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Resolution adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 16 October 2020

Access to digital technology in Europe and the responsibility of member states

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe,

Recalling Resolution A / HRC / 32 / L.20 (2016) of the United Nations Human Rights Council enshrining access to the Internet as a fundamental right;

Considering the targeted objectives of the 2018-2020 and 2021-2027 Action Plans of the European Commission in the field of digital education, in particular the actions aimed at encouraging the use of technologies in education and the development of digital skills;

Considering the UNESCO Declaration on Open Educational Resources (2012) and the European Framework of Digital Skills for Citizens (2017);

Recalling the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021);

Noting also Recommendation CM / Rec (2018) 7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on Guidelines for the respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of the child in the digital environment; Recommendation CM / Rec (2016) 2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Internet of citizens;

Considering that digital citizenship education is in line with the commitments made within the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that it contributes in particular to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) which aims to ensure equal access to quality education on an equal footing and to promote lifelong learning opportunities ;

Considering that the environment and digital technologies offers new ways of expressing oneself in various forms, of discovering, of learning, of creating, of meeting and of communicating; so many elements underlying the culture of democracy and citizen participation, which allow the proper functioning of democratic institutions;

Believing that mastery of digital tools and their technical complexity has become essential for the social, economic and professional integration of people.

Considering also that digital citizenship education can contribute to raising awareness of discrimination and prejudices, especially those based on gender stereotypes;

Considering that the limitation or lack of access to the digital environment hinders the ability of citizens, especially the disadvantaged groups, to fully exercise their rights and creates a digital and social divide;

Stressing that it is just as important to provide citizens with the means to acquire technical and functional skills and the skills necessary for a culture of democracy as it is to ensure their protection and security so that they can face the challenges and the risks presented by the digital environment and new technologies but also take advantage of the opportunities they offer;

Aware of the risk of widening social and economic inequalities that digital tools and technologies can generate, and considering that a balance must be maintained between economic interests and social needs;

Noting that the governments of member states have special responsibilities in this regard;

Inspires Member States to take appropriate measures to guarantee satisfactory, safe and affordable access for all to quality devices, connections, services and content. To the extent of their capabilities, States should take measures to allow free open access to the digital environment in dedicated public spaces.

Encourages Member States to pay particular attention to ways of reducing the price of digital equipment, since the acquisition of these involves a cost that can create and maintain a large "*digital divide*" between different social categories.

Calls on Member States to support efforts to improve connectivity and access to devices, services and content, through appropriate digital education and training measures.

Encourages Member States to take specific measures to improve access for people with disabilities.

Calls on Member States to design and implement specific strategies aiming to improve the accessibility of disadvantaged groups to digital tools and new technologies so that these citizens can continue to play an active role in increasingly digital societies.

Calls on Member States to review their legislation, policies and practices, to ensure that they comply with the principles, recommendations and other guidelines set out by the Council of Europe; but also to promote their application in formal, non-formal and informal education.

Calls on Member States to closely monitor the utilisation of newest technologies, like Artificial Intelligence, and their impact on the rights of citizens.

Encourages the Council of Europe and other international organizations to continue designing and implementing strategies, policies, programs and other projects on digital citizenship education, and to share on a permanent basis, best practices, pedagogical innovations and educational resources.

Supports the positive steps taken by civil society organizations to promote digital access and improve the connectivity of citizens in Europe.