

Think-tank meeting

'Placing citizenship education within a lifelong learning perspective: From research to action'

31 August 2023

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

Hamburg, Germany

Summary report

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), with the support of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), hosted a think-tank meeting, 'Placing citizenship education within a lifelong learning perspective: From research to action', at its premises in Hamburg, Germany, on 31 August 2023.¹

The aim of the meeting was to bring together researchers and practitioners to share ideas and propose actionable steps to promote citizenship education within the framework of lifelong learning.

An advocacy brief addressed to all stakeholders (including policy-makers of all UNESCO Member States and civil society), articulating the importance of citizenship education for transforming education and the urgent need to take action, is being drafted and will serve as the meeting's outcome document.

A total of 28 participants, comprising representatives of international organizations and academia, individual experts and practitioners, attended the meeting either in-person or onsite. Debates centred on or were inspired by the [Transforming Education Summit \(TES\)](#), the report [Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education](#), the 2023 [Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development](#), and the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education Ms Stefania Giannini provided the opening remarks, wherein she emphasized the need to inspire citizens of all ages, and in all spaces, to not only be well-informed critical thinkers but to actively engage in shaping a society that is democratic, peaceful, sustainable and just. This, she told participants, calls for a new approach to education that puts 'learning to care' in the foreground and which recognizes the importance of developing critical thinking skills for combatting misinformation.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Ms Farida Shaheed, spoke next, and highlighted the alignment between enhancing citizenship education and meeting commitments to human rights and universal values. She reiterated the importance of citizenship education for catalysing responsible and engaged citizens who contribute positively to their societies, care for themselves and each other, think critically, and are willing to 'unlearn' what they previously learned.

A highlight of the meeting was the statement made during Session 5 of the meeting (see p. 3) by Mr Leonardo Garnier Rimolo, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Transforming Education Summit, regarding the central role of citizenship education in transforming the futures of education. Mr Garnier Rimolo reminded participants of the reasons behind the UN Secretary-General's decision to convene the TES, namely to accelerate progress towards meeting the education-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

During Session 1 of the meeting, participants discussed the importance of citizenship education for fostering a global mindset. Sustainable development calls for a radical transformation, rather than a mere reform, of current education practices. This necessitates not only long-term future planning but learning from the past. The importance of non-formal and informal learning opportunities, which more easily lend themselves to promoting citizenship education, as well as socio-emotional learning, which fosters empathy, relationship building and critical thinking for responsible decision-making, were also highlighted. Participants stressed the importance of developing a citizenship education curriculum aimed specifically at young people and in engaging them in discussions about political systems.

Session 2 focused on the conceptualization of citizenship education: a notion subject to different interpretations, including a more conservative approach, which emphasizes context and knowledge, and a progressive approach, which emphasizes experiential learning. The point was raised that the

¹ The concept note, agenda and list of participants are included in the Annex.

specific term 'citizenship education' is expressly used in the Western world; embracing the concept's 'pluriversality' can therefore present a challenge for its proponents.

The session pointed out that the concept of citizenship education is often wrongly politicized; its aim of promoting learning to be, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to know and to care for the planet should therefore be publicized. The question of whether a concept could be developed that would apply to all societies and regions remained unanswered.

UNESCO's comprehensive framework on global citizenship education, the *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development*, was presented during the session, as was the work of APCEIU and the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).

Session 3 showcased three organizations whose work aims to create a bridge between formal and non-formal learning. The first, [Labhya](#), is a non-profit organization operating in India. Through partnerships with government actors, multilateral organizations and other non-profits, it provides scalable social-emotional learning programmes for children in formal education settings. Similarly, the non-governmental association [TEARN \(Tunisian Education and Resource Network\)](#) partners with relevant ministries to promote global citizenship, democracy and respect through technology. To date, it operates in 130 countries, is available in 30 languages, and has trained 40,000 teachers and reached 2 million students. The [European Wergeland Centre \(EWC\)](#) in Norway also develops programmes to empower educators and foster knowledge exchange, and has developed quality learning materials aiming to strengthen educational partnerships.

Session 4 highlighted how citizenship education can be a driving force in preparing learners for complex global challenges. The issue of training teachers and other education personnel to foster long-term thinking and prepare learners for the complex global challenges facing our society was discussed. Five threats to democracy were identified during the session – corruption, inequality, intolerance, polarization and populism – as were the skills needed to face them, which are cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The important role of digital technologies as a facet of active citizenship but also as a means of promoting citizenship education was also presented. Digital technologies are already an integral – but problematic – element of formal education, and they have great potential to enhance non-formal education. At present, citizenship education is primarily offered as informal learning via digital means.

In Session 5, Mr Garnier Rimolo recalled the primary objective of the Transforming Education Summit, which is to call on the global community to reaffirm its commitment to meeting the Education 2030 targets. He stressed the need for inclusive education to become a priority, with learning how to live together, with respect for each other and for nature, central to future sustainable development.

Session 6 was an opportunity for participants to provide valuable insights on the initial draft of the advocacy brief on citizenship education that had been prepared by UIL. It was agreed that the brief should make a clear link between citizenship education and lifelong learning, with a particular focus on improving adult learning and education opportunities, and that the role of citizenship education in transformative education should be emphasized.

During the closing session, the advocacy brief was presented as a rallying call for action and an integral part of the global campaign to promote lifelong learning. The brief should also be a reminder of the crucial role of adult learning and education in the framework of lifelong learning for fostering just, peaceful and democratic societies.

Participants unanimously agreed to not only assist UIL in revising the advocacy brief accordingly but to take concrete steps towards meaningful action to promote citizenship education in their contexts.

Further think-tank meetings on citizenship education are in the early planning stages; the focus of these future meetings will be on developing strategies for monitoring citizenship education and exploring its relationship to well-being, with the ultimate goal of contributing to the creation of just, peaceful and democratic societies.

Annex

Concept note

Citizenship education (CE) is essential for promoting a lifelong learning culture that fosters democratic values, supports learning to live together, and teaches us how to care for ourselves, each other, our societies and the planet. Global citizenship education (GCED) is a critical response to global challenges such as inequality, extremism, migration, digitalization, the climate crisis and mis- and dis-information.

Seen as a key enabler of target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, and of the realization of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as a whole, citizenship education has dominated discussions at recent international meetings.² Outcome documents and declarations such as the *Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA)*³ and the *European Declaration on Global Citizenship Education to 2050*, as well as recommendations such as the draft of *UNESCO's revised 1974 Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-Operation and Peace*,⁴ call for a more developed, human rights-based approach to education. Publications such as *Reimagining Our Futures Together. A New Social Contract for Education*⁵ and *Earth for All, a Survival Guide for Humanity: A Report to the Club of Rome*⁶ reiterate that education should also aim to provide skills such as critical thinking, monitoring injustice and condemning human-rights violations.

Aim of the think-tank meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to bring together researchers and practitioners to share ideas and take action in the field of citizenship education within the framework of lifelong learning.

Expected outcomes include a policy brief on citizenship education, as well as discussions on future projects and effective implementation strategies to turn ideas into action.

² Recent relevant meetings include the (1) [Seventh International Conference on Adult Education \(CONFINTEA VII\)](#) held in June 2022; (2) [Transforming Education Summit \(TES\)](#) held in September 2022; (3) [7th International Conference on GCED \(IConGCED\)](#) held in November 2022; and (4) [European Congress on Global Education to 2050 \(GE2050\)](#), also held in November 2022.

³ UIL (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning), 2022. *CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action: Harnessing the Transformational Power of Adult Learning and Education*. Hamburg: UIL. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382306> [Accessed 18 April 2023].

⁴ UNESCO, 2022. *Revised Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms ('1974 Recommendation')*. [online] Paris: UNESCO Available at: < <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383055> > [Accessed 18 April 2023].

⁵ ICFE (International Commission on the Futures of Education), 2021. *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*. [online] Paris: UNESCO. Available at < <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707> > [Accessed 18 April 2023].

⁶ Dixon-Declève, S., Gaffney, O., Ghosh, J., Randers, J., Rockström, J., & Stoknes, P. E., 2022. *Earth for All, a Survival Guide for Humanity*. A Report to the Club of Rome. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Themes to be discussed

The meeting will focus on the following themes, aiming to demonstrate the importance of citizenship education in lifelong learning:

- **The role of citizenship education in lifelong learning, under the following aspects:**
 - How can we learn from Indigenous peoples, traditional philosophies, and good practices of living together?;
 - Realising SDG 4.7;
 - UNESCO's work on citizenship education.
- **Skills for life in the twenty-first century**
 - Skills to become an active, responsible and caring citizen;
 - Citizenship in the digital era.
- **Promoting democracy through education**
 - Good practices.
- **Inputs on the advocacy brief**

General information

Organizer

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

Partners

- UNESCO HQ
- UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU)
- The Club of Rome
- The European Wergeland Centre (EWC)
- DVV International (tbc)

Format

- Hybrid

Working language

- English

Agenda

Thursday, 31 August 2023

<p>9:30–10:00 (CEST)</p>	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director a.i., UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)</p> <p>Opening remarks</p> <p>Ms Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education (online) (tbc)</p> <p>Ms Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on the right to education, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR; online)</p>
<p>10:00–11:15</p>	<p>Session 1: The importance of citizenship education for a sustainable future</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director a.i., UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)</p> <p>Mr Rilli Lappalainen, Chair and Founder, Bridge 47; Director of Sustainable Development, Fingo</p> <p>Mr Sobhi Tawil, Director, Future of Learning and Innovation Team, UNESCO (online)</p> <p>Mr Carlos Alvarez Pereira, Vice-President, The Club of Rome</p> <p>Ms Katarina Popović, Secretary-General, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)</p> <p>Discussion</p>
<p>11:15–11:30</p>	<p>Break</p>
<p>11:30–12:30</p>	<p>Session 2: What is citizenship education and how do we promote it?</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Rilli Lappalainen, Chair and Founder, Bridge 47, and Director of Sustainable Development at Finnish Development NGOs (Fingo)</p> <p>Ms La Salete Coelho, Member of the Advisory Board, Academic Network on Global Education and Learning (ANGEL); Consultant, Global Education Network Europe (GENE)</p> <p>Ms Lydia Ruprecht, Programme Specialist, Global Citizenship Education, Section for Global Citizenship and Peace Education, UNESCO</p> <p>Ms Jeongmin Eom, Head of the Office of Research and Development, Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU)</p> <p>Mr Raúl Valdés-Cotera, Chief Programme Coordinator, UIL</p> <p>Discussion</p>
<p>12:30–14:00</p>	<p>Lunch at Yu Garden (Feldbrunnenstraße 67, opposite UIL)</p>
<p>14:00–15:00</p>	<p>Session 3: Promoting citizenship education and empowering learners and facilitators through non-formal education</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Uwe Gartenschlaeger, Director, DVV International</p> <p>Ms Richa Gupta, CEO and Co-founder, Labhya Foundation</p> <p>Ms Héra Nafti, Executive Director, Tunisian Education and Resource Network (TEARN; online)</p> <p>Ms Ana Perona-Fjeldstad, Executive Director, The European Wergeland Centre (EWC)</p> <p>Moderated conversation</p> <p>Discussion</p>

15:00–15:10	Break
15:10–16:00	<p>Session 4: Fostering skills for active citizenship</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Katarina Popović, Secretary-General, ICAE</p> <p>Mr Fernando Reimers, Director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative at Harvard University (online)</p> <p>Mr Neil Selwyn, Professor, Faculty of Education, Monash University (online)</p> <p>Moderated conversation</p> <p>Discussion</p>
16:00-16:35	<p>Session 5: Statement regarding the role of citizenship education for transforming the futures of education</p> <p>Mr Leonardo Garnier, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Transforming Education Summit (online)</p> <p>Dialogue</p> <p>Mr Leonardo Garnier Rimolo in conversation with Mr Borhene Chakroun</p> <p>Questions from the plenary</p>
16:35-17:00	<p>Session 6: Inputs for UIL's forthcoming advocacy brief on citizenship education</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Christiana Nikolitsa-Winter, Programme Specialist, UIL</p> <p>Discussion</p>
17.00-17:15	<p>Conclusion and closing remarks</p> <p>Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director a.i., UIL</p>
17:15-18:30	Post-meeting refreshment reception at UIL

List of Participants

International participants				
Mr	Carlos	Alvarez Pereira	Vice President, The Club of Rome	Onsite
Ms	La Salete	Coelho	Consultant, Global Education Network Europe (GENE)	Onsite
Ms	Jeongmin	Eom	Head, Office of Research and Development UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education (APCEIU)	Onsite
Mr	Leonardo	Garnier	Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Transforming Education Summit	Online
Mr	Uwe	Gartenschlaeger	Director, DVV International	Onsite
Ms	Richa	Gupta	CEO, Labhya Foundation	Onsite
Ms	Hyo-Jeong	Kim	Senior Programme Specialist, Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)	Onsite
Mr	Rilli	Lappalainen	CEO, Bridge47	Onsite
Ms	Hela	Nafti	Executive Director, Tunisian Education and Resource Network (TEARN)	Online
Ms	Ana	Perona-Fjeldstadt	Executive Director The European Wergeland Centre (EWC)	Onsite
Ms	Katharina	Popovic	Secretary General, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)	Onsite
Mr	Fernando	Reimers	Director, Global Education Innovation Initiative, Harvard Graduate School of Education	Online
Mr	Neil	Selwyn	Deputy Dean, Faculty of Education, Monash University	Online
Ms	Farida	Shaheed	United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education	Online

UNESCO Paris				
Ms	Stefania	Giannini	Assistant Director-General for Education	Online
Ms	Lydia	Ruprecht	Programme Specialist, Section for Global Citizenship and Peace Education	Onsite
Mr	Sobhi	Tawil	Director, Future of Learning and Innovation Team	Online
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning				
Ms	Annapurna	Ayyappan	Assistant Programme Specialist	Onsite
Mr	Borhene	Chakroun	Director a.i.	Onsite
Ms	Katharina	Duermeier	Consultant	Onsite
Mr	Nicolas	Jonas	Team Leader	Onsite
Ms	Marie	Macauley	Programme Specialist	Onsite
Ms	Christiana	Nikolitsa-Winter	Programme Specialist	Onsite
Ms	Katja	Roemer	Communication Specialist	Onsite
Ms	Samah	Shalaby	Assistant Programme Specialist	Onsite
Mr	Paul	Stanistreet	Head of Knowledge Management and Communications	Onsite
Mr	Raul	Valdes Coteria	Chief Programme Coordinator a.i.	Onsite
Ms	Rakhat	Zholdoshalieva	Team Leader	Onsite

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners and responding to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.



The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

