Introduction to the global UNESCO context
As a result of increasing globalisation and the importance of knowledge in continuously changing economies and societies, it has become an altogether special priority to ensure all citizens’ right to education and learning in a life-long learning perspective. Globally, UNESCO fosters a human rights-based and holistic vision of education and life-long learning for all and underlines the importance of formal as well as non-formal and informal learning arenas. Investing in education and learning is a key precondition for reaching development goals such as e.g. the fight against poverty, the importance of health, gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. Specifically, UNESCO contributes knowledge and capacity building in support of Member States’ reforms and investment in ensuring education for all.

In 2014, we in Denmark celebrate the bicentenary of the introduction of compulsory education. Since then, we have developed a good and well-functioning framework for education and life-long learning. All children and young people receive education. However, we still face challenges in terms of ensuring good learning results and up-to-date competencies for all. The Government’s broad agreement on reforms of primary and lower secondary school (the Folkeskole) and vocational education and training programmes are the most recent measures to address these challenges and foster education and learning for all.

Increasing need for competencies and education with a global perspective
More Danes are quite simply in need of global competencies. It is therefore of crucial importance that the content and perspective of education programmes ensure a coherent vision for strengthening global education and competencies in education and learning. Danish education programmes hold many good international elements. However, exactly with regard to the global aspect, UNESCO is a special source of inspiration to draw from. The organisation’s strategy for the next eight years includes a cross-sectoral goal of strengthening learning for creative and responsible global citizenship, and for the last ten years UNESCO has been the lead organisation of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Most recently, in May 2014 UNESCO published “Global Citizenship Education. Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century.”

On the basis of knowledge and insight in the correlation between local and global challenges and increasing interrelation and interdependence globally, UNESCO’s goal is to be a source of inspiration for the development of:
• learning content and environments fostering critical thinking, innovation, creativity and new solution models
• an understanding of the importance of solidarity and ethical considerations as well as a spirit of community across differences in language, gender, culture and life circumstances
• the capacity for democratic participation and active citizenship – locally and globally.

Learning for global citizenship and sustainable development is, consequently, not a matter of specific learning elements. It is rather a matter of developing a relevant global outlook and action perspectives on all subject fields. It is also a matter of education and the framework for learning with an emphasis on openness towards the surrounding society and its challenges and towards active participation in this. This is completely in line with the best Danish and Nordic learning traditions as they are reflected e.g. in the New Nordic School and also in the thinking behind the new school reform. But learning for global citizenship and sustainable development is not just relevant to primary and
lower secondary school and the formal educational system. It is also of relevance to learning in non-formal and informal education and cultural contexts throughout life.

National challenges and opportunities for the UNESCO work
A crucial challenge in connection with this focus is to contribute to fostering a professional and educational practice which to relevant extent reflects the conditions and challenges of globalisation and ensures the opportunity of global education and competence development as an integral dimension of the learning provided for all children, young people and adults.

In basic school and the youth education programmes, there are good opportunities of interacting with the new corps of global education advisers that have been established for the purpose of inspiring and upgrading the work of municipalities and schools regarding global outlook and citizenship. Youth and higher education programmes and non-formal adult education have numerous good initiatives and organisations to collaborate with, for example the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASP net), relevant student organisations, the National Union of Danish Students, Operation Day’s Work (Operation Dagsværk), the Danish Council for Adult Education and many others.

National focal areas
- Denmark participates actively in the further development of concepts and good practice regarding Global Citizenship Education, among other things by developing models for ICT-based cooperation and interactive learning-targeted communication in line with social media.
- Education for Sustainable Development is an integral element of Global Citizenship Education and UNESCO’s new global action programme focuses e.g. on the Whole School Approach, i.e. school democracy and sustainability in practice, which also sets the stage for strong involvement of parents and the local community. Denmark has a good starting point for contributing to the development of this concept and practice.
- UNESCO has a strong tradition of a holistic, inclusive and strategic approach to education and learning, including adult learning and life-long learning. Denmark has many strong parallel learning systems throughout life. However, Denmark could strengthen a more integrating, appreciative and strategic overall perspective regarding the various learning arenas and their societal significance. In this respect we can learn something from UNESCO.