THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION

Statement by the Council of Europe Education Department

January 24 is the International Day of Education. But education is not something we do once a year and forget about the rest of the time – so why an International Day of Education?

One reason is that we should stop and think about something we may take for granted. Another reason is that while in Europe, we may take education for granted, this is not true for all parts of the world. The international dimension of the day is important. Educated persons cannot be indifferent to what is beyond their immediate horizon.

A classic saying has it that we should learn not for school but for life. Today, we could say we should learn not only for the *labor market* but for life.

The Council of Europe takes a broad view of education. For us, education has four major purposes:

  ➢ Preparation for the labor market;
  ➢ Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
  ➢ Personal development – the original purpose of education that nobody talks much about – and
  ➢ Development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

The four purposes are equally important, and they reinforce each other. Many of the competences that make us attractive on the labor market also enable us to be active citizens and contribute to our personal development.

As an organization devoted to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, the Council of Europe is particularly concerned with the democratic mission of education.

In a nutshell, we cannot have democracy if we do not have education. We cannot have a *culture of democra*cy without education. A culture of democracy is the set of attitudes and behaviors that make it possible for our institutions, laws, and elections to be democratic in practice.

The Council of Europe develops and promotes democracy, human rights, and the rule of law through our whole Education program. We have developed a Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Our approach to information technology emphasizes Digital Citizenship Education. We have established a platform for Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in and through Education because democracy cannot be present if ethics is absent.

We work with other partners to further the democratic mission of higher education. Our two longest running programs – language and history education – are both essential to understanding and furthering democracy. And we develop democracy through education in capacity building projects in many of the Council of Europe's member states.

Education, then, is not only *for* life. It is *essential to* life. Education helps make us who we are. Education helps us build the kind of society in which we would like to live.

Education is something not only to remember but to treasure and to celebrate – every day of the year. Congratulations to all of us on the International Day of Education.