which this vision is strongly present is that of education.

Many educational approaches have been developed to deal with various new challenges in our society. At present there is a further need to give education a new global direction.

Despite feeling overwhelmed by global processes, young people are often at the forefront of a variety of contexts and processes within which global issues are dealt. This increases the need for young people to be able to engage at a more structural and fundamental level, and advocate for the above-mentioned principles through spaces and structures developed specifically for this purpose, by young people themselves. Moreover, care has to be taken to ensure that all young people can be involved.

Next to these structures for the global representation of young people and youth organisations, ‘global education’ has begun to develop as an educational space through which young people can reflect on their role in global society and on the contribution they can make to social justice. Apart from acting as space for reflection, ‘global education’ also serves as a set of concrete actions through which youth organisations state their own educational claims in this broader framework.

The concept of ‘global education’ developed in response to the massive challenges and opportunities presented by contemporary globalisation, and has been linked to the growing consensus on the need for, and adoption of, the Millennium Development Goals. Globalisation, in view of its comprehensive social, economic

and environmental complexity, duly became the main focus of interest to be addressed through this educational approach.

Developments, such as the interlinking of world economies and the fact that only one in five citizens benefit economically from globalisation<sup>1</sup>, lead to a negative image of globalisation. Youth organisations and young people have, through Global Education, the opportunity to change the course contemporary globalisation is taking. Through Global Education they can show their potential to address effectively issues such as citizenship, intercultural dialogue, human rights, and climate change.

Being a global good and a right for all, education needs both a global perspective and various conceptual formats to become the means through which world realities will coalesce - while increasing the sense of global citizenship, responsibility and awareness felt among social actors and individuals, and increasing active individual participation to shape the world.

Education needs a new dimension that would encourage a citizen's critical thinking and capacity to reflect on and perceive the reality around them, while at the same time developing their understanding of how their Global Education contributes not only to improving local realities but also sustainable development and social justice.

### **1.3 Development of Global Education**

The concept of Global Education was developed in the 1990s and though originating from a Western context, is inspired by other visions of education from across the world - such as 'Educación Popular'<sup>2</sup>. There are several precursors to the emerging concept of Global Education, such as Human Rights Education, Citizenship Education, Environmental Education, Peace Education, Intercultural Learning, and Development Education, all of which provide essential contributions to the concept and understanding of Global Education.

Various actors within society have been working on the challenge of developing a new educational approach, and among the key actors, youth organisations developed participative approaches to tackle new challenges in society long before the Global Education concept came to light in the 1990s. This innovative approach to Non-Formal Education led to the development of new educational methodologies and to an emerging concept of Global Education.

The process of gathering global education-related practices into a defined 'Global Education', was greatly facilitated by the North South Centre (NSC) of the Council of Europe (CoE).

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<sup>1</sup> Salgado and Berger - Migrations', BBC TV Arena programme broadcast on 20 May 2001

<sup>2</sup> Educación Popular is a pedagogical and political vision on education that originated in Latin America in the 1960s. The principal author of this theory is Paulo Freire, a teacher from Brazil. The objective of Educación Popular is to educate oppressed people for their liberation.

Together with these initiatives in the field of Global Education, others have been developed for specific aspects of education, given that Global Education is related to various other types of education:

- the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)<sup>3</sup>
- the World Programme for Human Rights Education (UN 2005- ongoing)<sup>4</sup>
- Development Education and Awareness Raising (CONCORD Confederation For Relief and Development, EU Member States and European Commission)<sup>5</sup>
- Education for Democratic Citizenship (CoE)<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Understanding Global Education**

### **2.1 The YFJ understanding of Global Education**

Taking one of the viewpoints on Global Education developed by the CoE NSC within the ‘Maastricht Global Education Declaration’, which states that Global education is ‘education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world’<sup>7</sup>, the discussion about a global vision on education is a discussion about different realities and necessarily entails acceptance of various, sometimes contradicting viewpoints. The old model of a struggle of opinions needs to make space for a model of collaboration and discussion. The YFJ itself therefore proposes a dynamic concept instead of a standard definition that would fall short of describing all the realities in the world, and in this policy paper, puts forward an understanding of Global Education as a vision on education and a framework for discussion. This vision needs to be continuously developed with stakeholders from all over the world especially with youth organisations outside Europe.

As a specific approach towards Education, Global Education is an answer to the globalised world and the needs of people within it. It is a fundamental renewal in the area of education in an age of globalisation; it represents an educational concept with a political, philosophical and pedagogical background; it is global citizenship education preparing people to fully take up their role as citizens of one world, by exploring world realities, providing information and by developing understanding and respect.

Global Education enables people to develop empathy, a sense of belonging to the global community, and responsibility towards people and the environment. Global Education also enables people to see their responsibility in bringing about a world of greater justice, solidarity, equality of opportunity and one enjoying the genuine universality of human rights.

Global Education has an important role to play in developing awareness of the interdependence between peoples’ local realities and the global context in which these realities exist.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=23279&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23279&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/programme.htm>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.deeep.org/english/europe/strategy/european\\_consensus\\_30102007.pdf](http://www.deeep.org/english/europe/strategy/european_consensus_30102007.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/e/north-south\\_centre/programmes/3\\_global\\_education/h\\_publications/Maastricht\\_Congress\\_Report.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/e/north-south_centre/programmes/3_global_education/h_publications/Maastricht_Congress_Report.pdf)

Global Education is a process of discussion between all people and stakeholders involved. It is a political commitment for a change and for the development of a global process of working on educational understanding between actors in the different parts of the world: this duly implies universal access to education.

Global Education, through the adoption of a holistic view on education, encompasses the whole of educational practice and implies life-long and life-wide learning. Furthermore, it approaches people as complete persons and wants to educate them as such: physically, emotionally and rationally.

Global Education is not one methodology: various methodologies exist and have their value. Global Education does not seek to replace them but rather to provide the political, philosophical and pedagogical background for them.

Global Education, as an umbrella concept, represents a link between the educational practices of Peace Education, Intercultural learning, Human Rights Education, Citizenship Education, Development Education, Environmental Education, Refugee Education, etc. These can all be related to but not replaced by Global Education; with their particular foci, they form specific approaches to tackle specific local or social issues.

Development Education can, as a form of education through which one learns about global realities, and can become aware of and actively take part in furthering development, be a very strong component of Global Education. Human Rights Education is also a very successful approach whose educational tradition can serve as a useful platform for Global Education.

## **2.2 Global education and the UN Millennium Declaration**

The realisation of the Millennium Development Goals clearly requires effective educational and awareness-raising strategies, which the YFJ believes Global Education is able to deliver - given the breadth of topics, variety of contexts and the age groups which it addresses. Global Education can empower and engage young people to further the achievement of the Goals, as much as it can contribute to awareness raising and the development of global solidarity and understanding. The global youth work development and cooperation which are part of Global Education can, while acknowledging the role they have to play to making the world a better place for all, effectively give prominence to the voices and vision of young people on how to achieve sustainable development and social justice,.

## **2.3 Global education as a tool for achieving Gender Equality**

The achievement of gender equality as a basis for social justice is dependent upon the development of educational approaches which support women and men to break-down any gender-biased patterns that discriminate against them or make them discriminate against others, and that give them, or remove from them, privileges, on no other basis than their gender.

Global Education represents one of the most effective means for the achievement of gender equality. Through Global Education women and men are enabled to reflect critically on their surroundings, and to stand up against injustices of which they become aware, or which they themselves experience. As such, Global Education is both a way to develop understanding for other peoples' experiences

and to open one's eyes to gender disparities not necessarily seen as a result of cultural, traditional, social or other factors.

Furthermore, Global Education is an effective empowerment tool for both young women to become outspoken and active, and for men to engage more actively in work towards gender equality.

### **3. Global Education as a life-long and life-wide learning experience**

Education has become a life-long and life-wide experience. Global Education, as a vision on the whole of education, also includes a holistic vision on education, stressing the complementary natures of the three educational fields: formal education (FE), non-formal education (NFE) and informal learning. While recognition of NFE is growing, that of its results is still insufficient, and thus the current situation continues to leave too many gaps between FE and NFE.

The majority of the educational funding in Europe goes to formal education. Despite this funding, formal education falls short of providing young people with the Global Education they need. This is partly a structural problem as other educational approaches are better suited than the formal system; however formal education must be improved, and it can be if there is the awareness and the will.

Global Education is an excellent opportunity for all educational fields to better work together and to enhance the complementarity discussed above.

#### **3.1 Global education in Non-Formal Education**

As the main providers of NFE, youth organisations are willing to take the lead in bringing or developing Global Education further within the NFE field.

As the complement to formal education, non-formal education serves to provide unique learning opportunities that are not found in formal education or that cannot be obtained through informal learning. Development organisations, trade unions, socio-cultural organisations, and the media can all be providers of non-formal education. The NFE field is the field where civil society can strengthen itself and bring about a stronger awareness of global realities.

Global Education is already very present in the NFE provided by youth organisations, as it develops around a participatory process, aims to promote active citizenship and broadens the horizons of young people. The European Youth Forum believes that this approach can be beneficial for other NFE providers.

Youth organisations can provide inspiration to other NFE providers to enhance their educational programmes, and the following are key elements for a thorough pedagogical approach:

- Approaching the learner as a person with diverse learning needs that are not only rational but also emotional, social and cultural;
- Developing sensitivity and practices about diversity and the need for ensuring equality within the structures and the programmes of the provider and the recipient group;
- Taking learning by doing as the core methodology;
- Enabling self-reflection and evaluation in the learning process.

Next to the possibilities for improving the approaches used by NFE providers, the whole NFE field can be further developed by:

- Placing itself in a global context

Being citizens in a global world implies being citizens in a local context while being a citizen in a local context increasingly implies being a global citizen. Non-formal education has an important role to play in establishing an awareness of the interdependence between peoples' local reality and the global context. Various programmes exist that could easily be enhanced by becoming GE programmes and by relating them to the global level.

- Unite and cooperate

The NFE field is divided and fragmented due to the great diversity of providers - this is leading to an absence of a coherent dialogue between NFE providers. To effectively implement Global Education it is crucial that the various NFE actors meet and discuss and constantly improve the concepts and approaches together.

- Going further

Many NFE providers still mimic educational programmes from formal education focused on knowledge and certain skills but not on personal development. For the whole of NFE to be education of real value, the field needs to make a consistent switch to a learner centred process.

- Intercultural experience

NFE, in an international context, brings young people from diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds together and in that aspect represents a very beneficial experience towards broadening the views of young people regarding different realities and perceptions. The funding for international youth work and exchanges consequently represents an important investment in global education.

- Peer-to-peer concept

NFE makes an important contribution to global education in the sense that it is based on education developed and functioning on a peer-to-peer basis. It represents a very dynamic process of knowledge, skills and attitude transfer among people of a similar age, social background or life situation: which all bears significance on the practical implementation of Global Education. As it represents the joint effort of young people from different backgrounds to explore the ways in which they can bring a different reality to the world, it creates an important form of youth empowerment, contained within NFE.

- Role of trainers

Trainers and educators play an important role in the work of youth organisations and other NFE providers. Global Education needs a supporting training policy within NFE programmes to ensure that it meets the expectations of everyone involved. Such a training policy should focus on increased global and intercultural understanding: equality, justice and solidarity are nurtured through safe training spaces where the understanding among people from different cultural and/or socio-economic backgrounds is facilitated. Within this learning space, trainers, educators and trainees can exchange experiences, share input and discuss good examples of training methodology.

### 3.2 Global Education in Formal Education

Due to its diverse nature, and to the important task it plays in the educational process, Global Education needs to be an integral part of formal education if society wants to address education efficiently and holistically. Global Education has to be embedded in the school culture and be transversally included in all relevant subjects. As Global Education is a participatory process it also requires time and space for student-led initiatives.

The formal education can mainstream Global Education in the following ways:

- Through the transversal inclusion of global education in all relevant subjects, thus bringing an intercultural perspective into history, languages, geography, etc. In this regard it is important to ensure that history teaching assumes a global perspective and not simply a national focus.
- Through the inclusion of specific citizenship courses as a vital part of the curriculum. Such courses could provide a background and framework for the work done in other courses or projects, but it could include, independently of that, education on human rights, civic participation etc.
- By including ‘Learning by doing’ as a key method of participatory Global Education. Formal education institutions should provide time, space and recognition for projects initiated by students themselves, including projects in which students go out and educate others in society, and including projects through which students can act as peer-educators and multipliers. This fosters a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and so directly contributes to the development of the Key Competences for Life Long Learning<sup>8</sup>.
- The work of school student and student unions is also an important part in developing and enhancing Global Education within formal education. Their contribution to the educational process - especially through individual empowerment, and the promotion of participation and critical thinking - is essential for raising awareness and reflective decision-making. The role that school student and student unions can play, as a bridge to other youth organisations working on Global Education, should be further explored.
- Through the first hand experience of another culture. One of the most important intercultural learning experiences is spending time abroad and being immersed in a different culture. The YFJ believes that all young people should be provided the possibility to take part in an exchange while being in education, as this can be a defining or very enriching experience in one’s lifetime.
- By approaching the learner as a whole person. Formal education too often puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of academic knowledge and developing the rational side of people. To acquire the Key Competences ‘social and civic competences and cultural awareness’, more sides of one’s personality must have the chance to develop.

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<sup>8</sup> RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)

- Sensitivity to the diversity of our own societies. Global Education aims to make people aware of different cultural realities, both in other parts of the world and in our own societies. This should not only help students become aware of their multicultural societies but also should adapt schools systems to new realities of diversity. Classrooms must be perceived as unique spaces for day-to-day intercultural learning. One serious problem is that students who have a different cultural background than the mainstream, are more likely to remain low achievers or even early school leavers as the educational system is not adequately adapted to their needs or does not reflect their background sufficiently.<sup>9</sup> Curricular reforms need to pay attention to the growing diversity in society and should not reinforce stereotypes but support and ensure inclusion.

Finally, teachers also play an important role in the formal education of young people; and act as role models and, potentially, as strong examples of global citizens. Within a Life Long Learning framework, teachers need solid initial training in Global Education, which can be further developed throughout their careers, by way of international mobility programmes and further training. At the same time it should be acknowledged that the challenges that young people face regarding globalisation are also faced by teachers and schools. Therefore, Global Education has to be a joint project of all, making young people and teachers cooperate together in the learning process.

### **3.3 Global education and Informal learning: how can young people globally educate themselves?**

Young people - as life-long and life-wide learners - should be owners of their own education and learning, in all fields of education. Informal learning can only be driven by a young person's own interests. However, what that person can be interested in is hugely influenced by others - through the provision of information, or by attention being drawn to certain issues, for example. Therefore, many actors in society do have a responsibility to ensure that young people's interest in and understanding of global issues is raised.

Many pre-conditions for informal learning exist. For informal global learning, access to information and open exposure to a diversity of opinions are essential.

Other elements that could play an important part in the learning process are:

- A critical and pluralist media presenting a diversity of opinions while not violating human rights or contributing to the isolation and discriminatory perceptions of particular groups and communities.
- Political parties and institutions that are open and transparent and actively promote their views and do not condemn difference of opinions as 'wrong' unless they affect human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The chance to be mobile in European and global society, having the chance to experience personally different realities.
- Supporting all cultural groups to open up and share their cultural traditions and experiences, and understand those of others.
- Working towards a society where diversity is a recognised reality. Seeing the workplace, neighbourhood, arts club etc as spaces for learning.

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<sup>9</sup> European Commission Staff Working Paper, 'Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', SEC (2007) 1009.

- Providing young people with the opportunity to learn about and be aware of the choices they are making as consumers. Raising awareness about critical and responsible consuming is also a way of informal learning which contributes to global education - ensuring that young people make ethical decisions and support fair trade and human dignity in employment.
- Parents are also important educators and a source of informal education in the sense that their attitudes and approaches towards the world hugely influence how their children perceive the world; it is therefore necessary to raise their attention to this impact.

#### **4. The role of youth organisations**

Youth organisations are more than simply the main providers of Non-Formal Education; they bring young people of different backgrounds together to work, and learn from one another. They support young people as they develop the skills necessary to navigate in the complexity and diversity of contemporary society, allowing them to explore realities different from their own and helping them to identify a role to assume, as a way of contributing to social progress and further social development.

- Advocacy

The further development of Global Education requires further promotion of Global Education as a concept. Youth and student organisations are well placed to advocate for new measures implementing Global Education.

- Reaching out

Youth organisations can actively reach out to individuals or groups that have left school early or have become disillusioned by the formal education system. Through its diversity, the youth field gives a space for all opinions and beliefs to be practised and voiced. In addition, youth organisations can reach out and support youth groups which may not bear the character of an organisation, but nevertheless are dealing with issues related to Global Education.

- Global Youth Work Development

The YFJ believes in development cooperation and in the cooperation of youth organisations in different regions of the world as a means to developing and improving living conditions everywhere. Following growing interest from YFJ Member Organisations, Global Youth Work Development has, over recent years, become an important work area for the YFJ. A significant number of cooperation processes with non-governmental and intergovernmental global partners have been initiated and developed, with the YFJ playing a significant role in their evolution.

Global Youth Work Development is strongly linked to the principles of, and is a potentially powerful way of developing, Global Education. Notably, youth organisations with regional and global outreach provide a very direct way of learning about global realities through the exchange of ideas and the facilitation of individual mobility. The cooperation between regional youth platforms and global youth organisations meeting in the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO) and the Global Cooperation Coordination Committee (GCC) is also key to ensuring equality in the development of Global Education.

- Civil society

Development organisations, trade unions and other civil society organisations are usual partners for youth organisations working on Global Education. They can be

both providers of NFE and informal learning opportunities, and partners in advocacy work. Stronger cooperation within civil society is a necessity for the further development of Global Education.

### **5. Conclusion**

The contemporary age of globalisation has fundamentally changed our societies, and has brought new opportunities and challenges for the citizen. To be able to tackle these challenges and to use these opportunities fully, people need a new form of education.

The European Youth Forum proposes Global Education as a new educational approach. Global Education entails a holistic view to education, viewing all three educational fields (formal, non-formal and informal), and their strengths, as complementary types of education.

Many educational actors and stakeholders will need to work together to implement this new approach, and a key role shall be played by youth organisations. The latter are both the main providers of NFE and they educate many young people who are also in Formal Education. The contribution that the YFJ brings to this field, aims to involve young people and youth organisations as actors in creating a peaceful, just and equal world.

Globalisation - with its opportunities and its challenges - is neither simply a dream nor a nightmare. It is a new reality that needs a new educational approach. The YFJ is confident that youth organisations together with other relevant actors and stakeholders can implement this new educational approach and turn the world into one big learning space for all citizens.