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“LEARNERS FIRST”

**EDUCATION FOR TODAY'S AND TOMORROW'S DEMOCRATIC
SOCIETIES**

Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition across Europe of the importance of education in sustaining democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In the current climate, with both long-standing threats to the democratic processes of European democracies and new challenges on the horizon, it is more important than ever to promote a culture of democratic participation and political engagement among all citizens in order to safeguard democracy.

Such an approach was endorsed at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government in Reykjavik. In their final declaration, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states stressed the importance of education in providing children and young people with the necessary references to grow up with democratic values in culturally diverse societies and to take an active part in the protection of [Europe's] cultural heritage.

On the same occasion, the 46 Heads of State and Government also committed themselves in the Reykjavik Democracy Principles to "invest in a DEMOCRATIC FUTURE by ensuring that everyone is able to play their part in democratic processes. Priority will be given to supporting the participation of young people in democratic life and decision-making processes, including through education on human rights and core democratic values such as pluralism, inclusion, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability".

For democratic institutions and laws to work and create such a democratic future for all citizens, the institutions must be based on a culture of democracy. This culture of democracy can only be promoted by developing the values, skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding necessary for the full and active participation of citizens in a democratic society.

The Education Strategy is key to ensuring that this becomes the overarching aim of education and is underpinned by the values expressed at the Reykjavik Summit. In addition, the Strategy will contribute to the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's 2023 State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law report, which highlights in its key findings the need for education authorities, institutions and professionals in Member States to continue to adopt policies, legislation and practices to develop a culture of democratic participation through education.

THE STRATEGY

The overall long-term **vision** of the Council of Europe's Education Strategy is that all learners will be able to fully exercise their rights as active citizens in European democratic societies. This long-term vision will be achieved in cooperation with the Member States through a programme whose main **mission** is to improve the quality and accessibility of education in order to enhance the acquisition of knowledge and competences for life in democratic societies and ensure equal opportunities for all learners.

The **three priority pillars** of the Strategy are underpinned by **five cross-cutting principles**: flexibility in curriculum and programme design; learner autonomy; professional development; inclusion and participation; and democratic and participatory governance of education systems and institutions.

The Strategy will extend and strengthen the Council of Europe's previous efforts in the field of educational cooperation in Europe, while also contributing to regional and global efforts, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), and is in line with the priority actions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and in synergy with those of the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

All **learners, as final beneficiaries** in each of the 46 countries that make up the Council of Europe, as well as the wider public, will benefit from the Strategy.

The **expected outcomes** of the Strategy are linked to the development of new legal and policy instruments, reference standards on which Member States can have recourse and capacity-building tools, which can be adapted at national level and respond to the needs for specific changes in existing laws, regulations and practices.

Member State governments will promote the implementation of the Strategy at national, regional and local levels, in close cooperation with education stakeholders, represented by their organisations, in the different Council of Europe bodies involved in education cooperation.

The first implementation phase of the Strategy will run from 2024 to 2026 and the second from 2027 to 2030.

Pillars

The Education Strategy is based on the following three pillars, which will support the Council of Europe's mandate to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law and reinforce the values underlined in the 4th Heads of State and Government Summit:

- 1) **Renewing the democratic and civic mission of education**
- 2) **Enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education**
- 3) **Advancing education through a human rights-based digital transformation**

Beneficiaries

Learners, as the ultimate beneficiaries of any change in education policy at local, regional, national and international levels, are at the heart of this Strategy. The Strategy aims to develop the following three dimensions in every learner:

The "**citizen**" learner, who is a competent, engaged, responsible and active democratic citizen and critical thinker with confidence in the democratic process and its institutions. Citizen learners are also individuals who recognise the complexity and uncertainty of the world in which they live and promote democratic values and approaches in dealing with challenging and complex issues such as discrimination, human rights violations, sustainable development, migration and digital transformation.

The "**intercultural global**" learner who is socially engaged, environmentally aware and open to cultural and linguistic diversity. They can communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds and adapt easily to different cultural and linguistic environments. The intercultural global learner is open-minded, adaptable and willing to learn from different perspectives and experiences in a rapidly changing world. They develop and share knowledge, connect with their community and take meaningful action to support their own and others' wellbeing. They are prepared to work with others to explore pressing issues of personal and community concern at local and global levels.

The "**digital**" learner who uses emerging digital technologies competently and positively and participates actively and responsibly in the digital environment. The digital learner is aware of the impact of digital technologies and the digital environment on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. They are able to learn through digital technologies and are committed to exercising and defending their fundamental rights and freedoms and to protecting those of others online.

The overarching dimension concerns the learners' **well-being**, which is essential for their holistic development, academic success and long-term well-being. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, educators can help students to thrive emotionally, mentally, physically and socially, laying the foundation for a fulfilling future.

PILLAR 1: RENEWING THE DEMOCRATIC AND CIVIC MISSION OF EDUCATION

For many years, Europe has faced threats that undermine a culture of democracy and indeed the very fabric of democracy itself. Europe is experiencing democratic backsliding. It faces threats that undermine the culture of democracy and its values and principles, such as the return of war, radicalisation, a weakening commitment to freedom of expression, increasing discrimination, online hate speech and discontentment with governmental efforts to tackle climate change. Recent years have seen a rise in intolerance towards those perceived as different, and their cultures and languages, and a decline in interest in the integration of minorities and migrants. Adding to this complex state of affairs is the advent of the digital realm and technologies such as artificial intelligence, which offer unprecedented opportunities but also harbour considerable risks if used inappropriately.

These recent crises on the European continent have exacerbated some of the existing shortcomings of education systems. Education continues to fall short of its goal of preparing students to live as active citizens in a democratic society, despite the recognition that democratic values are fundamental components and essential for both professional and personal development, as well as for the democratic functioning of education institutions, including schools, vocational education and training and higher education institutions themselves. Furthermore, learners do not have sufficient opportunities to be empowered and to fully benefit from an education that prepares them to become active and informed citizens due to the lack of flexible curricula and safe and non-violent learning environments conducive to learning democratic practices. In addition, not all learners in Europe are able to understand and think critically about issues in the fields of history, the world, politics, law, human rights, cultures, religions, media, economics, sciences, and the environment.

To respond to these challenges, education must, among other things, revitalise its civic mission by preparing all citizens to become active participants in a democratic society. Citizens of all ages must be given the opportunity to develop and hone the skills necessary for democratic coexistence. This is done in the context of lifelong learning and through a multi-stakeholder approach, involving the support of education managers, teachers, learners and other partners in education.

While many Member States have already embarked on reforms, further action is needed to broaden the educational sectors and subject areas in which the citizenship competences can be applied, to work towards better quality provision for citizenship education and to ensure a better and more comprehensive European approach to such education through the establishment of a common European Space for Citizenship Education.

For many years, the Council of Europe has been strongly committed to promoting the preparation of young people as citizens for life in a democratic society as one of the main purposes of education. For the Council of Europe, preparation for life in democratic societies is one of the main purposes of education. This emphasis on developing a democratic culture through quality education is reflected in key instruments ranging from the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) to the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC).

The bodies of the Council of Europe, the Member States and other relevant actors should endeavour to pursue until 2030 the following specific objectives:

1. Place democracy and democratic citizenship at the heart of education by **promoting quality citizenship education** aiming at establishing a European Space for Citizenship Education and fostering dialogue and cooperation at European level based on common shared fundamental democratic values and principles.
2. Promote throughout the education system the acquisition and the practice of **competences that foster democratic culture** and intercultural dialogue and understanding.
3. Pay special attention to specific areas such as Vocational Education and Training (VET) and education for sustainable development, and partnerships between different levels of education.
4. Demonstrate and foster the link between a democratic culture and the **right to quality education**.
5. Promote actions and initiatives of **learners as citizens in both formal and nonformal contexts** through *inter alia* supporting learning environments which foster democratic participation and the development and advancement of learners.
6. Promote and protect **democratic values** in higher education institutions as places that foster active citizenship students' rights and democratic participation.
7. Raise awareness of and support for the **protection of students' rights**, in particular those relating to non-discriminatory access to higher education, to student-centred learning, privacy, data protection and freedom of expression and social rights.
8. Encourage **ethical approaches, integrity and transparency** within education systems and in particular within higher education institutions.
9. Improve the **competences of education practitioners in the formal and non-formal sector** to promote participation, inclusion and education for sustainable development, including through plurilingual and intercultural approaches.

The main implementation actions to be undertaken in the framework of intergovernmental cooperation and cooperation programmes during the first implementation phase 2024-2026 that respond to these specific goals are listed in Annex A.

PILLAR 2: ENHANCING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF EDUCATION

European societies are characterised by the great diversity of needs and aspirations of learners within society. Social responsibility and responsiveness in education means recognising and responding to these needs by empowering learners, voice their concerns and encourage them to participate actively in educational decision-making processes. In this way, education becomes more responsive to the dynamic social realities and changing demands of society.

The active role of the learner as a social actor helps to make education policies, curricula and methodologies more inclusive, relevant and responsive, ultimately leading to education systems that better serve individuals, communities and society as a whole.

Enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education can be achieved by ensuring that educational institutions are not only responsive to the changing needs of society, but also resilient in times of crisis. Embracing participatory governance of education, in which students, staff and community stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making processes, will be crucial in meeting the increasingly diverse needs of learners and fostering a sense of ownership and inclusiveness.

It is also essential to prioritise responses tailored to the needs of new and non-traditional learners, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged, as this promotes equity and inclusion and ensures that education remains

accessible and empowering for all. By embracing these principles, educational institutions can better adapt to the dynamic social landscape, address emerging challenges and proactively contribute to the holistic development and well-being of learners and society at large.

Resilience and responsiveness to future crises need to be built into these processes. In this context, it is imperative that the centrality of language in all learning processes is recognised and that the languages and cultures that learners bring with them are seen as a valuable resource for learning.

Inclusion should be essential throughout the education system and at all levels of education. Increased participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners in education (especially in higher education and in a perspective of lifelong learning) and their successful completion of their education promotes social cohesion and strengthens democratic societies where the principles of human rights and the rule of law prevail. Education that is truly inclusive respects and values all the languages and cultures that learners bring with them. It provides opportunities for learners to develop their plurilingual and intercultural competences from early childhood to higher education, as well as in the context of Vocational Education and Training (VET), adult education, both formal and non-formal, and in work-based learning. The provision of inclusive, lifelong and high-quality language and intercultural learning supports not only educational and professional success, but also personal development and self-esteem, which in turn contribute to a democratic, socially cohesive and peaceful Europe.

In the context of higher education the Council of Europe's Education Strategy must support academic mobility, in particular the participation of students and staff from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds while paying particular attention to the resurgence of the brain drain from Southern and Eastern Europe to Northern and Western Europe. Fair recognition of academic qualifications, including automatic recognition, goes hand in hand with mobility, as stated in the preamble of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), together with the digitisation of student data and qualifications. At the same time special attention should be paid to refugees which are among the most vulnerable, facing particular challenges in accessing and participating in further education and employment. This is especially true when their educational records are incomplete or lacking. The right to higher education includes the right to mobility for students to spend at least part of their studies in another higher education system. Universities and higher education institutions also play a crucial role in responding to societal needs and can further enhance their societal impact at local, national and international levels through community engagement.

The bodies of the Council of Europe, the Member States and other relevant actors should endeavour to pursue until 2030 the following specific objectives:

1. Promote the **social dimension of education** in order to strengthen inclusion, equity and diversity at all levels of education systems. It will also contribute to the fulfilment of the EHEA principle of social dimension.
2. Promote **whole-school/institution-wide policies from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education** and throughout lifelong practices that welcome and valorise linguistic and cultural diversity, promote language learning¹ and the development of plurilingual repertoires and which support the educational and social inclusion of migrant and marginalised learners.
3. Develop and implement approaches to **curricula and teaching which foster learner autonomy**, with the learner as social agent, able to make choices, take decisions, act on those decisions and evaluate their outcomes.

¹ It relates to the principle no. 3 listed in the „Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA“ available at https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf

4. Place a strong emphasis throughout the curriculum on building students' confidence in their academic abilities, on developing the **skills needed to live in multicultural societies and to conduct scientific research**.
5. Ensure opportunities for equal and meaningful **access to all levels of education for all learners** and, in this context, consider **ethics, transparency and integrity** as key conditions for quality in education and quality assurance processes.
6. Build a **culture of trust** by promoting ethics, mutual respect and accountability of all actors in education and by preventing educational fraud.
7. Ensure **free academic and psychological support for learners** to enhance the social dimension of education; with special attention to the mental well-being of learners and on prevention of psychological challenges in education during times of emergencies and crisis.
8. Support institutions responsible for the **initial and in-service training of teachers** to focus on the development of the competences of educational professionals to support inclusive teaching and learning. It will also contribute to the fulfilment of the EHEA principle of social dimension which seeks to “improve initial and continuing professional training for academic and administrative staff to enable them to work professionally and equitably with a diverse student body and staff”.²
9. Support the capacity of all relevant stakeholders/partners to create a **welcoming and enabling learning environment**, grounded in the local context.
10. Implement policies and practical measures to protect **privacy and personal data** within and beyond educational institutions.
11. Strengthen **language support for vulnerable groups**, including migrants and refugees, especially those with low levels of literacy and/or outside the formal education system.
12. Support **fair assessment of migrants' language skills** and knowledge of the host society to ensure access to education.
13. Promote the social dimension in the **internationalisation of schools and higher education**. It will also contribute to the fulfilment of the EHEA principle of social dimension which highlights that “international mobility programs in higher education should be structured and implemented in a way that foster diversity, equity and inclusion”.³

The main implementation actions to be undertaken in the framework of intergovernmental cooperation and co-operation programmes during the first implementation phase 2024-2026 that correspond to these specific goals are listed in Annex A.

PILLAR 3: ADVANCING EDUCATION THROUGH A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation, largely supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI), has dramatically changed the educational landscape in recent years. This transformation has been exemplified by the integration of digital technologies and practices to enhance teaching and learning processes, widen access to educational resources, promote digital literacy and foster innovative approaches that improve educational outcomes and prepare learners for the digital age. Education systems have embarked on reforms related to rethinking pedagogical approaches, redesigning learning environments, developing digital literacy among educators and students, and participatory governance of education systems.

² It relates to the principle no. 7 listed in the „Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA“ available at https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf

³ It relates to the principle no. 8 listed in the above EHEA document.

Digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and data analytics, have had both positive and negative impacts on educational processes. Artificial intelligence systems are being used to support teaching and learning for all learners, including children and lifelong learners as well as those with special needs, while data analytics could be used to better understand how learning takes place.

They could also have a negative impact on education by automating poor pedagogical practices, disempowering teachers and learners, and undermining the right to quality education for all. They could also lead to a downgrading of what is valued, favouring knowledge transfer and easily measurable competencies over the more humanistic and democratic values (learning that affirms human worth and dignity, reason, compassion, morality and ethics) that are harder to translate into numerical data.

To harness the potential of digital technology, it is imperative that the transformation of education be guided by a human rights-based approach. Advancing education through a human rights-based digital transformation is essential to creating inclusive, equitable and empowering learning environments. It involves ensuring that the use of digital technologies respects and protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, including privacy, freedom of expression, access to information, non-discrimination and participation.

For individuals to realise their full learning potential and contribute meaningfully to the democratic culture of their community and society, they need a solid understanding of the basic functioning of digital technologies and their impact on their daily lives. Through adapted pedagogical approaches, digital transformation offers innovative means to facilitate personalised, flexible, learner-centred environments that promote mobility, flexibility and lifelong learning. When embedded in contexts that promote democratic values and overcome any biases accentuated by technology, education can be transformed to foster the development of essential digital skills, which today include competencies such as critical thinking, independent learning, problem solving and reasoned decision-making.

Digital citizenship education offers an opportunity to do this by providing a pedagogical framework that fits holistically across the curriculum. It integrates the competences defined in the Framework of Competences for a Democratic Culture and covers the ten domains of activities affected by digital technologies. These domains are broadly grouped into three clusters: Being online, which includes domains related to the competences needed to access the digital society, to express oneself freely and to use digital tools creatively and critically; Wellbeing online, which includes domains related to the competences needed to engage positively in the digital society and to develop a healthy relationship with technology; Rights online, which includes domains related to the competences related to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in complex, diverse societies in a digital context, where privacy is protected and active participation is empowered.

Digital transformation has unleashed an exponential growth of knowledge, radically changing the way it is accessed and stored, and triggering profound changes in teaching and learning. Many learners spend more time online than in school, underlining the importance of independent learning strategies, resilience and the ability to filter content for truth and validity.

Digitalisation in higher education has had a significant impact on access, mobility and completion. Online learning platforms and distance learning programmes have widened access and reached a wider student population. Virtual classrooms enable mobility, allowing students to participate in learning experiences from anywhere. Personalised support and flexible pathways offered by digitalisation improve completion rates. But technologies also encourage other phenomena, such as the proliferation of fraudulent activities in education, seriously undermining not only the quality of what is on offer but also trust in the education systems of several countries. Hence the need to work towards greater transparency and accountability by encouraging the introduction of enhanced quality and control mechanisms.

Innovation and development have been driven by technology companies, which provide cutting-edge learning technologies and a range of associated digital services and learning resources. Educational institutions are increasingly relying on these technologies and solutions to support the new learning environment, making technology companies key stakeholders in education. Partnerships between educational institutions and the private sector and between European countries in terms of quality assurance of digital products for educational purposes have the potential to open up a world of new opportunities to improve learning opportunities for all. However, a better understanding of each other's needs and guidance on how best to reap the benefits of digital is essential.

The bodies of the Council of Europe, the Member States and other relevant actors should endeavour to pursue until 2030 the following specific objectives:

1. Reinforce **digital citizenship education as a lifelong process** to anticipate digital evolution and transformation.
2. Ensure **equality of access to digital technology (platforms, devices, tools and resources) for all learners**, including access in schools, libraries and public institutions and the balanced use of age-appropriate technologies in these spaces.
3. Foster **continuous professional development** opportunities that enable professionals in education to keep pace with and enhance their capacity to teach about and through and to make informed decision of emerging digital technologies (including Artificial Intelligence systems).
4. Ensure that the **use, teaching, and learning of emerging digital technologies** (including Artificial Intelligence systems) in education **prioritise human rights, democracy and the rule of law**, and support learners' agency, well-being and development (cognitive, social and emotional).
5. Encourage **partnerships between education institutions, the private and civil sectors**, that are aligned with relevant national, European and international standards, to harness the know-how, innovation and power to uphold the right of all learners to equitable quality education.
6. Work towards greater **transparency and accountability** of education systems, educational establishments and those involved in education by encouraging at European level the introduction of control mechanisms and enhanced quality to **counter the proliferation of fraudulent activities**.
7. Promote cooperation at European level on activities and initiatives that encourage pooling in the development of, **access to and use of high-quality digital educational resources**.

The main implementation actions to be undertaken in the framework of intergovernmental cooperation and co-operation programmes during the first implementation phase 2024-2026 that correspond to these specific goals are listed in Annex A.

CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES

A number of cross-cutting issues have been identified as important for the Education Strategy and will affect and cut across most or all aspects of development. These issues will therefore be integrated and mainstreamed at all stages of development, from policy design to implementation, evaluation and learning.

Five key principles underpin all three pillars and are key to the success of the Strategy. These are outlined below:

1) Adaptable curricula and programmes of study

Adaptable curricula and programmes are designed to help students develop the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes they need to succeed in an ever-changing world and to reach their full potential. They may involve

personalisation, differentiation, modularisation, blended learning, competency-based learning. Adaptable curricula and programmes focus on developing critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills to prepare students for a range of career opportunities and for active participation in a democratic society. It also gives students the opportunity to take courses not typically offered in traditional settings, such as extracurricular courses and more.

2) Inclusion and participation of all learners

The inclusion and participation of all learners in the educational process is essential to creating a supportive learning environment that meets the needs of all learners. This includes ensuring that every pupil and student has access to appropriate educational opportunities and resources. This is regardless of ethnic origin, class, gender, disability, religion, learning styles and language.

To promote a culture of inclusion and respect for others, it is important to value the diversity of learners; to use differentiated teaching to meet the individual needs of all learners, taking into account differences in learning styles, abilities and cultural backgrounds; to provide opportunities for learners to address, challenge and overcome prejudices and stereotypes; to prioritise the development of participatory and inclusive governance and management within educational institutions, involving students, staff and community stakeholders alike.

3) Development opportunities for educators

Educators should be provided with professional development opportunities that support their growth and development. Through continuing education and professional development, educators can improve their knowledge and skills. This leads to increased job satisfaction and overall success in education.

It is essential to promote the well-being of education professionals by addressing issues such as excessive workload, poor communication or inadequate resources.

Improving the status of education professionals is an essential step towards creating a more effective and equitable education system. It is important to remember that the status of teachers reflects not only their own professionalism but also the values and priorities of society. Improving the status of education professionals therefore requires the commitment of all stakeholders in the education system.

4) Flexible learning environments that promote learner autonomy

Flexible learning environments are designed to promote learner autonomy by providing learners with choices and opportunities to take ownership of their learning and develop their own pathways to knowledge.

Flexible learning allows learners to tailor their learning to their own needs and preferences. Encouraging learners to work with their peers can promote the exchange of ideas and enhance problem-solving skills. Giving learners more opportunities to self-assess their progress can help them to set goals and monitor their progress. The use of technology can help learners to access information and resources on demand and contribute to flexibility. Creating a flexible learning environment promotes a culture of lifelong learning and helps learners to become more self-directed, motivated and engaged in their learning.

5) Participatory and democratic governance

In order to ensure that all members of society have a say in how education is designed and delivered, it is imperative to prioritise participatory and democratic governance in education.

This approach seeks to promote collaboration, inclusiveness and transparency in decision-making, with the aim of improving educational outcomes for all students. Examples of participatory and democratic governance practices in education include student councils, faculty governance, parent-teacher associations, partnerships between educational institutions and community organisations, and others.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP

This Strategy will be implemented over a period of 6 years through two successive implementation plans. This will make it possible to carry out a series of actions and achieve the desired results.

Progress will be measured every two years within the Council of Europe and with the involvement of the various bodies and sectors working together under the Strategy. This will be done on the basis of the Action Plan, presented in appendix to this document and through two successive phases: 1st Phase 2024-2026 and 2nd Phase 2027-2030.

At the same time, during the implementation period, societal changes and developments may occur that require strategic adjustments, which means that the Strategy will have to remain open to a wide range of emerging challenges and adapt its focus to those agreed at the outset.

A mid-term review of the Education Strategy will be carried out by the Education Steering Committee. The results of this mid-term review will allow adjustments to be made to the Strategy and, where appropriate, new activities to be developed in the light of available resources.

Budget

The Strategy will be mainly covered by the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe and Partial Agreements where relevant. As such, the 2024-2027 CoE Programme and Budget, discussed with the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) at its meeting in April 2023, mirrors the Strategy in order to ensure its implementation.

The Education Department also supports Member States through large, country specific projects funded through extra-budgetary resources.

In addition, Voluntary contributions from Member States will be sought for new initiatives such as the Year of Digital Citizenship and the Observatory on Fraud.

Institutional settings

The Strategy will be implemented through intergovernmental and cooperation activities under the supervision of the following bodies and structures:

The **Education Steering Committee (CDEDU)** will be the main coordinating body for the implementation and monitoring of progress under the Strategy, in cooperation with other Council of Europe bodies and international partner organisations.

Under its 2024-2027 mandate, it will continue to oversee the Council of Europe's actions in the field of education and advise the Committee of Ministers on all questions within its area of competence. The overall aim of the CDEDU work programme is to support member States in developing their policies, legislation and practice in view of promoting democratic, quality, inclusive and corruption-free education systems, and taking into account the Council of Europe Reference Framework for Democratic Culture. The CDEDU will focus on Council of Europe priority areas of the Strategy and cover all levels and strands of education. It will meet in plenary twice a year, with the possibility of organising additional thematic meetings in different formats and setting up relevant subordinate expert and working groups as appropriate.

The Standing Conference of Council of Europe Ministers of Education (MED). Since 1959, the Council of Europe Ministers of Education have met regularly to discuss the priorities of the Education programme of the Council of Europe. Most education projects and activities of the Council of Europe have been suggested by the Standing Conference of Council of Europe Ministers of Education. At their 26th session that took place from 28 to 29 September 2023, Ministers discussed and adopted a specific Resolution on the Education Strategy of the Council of Europe.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRC Committee) oversees the implementation of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention) and promotes the further development of recognition practice under this convention. It was established in 1999, with the entry into force of the convention.

The **Governing Board of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)**, based in Graz, oversees the programme of this partial agreement. The ECML encourages excellence and innovation in language teaching and supports its member states in the implementation of effective language education policies.

The **Governing Board of the Observatory on History Teaching (OHTE)** is the Observatory's decision-making body, that defines and adopts the medium-term and annual programmes, monitors their implementation and the management of the Observatory's resources.

Through co-operation and **capacity building projects** the Education Department works to increase the capacity of national education systems to provide quality education, develop competences for a democratic culture, fight discrimination, support integrity and transparency in education and combat extremism and violence in schools. The projects are often financed from external sources, such as the joint programmes with the European Union.

Other intergovernmental and monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe will also take ownership of selected actions specific to their mandates. Committees or other bodies of the Council of Europe engaged in related work, as appropriate.

This intergovernmental cooperation structure will reflect the most urgent priorities identified, while remaining flexible to respond and adapt to emerging or unexpected challenges at a later stage. The CDEDU will continue to involve a wide range of internal and external partners, such as

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;
- Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB);

- North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.

PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to internal partners, the Council of Europe Education Department will reach out to external stakeholders, including international organisations, international or European civil society organisations, non-member States of the Council of Europe, as well as the business sector or industry, wherever opportunities and synergies are possible and desirable.

Of particular importance is the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, where the Council of Europe's Education Department contributes to the implementation of SDG 4 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Other key partners in the implementation of the Strategy include UNESCO, the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Civil society organisations, observers to the Steering Committee for Education, are also key partners in the Education Strategy implementation, notably:

- The Conference of European Churches (KEK);
- Education International (EI);
- European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE);
- European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (EURODOC);
- European Cultural Foundation (ECF);
- European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL);
- European Federation of Catholic Universities (FUCE);
- European Science Foundation (ESF);
- European Students' Union (ESU);
- European University Association (EUA);
- European Wergeland Centre (EWC);
- Federation for European Education (FEDE);
- International Association of Universities (IAU);
- Lifelong Learning Platform;
- Organising Bureau of European School Students Unions (OBESSU);
- Scholars at Risk (SAR).

COMMUNICATION

A communication plan, including traditional and new social media, will be developed to promote the Education Strategy and follow its implementation.

Communication for internal and external stakeholders will mainly be carried out through the website of the Education Department, <http://www.coe.int/education> as well as through social media channels, in particular the Twitter account [@COE_Education](https://twitter.com/COE_Education).

The website will also promote materials for a wider audience, such as brochures for children and young people, guidance for parents or manuals and checklists for education professionals. It will also promote other relevant materials. Thematic webinars and "EduTALKS" on topical issues related to the implementation of the Strategy will play an important role together with a new Knowledge Hub to share and support capacity building in member States.

ANNEX A

MAIN ACTIONS OF THE FIRST IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 2024-2026 AND SECOND IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 2027-2030

Pillar 1: Renewing the democratic and civic mission of education

| Actions | Outcomes | Level of education |
|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Develop in cooperation with member States a new framework convention on the establishment of European Space for Citizenship Education. | Standard setting | All levels |
| Promote democratic educational experiences in schools, vocational education and training and higher education institutions and their communities. | Advocacy and capacity building | All levels |
| Broaden and streamline the use of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture for cross-curricula application as well as Vocational Education and Training to address issues such as violence in schools, sustainable development, and others. | Standard setting and Capacity building | Primary and secondary education |
| Develop policies and guidelines showing more explicitly the relation between the RFCDC and the right to quality education, including a new toolkit on the right to quality education for all learners, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable. | Standard setting | Primary and secondary education |
| Develop guidelines to show more explicitly the relationship between the RFCDC and quality language education linked to the CEFR/CEFR CV. | Capacity building | All levels |
| Enable European citizens to enhance their individual and collective identity in their diversity through knowledge of their common historical heritage by developing materials to support curricula in schools. | Advocacy | School education |
| Develop instruments to foster healthy, strong and resilient education systems that can provide quality education regardless of the type of crises and emergencies, including climate change. | Standard setting | All levels of education |
| Promote the upholding of fundamental values of higher education by contributing to the ongoing work within the European Higher Education Area. | Advocacy | Higher education |
| Support the upholding of learners' rights by developing in co-operation with the European Students' Union a legal instrument on student rights. | Standard setting | Higher education |
| Support Member States to implement a culture of democracy through large, country-based project funded through co-operation programmes. | Capacity building | All levels of education |

Pillar 2: Enhancing education's social responsibility and responsiveness

| Actions | Outcomes | Levels of education |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Create a user-friendly compendium of key messages and updated guidelines for policymakers aligned to CM/Rec(2022)1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture. | Capacity building | All levels |
| Explore the re-introduction of a revised and simplified version of the Language Education Policy Profiles, using the Recommendation on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture as the overall framework. | Capacity building | All levels |
| Ensure that the history curriculum illustrates the diversity present in societies, including in terms of history as integral part of social cohesion building on the results of the OHTE research and reports and recommendations from the intergovernmental programme. | Capacity building | School education |
| <p>Promote existing resources and policy guidelines on the linguistic inclusion/integration of refugees and migrants; gather examples of their use and impact, collect feedback and address identified gaps.</p> <p>Identify and showcase good examples of practice in language and knowledge of society teaching and testing for migrants, which reflect the Council of Europe standards and values.</p> | Advocacy | Adult education |
| <p>Develop new instruments and expand capacity building in the field of language education in key areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st century skills to address global challenges • the role of home languages in the teaching of the language of schooling or language in other subjects • language teacher autonomy, criticality, resilience and well-being. | Standards setting | All levels of education |
| Support internationalisation of higher education by promoting automatic recognition of qualifications and by preventing obstacles to student and staff mobility, particularly for students and staff from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds. | Standard setting | Higher Education |
| Enforcement of the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles and implementation of all the related priorities, including through a supporting framework for dedicated capacity building for the European Network of Information Centres (ENICs). | Monitoring / Capacity building | Higher Education |

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|--|-------------------|------------------|
| Working towards better functioning recognition of qualifications and removing obstacles, particularly for vulnerable groups, widening and upscaling the use of EQPR across different sectors and institutions and analysing its impact from a quantitative and qualitative point of view. | Standard setting | Higher Education |
| Encourage and strengthen education fraud prevention and monitoring, including through collecting data and comparative analysis. | Capacity building | Higher Education |
| Provide training institutions for history teachers and young researchers with the support needed to maintain and improve the quality of their work using the innovative methods and practices identified through the HISTO-HUB. | Capacity building | Higher Education |
| Develop principles and guidelines for the social dimension of education for public authorities for early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education and lifelong learning in order to strengthen equity and inclusion at all levels of education systems. | Standard setting | All levels |
| Develop principles and guidelines for strengthening civic and community engagement in education for public authorities in order to strengthen a culture of democracy and links between education institutions and the needs of their communities. | Standard setting | All levels |

Pillar 3: Advancing education through a human rights-based digital transformation

| Actions | Outcomes | Levels of education |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Develop a legally-binding instrument on the use of Artificial Intelligence systems in education within the framework of the new Council of Europe treaty. | Standard setting | All levels |
| Develop a framework (mechanism) for partnerships between education institutions and the private and civil sectors. | Standard setting | All levels |
| Develop a curriculum framework for digital citizenship education (DCE planner) to guide/assist member States in incorporating digital citizenship education in their national curricula. | Capacity building | School education |
| Develop a framework for professional development to facilitate peer learning and exchange among professionals in education at European level. | Capacity building | All levels |
| Support independent research to provide an evidence base of the efficacy and broader impacts of the use of Artificial Intelligence systems and data analytics in educational contexts. | Capacity building | Higher education |
| Develop guidelines on developing human rights-based digital transformation policies at national regional, local, or school/university level. | Standard setting | All levels |
| Develop instruments that will contribute to promoting digitalisation in higher education. | Advocacy | Higher education |
| Develop instruments to ensure that hybrid and blended modes of learning and teaching are used to ensure for more effective and more inclusive language learning. | Standard setting | All levels of education |
| Develop instruments to counter digital fraud in education. | Standard setting | All levels |
| Launch a European Year of Digital Citizenship Education with the possibility of the establishment of a European Day/Week of digital citizenship education. | Advocacy | All levels |

ANNEX B

COUNCIL OF EUROPE REFERENCE STANDARDS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Despite its many human rights-related conventions, the Council of Europe does not have a single convention covering the wider social role of education, in particular its role in promoting democracy and human rights or democratic citizenship in general. However, various aspects of education, including the right to education itself, appear in several conventions, including the **Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)**. This Protocol (Article 2) states that "no one shall be denied the right to education".

The European Convention on Human Rights, the **European Social Charter** and a number of other legal instruments drafted by the Council of Europe all give individuals the opportunity to receive an education. The provision of educational opportunities to all learners is necessary for the realisation of this fundamental right.

The **Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education**, recognises the need for additional measures to provide quality education for specific individuals and groups, such as those whose medical, social, economic or other factors place them at a significant disadvantage.

The **European Social Charter** seek also to protect children and young people right to education: if they are subject to compulsory education, they should not be employed if this would "deprive them of the full benefit of their education" (Article 7.3). It also regulates the right to vocational training (Articles 7.4, 7.6, 9-10). The revised European Social Charter raised the age limit (from 16 to 18 years) for limiting working hours "in accordance with their vocational training needs" (Article 7.4). The Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter guaranteed, inter alia, "the right to equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation without discrimination on the grounds of sex" (Article 1).

The first treaty in the field of education was adopted in 1953 - the **European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities** according to which the States Parties agreed on the equivalence of diplomas for the purpose of admission to universities where such admission is controlled by the State. The **1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region** (developed in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation - UNESCO and also known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention) facilitates the mutual recognition of qualifications between States.

With regard to the role of the Council of Europe in the field of education, the early legal provisions of the Council of Europe focused on a number of functions of education in the field of culture and mutual understanding between and across cultures. Thus, the **European Cultural Convention of 1954** emphasised the need to study languages, history and a common civilisation in order to develop a mutual understanding among Europeans (Article 2).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** (Article 6(1)), stressed the importance of promoting "a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue" and of taking "effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons", irrespective of their "ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media". In addition, States Parties have agreed (Article 12(1)) to "take measures in the fields of education and research to promote knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority"

and (Article 14(2)) that persons belonging to national minorities shall, under certain conditions, have access to "appropriate opportunities to be taught the minority language or to receive instruction in that language".

Measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life have also been agreed in **the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** (Article 8), which also seeks to promote "means of teaching and studying regional or minority languages at all appropriate levels" and "study and research in regional or minority languages at universities or equivalent institutions" (Article 7(1f) and (h)).

In addition to being recognised as a human right and essential for mutual understanding in Europe, education has been entrusted with several other important objectives. One of these is the development of a "European consciousness". This development has taken place through soft law.

Education has been recognised by the Council of Europe not only as a human right, but also as essential for the promotion of the fundamental democratic values on which the Council of Europe is based. In particular, the aim of the Council of Europe Statute "to achieve greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage"[10] can be pursued through common action in the field of education.

Much emphasis has been placed throughout the years on the promotion and implementation of the European dimension of education, culminating in the adoption on 11 May 2010 of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2010\)7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#).

Building on its acquis of standards and tools developed over the last years such as:

- the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture,
- the Common European Framework of Reference for languages,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)18 on countering education fraud,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)5 on passing on remembrance of the Holocaust and preventing crimes against humanity,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10 on developing and promoting digital citizenship education,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)9 on fostering a culture of ethics in the teaching profession,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)4 on education for global interdependence and solidarity,
- CM/Rec(2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in education,
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research,

the Council of Europe is very well placed to support policy makers, educators and young people in member States in developing the competences citizens need to build and maintain genuine democracy and confidence in a common democratic future.