



## Education Ministers' Meeting

### Citizenship education in the digital era

#### 26 November 2019 - Paris

#### Concept note

#### Background

The digital revolution is helping schools meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is helping to simplify procedures for users, especially parents, to modernize how schools are run and to allow students to succeed.

Now more than ever, this digital transformation is based on the user's control over data and on consideration of ethical issues.

In today's age of digital technology and artificial intelligence, where technology is becoming increasingly complex and powerful, and information flows continue to expand; control of these aspects must be matched with data control, which has become a fundamental democratic issue for our societies.

Against this backdrop, it is essential that young people have the tools and the keys to develop their critical thinking, to understand the influence of algorithms and how they operate and to combat fake news and the propagation of hate speech. The manipulation and misunderstanding of historical facts provide fertile ground for the rise of nationalism in Europe, a movement we must all oppose. The teaching of history, whilst respecting national contexts, is essential in order to create well-informed citizens in the digital era.

#### Issues

Citizenship education in the digital age must enable students to understand data **control and how they use data**, to **better identify the risks** that they face as well as to help them unlock the **creative potential** of digital technology.

The approach must be based on **developing students' critical thinking** to respond to the ethical issues which they encounter. Teaching students how to analyse online information will enable them to identify and negate hate speech, which encourages the rise of nationalism.



The teaching of history is also a key factor in creating well-informed citizens. It must help reconcile peoples and build a true European consciousness. It is therefore important to discuss the teaching of history, whilst respecting national contexts and the sovereignty of each State.

### Objectives of the meeting

- Highlight the latest policies and the contribution of research to the area of digital literacy;
- Discuss best practice internationally including any difficulties encountered by States, due to specific contexts;
- Unite around the principle of a joint effort to make young people who use digital tools well-informed citizens, combatting hate speech and the rise in nationalism propagated by social networks and digital media;
- Propose the creation of a neutral, non-political Observatory for history teaching in Europe as part of an enlarged partial agreement of the Council of Europe.

### Session 1 - Ethical use of digital tools and developing critical thinking

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The objective of media and information education is to enable students to exercise their citizenship in the information and communication society and to create the active, well-informed and responsible “cybercitizens” of tomorrow. Critical and analytical reading and the ability to publish, produce and gather information constitute responsible media practices for which multiple literacies must be developed.

The **Council of Europe** has online material available, not only to provide information and lessons on digital citizenship education, but also to stimulate discussion and share practice. The objective of the digital citizenship education (**DCE**) project is to make children autonomous through education and the acquisition of skills in order that they may **actively participate** in the digital society. The work of the **Council of Europe** on **children’s digital lives**, which during the last decade focused mainly on their safety and protection in the digital environment, now emphasizes awareness and autonomy through education and through the acquisition of skills in order to actively participate in the digital society.

Educators the world over now prioritize encouraging children and young people to safely, effectively, critically and responsibly participate in the world of social media and digital technologies. The notion of digital citizenship has evolved to include a range of skills, qualities and behaviours allowing users to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital world, while increasing their ability to identify potential dangers.

In 2016, the Council of Europe’s Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE) launched a new intergovernmental project called “**Digital citizenship education**”. The project aims to



help redefine the role played by education to allow all children to learn the skills they need as digital citizens to actively and responsibly contribute to democratic society, whether online or off. A network of experts who met discuss this issue has already published a [Digital citizenship education handbook](#). The CDPPE will soon make a recommendation on digital citizenship education.

### Deliverable

**The Ministers will be invited to adopt a shared commitment to digital citizenship education**, which is seen as instrumental in creating well-informed citizens.

This commitment could be formalized through a shared political declaration adopted by the States Parties.

### Session 2 – Proposal for an Observatory for history teaching in Europe

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The promotion of European values through education is one of the main objectives of the Council of Europe, which devoted an important cultural convention to this subject in 1954. 50 countries have acceded to the convention which has produced a large number of recommendations.

With this in mind, **the French authorities would like to propose the creation of a neutral and non-political Observatory for history teaching in Europe**, which could take the form of an enlarged partial agreement of the Council of Europe. Its work could bolster the intergovernmental history teaching cooperation conducted by the Secretariat of the Council of Europe.

Through dialogue and shared experiences, the Observatory would **promote the most interesting perspectives and initiatives**, encouraging history teaching that is in keeping with the values of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Cultural Convention.

The Observatory would issue periodic **reports on school textbooks and curricula** in the States Parties to the agreement. The Observatory could potentially propose **non-binding recommendations** based on best practice identified by the States Parties. Establishing core European studies to teach in addition to national narratives could also be considered, in accordance with Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention.

### Deliverable

Parties which so desire can show their support for the proposed Observatory for history teaching in Europe project during the ministerial meeting.

This commitment can be formalized in the form of a **declaration of political intent** adopted by the States Parties concerned.