

# HIGHER EDUCATION



**The Higher Education  
programme**

Education for Today's  
and Tomorrow's  
Democratic Societies

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# HIGHER EDUCATION PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN FOSTERING A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME  
"Education for Today's and Tomorrow's  
Democratic Societies"

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# THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Higher Education programme of the Council of Europe addresses the areas of academic freedom, artificial intelligence, ethics, transparency and integrity in education, and the recognition of qualifications, including the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). We bring together key stakeholders from member States and international experts to develop projects and policy recommendations. Regular meetings and events serve to discuss and monitor implementation processes.

*The work in the field of higher education is overseen by*

*the Sub-Group on Higher Education Policy, which includes 25 members from education ministries in charge of higher education, as well as from academia and international NGOs.*

The Sub-Group reports to the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU), which is composed of representatives from public authorities responsible for education from the 46 member States of the Council of Europe, as well as the Holy See and Kazakhstan and a number of observer organisations.

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CDEDU

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HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY

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▾ **ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

▾ **RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS  
(INCLUDING LRC)**

▾ **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

▾ **ETHICS, TRANSPARENCY AND  
INTEGRITY IN EDUCATION**

# RECOGNITION OF

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION — LRC

## ENIC AND NARIC NETWORKS

*The European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC), jointly run by the Council of Europe and UNESCO, celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024.*

# QUALIFICATIONS

The Council of Europe and UNESCO form the Secretariat of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, also referred to as the “Lisbon Recognition Convention”, adopted in Lisbon in 1997.

*The Convention is the main legal instrument for the recognition of qualifications in Europe.*

It promotes fair recognition of academic qualifications, and, as of 1 November 2024, it counts 57 Contracting Parties.

Key initiatives for the implementation of the LRC for 2025 and 2026 are the adoption of the revised ENIC-NARIC Charter and the revision of the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education.



THE CHART OF SIGNATURES  
AND RATIFICATIONS

The network operates in conjunction with the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) network, established in 1984, with the European Commission as Secretariat.

The ENIC and NARIC networks have joint initiatives linked to supporting exchange of information on the recognition of qualifications, developing policies and practices, and providing opportunities for capacity-building activities. The networks participate in

consultative processes on international normative instruments related to the recognition of qualifications.

Both networks represent a joint, unique community of professionals working in the field of recognition, sharing practices and knowledge on a daily basis. A shared language and common understanding have been built over time among the institutions that are part of the ENIC and NARIC networks.



MORE INFORMATION ON THE  
ENIC-NARIC NETWORKS



# RECOGNITION OF REFUGEES' QUALIFICATIONS

Work on the recognition of refugees' qualifications is carried out both at the policy and at the practical level.

*The Draft Recommendation on Valuing the Academic and Professional Qualifications of Refugees is expected to be adopted in 2025.*

Passport for Refugees (EQPR) since 2017, an initiative aiming to facilitate the recognition of refugees' qualifications in the absence of full documentation.

The EQPR project is developing synergies and cooperates with the UNESCO Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants, which is targeting countries beyond Europe.

With regard to practical implementation tools, the Council of Europe has been running the European Qualifications

*By 2024, 23 countries joined the EQPR.*

## AUTOMATIC RECOGNITION

Throughout 2025 and 2026, the Council of Europe Ad Hoc Working Group on Automatic Recognition of Qualifications will work on a new legal framework based on building blocks, which represent the pre-conditions for mutual automatic recognition between education ministries and Higher Education institutions across different countries.

The new legal text will build on the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and consider other existing standards, like the Multilateral Treaty on the Automatic Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, establishing a triangular and mutually reinforcing system.

# 2025

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Albania	France	Latvia	Portugal
Andorra	Germany	Monaco	Republic of Moldova
Armenia	Georgia	Montenegro (joined in 2024)	Romania
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Greece	the Netherlands	Serbia
Canada	Ireland	Norway	United Kingdom
Croatia	Italy	Poland	

MORE THAN 100 CREDENTIAL EVALUATORS FROM THESE COUNTRIES ARE NOW TRAINED ON THE EQPR METHODOLOGY. IN 2024, THE MILESTONE OF ISSUING 1000 EQPRs WAS ACHIEVED.



# COUNCIL OF EUROPE PLATFORM ON ETHICS, TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY IN EDUCATION — ETINED

*ETINED is a network of specialists appointed by member States of the Council of Europe and States Parties to the European Cultural Convention.*

Since its launch in 2015, the ETINED Platform has been dedicated to promoting a culture of ethics, transparency and integrity within the education sector. The Platform has produced guidelines aimed at ensuring ethical practices in the teaching profession and has developed targeted recommendations on academic integrity based on assessments and exchanges with stakeholders in the field.

Adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 July 2022, the Recommendation CM(2022)18 on countering education fraud, along with

its explanatory memorandum, is the culmination of four years of work by the ETINED platform, aiming to foster a common European approach to ethics, integrity, and transparency in education.

Key initiatives for 2025 and 2026 include exploring the possibility of establishing a Centre on Preventing and Countering Education Fraud, allowing member States to exchange information and raise awareness about cases of education fraud.

*Furthermore, in partnership with UNESCO, the ETINED network plans to work on drafting policy guidelines on open school data to improve transparency and accountability in education.*

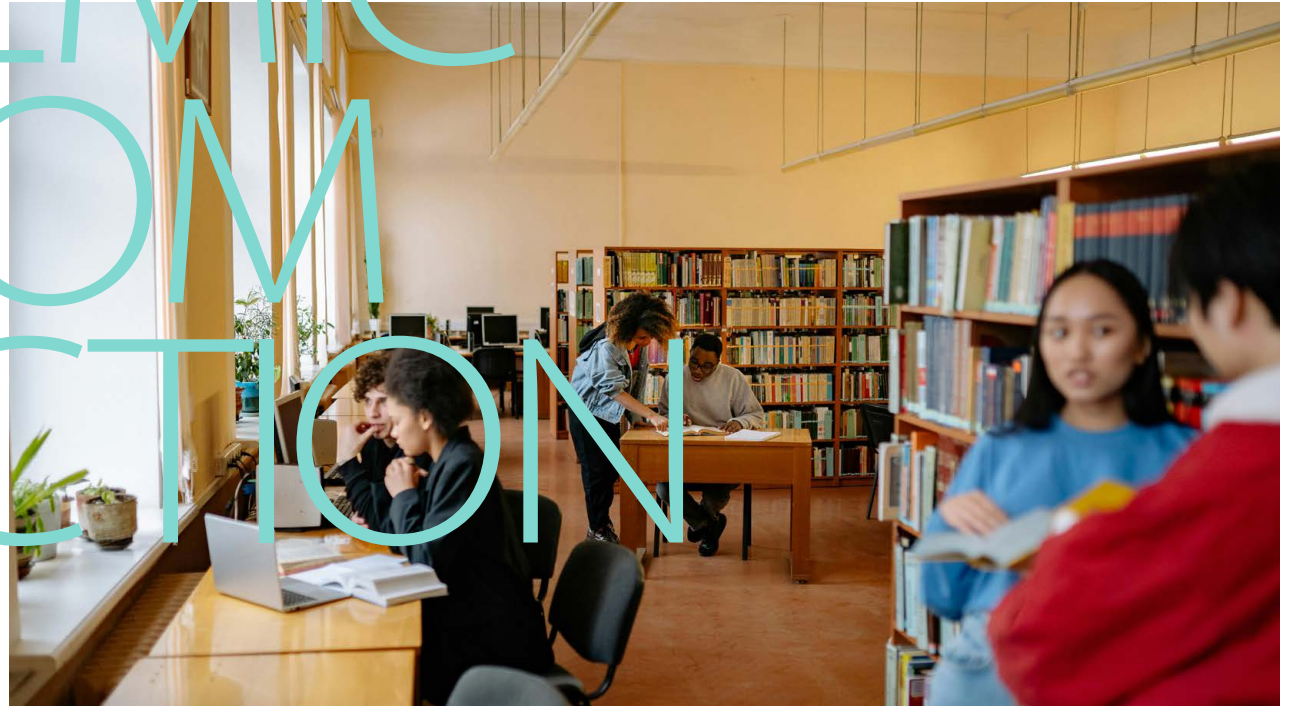


# THE *DEMOCRATIC* MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S WORK ON THE DEMOCRATIC MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IS STRONGLY LINKED TO THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW.

*In November 2024, a new project called "Academic Freedom in Action" was launched in Strasbourg. The project sets out to strengthen the protection and promotion of academic freedom, the premises of which were given in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy.*

# ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN ACTION



There has been continuing collaboration between the Council of Europe and the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy as well as ongoing preparations for the eighth instalment of the Global Forum on Higher Education, with the Forum to take place at Charles University in Prague, on 3-4 June 2025.

*The project addresses pressing challenges to higher education's democratic mission by reinforcing academic freedom, promoting the democratisation of science, and navigating the implications of digitalisation and AI.*

Through targeted initiatives, the project seeks to safeguard academic freedom from political, legal, technological and other threats, and ensures that universities contribute to inclusive and sustainable societal change and strengthen institutional autonomy as a foundation for democracy.



*Particular focus is placed on enhancing public engagement in scientific decision-making, supporting local community missions of higher education and addressing the impact of digitalisation and AI.*

By promoting collaboration between public authorities, universities, and international bodies, the project will produce actionable recommendations, guidelines, and tools to strengthen the democratic transformation of higher education institutions in line with the Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030.



# CONTRIBUTION TO THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA — EHEA



*The Council of Europe is a consultative member of the EHEA and is actively participating in the EHEA steering bodies (Bologna Follow-Up Group and Bologna Board) and selected Working Groups.*



# NEW INITIATIVES

*In 2025, the Council of Europe will be launching new initiatives and advancing existing projects.*

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025

EUROPEAN YEAR FOR DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE STUDENTS' RIGHTS CHARTER


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS



For more information on the Council of Europe Education Programme.



# HIGHER EDUCATION

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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