



# GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP & YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE



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## **GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION BRIEFING FOR POLICY-MAKERS**

Policy-makers across Europe have, over the past decade recognised the importance of young people having the knowledge and skills to be active participants in society. There has also been a recognition that many young people across Europe are also interested in global issues and wish to contribute to making a more just and sustainable world.

However, these themes in terms of policy initiatives have tended to run in parallel to each other, active citizenship and global education. What needs to be recognised is that these two themes are not distinct and that issues such as refugees, climate change, global terrorism and global poverty are impacting upon societies and democratic structures across Europe at local, national and global levels.

Globalisation is also influencing so many aspects of young people's daily lives, including skills for future employment, lifestyle and modes of communication, that active citizenship has to recognise a global dimension.

This means that a different and more coordinated approach is required if policy-makers are to effectively respond to these agenda. It is suggested therefore that 'Youth Engagement for Global Citizenship' could be promoted by policy-makers across Europe as a theme. This would ensure that young people's interests and perspectives were at the heart of initiatives in citizenship and global education.

To put this into practice, policy-makers need to recognise the following:

- Many young people see their form of engagement and participation in society not through traditional democratic structures but through forms of social networking.
- Initiatives on Citizenship and Civics education need to give greater consideration to the globalised and interdependent nature of European societies.
- Civil society organisations with expertise in global citizenship education can play a major role in implementing policies and practices around youth engagement through global citizenship.
- Educational bodies, and in particular teachers, have an important responsibility to ensure that learning, wherever it takes place, makes connections to the globalised world in which we are now living.

Policy-makers with a responsibility for education and democratic engagement in society need to become acquainted with, and supportive of, initiatives that directly

address the theme of global citizenship education. Since 2000, there has been a wealth of policy initiatives across Europe that have promoted and encouraged global citizenship themes. For example the Maastricht Declaration on Global Education in 2002, which has since been adopted by a large number of national governments across Europe, makes direct reference to citizenship in the context of opening 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'. The North-South Centre runs a popular Global Education Week and a European Congress on Global Education, and the European Commission has published a number of policy statements encouraging greater learning about global and development issues.

The launch of the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 has given added impetus to these themes. The Goals include a direct reference to global citizenship and the promotion of active engagement of young people. The Goals further state that:

*'By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.'*

There is a need for bodies at local, national and international levels with responsibilities for education policies to develop programmes and initiatives that equip young people with the knowledge and skills to be active global citizens, to give them the opportunities for their voices to be heard and to be able to make a positive contribution to society.

### **About this Briefing:**

This directive is part of a major European Commission funded project called Schools for Future Youth involving organisations in Cyprus, Italy, Poland and the UK and is based on a longer paper, Global Citizenship and Youth Participation available at <http://www.sfyouth.eu/index.php/en/mm-about-en/reports/needanalysis>.

The aim of Schools for Future Youth is to increase educational engagement and active civic participation through the application of Youth Participation for Global

Citizenship in formal and informal education. It will be reached through the achievement of three main objectives which are to:

- Develop innovative support for European teachers to use Youth Participation for Global Citizenship effectively through their core teaching;
- Develop innovative support for European youth to use Youth Participation for Global Citizenship to promote social actions through formal and informal education;
- Influence school systems across Europe to increase opportunities for teachers and young people to carry out Youth Participation for Global Citizenship.

Further information about the Project can be found at: <http://www.sfyouth.eu>.