MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2030 "LEARNERS FIRST"



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CONTEXT

The Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024–2030 "*Learners First — Education for Today's and Tomorrow's Democratic Societies*" builds on the commitments made at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government in Reykjavik and was adopted at the 26th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education on 28–29 September 2023.

Three main pillars guide the Strategy — Renewing the Democratic and Civic Mission of Education; Enhancing the Social Responsibility and Responsiveness of Education; and Advancing Education through a Human Rights-based Digital Transformation — supported by five cross-cutting principles: adaptable curricula; inclusion and participation; development opportunities for education professionals; flexible learning environments; and participatory, democratic governance.

This mid-term report, drawn up at the mid-point of the Strategy, during its first phase of implementation (2024–2027), and presented at the 27th Session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, on 3-4 December 2026 in Podgorica, Montenegro (hereafter referred to as 'the Ministerial Conference'), synthesises the most significant strategic developments at European level, shows how the Strategy contributes to the three pillars of the New Democratic Pact for Europe:

- Learning and Practising Democracy;
- Protecting Democracy;
- Innovating for Democracy.

Further, the report prepares the transition to the second phase (2028–2031). In line with the Council of Europe's quadrennial programming cycle, the second phase extends beyond the 2030 horizon of the Strategy so as to ensure continuity of action between the final evaluation of the Strategy, foreseen for 2030, and the adoption of the Council of Europe's education priorities beyond 2030.

OBJECTIVES

The review is a strategic stocktaking exercise: it highlights the key results of the first phase of the Strategy and sets directions for the second phase (2028–2031), allowing initiatives to be adjusted to emerging societal developments. Its main objectives are to:

- provide a concise overview of key achievements and strategic advances in 2024–2026, within the first phase of implementation of the Strategy;
- illustrate how the three strategic pillars and cross-cutting principles have been operationalised in practice at European level;
- demonstrate how the Strategy and its key results contribute to the New Democratic Pact for Europe;
- highlight the added value of the Strategy as a coherent framework for intergovernmental cooperation in education;
- provide a basis for adjusting the second phase (2028–2031), in view of the final evaluation foreseen for 2030.

SCOPE

The review covers the period from January 2024 to December 2026. It focuses on "key results" at European and intergovernmental level, including standard-setting processes, policy frameworks and cooperation activities enabled by the Strategy. It does not include assessments of national implementation of the Strategy. Chapter V presents the results of Council of Europe co-operation programmes delivered in partnership with national authorities.

DEFINITION OF "KEY RESULTS"

For the purposes of this exercise, a "key result" is understood as a development reflecting qualitative or strategic progress under the Strategy, such as:

- a strategic or political milestone (e.g. launch, endorsement or formal initiation of a process);
- a structural development, including the establishment of a new framework, mechanism or governance arrangement;
- the consolidation or scaling-up of an existing Council of Europe instrument within the framework of the Strategy;
- enhanced visibility, coherence or policy traction of a priority area at European level.

Routine activities, isolated events or internal procedural steps are not considered for inclusion in the review.

KEY RESULTS UNDER EACH OF THE THREE PRIORITY PILLARS

This chapter presents the key results of the first implementation phase, organised by priority pillar. Within each pillar, results are grouped according to the four types of key result defined in Chapter III: strategic and political milestones; structural developments; the consolidation or scaling-up of existing Council of Europe instruments; and enhanced visibility, coherence or policy traction at European level. The number of entries varies between pillars and reflects the differing nature of the work rather than its relative importance. Each result is set out in the same way: the result itself, why it matters for democracy, and the Council of Europe's distinctive value added.

PILLAR 1: RENEWING THE DEMOCRATIC AND CIVIC MISSION OF EDUCATION

This pillar reaffirms the Council of Europe's foundational commitment to preparing learners for life as active citizens in democratic societies, an objective made more urgent by the pressures on democracy across Europe.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS: NEW FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1 European Space for Citizenship Education (ESCE)

- Establishing a shared European framework for quality Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC). It is composed of three key pillars: a list of ten codified principles drawn from the Council of Europe acquis, a shared quality framework, and co-operation mechanisms supported by a digital platform and tools;
- The ESCE gives member states practical instruments to reinforce the learning and practice of democracy, at a moment when democratic culture faces sustained pressure;
- A pan-European framework built on 30 years of Council of Europe acquis, filling a long-standing policy gap and facilitating mutual learning among member states.

STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL MILESTONES

2 Report on the Legal Protections of academic freedom and the feasibility of a Council of Europe convention

- A Secretariat report, prepared for the Ministerial Conference, mapping existing legal protections for academic freedom in member states and assessing the feasibility of a Council of Europe convention; it concludes that such a convention is feasible and identifies a specialised convention as the option offering the greatest added value;
- It gives member states an evidence base for deciding how best to reinforce the normative framework protecting academic freedom, institutional autonomy and the integrity of public debate — a direct contribution to "Protecting Democracy";
- Subject to the decisions of member states, it could open the way to the first dedicated European legal standard on academic freedom, in full alignment with the European Convention on Human Rights.

3 European Student Rights Charter

- Responding to the call of the 26th session of the Standing Conference (Strasbourg, 2023) for a Council of Europe instrument on student rights, the Charter is in the final stage of drafting together with the European Students' Union (ESU). It will be the first pan-European standard-setting instrument stating minimum rights for all higher education students, whatever their nationality, cycle or mode of study;
- Grounded in the Council of Europe's human rights acquis, it rests on the principle that student rights, student participation and democratic governance of higher education reinforce one another, and sets out the corresponding responsibilities of students, institutions and public authorities, together with monitoring and review mechanisms;
- The draft will be submitted to the CDEDU in March 2027, with a view to its adoption by the Committee of Ministers as a Recommendation to member states.

CONSOLIDATION AND SCALING-UP OF EXISTING COUNCIL OF EUROPE INSTRUMENTS

4 Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) in Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- Groundbreaking policy guidance on developing a culture of democracy within VET, supported by two publications: the "Anthology on Learning Democracy in Vocational Education and Training in Europe" (2025), and the "Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) Guidance Document for Vocational Education and Training" (2024), extensive country examples of RFCDC implementation within VET, and active policy leadership in the sector;
- It extends "Learning and Practising Democracy" to nearly half of young Europeans in secondary education enrolled in VET; supporting democratic and inclusive participation in the world of work;
- Positions the Council of Europe as a leader in VET-related citizenship education, with its guidance now a reference point for EU and national policymaking.

5 EDC in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

- The Council of Europe's first publication on fostering EDC in early childhood education and care, opening a new field of action developed in close connection to the European Space for Citizenship Education;
- It contributes to "Learning and Practising Democracy" by clarifying how socialisation, participation and openness to diversity take shape in the earliest years;
- Closes a gap in both policy and practice by providing clarity, guidance, and practical tools for policymakers and practitioners working with young children and families.

6 Toolkit for Democratic and Inclusive School Culture

- A suite of practical resources for policymakers, school leaders, teachers, students and families, supporting the right to quality education for every learner through inclusive and democratic school cultures;
- It reinforces participation, inclusion and social cohesion in schools and removes barriers to equal access to education;
- It translates years of Council of Europe expertise in co-operation projects into ready-to-use tools for diverse national and local settings.

7 Operational Guidelines for Education for Democratic Citizenship

- Practical, evidence-based guidance for national authorities, education leaders and practitioners on strengthening EDC, building on the New Democratic Pact for Europe, the ESCE, the Charter on EDC/HRE and the RFCDC;
- It translates three decades of Council of Europe standards into practical recommendations across five areas — curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, teacher education and the whole-school approach — for all stages and forms of education, from early childhood to VET and non-formal learning;
- It gives member states a single, practical entry point to the Council of Europe acquis on education for democratic citizenship.

ENHANCED VISIBILITY, COHERENCE AND POLICY TRACTION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

8 Integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)

- Provides guidance on aligning competences for democratic culture with education for sustainable development (ESD), including through the "Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) Guidance Document for Education for Sustainable Development" (2025), enabling member states to address environmental challenges with citizenship at the core;
- Strengthens the resilience and cohesion of education systems and prepares learners to act as democratic citizens in response to environmental and climate-related challenges;
- Creates a European bridge between ESD and democratic culture, offering a common language across international ESD frameworks, including UNESCO ESD, GreenComp and OECD PISA, while reducing fragmentation and supporting coherent European benchmarks.

9 The Erosion of Academic Freedom in Europe Report

- A comprehensive mapping of threats to academic freedom across member states, accompanied by actionable recommendations;
- It safeguards the spaces for debate and inquiry that shape future citizens — a direct contribution to protecting democracy;
- The first shared European policy reference and data baseline on academic freedom, raising visibility and prompting collective action.

IN BRIEF FOR MINISTERS

Key results under Pillar 1 have given Europe its first shared principles and quality framework for education for democratic citizenship, together with the tools to put them into practice at all levels of education, from early childhood education and care to vocational education and training and higher education. They have also provided the evidence base and the feasibility assessment needed to strengthen the protection of academic freedom — essential contributions to democratic resilience.

PILLAR 2: ENHANCING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF EDUCATION

This pillar acknowledges the great diversity of learners' needs and aspirations and seeks to ensure that education responds to them, recognising learners as social actors and valuing their participation and voice. It places particular emphasis on inclusivity, plurilingualism and intercultural competences, while keeping education responsive and resilient in times of crisis.

STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL MILESTONES

1 Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)6 on Qualifications and Linguistic Competences of Refugees in Europe

- Guidance for member states on the fair and timely recognition of the qualifications of refugees and displaced persons, and on the validation of their skills and competences for further studies or employment;
- It supports the full implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention with regard to refugees, draws on the Council of Europe acquis on language and intercultural competences, and prepares member states for possible future refugee crises;
- It reinforces the goal to "Protect Democracy" by enabling refugees to participate equitably in society and engage as active citizens.

2 Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)XX on History Education in the Digital Age

- Principles and policy guidance for quality history education that addresses the risks and opportunities of digital transformation (combating manipulation, fostering critical digital literacy);
- It equips learners to assess sources critically, recognise disinformation, hate speech, historical denialism and false narratives, and engage with the past through evidence-based, multiperspectival approaches, supporting the capacity of education systems to form informed, critical and responsible citizens;
- The first pan-European reference for renewing curricula and teacher training to address historical disinformation and misinformation online and digital manipulation of the past.

3 Draft Convention on the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications

- A draft Council of Europe convention on the conditions of transparency and quality assurance for the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications, prepared by an Intergovernmental Drafting Group of 20 member states established under the mandate of the CDEDU, which has held five meetings between April and December 2026 with a view to the adoption of the text by the Committee of Ministers in 2027;
- It removes obstacles to the mobility of students and graduates, supporting fair access to further studies and employment across Europe and the participation of all learners in democratic life;
- It would be the first Council of Europe treaty setting common conditions for the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications, complementing the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS:
NEW FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

4 ETINED Platform – Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education

- Advances ethics, transparency and integrity in education through the development of key resources and initiatives, including:
  - the "Glossary of Terms Related to Ethics and Integrity in Education" (2024), which provides a shared framework and common understanding of key terms;
  - the "Student Perceptions and Awareness of Education Fraud" (2025) publication, based on a dedicated survey, providing evidence of students' experiences, perceptions and awareness of education fraud;
  - the establishment in 2025 of the Centre for Preventing and Countering Education Fraud, providing a dedicated mechanism for cooperation, knowledge exchange and capacity-building to prevent and counter education fraud; and
  - the publication "Open School Data in European Education Systems" (2025), which lays the groundwork for developing Open School Data Policy Guidelines.
- Contributes to the prevention of corruption and supports "Learning and Practising Democracy" by fostering transparent, accountable and equitable education environments, and facilitates co-operation and peer learning among member states through the ETINED Platform.

5 EDURES Toolkit – Education in Emergencies and Crisis Situations

- A toolkit, with guidelines and a preparedness matrix, helping education systems prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies such as conflicts, natural disasters and pandemics; piloted in Albania and Italy and presented at the 2025 World Forum for Democracy;
- Safeguards the right to quality education in times of crisis, conflict or disaster, sustaining democratic culture and inclusion under stress;
- Mainstreams European experience, links education response to wider peacebuilding and recovery efforts, and contributes to the commitments of the UN Transforming Education Summit, including the initiative "Education in Crisis Situations: A Commitment to Action".

6 Council of Europe Gender Equality in Education Scorecard

- Development of the Scorecard framework that measures the level of gender equality mainstreaming in education for both policy makers and education institutions, based on Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in education and developed together with the Gender Equality Commission (GEC).
- Contributes to all three pillars of the New Democratic Pact by providing an innovative tool for learning and practising democracy, which also aims to protect it through the development of broader gender equality in education within member states. The Scorecard supports the integration of gender equality into education policies and institutional practices, strengthening inclusive democratic cultures and contributing to democratic security in member states.
- The piloting phase of the policy maker scorecard is foreseen for 2027, whilst the further development of the education institution scorecard is foreseen for phase two (2028-2031).

CONSOLIDATION AND SCALING-UP OF EXISTING COUNCIL OF EUROPE INSTRUMENTS

7 Implementation of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees

- An established co-operation framework involving 24 countries and a growing network of national authorities and recognition centres, applying a proven methodology to assess refugees' qualifications when documentary evidence is missing or incomplete;
- Opens access to further studies and employment for refugees, supporting their inclusion and participation in democratic life;
- Reinforced co-operation between the EQPR and the UNESCO Qualifications Passport (UQP) provides a solid mechanism for implementing both the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Global Recognition Convention.

8 Implementation of the CoE/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention (ETS 165)

- The updated "Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education" (2025) strengthened transparency, quality assurance and learner protection in transnational education while addressing digital provision, artificial intelligence and education fraud;
- The updated ENIC-NARIC Charter (2025) reinforced the networks' mandate, governance and cooperation in promoting fair, transparent and efficient recognition of qualifications.

9 Policy instruments and publications for plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture

- Launch of "Towards Plurilingual and Intercultural Education – Reflection and Planning Survey Tool for lower-secondary level and Policy Toolbox":
  - A reflection and planning survey tool for lower-secondary education and a policy toolbox supporting the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1;
  - A direct response to polarisation, disinformation and anti-plurilingual narratives, helping restore trust by making democracy tangible in everyday education;
  - It supports member states in operationalising their commitments and feeds the emerging European Language Education Profile.
- Publication of the ECML-EC Motivation Manifesto and Motivation Call to Action, helping teachers and teacher educators sustain learners' and teachers' motivation to learn multiple languages in the age of AI;
- Publications to promote and support Europe's rich linguistic diversity with a focus on regional and minority languages: Lara's Journey through Europe's regional and minority languages and Lara's language journey through Italy.

10 Completion of the four-year Romani Plurilingual Policy Experimentation (2022–2025)

- A four-year initiative applying the Council of Europe's plurilingual and intercultural education approach to the inclusion of Roma pupils in primary schools in Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia, concluded with three publications;
- Exemplifies the Pact's call to make democracy tangible in people's daily lives through participation, accountability, and equal access to rights;
- It strengthened learners' sense of belonging and parental engagement and provides an adaptable blueprint for education communities across Europe.

11 Linguistic support for migrants and refugees: toolkits and resources disseminated in multiple languages

- Policy guidance, practical tools and research-based resources to help member states design effective language integration programmes for migrants and refugees;
- They support inclusion, diversity and equal access to democratic participation — cornerstones of resilient democracies under the New Democratic Pact;
- They equip national authorities, education professionals and civil society to meet integration challenges pragmatically and equitably, consistent with Council of Europe values and acquis.

12 Histolab Toolkit for history classes: countering disinformation and fostering critical thinking (2024)

- A pedagogical approach for secondary school teachers that applies historical inquiry – particularly multiperspectivity and evidence-based analysis – to contemporary information challenges;
- It reinforces young people's media literacy and critical thinking, thereby strengthening conditions for a pluralistic and participatory democracy across Europe;
- An innovative, transferable approach that enhances the Council of Europe's capacity to help education systems respond to disinformation, polarisation and democratic fragility through high-quality history education.

ENHANCED VISIBILITY, COHERENCE AND POLICY TRACTION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

13 Comparative reports on History Teaching in Europe - OHTE

- The OHTE "General Report on the State of History Teaching" (2024) delivered the first overview of history education systems and practices in Europe. The thematic report on "Economic Crises in History Teaching" (2025) and the ad hoc study on "The Abolition of the Death Penalty in History Teaching" (2026) deepened understanding of how history education builds democratic competences;
- Reliable comparative evidence helps member states strengthen young people's critical thinking, as well as democratic culture and dialogue. It also enables education policies to respond more effectively to historical disinformation, polarisation and representation of diverse perspectives;
- OHTE findings have directly informed the Council of Europe Recommendation on History Education in the Digital Age and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Recommendation 542 (2026) "Squeezed out? Bringing regional history teaching to the fore".

IN BRIEF FOR MINISTERS

Key results within Pillar 2 have made Europe's education systems fairer and more resilient — protecting the inclusion of refugees, migrants and minorities, the integrity of institutions, multiperspectival history education tailored to the digital age, and the fair recognition of qualifications as foundations of democratic life.

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

This pillar is dedicated to harnessing the positive impacts of digital technologies for education within a human rights framework, while minimising the risks and harms that come with emerging digital technologies.

STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL MILESTONES

1 The CoE Road Map for Strengthening Digital Citizenship Education 2027–2031

- A five-year plan of policy and programmatic measures to empower learners across member states as active, responsible and ethical digital citizens;
- The Road Map fosters dialogue among member states on the learning environments needed to build digital competences for learners of all ages;
- It provides member states with a strategic guiding document and a detailed action plan for advancing digital citizenship education.

2 Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on artificial intelligence literacy Digital Age

- Adopted by the Committee of Ministers in September 2026, the Recommendation sets out a coherent framework of guiding principles built on a three-dimensional model of AI literacy — human, technological and practical — with particular weight given to the human dimension;
- It helps all parts of society engage with AI critically, ethically and safely, harnessing innovation for democracy while guarding against its risks to rights and the rule of law;
- It gives concrete expression to the Council of Europe's AI and education instruments and supports their integration into public policy at national, regional and local levels.

3 White Paper on the Futures of Teachers and the Teaching Profession

- A strategic reference document, prepared with the UCL Institute of Education and drawing on a scoping review of the evidence and a survey of teachers in member states, setting out a vision for the futures of the teaching profession in a new age of education technology;
- It places education professionals — rather than technology — at the centre of the debate on quality education, addressing professional autonomy, retention, wellbeing and the role of professional voice in technology decisions;
- It gives member states a shared reference for national policy dialogue and for possible future standard-setting on the teaching profession, presented to ministers at the Ministerial Conference.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS:
NEW FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

4 The DCE Planner — a curriculum framework for digital citizenship education (DCE)

- A practical curriculum tool offering 320 learning outcomes across the ten domains of digital citizenship education, built on competences for democratic culture with input from 30 member states;
- Learning outcomes classified by age group, domain and theme help member states integrate digital citizenship into their education systems;
- It develops the digital competences citizens need to sustain democracy and human rights; the learning outcomes are available in nine languages and in use in at least five member states.

5 The Council of Europe Compass for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation in Education

- A strategic and operational framework helping member states and education stakeholders advance education through a human rights-based digital transformation, with human dignity, democracy and the rule of law at its centre. It translates these values into guidance on governing people and processes, and on education about and with AI;
- The Compass provides interconnected guidance across eight domains to support responsible, inclusive, accountable and sustainable digital transformation in education;
- Its Policy Toolbox supports the operationalisation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)12 on artificial intelligence literacy, particularly its human dimension, and helps education communities deliberate on, assess and make informed decisions about AI in education;
- The Toolbox comprises two complementary volumes — I: Foundations and II: Practical Guide — with implementation guides, workshop formats, worksheets and cards, which can be used together or independently.

6 The Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence and Education (EDU-IA)

- A sub-committee established in January 2026 to develop policy instruments supporting the third pillar of the Strategy and addressing the implications of the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence for the education sector. Under the authority of the CDEDU, it elaborated Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)12 on artificial intelligence literacy and has initiated work on a possible standard-setting response on the use of AI systems in education;
- It institutionalises inclusive, expertise-driven intergovernmental dialogue on AI in education;
- It accelerates a coordinated European approach to AI in education and sustains an expert network for rights-aligned innovation.

7 Integrated digital education ecosystem: Knowledge Hub, E-Democracy Lab and Histolab Digital Hub

- A coherent digital education ecosystem bringing together the Knowledge Hub, E-Democracy Lab and the Histolab Digital Hub, providing a more integrated entry point to the Education Department's knowledge, resources and learning opportunities;
- The Knowledge Hub curates Council of Europe education resources, the E-Democracy Lab offers practice-oriented online professional learning, and the Histolab Digital Hub brings together resources and professional exchange in history education;
- It enables users to move from discovering resources to developing competences and applying Council of Europe standards in practice.

CONSOLIDATION AND SCALING-UP OF EXISTING COUNCIL OF EUROPE INSTRUMENTS

8 Contextualising competences for democratic culture in digital citizenship education

- A guidance document explaining how the competences of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) underpin digital citizenship education in classroom settings;
- By clarifying the interconnections between the RFCDC and digital citizenship education, it strengthens the role of schools as spaces of empowerment and democratic culture;
- It supports policy makers, curriculum developers and education managers in planning policies and actions based on the whole-school approach.

ENHANCED VISIBILITY, COHERENCE AND POLICY TRACTION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

9 The European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025

- A pan-European initiative raising the profile of digital citizenship on policy agendas and mobilising efforts and investment to empower learners as responsible, democratic digital citizens;
- It resulted in a collective recommendation to develop a comprehensive guiding document, laying the groundwork for the Road Map for Strengthening Digital Citizenship Education;
- It increased beneficiaries' capacity to take part critically, responsibly and safely in digital society, and inspired many follow-up actions by participants and partners.

10 Educating for a Video Game Culture

- "Keep on playing, keep on growing" (2026), the second volume of the Council of Europe's publications on video game culture, following "A map for teachers and parents" (2021);
- Leading international researchers examine video games as cultural, economic and social phenomena that shape how people learn, connect and participate, across the ten domains of digital citizenship education;
- It invites educators, policy makers and the industry to move beyond stereotypes, address risks and inequalities, and recognise video games as spaces for creativity, empathy and democratic engagement.

IN BRIEF FOR MINISTERS

Key results in Pillar 3 have positioned the Council of Europe as a leading reference in ensuring that digital and AI transformation in education strengthens — rather than erodes — democratic values, learner agency and human rights.

CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES: KEY RESULTS ON THE GROUND

Co-operation programmes are the third side of the Council of Europe's strategic triangle of standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation. They translate the standards promoted under the Strategy into national policy and practices within education institutions, at the request of national authorities and in partnership with them.

Over the period under review and the programme phases that preceded it, the Education Department implemented programmes in eight member states and in Kosovo*, financed through European Union/Council of Europe joint programmes — notably the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance — and through voluntary contributions from Germany, Sweden and Switzerland.

This chapter draws on the final narrative reports and the independent evaluations of these programmes. It covers programmes implemented during the period under review and, where relevant, the earlier phases whose results the first phase of the Strategy consolidated and scaled up.

The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) and the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE Charter) served as the common reference across all programmes, which combined three levels of action:

- policy support to education authorities, including development of curricular and methodological documents;
- the professional development of education professionals; and
- the development of democratic school governance and inclusive school cultures in select schools.

ALBANIA

Strengthening Democratic Citizenship Education in Albania (December 2019 – May 2026), building on the joint European Union/Council of Europe action "Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System in Albania" (2016–2019)

- EDC/HRE principles were embedded across the education system: Ministerial Orders No. 555 and No. 556 (October 2025) approved new competence-based citizenship curricula for grades 1, 6 and 10, and more than 25 policy recommendations were integrated into national legislation and practice, including the National Education Strategy 2021–2026;
- The Network of Democratic and Inclusive Schools, established in November 2020, grew to 100 schools in 23 municipalities, directly serving more than 42 000 students and 3 350 teaching staff; 68% of the 1 130 students surveyed in 2025 reported increased participation in school decision-making;
- The project strengthened key mechanisms for student participation, including Student Governments, School Democratic Teams and the National Student Parliament. It also introduced the I-Vote platform to modernise and democratise school elections;
- The "Guidelines for School Anti-Bullying Teams", a whole-school framework supporting the National Action Plan for preventing violence in educational institutions, were finalised, and the "Never Violence" awareness-raising initiative, implemented with the Swedish Institute, reached over 4 000 people;
- The "Fake ≠ Fact" media-literacy initiative engaged over 12 000 students nationwide, and the "Learning from the Past" initiative engaged 300 students in linking the country's totalitarian history to active democratic citizenship today;
- Five professional development courses were accredited by the Ministry of Education for 2022–2026; 1 898 teachers took part in training, the TeacherNet community of practice reached 450 members and 17 Democracy Labs became operational;
- A National Citizenship Education Day was institutionalised on 16 November 2025 and the EDURES crisis-preparedness toolkit was piloted; project initiatives were presented at the World Forum for Democracy in 2024 (I-Vote) and 2025 (EDURES).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Quality Education for All – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Horizontal Facility Phase II (2019–2022) and Phase III (2023–2026)

- The Policy Recommendations with a Roadmap for Improving Inclusive Education, prepared jointly by the state-level entity and ten cantonal ministries were adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 2 September 2020. Their implementation was monitored through state-level reports adopted in 2023 and 2025, and the Roadmap is recognised in the European Commission's country reports, including in 2026;
- A multi-level Education Policy Network was established to institutionalise cooperation among all 14 education ministries and key stakeholders, providing a sustainable mechanism for implementing inclusive education and democratic school culture reforms;
- Recommendations to modernise history and geography curricula in line with the RFCDC were taken into account in the new curricula adopted in four administrative units;
- The Manual for Teaching Competences for Democratic Culture Online enabled around 1 500 teachers to support almost 16 000 students during the COVID-19 pandemic and was subsequently used by education authorities in Montenegro and Serbia;
- A network of 29 pilot schools from ten cantons, Republika Srpska and Brčko District introduced digital democracy classrooms, 29 school clubs for critical thinking and values and 20 joint projects between schools from different parts of the country;
- More than 760 teachers, school leaders and education staff from pilot schools strengthened their capacity to implement the RFCDC, while more than 600 pupils were involved in activities related to the RFCDC;
- In the third phase, six schools were established as Resource Centres for professional development, peer learning and democratic school culture, and 18 trainer-teachers were certified on the RFCDC;
- The action also contributed, alongside the EU, UN and OSCE, to the development of the Education Sector Programmes for Development of the Education Sector 2026–2036.

GEORGIA

Democracy Starts in Schools – Engaging School Children in Decision-Making Processes in Schools and Communities – Phase I (March 2022 – 2023) and Phase II (2024 – 2027)

- A nationwide baseline assessment of democratic school governance and citizenship education made the case for a more strategic, whole-school approach to student participation, centred on the role of school principals;
- Drawing on the recommendations of the baseline assessment, the guidelines "Student Participation in Democratic School Governance" and the professional development programme "Developing a Democratic School" were created; both were endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Teacher Professional Development Centre for use in school authorisation and the training of school principals;
- 75 schools across Georgia received support to develop and implement democratic school governance and student participation policies and practices, resulting in stronger student participation in school decision-making and numerous educational and community projects that have reached over 30,000 beneficiaries;
- A Whole School Approach Programme for school principals and teachers was developed to promote the whole-school approach to strengthen democratic culture, inclusive practices, and community engagement in schools;
- 13 practical resources on participation, inclusion, family involvement, community engagement, and digital participation were developed jointly with 64 school community members.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Education for Democracy in the Republic of Moldova – Phase I (2019–2022) and Phase II (2023-2026)

- The programme supported the national roll-out of the new civic education subject "Education for Society", developed with the support of the Council of Europe and fully aligned with the RFCDC and the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education;
- All 1 300 civic education teachers in secondary schools, including vocational schools, completed an intensive training programme on the new curriculum, supported by methodological guidance and lesson plans;
- The Democratic School Governance Methodological Guide was developed and piloted in 49 schools. It was then endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Research for national implementation in all schools;
- The external evaluation of Phase I found the programme highly relevant and fully integrated into national education policies and reforms.
- While during Phase II the Council of Europe continued to provide essential support to the quality teaching of the civic education subject and the transversal integration of competences for democratic culture in other school subjects, the Council of Europe has also supported the Ministry of Education and Research to develop a new, enhanced citizenship education curriculum as part of the new curriculum reform. The new subject will be taught in all primary and secondary schools as of September 2027 and the Council of Europe will support its national roll out through teacher training and resource development.
- 41 schools were supported to develop and implement democratic school governance policies and practices in line with the Methodological Guide.

MONTENEGRO

Quality Education for All – Montenegro, Horizontal Facility Phase II (2019–2022) and Phase III (2023–2026)

- The programme supported the implementation of the Law on Academic Integrity through nine tools, including online courses for higher education institutions, the development of the University of Montenegro's Code of Ethics, the pilot evaluation of academic integrity standards across universities and their integration into the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education's re-accreditation process, alongside the establishment of a national pool of trainers on academic integrity and ethics;
- Democratic culture, digital citizenship, non-discrimination and inclusive education were promoted through teacher training, school action plans, good practice exchange and community engagement, building on the experience of 25–40 pilot schools and progressively extending the programme's approach across schools throughout Montenegro involving around 20 000 actors;
- Regional co-operation, peer learning and public awareness campaigns promoted democratic culture, inclusion and equality, reaching nearly 300 000 social media users;
- The RFCDC shaped the civic outcomes of the National Framework of Key Competences (2020), defining democratic values and providing behavioural descriptors subsequently used by the National Curriculum Framework (2026) to embed active citizenship in everyday classroom teaching.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Quality Education for All – North Macedonia (December 2022 – March 2026)

- A mapping report on democratic, inclusive and multicultural education, prepared with more than 200 stakeholders, was endorsed by the education authorities in April 2024.
- The project developed 21 policy recommendations and measures, including measures supporting the execution of judgement Elmazova and Others v. North Macedonia of the European Court of Human Rights on the segregation of Roma pupils. These contributed to the development of the National Education Strategy 2026–2032, adopted in March 2026, embedding key Council of Europe priorities on democratic culture, inclusion, equal access and non-discrimination in the national strategic framework.

SERBIA

Quality Education for All – Serbia, Horizontal Facility Phase II (2019–2022) and Phase III (2023–2026); Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools (2024–2025)

- The National Guidelines for the Integration of the RFCDC in Selected Subjects of National Curricula link all 447 RFCDC descriptors to ten subjects across three education cycles. They were distributed to all 1 800 primary, secondary and VET schools, and the RFCDC was included in the Strategy for Education Development 2030.
- A network of mentor schools — 59 schools in the second phase and 36 mentor schools in the third — anchors the RFCDC in school practice; participating schools' self-assessed democratic culture rose from 2.87 to 3.40 on a four-point scale.
- Serbia's first national research study on bullying, peer violence and student well-being involved more than 5 000 students, parents and school staff from 77 schools; the resulting Roadmap and Policy Recommendations were adopted in November 2025, and 228 education professionals were trained, leading to 32 school action plans.
- Since 2023, phase III has reached 522 schools, with a further 117 planned for 2026/27 (together roughly one third of all state primary and secondary schools), training 10 410 teachers (86% above target) and reaching more than 205 000 students; two thirds of schools improved in all areas and every school now runs regular anti-discrimination activities. The RFCDC has entered seven national policies, the Ministry funds external advisers for democratic culture, and two postgraduate programmes have been completed, one accredited for pre-school education.

PREVENT BULLYING AND PEER VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS (2024–2025)

Serbia's first national research study on bullying, peer violence and student well-being involved more than 5 000 students, parents and school staff from 77 schools; the resulting Roadmap and Policy Recommendations were adopted in November 2025, and 228 education professionals were trained, leading to 32 school action plans;

TÜRKIYE

Strengthening Democratic Culture in Basic Education (August 2018 – January 2023); pilot project on digital citizenship education, Horizontal Facility Phase III (2023–2025)

- the RFCDC was contextualised to the national basic education system and policy recommendations were prepared with the Ministry of National Education;
- Twenty-three education materials — storybooks, teacher manuals and activity books covering every lower-secondary subject — were developed and piloted in 110 schools;
- Through a training-of-trainers model, 240 teacher-trainers trained 2 126 teachers; the programme was certified as an official in-service training programme, and all 110 pilot schools adopted the whole school model and established school commissions.

ENHANCING FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION QUALITY (2024–2029)

Test development manuals and four-skills tests aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its Companion Volume have been developed;

787 learners took part in the try-out study of the developed prototype tests, and 97 item writers and 22 item raters have increased their capacities to prepare and evaluate test items aligned to the CEFR.

KOSOVO*

Building Capacity for inclusion in education – INCLUDE (phase 1 : January 2020 – December 2023 ; phase 2 will start in January 2027)

- Policy support included a framework for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in upper secondary education, a revised curriculum for resource centres, a five-year strategic action plan for resource centres and a framework curriculum for learning centres;
- More than 1 300 education stakeholders and the school teams of 49 pilot schools were trained, with training programmes accredited by the education authorities;
- A mentorship programme supported more than 600 upper-secondary students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and in the final year the education ministry took ownership of the annual diversity activities.

LESSONS FROM THE EVALUATIONS

The independent evaluations of these programmes point to several common lessons for the second phase of the Strategy:

- Results last where they are anchored in national systems: national ownership, approved curricula within a coherent policy framework, accredited teacher training and ministerial endorsement of guidelines and resources proved the strongest guarantees of sustainability;
- Combining system-level policy support with networks of pilot and mentor schools allows school practice to inform policy, with schools acting as catalysts for system-wide change;
- The RFCDC provides a shared language that facilitates transfer between countries, regional exchange and coherence with the Council of Europe's standard-setting work. At the same time, the transversal integration of the RFCDC across school subjects is key to developing students' competences;

IN BRIEF FOR MINISTERS

Co-operation programmes have turned the Strategy's standards into curricula, accredited training and democratic school cultures in nine education systems. The second phase will build on this experience to support the implementation of the European Space for Citizenship Education and the other instruments launched at the Ministerial Conference.

Table 1 — Overview of co-operation programmes and main results

Country	Programme and period	Funding	Key results
Albania	Strengthening Democratic Citizenship Education (2019–2026)	Sweden (Sida); €2.26 million	New citizenship curricula (Grades 1, 6, 10); 100-school network; 1 898 teachers trained; 17 Democracy Labs
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Quality Education for All (2019–2022; 2023–2026)	EU/CoE Horizontal Facility, Phases II and III; €1.55 million	Inclusive education roadmap adopted (2020); 29 pilot schools; history and geography curricula informed
Georgia	Democracy Starts in Schools (2022–2023; 2024-2027)	Switzerland (SDC); €2.2 million	Student participation in school bodies from 45% to 91% in 20 pilot schools; guidelines and training programme endorsed; 44-school network
Republic of Moldova	Education for Democracy, (2019–2022; 2023-2026)	Switzerland (SDC); €2.2 million	1 300 teachers trained for "Education for Society"; democratic school governance piloted in 49 schools
Montenegro	Quality Education for All (2019–2022; 2023–2026)	EU/CoE Horizontal Facility, Phases II and III; €1.65 million	Academic integrity tools and re-accreditation standards; RFCDC in 40 pilot schools
North Macedonia	Quality Education for All (2022–2026)	Germany; €800 000	Mapping Report and 21 policy measures; 25 pilot schools; Network of Democratic and Inclusive Schools
Serbia	Quality Education for All (2019–2022; 2023–2026)	EU/CoE Horizontal Facility, Phases II and III; €1.9 million	RFCDC integrated in ten subjects; guidelines sent to 1 800 primary, secondary and VET schools; mentor school network
Serbia	Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools (2024–2025)	Germany; €650 000	First national study on bullying (77 schools); Roadmap adopted (2025); 228 education professionals trained
Türkiye	Strengthening Democratic Culture in Basic Education (2018–2023)	EU/CoE (IPA II); €4 million	23 education materials; training of trainers (240 teacher-trainers trained 2 126 teachers); Whole School Model in 110 pilot schools
Türkiye	Enhancing Foreign Language Education Quality in Türkiye	EU/CoE (IPA III) €5.4 million	Policy recommendations for quality foreign language education, CEFR aligned prototype tests for ISCED levels 1-3, creation of an Action Studio for teaching materials based on the CEFR's action-oriented approach
Kosovo*	Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE (2020–2023)	EU/CoE; €2.22 million	Inclusion framework for students with special educational needs; 49 pilot schools; mentoring for 600+ students

* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

NEW PERSPECTIVES: LOOKING INTO 2028–2031

Looking ahead to 2028–2031, the second phase of implementation of the Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024–2030 "Learners First" will shift the emphasis from standard-setting to implementation. Building on the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference, the instruments, frameworks and initiatives developed during the first phase will be translated into practice in member states, supported by monitoring, peer learning and co-operation programmes.

Education professionals will remain at the centre of this effort, as the main drivers of education transformation and democratic culture across schools, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education. The voice and participation of learners, from school to university, will be strengthened across all three pillars, in line with the founding principle of the Strategy.

The final evaluation of the Strategy in 2030 will take stock of its achievements and, in convergence with the post-2030 global education agenda, inform the Council of Europe's education priorities beyond 2030. The following priorities, set out under each strategic pillar, will guide the next phase:

PILLAR 1: RENEWING THE DEMOCRATIC AND CIVIC MISSION OF EDUCATION

01 **Implementing the European Space for Citizenship Education (ESCE)** following its launch at the Ministerial Conference — supporting the integration of ESCE principles and its quality framework into national reforms and governance structures, through the ESCE Co-operation Platform and a voluntary self-evaluation cycle.

02 **Supporting the adoption and implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on fostering a culture of democracy in VET** — integrating the RFCDC in vocational programmes, the education of VET education professionals and the training of in-company trainers, and promoting the voice and participation of VET learners and apprentices.

03 **Finalising and implementing the European Student Rights Charter** — a common European framework, co-designed with student representatives, setting coherent minimum principles and guarantees for the protection and effective exercise of student rights in higher education.

04 **Rolling out the "Une heure pour l'Europe" initiative**, jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, to bring the experience of European democratic culture into the classroom.

05 **Strengthening the protection of academic freedom and institutional autonomy** — taking forward, subject to the decisions of the Committee of Ministers, work towards a Council of Europe Recommendation on academic freedom in light of the results of the Ministerial Conference, complemented by monitoring mechanisms, high-level policy dialogue and thematic reports.

06 **Pursuing new and ongoing co-operation programmes** to promote democratic culture in and through education and translate strategic priorities into tangible improvements in specific countries.

PILLAR 2: ENHANCING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF EDUCATION

01 **Promoting the signature, ratification and effective implementation of the new Council of Europe Convention** on the conditions of transparency and quality assurance for the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications, once adopted, and preparing its follow-up mechanism.

02 **Reinforcing the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention** — carrying out the fourth monitoring exercise, focusing on the understanding and application of the concept of "substantial differences" by states parties; clarifying its relationship with the Global Recognition Convention and the regional conventions; and addressing the digital transformation of recognition.

03 **Consolidating the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)** and expanding its implementation across Europe, including for refugees without complete documentation, in co-operation with the UNESCO Qualifications Passport.

04 **Mainstreaming gender equality in education** through the roll-out of the policy maker Gender Equality in Education Scorecard, and the development of the Gender Equality in Education Scorecard dedicated in education institutions.

05 **Promoting plurilingual and intercultural education** as a foundation for democracy — through the European Language Profile Dashboard, new policy instruments, continued support for the effective use of the CEFR and the teaching of a wider range of languages.

06 **Advancing the ETINED agenda** — extending the Guidelines for Open Data to higher education, sustaining the Centre for Preventing and Countering Education Fraud, and addressing the impact of AI on ethics, integrity and transparency in education.

07 **Innovating in language education for democratic culture in the digital and AI era** through the next ECML medium-term programme, with resources on critical awareness, ethical AI use, assessment and learner agency, and by disseminating the results of the 2024–2027 programme.

08 **Keeping history education responsive to evolving challenges** — drawing on OHTE's comparative data, research and expertise, making evidence more accessible through data visualisation, and supporting the implementation of the Recommendation on history education in the digital age through the future-oriented Intergovernmental Programme on History Education.

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

01 **Developing a Council of Europe standard-setting instrument on the use of AI systems in education**, in a form to be determined by member states and consistent with the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law; supporting the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)12 on AI literacy; and developing a European reference framework for the evaluation of education technologies.

02 **Following up the White Paper on the Futures of Teachers and the Teaching Profession** — exploring a dedicated Council of Europe instrument safeguarding the status, autonomy and working conditions of education professionals in a transforming digital environment, and promoting the principle that the educational value of technologies is demonstrated before their use at scale.

03 **Governing education data** through a Committee of Ministers Recommendation on data governance in education, setting out one coherent framework for all data processed in connection with education, from the individual learner to the education system as a whole.

04 **Modernising digital and blended learning** through guidelines on hybrid and blended learning and on the governance of digital transformation, a reference framework for pluriliteracies in a digital context, an expanded DCE Planner integrating AI literacy, and a Committee of Ministers Recommendation on the pedagogical use of video games.

05 **Advancing work on AI and the recognition of qualifications**, ensuring that AI-supported recognition is fair, transparent and trustworthy.

06 **Strengthening European governance and exchange** through the proposed European Centre for Governance of Digital Transformation in Education, subject to the availability of resources, guidelines on public–private partnerships in education and a European peer-learning and exchange scheme for policymakers.

07 **Advancing digital transformation through shared knowledge and innovation** by consolidating the Knowledge Hub, the E-Democracy Lab and the Histolab Digital Hub into a comprehensive digital learning ecosystem.

08 **Empowering learners of all ages and education professionals** by implementing the Road Map for Strengthening Digital Citizenship Education 2027–2031.

TRANSVERSAL: TOWARDS 2030 AND BEYOND

01 **Preparing the final evaluation of the Strategy in 2030**, building on the present mid-term evaluation and on indicators and reporting arrangements refined by the CDEDU.

02 **Contributing to the post-2030 global education agenda** — supporting, with UNESCO, the regional consultation for Europe and ensuring coherence between Council of Europe standards, national reforms and SDG 4 processes.

03 **Preparing the Council of Europe's education priorities beyond 2030**, so that the results of the final evaluation inform the next strategic framework and ensure continuity of action in 2031.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The first phase of the Strategy has delivered new standards, frameworks and tools across all three pillars. The success of the second phase (2028–2031) will depend on ensuring that education professionals throughout Europe have the capacity, resources and agency to put them into practice: empowering education professionals means empowering every learner to succeed and to participate fully in democratic society.

These results respond to current and emerging challenges to democratic security, polarisation, disinformation, the risks of digital transformation and the exclusion of vulnerable groups. By equipping both education professionals and learners to participate fully in society, they directly advance the priorities of the New Democratic Pact for Europe, the Education Strategy and the themes of the Ministerial Conference:

- Education professionals as builders of democratic culture: the operationalisation of frameworks such as the ESCE and instruments for plurilingual and intercultural education empowers education professionals as promoters of democratic dialogue, participation and social trust.
- The future of education professionals in the digital age: capacity-building and professional development on the ethical use of AI, digital citizenship and pedagogical autonomy uphold teacher agency, ensuring technology supports rather than replaces human-centred teaching.
- Safeguarding academic freedom: achievements such as the report on the erosion of academic freedom in Europe and the feasibility report on a Council of Europe convention on academic freedom reinforce collective efforts to protect academic freedom as a foundational principle for democratic societies.

They also underpin the three strategic initiatives of the Ministerial Conference:

- the launch of the European Space for Citizenship Education (ESCE) as a benchmark for quality citizenship education and democratic culture;
- the presentation of the White Paper on the Futures of Teachers and the Teaching Profession as a reference for future policy and standard-setting;
- guaranteeing academic freedom, on the basis of the report on "Legal Protections for Academic Freedom and Feasibility of a Council of Europe Convention on Academic Freedom", to be presented at the Ministerial Conference, providing a structural safeguard for democratic education and critical inquiry through, as a first step, the development of a new Recommendation on the protection of academic freedom in Europe.

Recent mobilisations of school students and students in several member states are a reminder that learners expect to be heard on the conditions of their education. In the spirit of "Learners First", the second phase will therefore give greater weight to learner voice and participation, from school to university. It will also prepare the final evaluation of the Strategy in 2030, which, together with Europe's contribution to the post-2030 global education agenda, will shape the Council of Europe's education priorities beyond 2030.

Through these instruments, frameworks and co-operation initiatives, the second phase will remain closely aligned with the New Democratic Pact for Europe. By empowering education professionals as the central actors of change, the Strategy will promote democratic security, helping Europe's education systems become more resilient, inclusive and innovative.

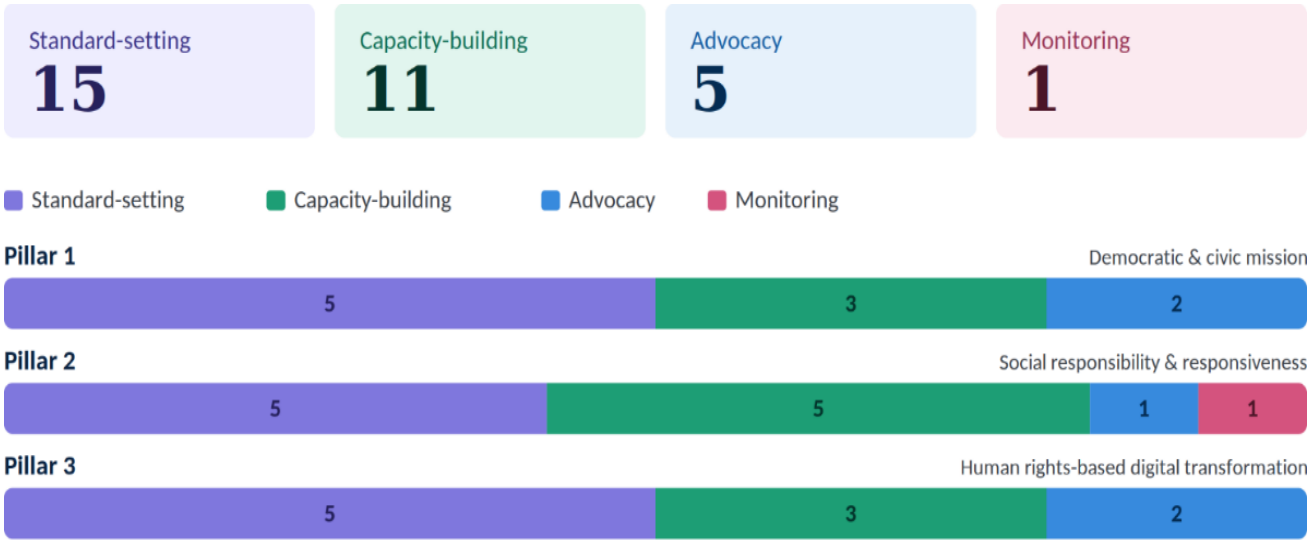
ANNEX

ANNEX A

Main actions, implementation status, and key results in the first phase in brief (2024-2027)

WHAT KIND OF WORK THE STRATEGY PRODUCED

The figure below highlights the type of activity and results produced for each action within the Strategy. Standard-setting predominates — 15 of the 32 actions — confirming the normative weight of the Strategy, complemented by capacity-building (11), advocacy (5) and monitoring (1).



IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

Of the 32 main actions tracked in this annex, 14 are achieved, 17 are under development and 1 is not yet initiated. Taken together, 31 of the 32 actions — 97 per cent — are delivered or in progress.



WHAT THE FIRST PHASE DELIVERED

The figure below highlights the key results grouped by type for each pillar of the Strategy. There were nine key results in pillar 1, thirteen in pillar 2, and ten in pillar 3. The figure below further shows the distribution of the key results of each pillar across the four different types of key results.



DETAILED ACTIONS BY PILLAR

Pillar 1 — Renewing the democratic and civic mission of education

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OUTPUT	STATUS
Develop in cooperation with member states a new framework convention on the establishment of the European Space for Citizenship Education.	Standard setting	All levels	European Space for Citizenship Education — shared principles, quality framework and Co-operation Platform (MED-27(2026)08)	Achieved
Promote democratic education experiences in schools, vocational education and training and higher education institutions and their communities.	Advocacy and capacity building	All levels	Democratic school culture initiatives; draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on fostering a culture of democracy in VET	Under development
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	School education and VET	RFCDC Guidance Document for Vocational Education and Training RFCDC Guidance Document for Education for Sustainable Development	Achieved
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 marginalised and vulnerable.	Standard setting	Primary and secondary education	Toolkit for a Democratic and Inclusive School Culture	Achieved
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	Guidelines linking the RFCDC and the CEFR/CEFR Companion Volume (in preparation)	Under development
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	Curriculum support materials on common historical heritage (in preparation)	Under development

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OUTPUT	STATUS
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	EDURES Toolkit — Education in Emergencies and Crisis Situations	Achieved
Promote the upholding of fundamental values of higher education by contributing to the ongoing work within the European Higher Education Area.	Advocacy	Higher education	Report on the erosion of academic freedom in Europe (2025); feasibility report on a Council of Europe convention on academic freedom (MED-27(2026)10rev)	Under development
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	European Student Rights Charter, co-designed with the European Students' Union (CDEDU Working Group)	Under development
Support member states to implement a culture of democracy through large, country-based projects funded through co-operation programmes.	Capacity building	All levels	Co-operation projects in eight countries, with extra-budgetary funding above €16 million	Achieved

Pillar 2 — Enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OUTPUT	STATUS
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	Towards Plurilingual and Intercultural Education — reflection and planning survey tool and Policy Toolbox	Under development
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	European Language Profile Dashboard (in development)	Under development
Ensure that the history curriculum and teaching practice illustrate the diversity present in societies, including in terms of history as an 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	OHTE General Report on the State of History Teaching in Europe and thematic reports; Histolab Toolkit for history classes	Achieved
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. 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.	Advocacy	Adult education	Linguistic Support for Migrants (LSM) Toolkit and accompanying guide	Achieved

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OUTPUT	STATUS
Develop new instruments and expand capacity building in the field of language education in key areas such as: • 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.	Standard setting	All levels	New ECML instruments and resources (in preparation)	Under development
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	Draft Convention on transparency and quality assurance for the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications (adoption foreseen in 2027)	Under development
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	Updated ENIC-NARIC Charter and Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2025); fourth monitoring exercise foreseen	Under development
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	Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)6 on qualifications and linguistic competences of refugees in Europe European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (24 countries)	Achieved
Encourage and strengthen education fraud prevention and monitoring, including through collecting data and comparative analysis.	Capacity building	Higher education	ETINED resources and Centre for Preventing and Countering Education Fraud, established in 2025 with CIMEA	Achieved

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OUTPUT	STATUS
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	Histolab Digital Hub, launched in 2024	Achieved
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	Principles and guidelines on the social dimension of education (in preparation)	Under development
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	Part of the new European Space for Citizenship Education	Achieved

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

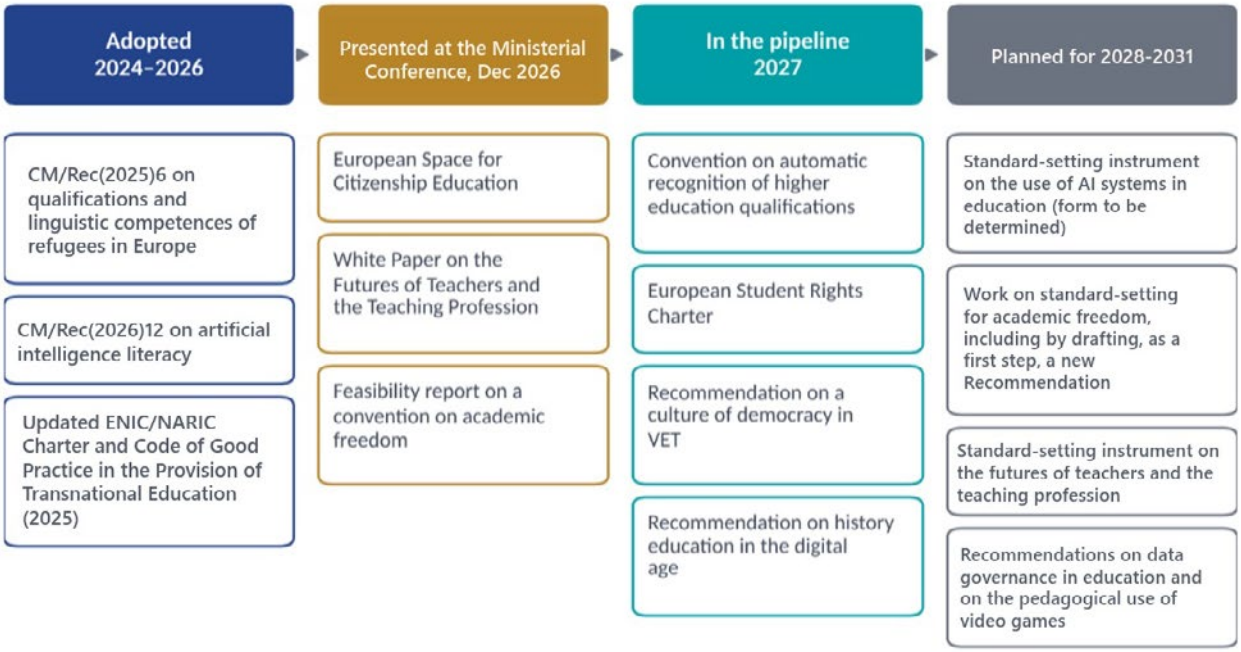
ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OUTPUT	STATUS
Develop a legally-binding instrument on the use of Artificial Intelligence systems in education within the framework of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225).	Standard setting	All levels	Work of the EDU-IA Committee towards a standard-setting instrument, legal form to be determined; Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)12 on AI literacy adopted	Under development
Develop a framework (mechanism) for partnerships between education institutions and the private and civil sectors.	Standard setting	All levels	Guidelines on public–private partnerships in education foreseen for 2028–2031	Not initiated

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OUTPUT	STATUS
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	DCE Planner — curriculum framework for digital citizenship education	Achieved
Develop a framework for professional development to facilitate peer learning and exchange among professionals in education at European level.	Capacity building	All levels	White Paper on the Futures of Teachers and the Teaching Profession; European peer-learning and exchange scheme foreseen	Under development
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 education contexts.	Capacity building	Higher education	Feasibility study (2025) for a European reference framework for the evaluation of education technologies	Under development
Develop guidelines on developing human rights-based digital transformation policies at national, regional, local, or school/university level.	Standard setting	All levels	Council of Europe Compass for Artificial Intelligence and Education; guidelines on the governance of digital transformation (in preparation)	Under development
Develop instruments that will contribute to promoting digitalisation in higher education.	Advocacy	Higher education	Instruments on digitalisation in higher education (in preparation)	Under development
Develop instruments to ensure that hybrid and blended modes of learning and teaching are used for more effective and more inclusive language learning.	Standard setting	All levels	Guidelines on hybrid and blended learning (in preparation)	Under development
Develop instruments to counter digital fraud in education.	Standard setting	All levels	ETINED resources and Centre for Preventing and Countering Education Fraud	Achieved
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	European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025	Achieved

ANNEX B

From adopted texts to instruments under consideration

The figure below highlights the main normative instruments of the Strategy, either adopted in the period 2024-2026, to be presented at the Ministerial Conference, in the pipeline for 2027 and explored for the next phase of the strategy. Instruments listed for 2028–2031 are subject to the decisions of member states and the Committee of Ministers and depend, where indicated, on the availability of resources.



ANNEX C

Main actions of the second implementation phase 2028–2031

ACTIONS PLANNED UNDER THE EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024–2030
"LEARNERS FIRST" FOR 2028–2031

The table sets out the 36 main actions planned for the second implementation phase, organised by pillar, together with a transversal block preparing the final evaluation of the Strategy and the Council of Europe's education priorities beyond 2030. Of these, 18 are new actions and 18 continue actions initiated during the first phase. By type of work, standard-setting accounts for 15 actions, capacity-building for 12, advocacy for 7 and monitoring for 2.

Pillar 1 — Renewing the democratic and civic mission of education

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	STATUS
Support member states in implementing the European Space for Citizenship Education, integrating its principles and quality framework into national reforms and governance structures, through the ESCE Co-operation Platform and a voluntary self-evaluation cycle.	Capacity building	All levels	New
Support the adoption and implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on fostering a culture of democracy in VET, integrating the RFCDC in vocational programmes, the education of VET education professionals and the training of in-company trainers, and promoting the voice and participation of VET learners and apprentices.	Standard setting and capacity building	Vocational education and training	Continuing
Finalise and implement, in co-operation with the European Students' Union, the European Student Rights Charter, setting coherent minimum principles and guarantees for the protection and effective exercise of student rights.	Standard setting	Higher education	Continuing
Roll out the "Une heure pour l'Europe" initiative, jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, to bring the experience of European democratic culture into the classroom.	Advocacy	School education	New
Take forward, subject to the decisions of the Committee of Ministers, work towards a Committee of Ministers Recommendation on academic freedom, complemented by monitoring mechanisms, high-level policy dialogue and thematic reports.	Standard setting and monitoring	Higher education	New
Promote the upholding of the fundamental values of higher education, including academic freedom and institutional autonomy, by contributing to the work of the European Higher Education Area.	Advocacy	Higher education	Continuing
Develop guidelines showing more explicitly the relationship between the RFCDC and quality language education linked to the CEFR and its Companion Volume.	Capacity building	All levels	Continuing
Develop materials to support curricula enabling learners to enhance their individual and collective identity in their diversity through knowledge of their common historical heritage.	Advocacy	School education	Continuing
Pursue new and ongoing co-operation programmes to promote democratic culture in and through education and translate strategic priorities into tangible improvements in member states.	Capacity building	All levels	Continuing

Pillar 2 — Enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	STATUS
Promote the signature, ratification and effective implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the conditions of transparency and quality assurance for the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications, once adopted, and prepare its follow-up mechanism.	Standard setting and monitoring	Higher education	New
Reinforce the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention by carrying out the fourth monitoring exercise, focusing on the concept of "substantial differences"; clarify its relationship with the Global Recognition Convention and the regional conventions; and address the digital transformation of recognition.	Monitoring and capacity building	Higher education	Continuing
Consolidate the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees and expand its implementation across Europe, including for refugees without complete documentation, in co-operation with the UNESCO Qualifications Passport.	Capacity building	Higher education	Continuing
Mainstream gender equality in education through the piloting and roll-out of the Gender Equality Scorecard, using the gender implementation continuum.	Capacity building	All levels	Continuing
Promote plurilingual and intercultural education as a foundation for democracy through the European Language Profile Dashboard, new policy instruments, continued support for the effective use of the CEFR and the teaching of a wider range of languages.	Standard setting and capacity building	All levels	Continuing
Advance the ETINED agenda by extending the Guidelines for Open Data to higher education, sustaining the Centre for Preventing and Countering Education Fraud and addressing the impact of AI on ethics, integrity and transparency in education.	Standard setting	All levels	Continuing
Develop, through the next ECML medium-term programme, resources for language education for democratic culture in the digital and AI era, covering critical awareness, ethical AI use, assessment and learner agency.	Capacity building	All levels	New
Support the implementation of the Recommendation on history education in the digital age through the Intergovernmental Programme on History Education, drawing on OHTE comparative data, research and expertise.	Capacity building	School education	New

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	STATUS
Strengthen the evidence base on history education through continued data collection and research, the publication of new OHTE general and thematic reports, and the development of data visualisation tools to facilitate access to and use of the data.	Advocacy	School education	Continuing
Develop principles and guidelines on the social dimension of education for public authorities, in order to strengthen equity and inclusion at all levels of education systems.	Standard setting	All levels	Continuing

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

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	STATUS
Develop a Council of Europe standard-setting instrument on the use of AI systems in education, in a form to be determined by member states and consistent with the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225).	Standard setting	All levels	Continuing
Support the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)12 on AI literacy.	Capacity building	All levels	New
Develop a European reference framework for the evaluation of education technologies, including AI, building on the feasibility study conducted in 2025.	Standard setting	All levels	New
Follow up the White Paper on the Futures of Teachers and the Teaching Profession by exploring a dedicated Council of Europe instrument safeguarding the status, autonomy and working conditions of education professionals in a transforming digital environment.	Standard setting	School education	New
Develop Committee of Ministers Recommendation on the processing of education data and learning analytics.	Standard setting	All levels	New
Develop guidelines on hybrid and blended learning and on the governance of human rights-based digital transformation at national, regional, local and institutional level.	Standard setting	All levels	Continuing
Develop a reference framework for pluriliteracies in a digital context and expand the DCE Planner to integrate AI literacy.	Capacity building	School education	New
Prepare a recommendation on the pedagogical use of video games.	Standard setting	All levels	New

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	STATUS
Advance work on AI and the recognition of qualifications, ensuring that AI-supported recognition is fair, transparent and trustworthy.	Standard setting	Higher education	New
Establish, subject to the availability of resources, a European Centre for Governance of Digital Transformation in Education.	Capacity building	All levels	New
Develop guidelines on public–private partnerships in education.	Standard setting	All levels	Continuing
Establish a European peer-learning and exchange scheme for policymakers and education professionals.	Capacity building	All levels	Continuing
Consolidate the Knowledge Hub, the E-Democracy Lab and the Histolab Digital Hub into a comprehensive digital learning ecosystem.	Capacity building	All levels	Continuing
Implement the Road Map for Strengthening Digital Citizenship Education 2027–2031.	Advocacy and capacity building	All levels	New

Transversal — Towards 2030 and beyond

ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	STATUS
Prepare the final evaluation of the Strategy in 2030, building on the mid-term evaluation and on indicators and reporting arrangements refined by the CDEDU.	Monitoring	All levels	New
Contribute to the post-2030 global education agenda, supporting with UNESCO the regional consultation for Europe and ensuring coherence between Council of Europe standards, national reforms and SDG 4 processes.	Advocacy	All levels	New
Prepare the Council of Europe's education priorities beyond 2030, so that the results of the final evaluation inform the next strategic framework and ensure continuity of action in 2031.	Advocacy	All levels	New

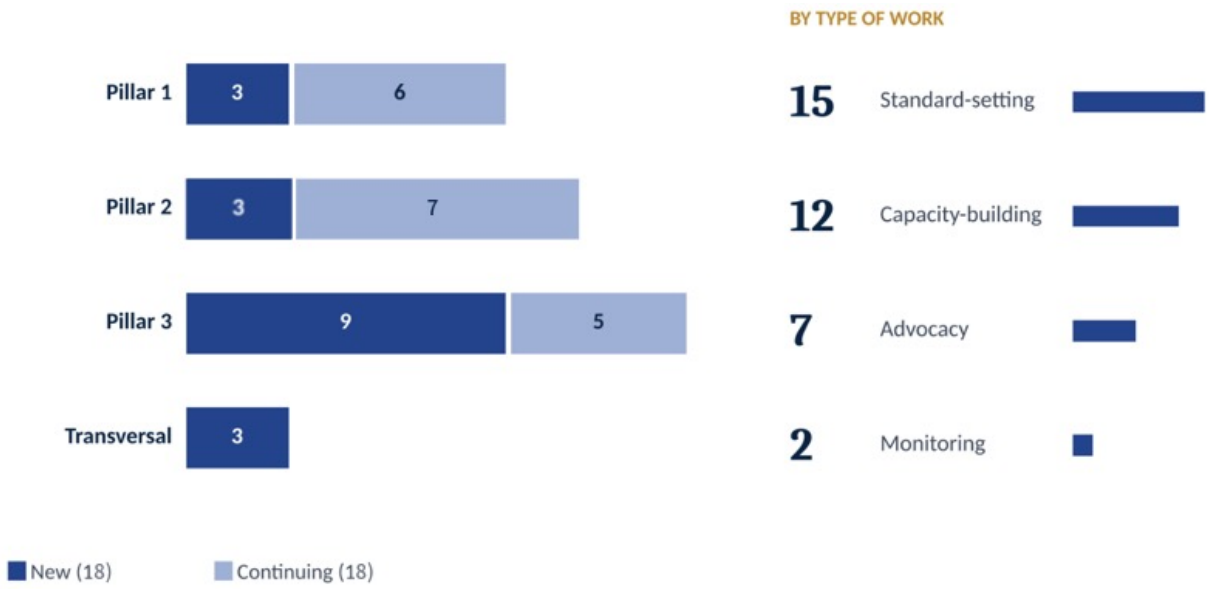
KEY

"New": action to be launched in the second phase.

"Continuing": action initiated during the first phase and pursued in the second phase.

MAIN ACTIONS OF THE SECOND PHASE

The figure below highlights the 36 new actions to be undertaken under phase two of the Strategy. It highlights new and ongoing strategies, and breaks them down across the type of action present in the Strategy.





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