

# MAKING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION A REALITY IN TIMES OF COVID-19



*A Roadmap for Action on the Council of Europe  
education response to COVID-19*

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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education response to COVID-19*

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# PREFACE

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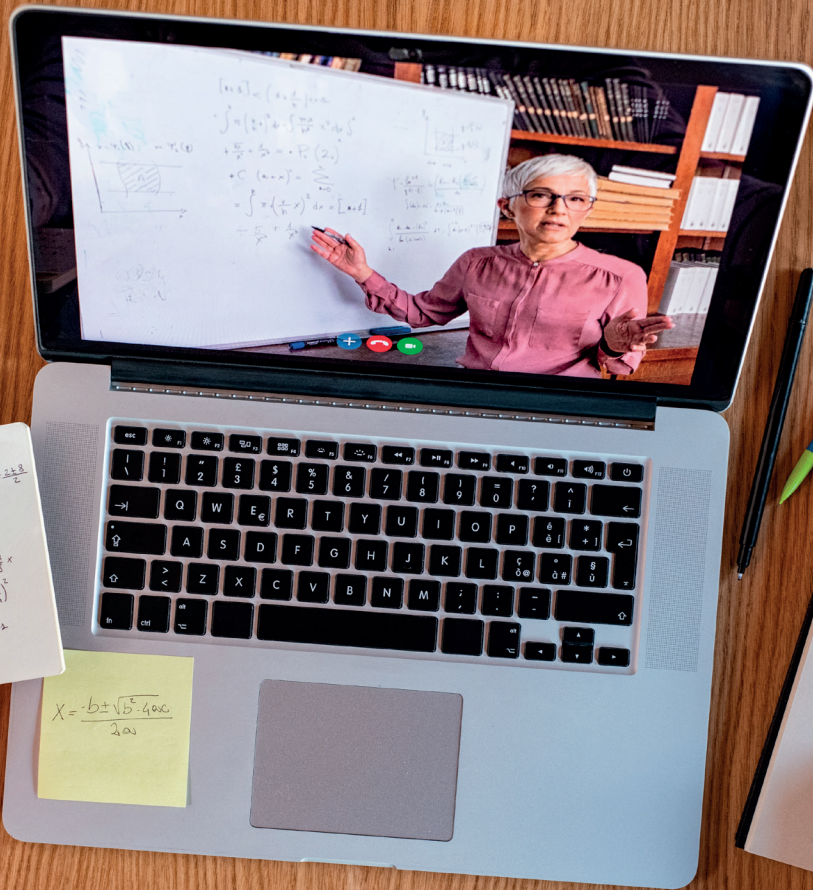
**S**afeguarding the right to education is a public responsibility. Every member state is obliged to meet this challenge, but there is no doubt that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made that harder to achieve. Students and teachers are spending long and disrupted periods away from the classroom. Lessons must be taught in new ways that rely heavily on the internet and technology. Parents are often required not just to be present but to take on responsibilities that are normally covered by professional educators.

■ None of this is easy. It presents challenges in terms of the content, method and fair assessment of course work, and the very real danger that some students will be put at a disadvantage because of their circumstances or background. This is not merely a short-term inconvenience: it poses the very real danger of creating and expanding structural exclusion and inequality that will disadvantage some students, possibly for the rest of their lives.

■ But inclusive, expansive and high-quality education is essential for ensuring that every individual can fulfil their potential academically and professionally and as informed, active citizens in their respective democracies. This Roadmap for Action outlines steps that the Council of Europe is taking to help ensure that such education is available: to assist students, educators and parents and guardians alike. From specific lesson plans to the development of a practical guide for parents supporting their children's distance or blended education, it is testament to our determination to help in what remains an unpredictable and fluid situation.

■ We do not know for how long the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to disrupt our societies, but it is important that we act to limit and mitigate its impact on education, democratic citizenship and all areas of our mandate.

**Marija Pejčinović Burić**  
Secretary General of the Council of Europe



$CM = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$   
 $CM = \frac{2 \pm \sqrt{4 - 4 \cdot 1 \cdot 1}}{2} = \frac{2 \pm \sqrt{0}}{2} = \frac{2 \pm 0}{2}$   
 $CM_1 = \frac{2+0}{2} = \frac{2}{2} = 1$   
 $CM_2 = \frac{2-0}{2} = \frac{2}{2} = 1$   
 $\left(\frac{x-1}{2}\right)^2 - \left(\frac{x-1}{2}\right)^2 = x - \frac{7}{2}x$   
 $\left(\frac{2x-1}{2}\right)^2 + \frac{23}{16} = \left(x + \frac{1}{4}\right)^2$   
 $\Rightarrow \frac{2x-1}{2} = x + \frac{1}{4}$   
 $\Rightarrow \frac{2x-1}{2} - x = \frac{1}{4}$   
 $\Rightarrow \frac{2x-1-2x}{2} = \frac{1}{4}$   
 $\Rightarrow \frac{-1}{2} = \frac{1}{4}$

$X = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$

$[k+2] = \left(1 + \frac{1}{k}\right)^k + 1$   
 $\int_0^1 \left(\frac{x}{k}\right)^k dx = \int_0^1 \frac{x^k}{k^k} dx = \frac{1}{k^k} \int_0^1 x^k dx$   
 $= \frac{1}{k^k} \left[ \frac{x^{k+1}}{k+1} \right]_0^1 = \frac{1}{k^k} \cdot \frac{1}{k+1}$   
 $+ C (a+x)^n = \frac{1}{k^k} \cdot \frac{1}{k+1}$   
 $= \int_0^1 \left(\frac{x}{k}\right)^k dx = \frac{1}{k^k} \cdot \frac{1}{k+1}$   
 $\frac{1}{k^k} \rightarrow x$   
 $x=a \quad f = P(a)$   
 $x=b \quad f = P(b)$

# THE EDUCATION RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## THE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

■ The COVID-19 pandemic will mark the history of Europe, as did the recession of the 1930s, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Europe's post-war recovery. Like these events, its impact is local, national, European and global. Even if there were no second wave – uncertain at the time of writing – the pandemic will leave behind an economic recession unseen in post-World War II Europe outside of areas marked by violent conflict.

■ In spring 2020, Europe's immediate response to the pandemic was, for the most part, lockdown and closing of borders. But Europe's response was also solidarity and resilience. Borders closed by medical necessity did not prevent Europeans from helping each other. Societies locked down in an immediate response to the health crisis quickly shifted to alternative means of working and learning.

■ Europe's teachers and students, administrative and other education staff, leaders of schools and higher education institutions as well as parents were called on to make extraordinary efforts in rising to the immediate challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. They responded quickly, competently and creatively, sometimes in the face of impossible odds.

■ Education systems and institutions had to take rapid measures to limit the health risks to students, staff, parents and society more broadly. Few if any education systems were fully prepared. They responded in accordance with the situation in each country and each local community. They responded according to the situation of each school or university, with some well-equipped for shifting to online learning and others in need of both equipment and the skills to make good use of it. They responded in ways adapted to the age of the students, the support parents and other carers were able to provide, and the specificities of each level and strand of education. They responded in ways that demonstrated that while health care

was the immediate concern of the crisis, education is no less important in the medium and longer-term.

■ The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic go well beyond the immediate. The pandemic challenges our societal models and our cohesion in many ways, including European values and the assumption on which we build our societies: that every voice counts and that all citizens have a stake in building our European future. A recent [survey](#) carried out by a group of Oxford University academics and students revealed that more than half (53 per cent) of young Europeans believe that authoritarian states are better equipped than democracies to address climate change. This survey was conducted just before COVID-19 hit Europe but its results can be extrapolated: similar claims were made with regard to the COVID-19 crisis.

■ Young people losing faith in democracy is a particularly alarming trend. It is a trend to which no response can be found without education. The challenges with which education will be faced in the aftermath of COVID-19 will be no less than those with which education was faced as the crisis unfolded.

■ The aftermath of COVID-19 challenges the way in which we learn and teach. As European education systems, schools and institutions move from emergency education to a sustainable response, we will need to innovate in the way we learn and teach, by blending face to face and online provision in new ways that may require new pedagogical approaches. We will need to rethink the way in which we design, assess and recognise qualifications. We will need to ensure that no students are cut off from the benefits of education and from the possibility to develop their talents and potential to the full regardless of where they live, their gender, their ethnic origin, their beliefs and convictions, the socio-economic difficulties they face and the discouragement they face in their immediate environment.



■ The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath also challenge the role of education in building our societies. We will need to strengthen democracy through education, and with it human rights and the rule of law, as well as our ability and will to live peacefully in diverse societies.

■ We cannot allow a health crisis to turn into a crisis of democracy. For our democratic institutions, elections and laws to function in practice, they must build on a **culture of democracy** that can only be developed through education, at all levels. It requires an awareness of our past, as well as an understanding of our present and a will to build our future on the values we share as Europeans. It requires not only the skills to use digital technology, but also the competences to put them at the service of democratic **digital citizenship**. Education must help **shape the post-COVID-19 world**.

## ENSURING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION: A PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

■ The right to education is enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>1</sup> and in the European Social Charter<sup>2</sup>. Even a crisis as severe as the COVID-19 pandemic cannot abrogate the right to education, even if it may modify the ways in which the right is exercised and ensured.

■ Safeguarding the right to education is a **public responsibility**<sup>3</sup>. Public authorities carry the responsibility for ensuring that national education systems fulfil all major purposes of education:

- ▶ preparation for sustainable employment;
- ▶ preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- ▶ personal development;
- ▶ the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

■ To exercise their responsibility, public authorities have:

- ▶ exclusive responsibility for the framework within which education is conducted;

1. Protocol 1, Article 2

2. Articles 17, 7, 10 and 15.

3. While Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2007\)6](#) concerns higher education and research, its provisions are applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to all levels and strands of education.

- ▶ leading responsibility for ensuring effective equal opportunities to education for all citizens, as well as ensuring that basic research remains a public good;
- ▶ substantial responsibility for financing education and research, the provision of education and research, as well as for stimulating and facilitating financing and provision by other sources within the framework developed by public authorities.

■ A distinction must be made between *responsibility* and *provision*. Schools and higher education institutions may be public or private, and the latter may be non-profit or for-profit. Provided institutions and programmes belong to a national education system, they operate within the framework established by public authorities. They need to abide by the pertinent legislation, both specific education legislation and general legislation like labour legislation or laws regulating accounting, as well as public safety regulations, including those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools and institutions need to undergo quality assurance in accordance with national requirements, the qualifications they provide must comply with the national qualifications framework, and the public authority responsible must recognise the institution and/or programme in question as part of its education system, as stipulated in the [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#), Section VIII.

■ In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of public authorities will comprise a responsibility for ensuring the right to education by inciting schools and institutions to adapt their teaching and learning to new circumstances, by supporting them in this endeavour and by developing the frameworks that will maintain education provision in areas that are particularly affected by the economic and societal consequences of the pandemic. Public authorities will also need to create conditions encouraging international education co-operation and exchange at a time when international travel will be subject to particular restrictions and a much reduced offer and when requirements for student visas may need to evolve so as not to exclude students enrolled in blended and online learning.

## MAKING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION MEANINGFUL: QUALITY EDUCATION

■ The right to education is meaningful only if the education offered is of high quality. While the concern

for quality is prominent in national and European education policies, these too often fail to make explicit the understanding of quality on which they build.

■ The Council of Europe advocates an understanding of **quality education** that takes account of the purposes that education should fulfil and that sees quality in relation to education systems, as well as schools and universities. In this view, quality education must be **inclusive** and give access to learning to all students, particularly those in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, adapted to their needs as appropriate. It should also, among other things, provide a secure and non-violent learning environment in which the rights of all are respected and develop each student's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Not least, it promotes democracy, respect for human rights and social justice in a learning environment which recognises everyone's learning and social needs.

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

■ In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Council of Europe Education programme** will continue to develop and promote education policies and practice that:

- ▶ ensure the right to education;
- ▶ help build democratic, sustainable and resilient societies;
- ▶ further inclusive quality education.

■ It will do so through its **intergovernmental programme, co-operation and capacity building programmes** primarily financed from other sources and the **European Centre for Modern Languages**, an Enlarged Partial Agreement. It aims to do so also through a second Enlarged Partial Agreement on an Observatory on History Teaching in Europe currently under consideration by the Committee of Ministers.

■ This Roadmap for Action outlines how the Education programme will help member States face the education challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. It also indicates how the programme could evolve to provide an even more forceful response.



# STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY THROUGH EDUCATION

## REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE (RFCDC)

■ In times of crisis, it becomes even more evident that citizens should be able and willing to engage in public space to further democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#) (RFCDC) is a key resource to support policy makers and educators in developing competences for life in democratic societies in students. Democratic culture denotes the set of attitudes and behaviours citizens need to make democratic institutions, laws and elections function in practice. Civic-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity, autonomous learning skills and analytical and critical thinking are some of the [competences](#) in [this model](#) that could help learners adapt to the ambiguity and uncertainty of the present and future crises constructively and innovatively, avoiding the pitfalls of radicalisation leading to violence or authoritarian tendencies.

■ Following the decision by the [25th Session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education](#) in April 2016, the Council of Europe has assisted the States Parties to the [European Cultural Convention](#) in developing and implementing the RFCDC in their national education systems by offering guidance for curriculum development, teaching and learning strategies and assessment. The Council of Europe will continue to help member States strengthen the capacity of their education systems to provide competence-based education for democratic culture. The RFCDC constitutes the basis on which our education systems and institutions will carry on developing competences for democratic culture at all levels and in all strands of education, including and especially in times of crisis.

The RFCDC can be applied to many aspects of the COVID-19 crisis, as its conceptual framework provides useful guidance for developing education material in response to the pandemic.

In the short term, the Council of Europe will:

- ▶ publish a series of twenty activity plans for use in classrooms to make key aspects of the RFCDC easily available to educators in the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention;
- ▶ work with the [Education Policy Advisors' Network](#) (EPAN) and other experts, starting with a conference in Athens on 30 October 2020, to consider CDC responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Equipping teachers and students with the competences required to use digital learning and teaching effectively, safeguarding democratic culture in schools and drawing on the lessons learned in education post-COVID will be prominent features of this work;
- ▶ draw on the outcomes of an [online survey aimed at secondary school teachers](#) from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, launched by the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to better understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student participation and prepare policy and practice responses accordingly.

In the medium to longer-term, the Council of Europe will:

- ▶ promote practical tools for RFCDC implementation ([RFCDC Self- and Peer Reflection Tools for Teachers](#), [Portfolio of Competences for Democratic Culture](#), [Autobiography for Intercultural Encounters](#)) as means for educators and learners to become aware of the competences they have or might yet acquire in order to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 crisis;
- ▶ through the [Democratic Schools Network \(DSN\)](#), support and bring together examples of relevant practice of online or hybrid education delivery in times of crisis;
- ▶ develop a modularised RFCDC Training Pack, which will include a section on the RFCDC as an educational response to societal challenges and crisis situations;
- ▶ through [co-operation and capacity building activities](#), help individual member States put the RFCDC into practice in their national and regional contexts.

## DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

■ The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems across Europe, leading to the near-total closure of schools and cessation of face to face teaching and learning. In a bid to limit the disruption to children's education, national education authorities in many European countries have turned to distance learning, using a variety of technologies ranging from conventional radio and TV broadcasting to online lessons and videoconferencing.

■ [Education for democracy](#) is one of the fundamental aims of quality education and an essential element of the Council of Europe mission in education. It helps young people to be stronger and more confident in controlling their lives and exercising their rights both off- and online, contributes to the development of a wider and more sustainable culture of democracy in society and acts as a bulwark against violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance. [Digital citizenship education](#) has therefore become a crucial aspect of education and training, alongside the development of digital

competences, as it empowers learners through the acquisition of competences for democratic culture to be able to engage competently with evolving digital technologies, participate responsibly in social and civic activities, be involved in lifelong learning and commit to defending democracy, human rights and dignity.

■ The Council of Europe has developed a series of new [lesson plans](#) for educators on topics that are particularly relevant during the present crisis. They are meant to help young learners to discuss important issues such as solidarity, cyberbullying, fake news, living in lockdown, speaking out or ethical shopping. Each lesson plan is designed around a theme corresponding to one of the domains of Digital Citizenship and linked to the learning outcomes set out in the Council of Europe's [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#). The lesson plans can be used in a variety of distance learning situations and adjusted to suit available e-learning platforms or devices, the age of learners, the local context, time on-line and level of digital skills.

■ Parents' role in their children's education has become more prominent during the lockdown. Many had to work from home and address the educational and other needs of their children in new ways. The Council of Europe developed an [info sheet](#) accompanied with a game "Beat the Virus" to help parents keep their children purposefully occupied and learn more about what it means to be a digital citizen. These have been translated into 14 languages and adapted to the local context by volunteer parent associations.

■ In addition, the [Easy steps to help your child become a Digital Citizen](#) leaflet offers a broad range of insights into and ideas about things parents can do with their children to help them understand how and why they share the responsibility of making 'online' a fun and friendly place.

■ A recent Council of Europe [survey on DCE](#) revealed that juggling their work organisation with their children's, balancing their screen time with physical activities, supervising their online activities, struggling with the content requirements from schools and ensuring their wellbeing during the pandemic were among the challenges that parents faced. The results of the survey will inform the policies and resources to be developed in the medium to long term.

■ DCE Promoters, an informal network of education specialists from 21 countries, have contributed to the promotion of digital citizenship education by disseminating the [Digital citizenship education handbook](#) and

the lesson plans in their respective countries. Out of 100 schools in 10 countries which pledged to implement DCE activities, 33 schools successfully completed their projects despite the lockdown.

In the short term, the Council of Europe will:

- ▶ develop a practical guide for parents to help them support their children's distance and/or blended learning;
- ▶ redesign the DCE website to make it more user-friendly and to facilitate access to relevant Council of Europe resources;
- ▶ develop a step-by-step guide to support schools in developing and adapting their policies to digital citizenship education;
- ▶ organise a major videoconference in co-ordination with the French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in November 2020 which aims at raising awareness of educators from around Europe of digital citizenship education.

In the medium to longer-term the Council of Europe will:

- ▶ develop a full-scale online training programme for educators on DCE to contribute their capacity towards teaching effectively in the digital age;
- ▶ create an e-library to bring together DCE-friendly resources developed by third parties aiming to make the DCE website a one-stop-shop for all stakeholders who wish to find reliable or accredited resources.

## THE DEMOCRATIC MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Democratic institutions and laws will not function in practice unless they can build on attitudes and behaviours that accept that minorities have inalienable rights even if majorities decide, that one can learn from the views and practices of others and that diversity is enriching rather than threatening. The Council of Europe's [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#) applies to all levels of education, and a guidance document shows how it can be developed in higher education.

With the US-based [International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy](#), the [International Association of Universities](#) and other partners, the Council of Europe is furthering the [democratic mission of higher education](#) through a series of [Global Fora](#) and books in the [Council of Europe Higher Education Series](#). The Global Forum foreseen for June 2021 will focus on the democratic mission of higher education in furthering sustainable societies and will be adjusted to take account of the COVID-19 pandemic (see below).

The role of higher education institutions in their local communities is a specific aspect of their democratic mission. On the basis of three seminars held in 2017 – 19 and a [book](#), work was launched in early 2020 to define the Council of Europe's role in furthering the local mission of higher education. This work has been somewhat delayed because of the COVID-19 crisis and is now being readjusted to take account of it.

To respond to the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath, and in co-operation with partners, the Council of Europe will through its Education programme:

- ▶ refocus the 2021 Global Forum to incorporate the higher education response to the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath as well as universities' response to the movement for social justice launched during the COVID-19 crisis;
- ▶ hold the Global Forum face to face, if possible, but organise a series of webinars in its preparation and also as a backup solution should a physical conference not be possible;
- ▶ publish a book on the democratic mission of higher education in the COVID-19 crisis in the [Council of Europe Higher Education Series](#), with publication foreseen in early 2021;
- ▶ readjust the work on the local mission of higher education to take account of the impact of COVID-19 crisis in strengthening the role of higher education in furthering a culture of democracy, also in its immediate local environment.

## HISTORY EDUCATION

With language education, history teaching is one of the two specific areas mentioned in the [European Cultural Convention](#). While this mirrors the focus of international co-operation in education when this convention was adopted, less than a decade after the end of World War Two, an awareness of Europe's past remains crucial to understanding its present and developing its future. This is reflected in the importance given to knowledge and critical understanding of history in the [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#). History education is about lessons learned but also about lessons forgotten and a choice of lessons to be learned that is necessarily selective by the weight of the material available.

The Council of Europe is now relaunching its history teaching project after a hiatus of two years with greater focus on the development of democracy and the historical obstacles to it. The intergovernmental programme is complemented by a specific project on [Remembrance of the Holocaust and prevention of crimes against humanity](#) that honours the victims of a particularly dark reality of Europe's recent past and also seeks to bring out the lessons of this unique crime to help avoid crimes against humanity in the future.

This project will also be complemented by a new Enlarged Partial Agreement setting up an Observatory on History Teaching in Europe aiming to establish an overview of the approach to history teaching throughout Europe at different levels of education.

The relaunch of the intergovernmental programme will take account of the COVID-19 crisis by:

- ▶ emphasising the role of history education in developing a culture of democracy;
- ▶ examining how periods and events of the past from which our current societies have important lessons to learn can be reflected in history education, including examples of recovery from and resilience in the face of disasters of the past;
- ▶ developing an understanding among students of how individuals and societies have reacted to disasters and emergencies, stimulating reflection on how the students themselves could have reacted in similar situations;
- ▶ examining the role of public authorities in transmitting historical understanding and memory.

## CO-OPERATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES – FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

A strategic decision was made a decade ago to strengthen support for States Parties to the European Cultural Convention by establishing [capacity building in the Education programme](#). The capacity building projects complement and inform the education policy work through comprehensive projects – from policy to practice. Project results also provide inspiration to other countries and Council of Europe intergovernmental tools. In the COVID-19 crisis, such an approach has proven useful to support ministries of education swiftly, tailored to their specific needs.

One reason [capacity building projects](#) are able to respond rapidly is that they fully reflect the Education programme and were already tackling issues that many education systems are facing, including inequalities, discrimination and bullying in schools. They draw on Council of Europe resources known to ministries of education through the CDPPE such as the [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, quality and inclusive education](#) and [academic integrity](#). Support is tailored to each context and includes policy and legislative expertise, development of resources, teacher education, networking, peer learning and/or community involvement. Some projects require more of a grassroots-to-policy approach. Engaging first with schools and their communities, the Council of Europe offers support to ministries of education to develop evidence-based policies for their entire education systems.

The value of the capacity building projects became even clearer during the COVID-19 pandemic. With education systems facing unprecedented challenges, the projects were able to adjust quickly. With staff based in seven Council of Europe field offices and support from Strasbourg, activities were adapted to the new context. Results include [new resources for teachers and parents teaching on-line](#), [regional webinars on the RFCDC and training](#). These resources were translated and can be used in other contexts. The [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees \(EQPR\)](#) is another example whereby a specific capacity building initiative was launched for [refugees with health-related qualifications to help in the pandemic](#) (cf. the section on the EQPR).

Given these results, the Education programme will continue to promote capacity building projects. Since 2015, some 38 countries have been supported through 37 million Euros of additional, external

funding<sup>4</sup>. The solutions provided through these projects also address issues raised by other bodies of the Council of Europe, including the Human Rights Commissioner Office, anti-discrimination conventions and Parliamentary Assembly resolutions as they seek to fight discrimination, support integrity and transparency in education and combat extremism and violence in schools (cf. the section on Conventions and other bodies).

■ In addition to the education policies and proven project management capacities of the Education programme, both the relevant authorities and donors also appreciate the broader political umbrella the Council of Europe offers. The Council of the European Union stated on 16 June 2020 in its [Conclusions on countering the COVID-19 crisis in education and training](#) (para. 44) the importance of working closely with international organisations such as the Council of Europe. Donors also appreciate the Education programme's strong link with the [UN Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education](#) as well as close co-operation with agencies such as the UNHCR.

■ In addition to these country-specific projects, the Education programme offers a Rapid Reaction Mechanism. This feature is flexible and responds rapidly to member States' needs. It can take the form of advising on a draft education or higher education law or the integration of Council of Europe policies and materials – adapted to each context – into education systems. In the context of the ongoing pandemic, such a mechanism may be useful to adjust policies.

With countries wishing to move from policy to practice - often quickly and creatively, as seen in the COVID-19 pandemic – the Education programme's capacity building projects are uniquely placed to support ministries of education. The Education programme will:

- ▶ promote capacity building projects to expand policy to practice in other member States while at the same time helping to inform the intergovernmental work of the Education programme;
- ▶ support member States' immediate needs through the Rapid Reaction Mechanism;
- ▶ conduct an overview of the results of capacity building projects – in particular in facing the COVID-19 pandemic – to see how they can be used in other contexts.

4. Funding comes from diverse sources, including the European Union (DG EAC and DG NEAR), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, EEA/Norway Grants, thematic Action Plans and voluntary contributions. The Council of Europe core team in Strasbourg works hand-in-hand with the education project staff in Council of Europe field offices.





# INNOVATING THE WAYS IN WHICH WE LEARN AND TEACH

## ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

■ Perhaps more than ever before, the COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of building a culture of trust and ethics in a society, as part of as well as in support of a [culture of democracy](#).

■ Being able to trust the results of academic research because they are grounded on evidence-based information and data, collected in a transparent manner; being able to trust a medical doctor or a nurse because we trust their qualifications, delivered by recognised and quality-assured institutions; being able to trust the information and qualifications delivered by a given higher education institution - these themes are central to the work of the [ETINED Platform](#).

■ As the current health crisis may result in a long-standing crisis of trust towards democratic and scientific institutions, the rejection of fraud and corruption in education has acquired political importance that the Council of Europe ETINED Platform is well placed to serve. Fraud and corruption in education destroy the fundamental cement of our democracies: the trust based on the belief that rules apply equally to everyone. They also destroy legitimate aspirations to quality education, the equal opportunities of children in life and every child's right to fair education based on merit, efforts and achievement. Against this background, ETINED is developing a new political recommendation aimed at countering all forms of education fraud, targeting new types of fraud enabled by the exponential development and use of new technologies and by the prevalent lack of proper legislation on the topic.

■ [Quality education](#) is not only about *what* is taught, it is also about *how* education is transmitted, assessed and fostered. It is therefore indissociable from the values of [ethics, transparency and integrity](#), without which we can have no democracy. The

ETINED Platform has produced [guidelines](#) for ensuring a culture of ethics in the teaching profession. It has developed targeted [recommendations](#) on academic integrity following assessments and exchanges with the actors on the ground. It is also currently working on a programme aimed at promoting best practices in academic integrity, showcasing examples from public and private higher education institutions in Europe.

To respond to the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath, and in consultation with delegations, the Council of Europe ETINED Platform will:

- ▶ hold a Plenary Session in November 2020 devoted to the COVID-19 crisis, the specific ethical issues in education arising from it and responses through education policies;
- ▶ develop its Best practice programme to support higher education institutions in promoting academic integrity;
- ▶ Readjust its working themes, which could include:
  - i) new targeted action on the specific aspects of ethics in research, about the way in which research is conducted, the integrity of results and the way in which these are transmitted to the public;
  - ii) the ethical challenges of the use of Artificial Intelligence in education;
  - iii) the impact of the increasing recourse to “Ed-tech businesses” for online teaching and assessment, and its potential risks for the protection of student data, privacy and security;
  - iv) a reflection on the ethical aspects of the refugee crisis, and the protection of the human dignity of refugees, including in times of crisis.

## ONLINE EDUCATION AND LEARNING

One important feature of the education response to the COVID-19 crisis is the increasing reliance on digital technology to provide solutions to educational challenges. The need to find an alternative to face-to-face learning has spawned numerous experiments in the use of digital technology for education purposes, which have again led to a number of innovations in the use of existing devices and types of software.

The Council of Europe has commissioned a group of experts to explore options for education in a post-pandemic learning environment, with a focus on education for democracy, to analyse existing training programmes and to draw up an online training programme proposal for educators.

In their concept note, the experts stated that the challenge for education for democracy in the post-pandemic learning environment is how to create the experience of democratic life in a 'digital classroom' or 'digital school'. In other words: How can young people be introduced to the process of collective reflection, deliberation, persuasion, compromise and collaborative action, which characterises democratic life, in schools and classrooms which are not defined by any particular physical space? They suggest that meeting this challenge will demand new competences in teachers - conceptual, pedagogical and technological - and claimed that to date little work has been done to scope this new area of teacher competence.

The experts draw attention to the tendency in current thinking to prioritise the personal over the social use of technology in education, which is reflected in the widespread perception that one of the chief educational values of digital technology is its potential to personalise learning, i.e. tailor it to the needs of the individual learner. They indicate that early evidence of the use of technology to support education during lockdown suggests that attempts to provide any form of group learning, let alone learning which is participative or collaborative in nature, are few and far between and often confined to elite forms of education. Yet group learning is the very essence of education for democratic life.

Reflection on the phenomenon of social media shows that the power of digital technology can be harnessed just as much for group as for individual learning. It is this power that teachers will need to develop in creating a form of democratic education appropriate for the post-pandemic world. The Council of Europe Education Programme aims to help this endeavour.

A new Council of Europe online training programme will be developed that will focus on the competences that educators require to meet the challenge of education for democracy in the post-pandemic school. It will:

- ▶ demonstrate how the Council of Europe approach to democratic education can be adapted to a blended learning environment;
- ▶ promote an ethos of critical enquiry and reflection;
- ▶ create opportunities for learners to share ideas and experiences;
- ▶ promote activity-based learning as a rich source of competency development;
- ▶ consider the contribution of a whole-school approach to learning;
- ▶ endeavour to explain complex concepts in simple, practical ways;
- ▶ be flexible and considerate of the needs of a range of learners from different backgrounds.

As the programme is likely to be breaking new ground in this area, it could serve as a model for others working in this field across the member States of the Council of Europe and beyond. It is also envisaged that the practical initiatives developed by learners in the course of the programme will form a valuable resource for further training and professional development activities.

## LEMON – LEARNING MODULES ON-LINE

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted: 1) the ability to adapt quickly to working and learning from home 2) the availability of targeted, easily accessible, self-paced online learning and 3) the necessity to improve rapidly the pedagogical aspects of online learning when online classrooms need to replace physical ones.

Recognising this potential, the [LEMON online platform](#) offers a one-stop place for [Council of Europe resources](#) on topics ranging from democratic competences to digital citizenship, from media literacy to bullying. While the resources and courses mainly target education professionals, they are also of interest to the

general public. They are free of charge. The courses are constructed in three progressive levels so that learners can choose a course according to their needs.

■ The new Key series, launched in spring 2020, provides concentrated information on issues facing today's societies. Targeting busy professionals, two-hour courses provide basic information on specific issues and can also be used as an introduction for more intensive training. The first two online courses – the *Key to Media Literacy and the Key to Competences for Democratic Culture* – will soon be followed by courses on *Democratic School Governance, Dealing with Controversial Issues and Preventing Cyberbullying*.

■ 11 [online self-learning courses](#) on priority Council of Europe topics are currently offered. These courses last 5 to 25 hours and a certificate of completion is awarded. In the autumn of 2020, the self-learning course *Competences for Democratic Culture* will be available.

■ [Tutored Master classes](#) of about 35 participants with nominations through the Steering Committee on Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE) started in 2019 and continue in 2020. The first Master Class, *Media and Information Disorder*, helps learners to develop critical thinking skills to enable them to identify reliable information in news reports and other sources. A second Master class on *Competences for Democratic Culture* is expected to be launched in 2021.

■ With interest in LEMON steadily increasing, the Education programme will:

- ▶ develop additional topics including methodologies on effective teaching and learning on-line following the principles of school democratic culture. This topic is of specific interest in the education sector both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic;
- ▶ upon request from member States, adapt courses to national languages and contexts;
- ▶ continue to expand the technical capacities of the platform.



# ASSESSING AND RECOGNISING QUALIFICATIONS

## RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

Fair and easy [recognition of foreign qualification](#), i.e. giving them value in another education system, is essential to professional and personal mobility across Europe. The Council of Europe/UNESCO [Lisbon Recognition Convention \(LRC\)](#), adopted in 1997, is the key international standard facilitating the recognition of higher education qualifications as well as secondary school leaving qualifications giving access to higher education. The LRC has been [ratified](#) by 54 countries and supplemented by [subsidiary texts](#) adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC). It is implemented primarily through the [European Network of National Information Centres on recognition \(ENIC Network\)](#), in close co-operation with the [NARIC Network of the European Union](#).

When national information centres (ENICs) had to close as countries went into lockdown in spring 2020, almost all were able to devise alternative procedures to ensure applicants' right to fair recognition, enshrined in the LRC, Article II.1: "Holders of qualifications issued in one of the Parties shall have adequate access, upon request to the appropriate body, to an assessment of these qualifications". The article further stipulates that this right shall not be subject to discrimination, in language consonant with the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>5</sup>. A disruption in access to fair recognition would disrupt academic and professional mobility, make it difficult for individuals to enrol in

5. No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, or on the grounds of any other circumstance not related to the merits of the qualification for which recognition is sought. In order to assure this right, each Party undertakes to make appropriate arrangements for the assessment of an application for recognition of qualifications solely on the basis of the knowledge and skills achieved.

study programmes outside of their country of origin and reduce access to employment. Solutions will need to be found to recognise qualifications earned in study programmes that were interrupted.

Article III.2 stipulates that "[e]ach Party shall ensure that the procedures and criteria used in the assessment and recognition of qualifications are transparent, coherent and reliable". A [survey](#) conducted in March/April 2020 shows that most ENICs shifted to remote working while facing challenges ranging from legal obligations to use paper-based procedures through imperfectly developed digital workflows to lack of access to student records due to the closure of higher education institutions. The annual meeting of the ENIC and NARIC Networks was transformed from a face to face meeting in June 2020 to a series of shorter online sessions and webinars.

In the medium to longer-term, the Council of Europe/Education Programme will support the LRCC and the ENIC and NARIC Networks in developing proposals to improve the response of national centres and the Networks in the face of crises by:

- ▶ encouraging a review of the legal and other requirements preventing online processing of applications;
- ▶ identifying measures to support the fair recognition of disrupted learning;
- ▶ organising peer learning activities to draw conclusions from the immediate COVID-19 response.

Specific action was also taken to ensure the fair recognition of qualifications held by refugees, see the [European Qualification Passport for Refugees](#) below.

## LANGUAGE EDUCATION

■ The protection and promotion of Europe's rich linguistic and cultural heritage have been cornerstones of the Council of Europe since the [European Cultural Convention](#) (1954). Access to this heritage comes through the provision of lifelong quality language education which is based on learner needs and is inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural. By viewing the learner as "an active agent in a participatory, pluralist democratic society" ([Trim 2002: 18](#)), quality language education contributes to social cohesion and democratic citizenship.

■ [The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages \(CEFR\)](#): Learning, teaching, assessment sets transparent, coherent and comprehensive European standards for the development of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials and the assessment of language proficiency. By providing a metalanguage for discussing the complexity of language proficiency for all citizens in a multilingual and intercultural Europe, it stimulates reflection and exchange between language professionals for curriculum development and in teacher education. It also facilitates greater social mobility and promotes quality plurilingual and intercultural education. The recently published [CEFR Companion Volume](#) broadens the scope of language education, with extended CEFR descriptors, including descriptors for mediation, online interaction, plurilingual/pluricultural competence and sign language competences. The related instrument for learners, [the European Language Portfolio \(ELP\)](#), allows users to record their language learning achievements and their experience of learning and using languages. In this way it supports the development of learner autonomy, plurilingualism and intercultural awareness and competence.

■ In order to ensure the continued provision of quality language education during lockdown, a [dedicated section on language education](#) on the Council of Europe's COVID-19 education website provided member States with links to the CEFR, the ELP and to related resources for their implementation. The use of these key instruments at the levels of curricula and formative assessment helped facilitate valid alternative assessment where external examinations could not take place and ensure the recognition of prior learning at transition points within education systems. In addition, the [European Centre for Modern Languages \(ECML\)](#) created an online [treasure chest](#) of resources for learners, parents and teachers in times of confinement.

In the short term, the Council of Europe language policy programme will publish case studies on the implementation of the CEFR Companion Volume and launch the publication process of the French version. Additionally, reader-friendly explanations of key concepts will be prepared and put on the CEFR website.

The ECML will organise a series of webinars for different target groups involved in language education, including a webinar dedicated to the promotion and implementation of an electronic European Language Portfolio.

In the short-to-medium term, the ECML will continue to offer Training and Consultancy in [relating language curricula, tests and examinations to the CEFR](#). A FAQ section will be created to respond to typical false claims and misunderstandings of the CEFR.

In the medium to longer-term, the language policy programme will promote the CEFR Companion Volume and reorganise the CEFR website to enhance accessibility and user-friendliness. The ECML will host a series of online think tanks to review the impact of the pandemic on language education and consider what action needs to be taken to ensure a sustainable future for quality language education.

A draft recommendation on the contribution of plurilingual education to democracy will be prepared and submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption. This draft recommendation will further develop the relationship between plurilingual competences and competences for living in culturally diverse democratic societies.

By the end of its current programme, the ECML will have produced two new resources linked to the CEFR Companion Volume: an [implementation toolbox for teacher educators](#) and a [guide to linguistic mediation for primary and secondary language teachers](#).

## EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS PASSPORT FOR REFUGEES

■ As European countries struggle with the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, the Education programme offers a concrete solution to support national health systems. While the pandemic has subsided in the summer, in most European countries special precautions

will continue for a long time, staff will be unable to continue working at the current level of intensity and the danger of a second COVID-19 wave cannot be discounted.

■ Joining forces with the UNHCR, the Education programme launched a tailored initiative for refugees with health care backgrounds through its [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees project \(EQPR\)](#)<sup>6</sup>. The EQPR is a specially developed assessment scheme to help States assess refugees' qualifications even when these cannot be fully documented and to enable their holders to continue their studies or to find a job relevant to their qualifications. The EQPR helps States Parties to the [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#) implement Article VII on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation. It is mentioned in the [Recommendation](#) adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in November 2017.

■ At the beginning of the pandemic, 46 EQPR holders with health-related qualifications were identified in order to support national authorities in their efforts. By mid-July, 20 additional online evaluations had been organised in France, Greece and Italy for refugees with health-related qualifications. The UNHCR engaged with partners to find innovative ways to reach out to refugee communities and facilitate access to these online evaluations. Given that most medical professions are tightly regulated, the EQPR can be a first step towards professional licensing by the relevant national health authority or a job in a health-related field under the supervision of a fully licensed health professional.

■ The mobilisation of partners contributing to national responses addressing the pandemic translated into high level political support. This included a [joint initiative by the Council of Europe's Secretary General and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) and increased interest in the possible role of the EQPR in this regard, including articles in [TIME Magazine](#) and [University World News](#). Interest among member States has grown and two new countries joined the initiative in 2020, bringing the number to eleven. The French Ministry of Interior has also become an active partner in the EQPR.

6. The EQPR was launched in 2017 by the Council of Europe and now involves recognition centres from 11 countries (Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania and the United Kingdom) as well as public authorities and the UNHCR. It receives financial support from Belgium (Flemish government), Georgia, Greece, Italy, Monaco, and Norway.

■ In addition to the focus on health-related fields, the EQPR was also more broadly used and accepted in other parts of the labour market as well as in higher education institutions. For the first time EQPR holders will be able to use their EQPR to [apply for a scholarship](#) in Italy for the academic year 2020-2021, and the EQPR is promoted on French official sources such as [EtudiantGouv](#).

■ By the end of July 2020, 609 refugees had benefited from the programme across Europe with a success rate of around 83 per cent.

Recognising the contributions that refugees can offer to their new communities, the EQPR provides a reliable and well-established method for assessing refugees' qualifications even when these cannot be adequately documented. Its adaptability was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic and can be upscaled in similar contexts for access to the labour market as well as to higher education. Steps to achieve this aim include:

- ▶ providing many more refugees with adequate access to an assessment of their qualifications in view of obtaining the EQPR;
- ▶ acceptance by all States Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention of the EQPR as a valid assessment for purposes of access to further study and/or the non-regulated parts of the labour market. The EQPR may also facilitate access to preparation for the exams giving access to regulated professions and/or facilitate partial recognition for study programmes qualifying for regulated professions;
- ▶ giving EQPR holders the opportunity to support health institutions and systems by working under the supervision of fully licensed health professionals;
- ▶ acceptance and endorsement of the EQPR in the Communiqué to be adopted by the 2020 Rome Ministerial Conference of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on 19 November;
- ▶ expanded use and acceptance of the EQPR among universities and employers as well as the bodies responsible for the recognition of qualifications.





# ENSURING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE STUDENTS

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## QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

■ Inclusive education is part and parcel of the Education programme's approach to [quality education](#) and is primarily intended to a) safeguard the right to education for all learners and b) strengthen the role of education in [building inclusive and cohesive societies](#).

■ Education plays a key role in building inclusive societies and it must itself be inclusive. It is through education that young people develop European values, a sense of community and solidarity, learn to value and embrace diversity and become active and engaged members of society. Education helps learners from disadvantaged backgrounds break the cycle of marginalisation.

■ Ensuring access to quality on-line education at all levels for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds has been a key concern during the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to be so in the medium to long term. Addressing this concern requires resources, stronger policies and improved competences of education professionals. It requires not only endowing all learners with the technical means for remote learning, but also ensuring that they have the skills to use them, get the necessary guidance from their caregivers and educators and that teachers have the competences to provide quality on-line teaching adapted to the needs of all learners. Educators, institutions and other learners need to embrace an inclusion ethos to ensure a safe and enabling learning environment.

■ The Council of Europe has developed a wealth of tools and resources on inclusive education that can help respond to these needs. The [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#) (RFCDC) encourages the development of competences for life in democratic and inclusive societies at all levels of education. [Digital citizenship education](#) helps all children to become competent digital citizens able to participate actively and responsibly in democratic societies both online and offline.

■ Recognising that [language](#) is crucial for enabling access to education and that language lies at the heart of all learning, a wide range of [resources](#) is offered to support the learning and teaching of all languages, including sign language. This holistic approach to language education fosters such values as inclusivity and diversity.

■ Refugees are supported through the [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#), the [Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants](#) and a future Academy for Democratic Leadership for Persons with a Refugee Background, as part of the [Network of Schools of Political Studies](#).

■ In addition, the [co-operation and capacity building programme](#) offers tailored support to member States to strengthen inclusive education policies and practices and to promote inclusive and democratic school environments. The projects are transversal, in that they often address issues related to education raised by conventions or other bodies, such as the Human Rights Commissioner's comment [Inclusive education vital for social cohesion in diverse societies](#) (cf. the section on conventions).

Support is provided at all levels: policy, development of resources, training and fostering a whole school approach. Results include an Action Plan for Inclusive Education, adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2019. Tools such as the [teacher education kit developed within a regional EU/Council of Europe project in the Western Balkans](#) have become references in the field of inclusive education and have been used by education authorities in other settings. [Networks of inclusive schools](#) were created in the Western Balkans with the ethos “An inclusive school is a school where every child is welcome, every parent is involved and every teacher is valued”.

While vulnerable groups are supported, including children with special needs, Roma, children from rural areas – indeed, any child who may be excluded from the education system – the Education programme’s approach is holistic, combining targeted support to vulnerable groups while convincing the “majority” of the benefits of inclusiveness and diversity in schools and communities.

Building on this expertise, in the medium to long term the Council of Europe will focus its work on inclusive education on:

- ▶ supporting member States in developing and implementing inclusive education policies that ensure quality education provision to all learners, on-line and in person;
- ▶ continuing its holistic approach, combining targeted support to vulnerable groups while convincing the “majority” of the benefits of inclusiveness and diversity in schools and communities;
- ▶ developing and delivering teacher training programmes to enhance teachers’ competences in child and youth-centred teaching and learning;
- ▶ developing programmes and tools for parents to enable them to provide education support to their children;
- ▶ promoting the integration of digital citizenship education and media literacy in school curricula;
- ▶ facilitating the sharing of best practices in the field of inclusive education through its inter-governmental bodies and the co-operation and capacity building programme.

## THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN ENSURING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

By promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, quality language education places democratic citizenship and human rights at the core of learning and teaching. It values all the languages in a learner’s repertoire – the different languages learners bring with them to the classroom or workplace, the language/s of instruction as well as all languages offered within the curriculum. It brings languages and the language used in different subjects into contact with one other, helping learners to develop integrated communicative repertoires. It provides access to intercultural learning, essential for the acceptance of difference and the exercise of democratic citizenship. Quality language education is therefore inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural.

Such an approach goes beyond the classroom, with implications for other education stakeholders, including decision-makers, leaders of education institutions, teacher educators and parents. The successful implementation of this holistic approach to language education leads to more effective learning overall and to the academic success of the most vulnerable learners, thereby enhancing social cohesion.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the [European Centre for Modern Languages](#) (ECML) organised a [webinar](#) for language teachers in English, French and German to demonstrate how technology can be used to promote interaction in online learning in tandem with the promotion of a new resource website focusing on critical digital pedagogy in language education. Within its [online treasure chest of resources](#), it provided curriculum planners and school leaders with [a range of tools](#) for promoting sustainable linguistic and cultural diversity.

In the short term, the language policy programme will publish a reference guide to support adult migrants develop basic literacy skills.

In the medium-to-longer term:

- ▶ It will fund a policy experimentation project on the role of the Romani language in the educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents. This project aims to enhance the understanding of the Council of Europe’s concept of plurilingual education and how this can be translated into classroom practice that secures the educational inclusion of pupils from linguistic minorities.

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- ▶ Beyond the current work programme, it could commission a group of experts to extract, highlight and render more accessible key messages, resources and examples of good practice for different target groups involved in language education - decision-makers, school leaders, teacher educators and teachers – from [the platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education](#).

In the short term, the ECML will organise a series of webinars for different target groups involved in language education, including a webinar for school leaders on holistic approaches to language education and another for teacher educators on the kind of competences required of language teachers to implement such a holistic approach.

In the short and medium term, it will continue to offer a range of online/hybrid or face-to-face capacity-building activities ([ECML Training and Consultancy](#)) to support the implementation of inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural language education in different national contexts.

By the end of its current programme, the ECML will have produced a range of new resources for language education stakeholders, including instruments for [assessing the language competences of migrant children](#), scenarios for the development of [teacher competences for pluralistic approaches](#) and a pedagogical framework to deliver critical [digital citizenship through language education](#).



# WORKING WITH OTHERS

## EDUCATION PROGRAMME LINKS WITH CONVENTIONS AND ORGANS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

■ The Education programme is the Council of Europe's main instrument for ensuring the right to education, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter, and for developing a culture of democracy, human rights and the rule of law through education. In addition, the Education programme contributes to the implementation of conventions and the work of Council of Europe bodies in other areas in so far as these address education issues.

■ While the [European Cultural Convention](#) is the main legal basis for the Council of Europe's activities in education and culture and the [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#) is devoted exclusively to education, other conventions and organs of the CoE<sup>7</sup> also address education - and increasingly so as inequalities in education grow due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ The Education programme therefore also plays an essential role in supporting member States to honour their obligations while at the same time honouring their commitments with regard to conventions and organs. With its rich array of policies and resources, combined with the regular and close connection with the relevant education authorities through the [Steering Committee on Education Policy and Practice \(CDPPE\)](#), the [Education Policy Advisors Network \(EPAN\)](#), the Council of Europe [Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education \(ETINED\)](#), and the [Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee](#) and the [ENIC Network](#), the Education programme

is uniquely placed to provide credible and sustainable solutions to many issues raised in convention monitoring reports.

■ The Education programme's co-operation and capacity building projects have demonstrated the added value of supporting member States to develop policies and practices in a variety of fields, from inclusive education to the promotion of a culture of democracy, ethics and integrity and, more recently, providing education opportunities for refugees, to name just a few. The projects are based on Council of Europe standards, including conventions and recommendations, and operate within Council of Europe's strategic triangle of standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation/capacity building. Other institutions and organisations, in particular the European Commission, consider this strategic triangle to be an essential feature of the Council of Europe. For some external funding, demonstrating this link is a *conditio sine qua non*.

■ In carrying out these programmes, while references emanate from various sources, the Education Department draws upon the standards and materials developed by the CDPPE. As a result of this direct relationship with the education ministries, countries feel an ownership from the very beginning of a project, thereby increasing chances of success and sustainability. The Education programme's approach is also holistic, combining targeted support to vulnerable groups cited in conventions while convincing the "majority" of the benefits of inclusiveness and diversity in schools and communities.

■ The long-standing, recognised achievements of the Education programme also benefit related conventions and monitoring mechanisms. In addition to enhancing the quality of monitoring results, by linking the Education programme more closely to conventions and monitoring mechanisms, the impact of the Education programme will be extended to other areas.

7. [European Convention on Human Rights](#), the [European Social Charter](#) and anti-discrimination conventions such as the [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#), the [European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#), the [Charter for Regional or Minority Languages](#), as well as the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe](#), the [Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE \(PACE\)](#) and the [Human Rights Commissioner's reports](#)

With growing inequalities in education provision and opportunities due to the COVID-19 crisis, the Education programme is uniquely placed to provide credible solutions to issues raised in conventions and other monitoring reports. The Education Programme will:

- ▶ develop new standards in the education field, including a framework policy document on education fraud;
- ▶ continue to support member States in honouring their commitments in conventions and other standard-setting texts through tailored co-operation and capacity building projects;
- ▶ highlight the relevance of the Education programme to a wider audience as a credible support to governments in honouring their commitments in the field of education;
- ▶ conduct a mapping of provisions of relevance to education in Council of Europe conventions, monitoring reports, standard setting texts and organs. The issues raised in monitoring reports and organs will be matched with proposed solutions developed within the Education Programme.

## WORKING WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

■ To address common challenges and reach common objectives, the Council of Europe Education Programme works with other international governmental and non-governmental organisations and institutions based on the specificity of its mandate to support democracy, human rights and the rule of law through education.

■ The Council of Europe **contributes** to the United Nations **Strategic Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education** through its membership of the SDG 4 Steering Committee, as a representative of Europe, as well as through its work on inclusive quality education, including competences for democratic culture and language education, but also through its work on higher education and the recognition of qualifications, its efforts to improve education

provision for refugees, its support for the **European Higher Education Area** and the **democratic mission of higher education** and its work on strengthening integrity and combatting corruption in education.

■ The Education Programme has worked closely with the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**, in particular in the context of implementation of the joint Council of Europe/UNESCO **Lisbon Recognition Convention**, which furthers the fair recognition of qualifications. Co-operation with UNESCO's **International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP)** centres around ethics and corruption in education. Moreover, the Council of Europe and UNESCO have launched an **online survey aimed at secondary school teachers** from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, the outcome of which will help understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student participation and prepare policy and practice responses accordingly.

■ A close partnership at the operational level has been established with the **United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)** to promote and implement the Council of Europe's **European Qualifications Passport for Refugees**. This work has included a **joint Council of Europe and UNHCR statement** encouraging member States to benefit from the support refugee health professionals can provide to national health systems in the COVID-19 context.

■ The Council of Europe enjoys observer status with the Education Policy Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

■ The European Union (EU) is a key partner in achieving common objectives in education both in EU Member States and in the Western Balkans, Turkey and the Eastern Partnership Countries. The **European Union priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe 2020-2022**, which acknowledge the challenges to democracy brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, stress the importance of civic education as a necessary medium and long-term contribution to the resilience of democracies. The document makes specific reference to the Council of Europe's **Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture** and its contribution to equipping young people with the necessary competences for promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, complementing the democracy support work of the EU. It also underlines that the EU and the Council of Europe will continue their co-operation in the fields of language education and education for digital citizenship.

■ Co-operation with the EU in the field of education has been mainly in the form of [joint co-operation and capacity building projects](#) supporting tailor made initiatives to promote quality and corruption free education systems in member States. The Council of Europe Education Programme also supports the European Commission's initiative to establish a [European Education Area](#) to ensure that education and training contribute to economic growth, social cohesion and a strong sense of European identity.

■ The Council of Europe has contributed to the development of the [European Higher Education Area](#) (EHEA) since the launch of the Bologna Process in 1999. In addition to playing a key role in the governing bodies of the EHEA, the Council of Europe has a leading part in the EHEA's work on academic freedom, institutional autonomy, ethics and student and staff participation in higher education governance as well as in the development of structural reforms (qualifications frameworks, recognition, quality assurance) and in providing advice to newer and prospective members of the EHEA. Membership of the EHEA is open to States Parties to the [European Cultural Convention](#) whose component authorities commit in writing to implementing EHEA principles and goals.

■ Non-governmental organisations contribute to many aspects of the Council of Europe Education programme, from competences for democratic culture and the democratic mission of higher education to language and history education. 13 NGOs as well as the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe participate in the work of the [Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice](#) (CDPPE). The [European Wergeland Centre](#) is a privileged Council of Europe partner.

In addition to the joint measures with other international organisations and institutions mentioned elsewhere in this Roadmap for Action, the Council of Europe will continue this co-operation on the basis of its acquis and experience in order to:

- ▶ contribute to a multilateral approach in addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to education and in supporting more sustainable and resilient education systems in member States;
- ▶ further promote the use of Council of Europe's RFCDC and other tools as instruments for developing democratic competences through education by other international organisations;
- ▶ contribute to the establishment of the European Education Area to promote quality inclusive education based on common European values for all learners in Europe.



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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