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Conseil de l'Europe



Education for Democracy in Schools: Applying the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

Online Conference of Senior Officials and Experts
organised in the framework of the German Chairmanship
of the Committee of Ministers

15-16 April 2021

Background Note



Background

Effective implementation of the [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#) (RFCDC), the Council of Europe's flagship instrument in the field of education, requires to reach out to all relevant stakeholders at the international and - quite as importantly - to the national and regional levels.

Consequently, this conference is intended for Senior Officials of Primary and Secondary Education in Ministries of Education and related institutions in the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention - at a level equivalent of Director General - in acknowledgement of their essential role in policy making and practice in their respective countries. At the same time, this Conference brings together the Council of Europe's [Education Policy Advisers' Network](#) (EPAN) which is meeting at least twice every year.

The conference will contribute to giving further visibility to educational resources fostering the implementation of the RFCDC developed in the framework of Council of Europe's education programme, by member States and other partners.

This conference is organised in the framework of the German Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in cooperation of the Council of Europe and the Pädagogisches Landesinstitut Rheinland-Pfalz which will be hosting the event and be representing the Interreg-VA-project *SESAM'GR*, the objective of which is to produce pedagogical tools for education for democracy in schools in the Greater Region (bringing together Lorraine, Luxembourg, Saarland, Federation of Wallonia and Brussels, East Belgium and Rhineland-Palatinate).

Due to the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conference will be held in an online format, hosted technically in Mainz/Germany.

The RFCDC consists of a set of education materials that can be used to equip young people with the competences needed to take action to defend and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies. Moreover, it is a useful tool to assist young people in their preparation for the labour market which tends to require an increasing level of democratic competences (such as linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills, tolerance of ambiguity, and resilience) in highly technologically advanced contexts.

It is intended for use by education policy makers, especially those working within ministries of education, and by education practitioners in all sectors of education systems, from pre-school through primary and secondary schooling to higher education, including adult education and vocational education. The RFCDC provides a systematic approach to designing the teaching, learning and assessment of competences for democratic culture, and introducing them into education systems in ways that are coherent, comprehensive and transparent.

So far, work on the RFCDC may be divided into two phases. The period from 2013 to 2018 focused on the development of the Framework itself. In the second phase, work has been concentrating on fostering implementation. The Council of Europe [Education Policy Advisors Network](#) (EPAN), made up of representatives of all States Parties to the European Cultural Convention, oversees the implementation of the RFCDC under the auspices of the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE).

Considering the current socioeconomic situation in several European countries coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges posed to democracy, the focus on RFCDC implementation has been identified as a priority in the programme of the Council of Europe Education Department for 2022-2025.

During the high-level segment of the Conference on the morning of 15 April, Senior officials will have an opportunity to present the work of their institutions in respect of strengthening democratic culture at the school level and exchange experiences.

In the afternoon segment, EPAN members and other policy makers and experts will discuss the dynamics, challenges and emerging needs in the education context. Schools from the [Democratic Schools Network](#) will be invited to share their experiences. On the morning of the following day, EPAN members will continue their meeting, focusing on aspects of in-service teacher education at the national and regional level for the implementation of the RFCDC.

While the discussions in the high-level segment will take place in plenary sessions, the EPAN segment will also include interactive sessions in digitally enabled parallel workshops.

Participants

Senior Officials of Primary and Secondary Education in Ministries of Education and related institutions in the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention (at a level equivalent of Director General), EPAN representatives, EPAN lead experts, experts, education practitioners, policy makers from German federal states, selected schools.