



Building a Europe  
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Construire une Europe  
pour et avec les enfants



Strasbourg, 6 February 2020

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## Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)

**Opinion by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child on PACE  
Recommendation 2167(2019) on the Role of education in the digital era: from  
“digital natives” to “digital citizens”<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Opinion adopted by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child during its first meeting (Strasbourg, 4-6 February 2020) for communication to the Committee of Ministers

**Opinion by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)**  
**on PACE Recommendation 2167(2019) on the Role of education in the digital era:**  
**from “digital natives” to “digital citizens” (as adopted by the CDENF on 6 February 2020)**

1. Following its adoption on 29 November 2019, by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE hereafter), Recommendation 2167(2019) on the *Role of education in the digital era: from “digital natives” to “digital citizens”* has been submitted to the Committee of Ministers on 15 January 2020. The Committee of Ministers agreed, amongst others, to communicate it to [...] the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) for information and possible comments by 13 February 2020.

2. *The CDENF accordingly examined PACE Recommendation 2167(2019) on the Role of education in the digital era: from “digital natives” to “digital citizens” by applying the procedure set out in Article 13 of CM/Res(2011)24. At its first meeting (4-6 February 2020) the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child adopted the present opinion for communication to the Committee of Ministers, agreeing the following comments concerning those aspects of the Recommendation which are of particular relevance to its Terms of Reference:*

3. The CDENF is convinced of the role and importance of education in the “digital era” and to prepare the “digital citizens” of tomorrow for relevant challenges, and therefore welcomes that the Parliamentary Assembly looks into this matter, to trigger relevant legislative changes in Council of Europe member States. However, the approach pursued by the Parliamentary Assembly in its text appears to be very broad, referring to education generally while not addressing the specific skills required for a true “digital literacy” in different societal spheres and settings and by different target groups.

4. The CDENF would have welcomed a reference to the guidance provided on “digital literacy education” as contained in Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of the child in the digital environment, outlining the essential components of such an education, both in terms of a positive use of online tools and resources and the protection against online risks, does not appear to have been considered nor reflected by the Assembly in its text. Some of the terms used by the Recommendation could have been used in a slightly more differentiated manner, such as the one of “digital natives” the acceptance of which is subject to some debate in the current research landscape.<sup>2</sup>

5. The CDENF regrets that some of the key references and resources in the area were not referred to, including the Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the Participation of children and young people under the age of 18 and the Council of Europe’s Internet Literacy Handbook published in 2017 when appreciating Council of Europe’s instruments to promote the participation of children in modern society.

6. The CDENF fully supports some of the recommendations addressed to the Committee of Ministers in the operational part of the PACE Recommendation (paragraphs 6.1.-6.4.) but wishes to recall that some of these lines of action are already being implemented. With a view to the implementation of the current Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), for example, the supervision of which is assigned to the CDENF via its terms of reference, the organisation of activities undertaken in follow-up of CM/Rec(2018)7 is already foreseen in the Committee’s specific tasks. However, the CDENF welcomes any support of this line of action from other Council of Europe bodies, including the Parliamentary Assembly, through their own activities and through transversal co-operation with the Committee.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ecdl.org/media/TheFallacyofthe'DigitalNative'PositionPaper1.pdf>

7. Overall, the CDENF encourages the Parliamentary Assembly to further promote relevant activities within the national parliaments represented via its 47 delegations to ensure that the Council of Europe standards and tools referred to, will be effectively used by member States in developing their respective education programmes. These need to be very specific and take into consideration the particular needs of different target groups. For example, with respect to the general reference of the PACE Recommendation to “children with special needs”, it is important to note that the intergovernmental work has already progressed towards more specific action in some cases, evidenced for example by the publication in December 2019 of a report on children with disabilities in the digital environment "Two clicks forward and one click back"<sup>3</sup> which includes specific recommendations to member States.<sup>4</sup>

8. Finally, promoting the use of artificial intelligence in education, as mentioned in the last paragraph (6.4.) of the PACE Recommendation, is a positive move as such. However, the CDENF recommends that this should be conducted alongside reflection of the risks presented by AI to children’s and young peoples’ rights and wellbeing, including and especially in education. The CDENF notes that the newly established Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI) which held its first meeting in November 2019, should be invited to address human rights, rule of law and democracy related issues with regard to Artificial Intelligence and education.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/-/-two-clicks-forward-and-one-click-back->