ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATION

Ensuring quality education in the AI era – Introducing the Council of Europe Compass for AI and education

3rd WORKING CONFERENCE

8-9 October 2025

Council of Europe Headquarters
Strasbourg

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATION

Ensuring quality education in the AI era – Introducing the Council of Europe Compass for AI and education

3rd WORKING CONFERENCE

8-9 October 2025
Council of Europe Headquarters
Strasbourg

Council of Europe

All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to the Education Department, Council of Europe, Agora Building 1, Quai Jacoutot F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France
E-mail: education@coe.int

Cover design and layout: Publications and Visual Identity Division (DPIV), Council of Europe

Cover photo: Council of Europe

Rapporteur: Anna Lindroos Cermakova

The report was compiled based on my notes, policy lab rapporteurs' notes and other available sources, such as speakers' presentations and recordings. I would like to thank the policy lab rapporteurs for sharing their insights (in the order of the policy labs): Lola Garay Abad, Michelle DuQuette, Kristina Ishmael, Stephane Chaudron, Alex Kaiserlis, Denise Amram, Alina Pisica, Anders Hyldig, Serena Spitalieri, Diana Knodel and Veli Hillman. I would like to extend additional thanks to Chiara Altafin for her input on the human-rights-based approach. However, I am responsible for any mistakes and potential misinterpretations or overinterpretations in the report.

Contents

Executive summary

The 3rd Working Conference entitled "Artificial intelligence and education: ensuring quality education in the AI era" that took place at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 October 2025, advanced Europe's collective effort to ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) serves the right to quality education and supports democratic values. The conference took place against the backdrop of ongoing efforts towards Europe's democratic renewal, as reflected in the Council of Europe's New Democratic Pact for Europe (2024, the Pact).[1] This conference placed education at the heart of democratic renewal, recognising teachers and learners as active agents in shaping how AI supports learning, trust and civic participation.

The conference introduced the Council of Europe "Compass for AI and education" (the Compass), a practical instrument translating the Organisation's core values – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – into guidance for policy and practice. Conceived as a navigation tool, the Compass is designed to help policy makers, educators and other stakeholders align innovation with human purpose through four interconnected components.

i. Regulation and governance. Building on existing legislation such as the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act),[2] the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[3] and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC),[4] this component focused on ensuring coherence and safeguarding children's rights within the education sector. It aimed to ensure that appropriate safeguards are adopted before AI systems are used in education and that accountability, feasibility and coherence are made explicit across all levels of governance. Participants agreed that a future legal instrument should be anchored in human rights, education specific and capacity oriented, combining legal clarity with practical support tools and co-regulation mechanisms to make implementation of obligations feasible for schools and educators.

ii. Education about AI (AI literacy). Seen as both a civic capacity and a democratic safeguard, AI literacy was widely recognised as essential, yet its scope and implementation remained contested. While participants agreed that AI literacy must integrate technological, practical and human dimensions, they differed on whether it should be treated as a distinct competency or embedded within existing media and digital literacy frameworks. The discussions underscored the need for coherence across initiatives, sustained professional learning for teachers and the inclusion of students, parents and civil society actors as co-creators of policy and practice.

iii. Research and evidence. Participants affirmed the need for independent, research-based, transparent and rights-based evaluation of educational technologies, but highlighted significant challenges in co-ordination, feasibility and scope. There was agreement on the value of a European reference framework linking ethics, quality and evidence, yet views diverged on how prescriptive or flexible it should be and who should oversee its implementation. Calls were made for simplification, prioritisation and progressive validation mechanisms that would encourage responsible innovation while maintaining trust and accountability.

iv. Education with AI. Participants reaffirmed that AI can strengthen education only when embedded within pedagogical and institutional contexts that uphold human dignity, teacher agency and the best interests of the learner.

1. www.coe.int/en/web/new-democratic-pact-for-europe.
2. Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence, available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R1689.
3. https://gdpr-info.eu/.
4. www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child.

Several cross-cutting themes emerged throughout the discussions. It was agreed that:

- conceptually, Europe must redefine quality education in an AI age, aligning innovation with rights and experimentation with equity;
- operationally, capacity building and interoperability are as vital as regulation; schools and teachers cannot bear the burden of implementation alone;
- ethically and epistemically, transparency, accountability and legitimate evidence are essential for sustaining public trust;
- culturally, inclusive dialogue and participatory governance remain preconditions for legitimacy and trust in AI.

The conference itself embodied these principles through its participatory "policy lab" format, which modelled how inclusive, evidence-informed deliberation can bridge diverse perspectives and generate collective ownership.

Looking ahead, participants called for the Compass to remain a living and adaptive framework, encouraging national pathways for implementation, fostering shared capacity, ensuring coherence with European and global initiatives and embedding participatory mechanisms. Ultimately, the conference reaffirmed that Europe's task is not only to regulate AI in education but to govern its meaning, ensuring that technology strengthens, rather than supplants, the human purposes of learning and democracy.

1. Context and aims

The 3rd Working Conference entitled "Artificial intelligence and education: ensuring quality education in the AI era" (Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 8-9 October 2025) took place during a period of renewed attention to democratic renewal across Europe. In his opening address, Mr Villano Qiriazi, Head of the Education Department of the Council of Europe, placed this topical issue within the broader political horizon of the New Democratic Pact for Europe. Adopted in 2024, the Pact represents the Council of Europe's response to rising trends in democratic backsliding, disinformation, impunity and a tendency towards authoritarianism. It calls for a regeneration of democratic commitment through collective action and shared responsibility, reaffirming that democracy must be learned, practised and continually renewed.

Mr Qiriazi reminded participants that Europe's institutions cannot rely solely on legal safeguards or technical regulation. They must also nurture the civic competences and moral imagination that allow citizens to live democracy daily. AI, he argued, confronts Europe with a double challenge: while it can extend access to knowledge and innovation, it also risks eroding public trust, amplifying misinformation and displacing human judgment. The question, therefore, is not whether AI should be used in education, but how to ensure that its presence strengthens, rather than weakens, the democratic fabric.

The Pact rests on three interdependent pillars that also guide the Council of Europe's work on AI and education:

i. learning and practising democracy, meaning that literacy and accountability must remain civic values, not algorithmic processes;

ii. protecting democracy, by developing AI literacy as a means of defence against manipulation, polarisation and the erosion of reliable information;

iii. innovating for the public good, ensuring that technology serves shared human purposes rather than the speed at which markets develop.

In this vision, teachers and learners stand at the heart of democratic renewal. They are not passive users of digital tools but active agents of interpretation, guiding technology by employing the principles of equity, critical thinking and human dignity. Education's role is thus not to adapt to AI but to shape the conditions under which AI can serve learning and society. This political framework provided orientation for the rest of the conference.

From political vision to educational governance

The first plenary session on why Europe needs a common AI framework for education discussed this political vision and translated it into questions of governance and trust. The panel (see the appendix for more details and a list of speakers) brought together representatives of education authorities, academic ethics bodies and publicly governed digital education infrastructure organisations, each reflecting a different governance model – from small, centralised systems to large federal ones and decentralised networks.

Across these perspectives ran a shared conviction that fragmentation threatens both quality and trust. Speakers highlighted the risk that without a common framework, AI in education could be driven by commercial interests rather than educational values and could increase the danger of a new digital divide where students' opportunities depend on postcode rather than principle. Some speakers, particularly those working in decentralised contexts, pointed to the need for cross-institutional co-operation capable of balancing innovation with public oversight. Academic integrity and ethics authorities argued that a coherent European approach could build trust rather than bureaucracy, giving teachers and students confidence that technology use is ethical, transparent and accountable.

Taken together, these perspectives showed that the purpose of a common AI framework is not uniformity but coherence: ensuring that diverse systems innovate within a shared ethical space. This means aligning educational aims with data protection, creating mechanisms of accountability that are feasible for schools to implement and preserving human interaction as the defining feature of education. In the panel, trust emerged as Europe's distinctive comparative advantage, the foundation on which responsible innovation must rest.

Education as a democratic ecosystem

The plenary perspectives panel, chaired by Mr Ahmet-Murat Kiliç, Head of the Digital Transformation Unit of the Council of Europe (see the appendix for details), extended the discussion on governance to educational ecosystems, showing how the key components of the Council of Europe's efforts – literacy, practice, governance and evidence – already resonate within national strategies.

National representatives from Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland offered examples of how AI-related policies are being integrated into educational practice. From co-ordinated digital-competence frameworks in Spain that make AI literacy a legal entitlement for students and teachers, and the creation of school digital co-ordinators in Slovakia to support local innovation projects, to Luxembourg's initiative that in many ways already mirrors Council of Europe principles – these examples demonstrated that structural transformation can be achieved when pedagogy, policy and infrastructure evolve together.

Experience from the Swiss federal and multilingual contexts underscored that AI governance should begin with data governance – transparent, interoperable data systems are prerequisites for ethical and trustworthy AI –, connecting data protection, digital self-determination and the right to privacy. Speakers also illustrated how human-centred principles can guide policy even in complex digital environments: placing people and pedagogy before technology; quality and equity before efficiency; law and ethics before speed; and dialogue before activism. These experiences reinforced a shared understanding of education as a democratic ecosystem where literacy, governance and evidence are mutually reinforcing and where innovation must always remain anchored in human rights and social purpose.

Towards the Compass for AI and education

Against this backdrop, Mr Qiriazi introduced the Council of Europe Compass for AI and education, the Organisation's practical answer to the question of how we keep education human centred in an AI age. The Compass offers a structured way to incorporate the Council of Europe's fundamental values into educational policy and practice. Rather than a static framework, the Compass is conceived as a navigation tool, guiding policy makers, educators and partners through the ethical, legal and pedagogical complexities of AI and aiming to align Europe's existing legal instruments, educational priorities and civic ambitions. The following section of this report explores the Compass components through the work of dedicated "policy labs".

2. Council of Europe Compass for AI and education

The Council of Europe Compass is conceived as a guide for policy makers, educators and practitioners as well as other stakeholders from the educational technology (EdTech) sector to help them navigate the everyday realities of AI in education. It helps translate the Council of Europe's core values – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – into actionable recommendations that will ensure that AI-based technology serves educational and societal aims. At its core, the Compass seeks to establish common goals and shared standards for the responsible use of AI in education, helping member states avoid fragmentation and duplication of effort, providing directions and links, as the metaphor of a compass suggests. It offers a structured way to connect ethical principles with policy decisions, and strategic vision with classroom practice in order to implement responsible, ethical and human-centred AI.

The Compass puts education-specific principles at the forefront, focusing on the best interests of the learners, teacher empowerment and the prioritisation of education. The Compass is anchored in four interrelated components:

i. regulation and governance;

ii. education about AI;

iii. research and evidence;

iv. education with AI.

Regulation and governance

The component "regulation and governance" focuses on harnessing the potential AI technologies may bring, while at the same time making sure they are safe to use. Therefore, the emphasis is primarily on establishing appropriate safeguards before the technology is deployed in schools. The Council of Europe has two types of legal instrument at its disposal: hard law, namely binding legal instruments such as charters or conventions, and soft law in the form of recommendations, resolutions or guidelines. The Compass aims to make use of both.

Governance of AI in education applies across governance levels – from global and European to national, regional, local and school levels. Due to this hierarchical complexity that works differently in practice in each of the member states, it is of paramount importance that any regulation is co-created with input from a variety of stakeholders, acknowledging their agency and voices amid concerns about the technological push and emergence of "synthetic government" – government guided by algorithmic rules.

In 2024, the Council of Europe completed a preparatory study on regulating AI in education,[5] which was presented at the second conference in this series. Further work included a draft proposal to be submitted to the Committee of Ministers in 2026. This third conference contributed to the "regulation and governance" component of the Compass through work on two legal instruments: a draft of the legal instrument on the use of AI in education, discussed in Policy lab 2 of the conference, and a "policy toolbox", discussed in Policy lab 3, designed to help policy makers decide when, why and how to implement AI responsibly, ensuring that relevance and usability remain at the forefront (see section 2.1).

Education about AI (AI literacy as a civic value)

The second Compass component addresses what learners and educators need to know, understand and be able to do in relation to AI. As the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in 2023 underlined, AI literacy must be understood not merely as a technical skill but a civic capacity. Its conceptual definition encompasses three interlinked dimensions:

i. technological: understanding how AI systems function and are developed;

ii. practical: using AI tools effectively and responsibly;

iii. human: recognising and reflecting on the impact of AI on individuals, rights, democracy and the rule of law.

5. www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/regulating-the-use-of-artificial-intelligence-systems-in-education.

The human dimension, less emphasised elsewhere, is central to the Council of Europe's approach. A first draft Committee of Ministers recommendation on AI literacy was already presented to the Steering Committee for Education in October 2025, in which teachers were identified as the key agents of implementation and equity, ensuring that every learner can access AI literacy opportunities. This model aligns with the Council of Europe's legally binding Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law[6] (particularly Article 20) and the EU AI Act (particularly Article 4).

The conference contributed to this Compass component through the work in Policy lab 1 "AI literacy recommendations" (see section 2.2).

Research and evidence

The third Compass component emphasises the need for evaluation before deployment, and impact assessment during and after use of AI systems in education. Evaluation evidence should come from independent, publicly funded research, to ensure transparency and credibility. Research should examine both the pedagogical efficacy of AI tools and their broader social effects, supporting a permanent policy learning cycle in which findings continually refine policy and practice. Globally, this landscape remains uneven: while some countries have mature educational technology ecosystems, others lack basic capacity.

The Compass therefore calls for common benchmarks for evaluation and deployment of AI in education and proposes a "European reference framework for the evaluation of educational technologies"[7] establishing shared criteria that link quality, ethics and evidence across member states. This type of reference framework will apply across sectors, including developers of educational technologies. The conference contributed to this component through the work in Policy lab 4 (see section 2.3).

Education with AI (responsible integration)

Finally, the Compass recognises that, with the right regulation, governance and guidance, AI can be a force for good and can strengthen education. The goal is not to ban or celebrate technology, but to embed it responsibly within pedagogical and institutional contexts that uphold human values.

AI systems are already present in schools – for learning, teaching, assessment, admissions, placement and others. The Council of Europe therefore aims to develop guidelines on education data and learning analytics. While building on previous work, the core principles remain – a focus on "human-in-the-loop"[8] and child-friendly solutions, particularly when consequential decisions are being made.

Taking these elements together, the Compass is the Council of Europe's practical answer to the strategic question of how we keep education human centred in an AI age. By aligning innovation with rights, by empowering teachers and learners, by testing before scaling up and by governing with care, we can make AI serve the right to quality education and strengthen Europe's democratic future.

2.1 Regulation and governance

The "regulation and governance" component of the Compass aims to include hard law (legal instruments, addressed in Policy lab 2) and a more practically oriented toolbox instrument (addressed in Policy lab 3). Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 aim to capture the conference discussions around the development of these instruments.

The initial plenary conversations before Policy lab 2, with invited speakers (Ms Manon Letouche of the 5Rights Foundation[9] and Ms Célia Chamiça of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)),[10] underscored that while the Council of Europe's work builds on prior initiatives, significant gaps remain in safeguarding children's rights, clarifying institutional responsibilities and aligning educational aims with technological realities. Speakers pointed to recurring issues in EdTech: insufficient evidence of efficacy,

6. CETS No. 225, available at www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/the-framework-convention-on-artificial-intelligence.
7. www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/developing-a-common-european-evaluation-framework-to-assess-educational-technologies.
8. Human-in-the-loop (HITL) refers to a system or process in which a human actively participates in the operation, supervision or decision making of an automated system. In the context of AI, HITL means that humans are involved at some point in the AI workflow to ensure accuracy, safety, accountability or ethical decision making. Source: www.ibm.com/think/topics/human-in-the-loop (accessed 20/10/2025).
9. https://5rightsfoundation.com/.
10. For the full list of speakers, please see the appendix.

inadequate protection of children's data, lack of agency for students and limited possibilities to opt out once tools have been adopted in schools. Concerns extended to the environmental impact of technology and to whether AI-supported learning may erode students' independent thinking. Participants therefore stressed that any legal framework must link explicitly to the UNCRC and, more specifically, to the right to quality education (Articles 28 and 29).

From national examples, such as that from Italy, it became evident that in practice, schools are being made responsible for risk and impact assessments without the resources, expertise or clarity to carry them out effectively. There was a shared call for practical support – clear templates, checklists and common definitions of "high-risk" applications – and for governance mechanisms that prevent the overburdening of educators. Some speakers also cautioned that the resulting legal texts should use accessible, internationally comprehensible language and that their ultimate purpose should be to define not only how AI is regulated, but also what kind of education Europe wishes to protect and promote.

The policy toolbox represents an ambitious attempt to assist policy makers at different levels, including at local and school levels, to address concrete challenges posed by AI in education. Its core idea is to be highly flexible and adaptable to enable its use in decision-making processes at various levels of governance, but also across countries. The toolbox is structured around three domains – governance, education and AI literacy, offering five tools.

i. Making the future of education – a tool helping policy developers to create objectives for the use of AI in education.

ii. Assessment readiness for AI in education – a tool focusing on the participatory processes that develop organisational AI readiness and locate areas for capability development.

iii. Building your own democracy-centred AI literacy for social agency – a tool supporting the development of AI literacy as social agency in democratic societies.

iv. Regulatory triangle – a tool focusing on regulation of the market, risk and norms.

v. Layered decision model – a tool intended for control and metrics and to provide conceptual clarity.

The three domains, governance, education and AI literacy, are directed at different types of stakeholders, while at the same time highlighting their interdependent roles: for example, although the governance domain extends to policy makers, teachers and EdTech developers, it is important to understand at which point the decisions are being made – only teachers will fully understand the classroom setting, for example, while this area will be less well understood at the policy level. The regulatory triangle highlights the shift from regulating only the marketplace to regulating the risks – and increasingly the norms and values – that are strongly influenced by the vendor offering.[11]

Discussion groups in Policy lab 3 were preceded by an expert commentary (Professor Daniel Burgos) on the current version of the toolbox. The key insights included, for example, insufficient inclusion and visibility of parents and families among the targeted stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the education domain within the toolbox might shift the focus to competence development (knowledge, skills and attitudes) in order to maximise performance and efficacy. Another concern raised was the relative isolation of the three domains, although, for example, education is clearly a cross-cutting category, also extending to governance and AI literacy. Furthermore, it was thought that the toolbox needs to acknowledge that the efficacy of AI is still unknown and is yet to be assessed. A potential reference framework should be able to reach beyond technology, allowing cultural, linguistic and subject-specific contextualisation.

Additionally, it was thought that the governance domain misses the opportunity to engage sufficiently with existing standards – on technology, data, privacy, etc. The AI literacy domain, being focused on students and educators, sidelines the fact that this skill set is also needed by administrators and managers. AI literacy should focus less on technological aspects that rapidly evolve and rather aim to build strong foundations and "not forget the human touch".

2.1.1 Regulating the use of AI systems in education – Policy lab 2

2.1.1.1 Gap definition

Across all working groups, participants recognised that the ambition behind the Council of Europe's draft legal instrument is both timely and necessary. Yet the discussions revealed widespread concern about how

11. As pointed out, some of the normative values of the United States are, for example, embedded in many AI systems.

this instrument will be positioned in relation to existing legislation and whether it will add clarity or further complexity. The perceived central gap seemed to be not so much the absence of legal principles, but rather the lack of coherent and executable implementation mechanisms for those that already exist.

Several participants emphasised that frameworks such as the EU AI Act, the GDPR and the UNCRC already cover much of the normative ground. However, what is still missing is a sector-specific articulation of how these norms apply in education, where legal obligations meet pedagogical realities and where compliance interacts directly with teaching practice. The instrument therefore needs to primarily define what the "right to quality education" means when education is mediated, shaped or even automated (if only partly) by AI systems.

A clear pattern reflected across groups was the disproportionate burden placed on schools and educators, as mentioned earlier using a specific example from Italy. In many national contexts, new AI or data protection guidelines make schools legally responsible for impact assessments, risk monitoring and data governance – tasks for which they lack both the resources and expertise. There was broad agreement that obligations must be feasible, matched with adequate resources and supported through shared tools (such as checklists, templates and guidance notes). The feasibility gap also extends to definitional clarity. Key terms such as "automatic decision making", "robust evidence" or "AI literacy" were seen as underdefined, potentially leading to inconsistent implementation and understanding across member states. This uncertainty risks leaving schools and local authorities exposed to liability while developers and vendors are not held to equivalent standards.

Several omissions were noted as significant: the draft text does not contain sufficient reference to learners with special educational needs; it lacks discussion of environmental sustainability; and it gives limited treatment to opt-out mechanisms for students and parents. Participants stressed that these omissions, if not addressed, could undermine the coherence of the Council of Europe's human-rights-based approach.

A further gap was identified in respect of enforcement and accountability. Participants questioned who, in practice, will monitor compliance, especially given the multilevel governance structures in education. Without clear delineation of responsibility – from developers and ministries down to municipalities and schools – there is a risk that the legal instrument will remain aspirational rather than truly operational. In summary, the core problem is not so much an absence of values or frameworks, but a lack of "connective tissue": actionable and practical bridge(s) between existing law, educational governance and classroom-level realities. These gaps point to the absence of an explicit human-rights-based approach that would ensure coherence across values, obligations and implementation mechanisms.

2.1.1.2 Patterns of agreement and divergence

Despite the plurality and abundance of voices leading to differences in emphasis, participants agreed on several foundational principles, suggesting that a human-rights-based approach may provide the overarching interpretive framework within which to regulate AI in education. This approach, as some speakers underlined, rests on the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality – a set of criteria that can guide both policy formulation and implementation. There was strong consensus that the legal instrument must be human centred, rights based and education specific. AI systems used in schools should advance, not endanger, the four "As" in education: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. This framework anchored the discussion in the Council of Europe's normative and value-oriented tradition, positioning education primarily as a public good rather than a service to be optimised through technology.

The key areas of agreement included the following:

- a human-centred and rights-based approach. All groups underlined the need for the instrument to reaffirm and practically operationalise existing human rights obligations.
- the need to build on existing regulation. Participants stressed that the new instrument must complement the EU AI Act, the GDPR and other relevant conventions, not duplicate or contradict them.
- a redistribution of responsibility. Developers should carry a greater share of legal and ethical accountability, applying safety and privacy by design and by default, and offering opt-out options.
- teacher and learner agency. Teachers need to retain autonomy in pedagogical choice and learners (and parents) must have meaningful agency in whether and how AI tools are used.
- the need for an evidence and testing culture. The development of shared assessment frameworks and regulatory sandboxes was widely supported in order to provide mechanisms for testing tools before large-scale deployment.
- the need for transparency and equity. Core principles should include transparency on data usage, non-discrimination and equitable access to AI-enhanced learning environments.

While participants agreed on the core framework of the future legal instrument, divergence emerged in several areas:

- the level and form of regulation. While some participants argued for a binding convention that would set enforceable obligations across member states, others preferred a more flexible format, such as guidelines, recommendations or a voluntary labelling system to allow more flexible adaptation to national contexts.
- the purpose of regulation. There was some tension between seeing the instrument as a protective document (guarding against risks) or as an enabling one (empowering responsible innovation and pedagogical creativity). This debate reflected broader concerns about the tone of regulation: whether it should constrain AI or guide its responsible use.
- the scale of governance. Opinions differed on whether governance and potential certification should be centralised (for example, a European repository of certified tools) or nationally distributed (allowing national or even local decision making), the key argument here being that while centralisation offers consistency, local flexibility can better respect diversity.
- definitional and conceptual clarity. Terms such as "automatic decision making" or "robust evidence" generated debate, revealing epistemic divergence about how technical concepts translate into educational realities and extending this debate to wider discussions about the EdTech ecosystem.
- the allocation of responsibility. While there was consensus that schools are overburdened, there was less agreement on where and how responsibility should be reallocated: perhaps to national ministries, independent authorities or developers.
- the feasibility of implementing the legal instrument. Some participants cautioned that a very detailed, legally binding document could become costly to implement and therefore politically unviable; others argued that soft law alone would fail to drive meaningful change.

2.1.1.3 Insights and potential implications

The combination of convergence on principles and divergence on mechanisms highlighted the need for the legal instrument to act primarily as a framework of alignment rather than a rigid prescriptive instrument. Three broader insights emerged from the discussions, each pointing towards the type of legal and policy architecture needed for AI in education.

From compliance to capability

One of the dominant messages seemed to be that compliance alone will not safeguard educational integrity. Legal safeguards must be accompanied by capacity building, including, for example, professional training, shared resources and institutional support. Schools cannot be expected to fulfil obligations without being given the means for doing so. A future instrument should thus combine legal provisions with procedural supports, such as model templates, guidance checklists or joint capacity-building mechanisms between states and schools.

This, in turn, implies reframing regulation to ensure that it is not merely a constraint but an enabler of competence, helping educators and institutions, but also developers, to act responsibly and confidently in AI-mediated environments.

Towards co-regulation and shared accountability

A recurrent insight was the need for shared governance and/or consistent knowledge exchange, where responsibility is distributed across states, developers and educational institutions. Participants suggested mechanisms of co-regulation such as: certification schemes where developers demonstrate privacy and pedagogical soundness; testing environments (sandboxes) where new tools are evaluated collaboratively; and multilevel impact assessments in which national oversight is combined with local adaptation.

Such a co-regulatory model could align public accountability with private innovation, ensuring that human rights are not external to technological development but embedded within it. This model also reflects a pragmatic understanding that effective governance must extend beyond the formal reach of ministries and school inspectorates.

Human rights as a practical design compass

Rather than abstractly invoking rights, participants called for a translation of rights into operational criteria, such as the principles of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. Taking a human-rights-based approach entails assessing whether the objectives, processes and outcomes of AI-related education policies advance the realisation of human rights – strengthening the capacity of duty bearers to fulfil their

legal obligations and the capacity of rights holders to know about and claim their entitlements. The relevant normative content includes the rights to education, equality and non-discrimination, participation in cultural life, enjoyment of scientific progress, academic freedom, health and a safe and sustainable environment, and children's rights. These elements define the scope within which the Compass for AI and education must operate.

Participants also stressed that trust depends on transparency. Mechanisms such as allowing parents and students to opt out of specific AI-mediated educational uses, as well as enforceable provisions for monitoring and redress, would be desirable, if not essential for legitimacy. Furthermore, by explicitly addressing equity, diversity and inclusion, including cultural and linguistic plurality and special educational needs, the instrument could anchor human rights in the lived realities of European classrooms.

Finally, there was agreement that the instrument's added value would lie in its coherence: it should act as connective tissue between existing laws rather than creating an additional framework. Its role would be to articulate how fundamental principles – human dignity, democracy and the rule of law – are interpreted within the specific and evolving context of education.

2.1.1.4 Conclusion

Overall, the debates in Policy lab 2 and during the "conference corridors" pointed to a growing maturity in the discourse on governance of AI in education within Europe. The conversation has moved beyond the question of whether to regulate towards how to regulate meaningfully by balancing protection, feasibility and innovation. The emerging consensus suggested that a future Council of Europe legal instrument should be anchored in human rights, education specific, implementation aware and capacity oriented.

Rather than multiplying rules, it should provide a shared compass, aligning the responsibilities of states, developers and educators; linking legal coherence with pedagogical integrity; and ultimately ensuring that AI in education serves not only efficiency but the flourishing of learners and the vitality of democratic societies.

2.1.2 Policy toolbox

2.1.2.1 Gap definition

Across all sessions, the policy toolbox was recognised as a potentially powerful bridge between the Council of Europe's principles and their real-world implementation. Yet participants repeatedly noted a "translation gap" between intent and usability. While the toolbox aspires to offer concrete guidance, its current iteration remains too abstract, too conceptual and insufficiently operational for diverse educational contexts. Teachers and school leaders would struggle to see how to apply it; policy makers might find it difficult to identify target audiences and expected outcomes. The language was at times described as too technical or academic, using epistemic or ontological terminology unfamiliar to practitioners. Participants also questioned the notion of "readiness" invoked in the framework – whether referring to information technology (IT) infrastructure, regulatory maturity, political will or human competence. These uncertainties point to a fundamental gap: the toolbox articulates principles but does not yet provide a clear pathway for action or adaptation across different systems and user groups.

2.1.2.2 Patterns of agreement and divergence

There was broad agreement that the toolbox should not be seen as a static manual but as a living, iterative instrument that evolves through testing, feedback and continuous improvement. Participants stressed the importance of pilot projects and usability trials to refine both language and structure. There was consensus that layered guidance is needed: high-level principles for policy makers, managerial frameworks for school leaders and concrete examples or activities for teachers. This would allow the toolbox to serve multiple audiences without diluting its coherence.

The points of divergence concerned primarily the nature and scope of adaptation. Echoing to some extent discussions in Policy lab 2, some participants argued for clear, harmonised standards to ensure comparability and fairness across Europe, while others emphasised contextual flexibility**,** warning against over-prescription that could stifle innovation. Participants from governance-oriented discussions suggested, for example, the creation of a permanent body or mechanism responsible for monitoring and updating the toolbox, ideally on a two-year cycle, to ensure legal and pedagogical alignment. Conversely, practitioners in the education and literacy sessions prioritised capacity building and facilitation, arguing that without trained intermediaries and time allocated for professional learning, even the best-designed toolbox would remain unused.

Despite these differences, a shared key insight emerged: adaptability and clarity must go hand in hand. The toolbox should enable contextual innovation while maintaining a shared vocabulary and an ethical anchor rooted in human rights and democracy.

2.1.2.3 Insights and potential implications

Several insights cut across the discussions. First, usability is relational; it depends as much on governance structures and human capacity as on design. Effective deployment will require social partners, school leaders and teacher trainers to work together in a bottom-up manner, supported by ongoing professional learning. Second, the toolbox must encompass accessibility, adaptability and feedback. Accessibility requires plain language, intuitive visuals and concrete case examples; adaptability calls for modular or spiral structures that allow countries to use only the relevant components; feedback mechanisms must enable practitioners and users to report experiences and influence future revisions.

Third, readiness should be reconceptualised as multidimensional, to include not only infrastructure and policy alignment but also considerations of AI literacy, pedagogical confidence and cultural attitudes towards innovation. The diversity of national examples, such as the French "AI committee" model in schools, the Italian network of digital specialists and the Estonian certification of AI-literate teachers, illustrate different entry points for implementation within the same overarching policy tool.

Finally, usability is itself a governance challenge. The most effective way to ensure it may be, for example, through networks of practice or facilitators – trusted intermediaries who can interpret the toolbox for schools, mediate between the realities of policy making and classroom and ensure that adaptation remains anchored in shared ethical values.

2.1.2.4 Conclusion

The working groups collectively positioned the policy toolbox as a navigation aid rather than a checklist, as a mechanism for dialogue, reflection and continuous learning. To fulfil this role, it must be both strategic and practical – strategic in providing a coherent European direction grounded in the Council of Europe's core values, and practical in offering adaptable pathways for national and institutional implementation. Participants mostly agreed that the next stage should prioritise pilot testing, co-creation with practitioners and iterative refinement. Ultimately, the success of the toolbox will be measured by whether it enables education systems to turn shared principles into lived practice, transforming ethical guidance into the everyday actions of teachers, learners and school leaders across Europe.

2.2 Education about AI

Policy lab 1, "AI literacy recommendations", addressed one of the most urgent yet least co-ordinated dimensions of Europe's AI-in-education agenda: education about AI. Whereas the preceding sections examined the legal and policy tools shaping how AI is governed and deployed, this discussion was focused on people: how learners, teachers and citizens can understand, critically evaluate and responsibly engage with AI. Across interventions, the concept of AI literacy emerged as both a civic capacity and a democratic safeguard, aligning closely with the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Among the themes discussed during the conference, education about AI stood out as both pressing and fragmented. Mr Bálint Koós of the European Students' Union, representing more than 20 million students across Europe, drew attention to an AI literacy landscape marked by inequality and inconsistency: unequal access to tools, fragmented guidance and the absence of any co-ordinated mechanism to ensure quality or inclusion. His intervention reframed AI literacy as a matter of equity and democracy, calling for systems that students help design rather than merely receive. He emphasised that currently access and opportunity are determined by geography and privilege: some students learn to navigate AI critically, while others are left with unmediated exposure and no structured guidance. For him and for many young people, this is not an abstract policy question but a lived experience that shapes autonomy, participation and trust. His remarks crystallised the sense that, while regulation may define boundaries, education determines agency – and a coherent European approach to AI literacy is urgently needed to prevent new inequalities from deepening old ones.

Other speakers also noted that existing AI literacy efforts are widespread but disconnected. Many frameworks have been developed globally, yet most remain technologically or computationally driven. Few meaningfully address the human dimension of AI: its implications for well-being, agency, privacy and equity, or its potential to reinforce social exclusion and misinformation. The policy lab therefore positioned the Council of Europe's work as a necessary complement to these initiatives, placing ethical and civic understanding at the centre of AI literacy.

2.2.1 Gap definition

The policy lab identified a deep and widening gap between the rapid expansion of AI technologies in society and the capacity of education systems to prepare citizens for them. While AI tools are already embedded in everyday learning, communication and decision making, coherent strategies for equipping learners and educators with critical understanding remain rare. The issue is not one of awareness but of structure: Europe seems not so much to lack frameworks and initiatives but to struggle with their fragmented nature and distribution – they are scattered across geographies, institutions, sectors and levels of governance, rarely converging into a shared vision or a co-ordinated implementation plan.

Participants described an AI literacy landscape that is at once crowded and incomplete. The frameworks that exist mostly originate from computer science or digital skills perspectives. They tend to prioritise how AI works or how to use it effectively (for example, the skill of "prompting"), leaving aside the broader civic and ethical questions of how AI shapes human experience. As a result, learners often acquire functional skills without developing critical understanding and teachers are left without clear guidance on how to translate complex technological and social issues into classroom practice.

From the student perspective, this gap is visible and consequential. Young people are already interacting with AI daily – through recommendation systems, language models and automated assessments – yet their capacity to question or influence these systems is unevenly distributed. Access to AI literacy opportunities depends on geography, school resources and national priorities, producing what Mr Koós called a "fragmented and unequal landscape". Without co-ordinated efforts, AI literacy risks becoming another axis of inequality rather than a tool for empowerment.

Educators echoed this tension. Many see the value of AI literacy but face curriculum overload and limited support for professional learning. Adding new topics without removing old ones creates resistance and fatigue. The discussions also revealed that current approaches often overlook families and learners themselves as active partners. Representatives of parent organisations stressed that young people and parents must be involved as co-creators of digital education strategies, not merely as end users or consultees. Policy makers, meanwhile, grapple with aligning AI literacy with existing digital and media education agendas, often duplicating work or creating competing expectations. The result is a patchwork system that lacks coherence, inclusivity and sustainability.

2.2.2 Patterns of agreement and divergence

Broad consensus emerged on several fronts. Participants agreed that AI literacy should be considered as a core civic and educational competency, necessary for everyone – not only for computer scientists or teachers of technology. There was wide consensus that it must be approached holistically, spanning technological, practical and human (and/or social) dimensions. These dimensions correspond to understanding how AI works, how to use it responsibly and how it affects individuals and societies. Together, they mark AI literacy as an enabler of democratic participation in an increasingly algorithmic world.

At the same time, many participants cautioned against reinventing yet another layer of "literacy". Several argued that AI literacy is already implicit within media and digital literacy and should be developed as part of these broader traditions rather than as a stand-alone framework. They saw alignment as essential for policy coherence and for reducing the pressure on teachers who are already asked to deliver multiple, overlapping competencies. The experience from Romania, for example, where AI literacy has been embedded within existing media education programmes, was presented as a practical example of such integration in action. For these participants, the strength of AI literacy lies not in its separateness but in its ability to renew and deepen existing literacies with critical perspectives on automation, data and power.

Others, however, maintained that AI literacy warrants explicit recognition as a distinct area, given the speed and depth of AI's societal impact. They argued that naming it separately could help secure visibility, funding and accountability, as was the case for digital literacy in earlier policy cycles. For these participants, establishing distinct terminology and measurable competencies would help policy makers track progress and ensure that the ethical and civic aspects of AI are not diluted within broader digital agendas.

There was also consensus around the importance of ongoing professional learning. Given the rapid evolution of AI tools, one-time training was seen as insufficient. Teachers need continuous opportunities for upskilling, exchange of practice and reflective dialogue on pedagogical use. Beyond formal structures, there was broad agreement that meaningful participation by students and parents is essential. Student organisations called for co-creation that builds ownership and responsibility, while parents' associations emphasised the need for

genuine co-operation between families and educators as equal but distinct stakeholders. This perspective broadens the notion of AI literacy from a classroom skill to a shared social capability.

Differences and a plurality of voices clearly emerged regarding governance and mechanisms. While some participants supported creating a dedicated task force or even international certification systems to give AI literacy a more formal structure, others warned that such mechanisms could be exclusionary or impractical, particularly in decentralised systems where national curricula are diverse or non-existent. A few suggested that the goal should not be to centralise control but to enable participatory ecosystems that allow teachers, students and civil society actors to adapt AI literacy principles to their own contexts.

2.2.3 Insights and potential implications

Several cross-cutting insights emerged from the discussions. First, AI literacy should not start from zero: it can and should build on the substantial groundwork of digital and media literacy. This may require an audit of what already exists in each context, mapping overlaps, gaps and inequalities of access before adding new requirements.

Second, inclusivity must be a design principle, not an afterthought. Access to AI literacy opportunities should be equitable, reflecting socio-economic diversity, geographical variation and learners' lived experiences. The participation of students, particularly those from underserved communities, in policy design was highlighted as essential for legitimacy and impact. Participants further underlined that a rights-based approach must underpin all AI literacy measures. This includes awareness of privacy, consent and the permanence of digital footprints. Safeguards should be embedded by design rather than added post hoc, ensuring that learners understand both the benefits and the risks of AI systems.

Third, AI literacy is a shared societal responsibility. Parents, civil society organisations and media actors all have roles in shaping public understanding. Examples such as France's "All-Screen family guide"[12] demonstrate how partnerships between ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international agencies can extend literacy beyond schools into homes and communities.

Finally, implementation must remain realistic and context sensitive. In decentralised or higher education systems, flexibility will be needed; national mandates alone may not suffice. Incentive structures, such as micro-credentials or voluntary certification, could motivate engagement without overburdening curricula. Participants cautioned that successful implementation would require adequate time, expertise and resources. Policy makers and practitioners alike emphasised the need for adaptive models that evolve with technological change, supported by accessible communication and realistic expectations about what AI can and cannot achieve in classrooms.

2.2.4 Conclusion

Education about AI is foundational to ensuring that Europe's engagement with artificial intelligence remains human centred, democratic and respectful of rights. The policy lab discussions revealed broad agreement on principles but heterogeneity on means. The Council of Europe's potential added value lies in articulating a coherent, values-based vision that connects existing digital and media literacy initiatives, promotes inclusivity and encourages continuous learning across sectors. In this way, AI literacy becomes more than a technical skill – it becomes a civic capacity that underpins trust, agency and participation in the AI era.

Ultimately, the discussions reaffirmed a deeply humanistic view of AI in education: technology should enhance, not replace, human capability. Education about AI is therefore inseparable from education for autonomy and critical thinking, cultivating citizens able not only to use AI but also to question and shape its role in democratic life.

2.3 Research and evidence: European reference framework

Policy lab 4 explored the Compass component on "research and evidence", focusing specifically on one of its concrete manifestations: the proposed European reference framework for the evaluation of educational technologies.[13] While the broader Compass component concerns how research, evaluation and evidence

12. *"Le guide de la famille Tout-Ecran"*, available at www.clemi.fr/familles/publications/le-guide-de-la-famille-tout-ecran#:~:text=Retour%20au%20menu%20*%20La%20bande%20dessin%C3%A9e,*%20Le%20Guide%20de%20la%20Famille%20Tout%2D%C3%89cran.
13. www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/developing-a-common-european-evaluation-framework-to-assess-educational-technologies.

generation can support trustworthy and human-rights-aligned use of AI in education, the policy lab itself concentrated on the reference framework as a practical instrument within that wider agenda. This draft framework, endorsed by Council of Europe member states in 2024, aims to provide a coherent foundation for assessment across Europe; the panel discussion that opened the session therefore centred on the feasibility, purpose and implications of validating such a framework.

The panel discussion situated the work on the European reference framework within real-world evaluation practices, highlighting both the opportunities and structural constraints. Ms Milja Laakso (UNICEF) described how UNICEF's global "EdTech for Good framework"[14] is built around safety, pedagogical impact, readiness for scale, and equity, showcasing a strong global need for coherent guidance. She noted that despite multiple existing tools, fragmentation continues to impede comparability, dialogue and trust, and that public good frameworks can help create shared baselines in diverse environments.

Mr Lukas Peh (educheck Digital)[15] drew attention to Germany's complex multistate approach, showing what co-ordinated governance can achieve when privacy, IT security, interoperability and commercial safeguards are addressed jointly. He emphasised that consensus across all 16 states was a major achievement and maintaining stakeholder alignment remains resource intensive. He also raised a central definitional challenge: existing legal instruments, including the EU AI Act, are too broad to be operationalised directly in education, requiring more precise, context-specific interpretations of what counts as AI and how to benchmark safety, transparency, autonomy and fairness in school settings.

Dr Lisa-Maria Müller (EdTech Evidence Board/Chartered College of Teaching,[16] United Kingdom) shared experience from an EdTech Evidence Board (EEB) project, highlighting the importance of a practitioner-informed perspective, stressing that evidence must extend beyond impact studies to encompass need, usability across varied contexts and accessibility, but also potential negative effects. Her insights from teacher focus groups conducted during the EEB project underscored that teachers value technologies used in classrooms for their professional purpose – "EdTech needs to do something I can't do". The evaluation frameworks must therefore consider teacher workload, agency and trust. She also highlighted that teacher-led evidence and multistakeholder participation are needed in any reference framework conceptualisation.

2.3.1 Gap definition

The gap definition synthesises observations from the panel discussion, rapporteur summaries and the workshop sheets. As the workshop was qualitative and did not seek to generate numerical consensus, the themes reflect shared patterns in a qualitative manner across these sources rather than a quantified majority view. Participants agreed that the current evidence landscape for educational technologies in Europe is crowded but incoherent. Multiple frameworks at global, national and regional level already assess aspects of impact, privacy and safety. Yet these instruments often duplicate effort, use incompatible criteria or remain too narrow in focus. As the feasibility study for the Council of Europe's own framework confirmed, significant gaps persist between existing evaluation models, between conceptual design and practical implementation, and between public-interest objectives and commercial interests.

The identified structural issues include fragmentation of standards, over-complexity and insufficient visibility of rights-based concerns, despite numerous references to safety and data protection. Existing gaps between frameworks and practice were highlighted. As several participants noted, "there are already lots of rules". This reflects a need for pathways between regulatory, ethical, practical and pedagogical domains.

2.3.2 Patterns of agreement and divergence

In the panel reflections, rapporteur summaries and the workshop discussions, participants expressed broad alignment on several foundational principles, even though their priorities and emphases varied. Many participants reiterated the importance of clearly anchoring any European reference framework in human rights, particularly emphasising the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, transparency and data protection. Others highlighted the need for the framework to remain a living, adaptable instrument, capable of evolving with technological change and in diverse national contexts.

There was also repeated emphasis, particularly in the workshop groups, on ensuring that evaluation covers a wider set of outcomes than academic performance alone. Participants pointed to well-being, confidence, teacher workload, accessibility and contextual usability as essential dimensions for understanding the educational

14. www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/edtech-for-good.
15. https://educheck.schule/.
16. https://chartered.college/edtech-evidence-board-project/.

value of digital and AI-enabled tools. Several also stressed that developers should receive clearer guidance on expectations about privacy by design and safety by design and that evaluation should include the potential harms as well as the benefits of EdTech products.

At the same time, the discussions revealed a diversity of perspectives on scope, mechanisms and feasibility. Participants differed on whether the framework should focus primarily on product-level evaluation or adopt a broader ecosystem-level orientation that examines institutional practices and governance conditions, such as oversight arrangements, accountability structures, and decision-making responsibilities. Concerns about complexity, resourcing and operationalisation surfaced across multiple groups: some participants warned that the current criteria appeared overly extensive or insufficiently prioritised, while others questioned who would assess compliance and decide how results would be communicated. Divergence also emerged around the balance between harmonisation and contextual flexibility, namely whether the framework should set out a common core of criteria with optional national adaptations or allow for more localisation from the outset.

2.3.3 Insights and potential implications

Across the panel reflections, rapporteur summaries and workshop discussions, several cross-cutting insights emerged that helped clarify both the potential and the practical constraints of a European reference framework.

First, the need for greater simplification and prioritisation was highlighted repeatedly. The current draft appears overly broad and/or difficult to operationalise, with concerns about "too many criteria", overlapping domains and the risk that complexity could hinder successful implementation. The framework should identify a core set of criteria that are anchored in rights, safety and educational purpose, with optional layers that allow for national or contextual adaptation. Related concerns about transparency, accountability and feasibility appeared across groups. Participants raised questions about the framework operationalisation, including on who would evaluate products, how assessments would be made visible to end users, and how consistency could be maintained across different contexts. Rapporteurs also noted the gaps between conceptual criteria and practical implementation, including uncertainties about required resources, governance structures and institutional capacities. These concerns point to the need for clear implementation pathways and shared terminology.

Second, a recurring theme was the importance of grounding evaluation explicitly in human rights, particularly children's rights, non-discrimination, transparency and the best interests of the child. Participants agreed that these principles should not only be referred to but also translated into operational safeguards. This emphasis also reflected the broader view that the framework's distinctive added value lies in emphasising ethical, democratic and societal dimensions.

Third, several groups also highlighted the importance of understanding educational value in broader terms, noting that evaluation should cover not only learning outcomes but also well-being, confidence, teacher workload, accessibility, sustainability and potential harms.

2.3.4 Conclusion

The policy lab discussions underscored that work on the European reference framework is both necessary and complex. In the panel reflections, rapporteur summaries and workshop sheets, participants expressed a shared interest in moving towards a coherent and rights-based approach to evaluating educational technologies, while also recognising the practical constraints that such a framework must address.

Many contributions highlighted the importance of clearer prioritisation, stronger emphasis on human and specifically children's rights, greater transparency about roles and responsibilities, and attention to feasibility and implementation. The discussions reflected a plurality of perspectives regarding scope, mechanisms and level of evaluation. Participants differed on how to best balance harmonisation with contextual flexibility across diverse national contexts. Concerns about complexity and the challenge of applying standards consistently were recurring themes, pointing to the need for iterative refinement and mechanisms that support usability and clarity.

The deliberations also underscored the importance of a broad understanding of educational value, extending beyond academic outcomes, which led to the view that evaluation should primarily relate to the lived realities of educators and learners. The policy labs' outputs confirmed that the European reference framework could make a meaningful contribution if developed as a clear and adaptable instrument that aligns with existing legal obligations, emphasises human rights and remains sensitive to the operational realities of national education systems. Its legitimacy and usefulness would, however, depend on continued dialogue, simplification and attention to feasibility of implementation, as well as transparent processes that enable diverse stakeholders to help shape its evolution.

3. Shared themes and emerging questions

The discussions in the four policy labs clearly showed that the Compass components – regulation, literacy and evidence – are interdependent. Each addresses a different aspect of the same challenge: how to ensure that AI in education advances democratic values while remaining pedagogically meaningful and practically feasible. The discussions collectively raised several cross-cutting themes – conceptual; operational; ethical and epistemic; and cultural and societal – that shape the emerging European agenda on AI and education. While highlighting these common themes, they also exposed questions that should guide the next phase of the Council of Europe's work.

Conceptual: defining "quality education" and balancing innovation and rights

Across the policy labs, participants acknowledged that Europe's traditional understanding of "quality education" must evolve to include how learning is mediated by data and algorithms. The underlying challenge is to reconcile innovation with rights, that is, to allow experimentation without compromising safety, agency or equity. There was broad consensus that technological innovation cannot be an end in itself: it must be justified by educational and social purposes. Yet uncertainty persists around how to translate values such as human dignity, autonomy and participation into "measurable" quality indicators. The question of what evidence of "good AI in education" looks like when human flourishing is the metric therefore remains open.

Operational: bridging capacity gaps and ensuring interoperability

A recurrent thread across all sessions was the uneven capacity among countries, institutions and professions to engage with AI responsibly. Teachers and school leaders face workload pressures and lack of training; ministries grapple with fragmented responsibilities; and smaller EdTech actors struggle to navigate overlapping standards. The conference highlighted that interoperability – of data, frameworks and language – is as important as regulation itself.

Participants called for multilevel governance structures that enable dialogue between policy makers, developers and practitioners to ensure that tools and frameworks can be adapted to diverse national contexts. The open question is how to design governance that remains coherent yet adaptable, that is, rigorous enough to protect rights, but flexible enough to accommodate national diversity.

Ethical and epistemic: accountability, transparency and the legitimacy of evidence

Whether discussing regulation or evaluation, participants repeatedly returned to the issue of trust. Transparency, in data use, algorithmic processes and evaluation criteria, was identified as the cornerstone of legitimate governance. Yet defining who is accountable and for what, remains unclear. In the evidence domain, epistemic questions persist concerning what kinds of data count as evidence of impact, and who decides which outcomes matter.

The policy labs collectively called for rights-based accountability chains that link developers, educators and authorities, making ethical responsibility traceable throughout the AI ecosystem. An unresolved tension lies between the speed of technological change and the slower rhythms of evidence generation and policy response. The question remains of how education systems can keep evidence-based oversight timely and relevant without sacrificing rigour.

Cultural and societal: building trust, agency and public understanding

All discussions underscored that technological adoption in education is ultimately also a cultural process. Teachers' confidence, learners' agency and public narratives about AI shape whether systems succeed or fail. The conference pointed to the need for deliberate efforts to communicate about AI in education in ways that foster understanding rather than fear, and agency rather than compliance.

Participants emphasised that democratic participation depends on trust, starting from trust in teachers' judgment, in public institutions and in the ethical integrity of technology itself. However, there remains the open question of how Europe can sustain public trust in AI for education at a time of polarised narratives and rapid change.

Taken together, these shared themes suggest that Europe's task is not merely to regulate or evaluate AI, but to govern its meaning, to ensure that technological progress aligns with educational purpose and democratic renewal. The Compass provides a starting point for that alignment, but the conference made it clear that the journey is ongoing.

4. Reflecting on the process: participation, dialogue and trust

The format of the 3rd Working Conference was designed not only as a discussion forum but also to directly showcase how inclusive policy for AI in education can be developed. Its working format, combining plenary exchanges with focused policy labs, mirrored the principles the Council of Europe seeks to embed in the Compass: participation, dialogue, transparency and shared responsibility.

The policy lab format enabled participants from ministries, research organisations, NGOs, schools, teacher associations, youth and parent bodies, civil society and the EdTech sector to work together on common challenges rather than to debate fixed positions. Rapporteurs synthesised discussions iteratively, ensuring that insights flowed across policy labs and back into plenary sessions. This design transformed the conference into a microecosystem of participatory governance, where policy development was not felt to be top-down consultation but genuine co-creation.

Participants consistently underlined that spaces like these are vital for building trust, the same trust that underpins responsible AI ecosystems. Multistakeholder dialogue revealed how differences, at times significant, of vocabulary or perspective between legal, pedagogical and technical communities can become productive rather than divisive when framed around shared values. The process thus served not only to inform the Compass components but also to test in practice the Council of Europe's approach to democratic deliberation.

The experience also highlighted the methodological value and inviting nature of structured deliberation. Alternating between plenary framing and smaller policy lab discussions created a rhythm of reflection and synthesis. This iterative design made it possible to identify cross-cutting insights in real time. The rapporteurs' comparative summaries were themselves an act of evidence translation, demonstrating how collective reasoning can distil complexity into actionable understanding.

By involving educators, students, parents and developers alongside policy makers, the conference operationalised the Council of Europe's principle that those affected by technology must have a voice in shaping it. In practice, this meant that ethical, pedagogical and technical considerations were examined together rather than sequentially. Participants noted that this approach not only enriched outcomes but modelled the kind of participatory ecosystem that future AI-in-education frameworks should institutionalise.

In many ways, one of the conference's most significant achievements lay in the process itself. The deliberative, multistakeholder format demonstrated that inclusive design can produce both legitimacy and learning. It showed that effective governance of AI in education is not simply about creating new rules or frameworks but about cultivating the habits of collaboration and creating safe spaces for dialogue. The Compass thus emerges not only as a policy tool but as a shared space of practice – it is a metaphor for a navigation method as much as a map.

5. The way forward for the Compass

The 3rd Working Conference confirmed that the Compass has moved from a conceptual vision to a shared framework for action. Yet it also underscored that this process is far from complete, with possibly more questions left still open than fully answered. The conference outcomes point to a collective understanding that responsible AI in education cannot be achieved through a single instrument, but through sustained alignment, experimentation and dialogue. The next phase of work should therefore focus on consolidating the Compass as a living and learning instrument.

The Compass as a living framework

Participants agreed that the Compass, or some of its elements, should remain dynamic rather than static. It must continue to translate the Council of Europe's foundational values – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – into practical mechanisms that evolve with social and technological change. To do so, the Compass could be supported through periodic reviews, pilot actions and structured feedback loops from member states. Iterative testing at national and institutional levels would allow the framework to adapt and remain usable, ensuring it serves as a genuine navigation aid rather than a fixed template.

Building national pathways and shared capacity

Across the four policy labs, a recurring message was the need to strengthen capacity for implementation. This includes the development of national adaptation pathways for each Compass component, connecting international guidance with local realities. Particular attention will need to be paid to professional learning for teachers, ministerial expertise on AI ethics and governance, and the creation of intermediary networks that can mediate between policy and practice. Investments in evaluation capability, within ministries, research institutions and inspectorates, were seen as essential for maintaining quality assurance and fostering evidence-informed learning for policy making.

Strengthening coherence and interoperability

Another direction emerging from the conference was the need to ensure that the Compass aligns seamlessly with broader European and global initiatives, including the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law and the EU AI Act. Participants highlighted the value of cross-sector collaboration to avoid duplication and promote mutual reinforcement. Interoperability of data standards, terminology and evidence frameworks was identified as both a technical and an ethical imperative. Achieving it will require sustained co-ordination among education, digital and data protection authorities across levels of governance.

Institutionalising participation and inclusivity

The conference also reaffirmed that inclusive governance is a precondition for legitimacy. Future work on the Compass should continue to institutionalise the participation of learners, educators, parents and civil society organisations in shaping AI-related policy. The policy lab format itself, being iterative, participatory and evidence informed, provides a promising model for ongoing dialogue. Embedding these participatory mechanisms within the Council of Europe's future work would help ensure that co-creation remains at the heart of implementation.

From principles to practice

The ultimate test of the Compass will lie in how effectively its principles can be translated into tangible improvement in schools, classrooms and learning outcomes, and ultimately benefit the society as a whole. This transition from principles to practice requires not only regulatory clarity but also supportive ecosystems and mechanisms: funding availability, professional learning communities and research partnerships that can sustain long-term change.

A shared agenda for trust and transformation

In conclusion, the conference confirmed that Europe's task is not simply to regulate AI in education but to govern its meaning. The Compass provides a shared ethical and pedagogical language through which this governance can take place. Its strength lies in its ability to connect stakeholders, disciplines and systems around a common goal: to make AI serve the right to quality education and the renewal of democratic values. The next steps should perhaps emphasise sustained collaboration – between ministries, researchers, practitioners and learners. By continuing to learn together, Europe can ensure that AI becomes not a force of division or dependency, but a catalyst for trust, capability and the flourishing of human potential.

Appendix

Policy lab leads and invited speakers

Artificial intelligence and education

3rd Working Conference
Ensuring quality education in the AI era – Introducing the Council of Europe Compass for AI and Education

8-9 October 2025, Council of Europe Headquarters, Strasbourg

Plenary panel: "Why Europe needs a common AI framework for education"

Moderator: Villano QIRIAZI | Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe

Panellists: Reda CIMMPERMAN | Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics, Lithuania
Birte GUETING | Ministry of School and Education NRW, Germany
Adam LIWAK | Malta Further and Higher Education Authority
Johannes SCHLEISS | SURF Netherlands

Plenary

Perspectives: "The four guiding points of the Compass for AI and Education"

Moderator: Ahmet-Murat KILIC | Head of the Digital Transformation Unit, Council of Europe

Panellists: Julio ALBALAD | National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training, Spain
Ľubomír ANTONI | Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia
Daniela HAU | Ministère de l'Education nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg
Edouard LAMBORAY | Educa, Switzerland

Policy lab 1 – AI literacy recommendations

Plenary

speakers: Wayne HOLMES | Council of Europe Expert
Bálint KOÓS | European Students' Union (ESU)

Group discussions

Group 1 | Educators

Moderator: Barbara WASSON | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Lola GARAY ABAD | Eduki

Speakers: Hazel FARRELL | GenAI:N3 National Network, Southeast Technological University, Ireland
Tobias M. SCHIFFERLE | Zurich University of Teacher Education, Switzerland

Group 2 | Learners, youth and parents

Moderator: Dora KATSAMORI | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Michelle DUQUETTE | Council of Europe Facilitator

Speakers: Lauren BOND | Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
Arja KRAUCHENBERG | European Parents Association

Group 3 | Policy makers

Moderator: Ilkka TUOMI | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Kristina ISHMAEL | Ishmael Consulting

Speakers: Hugo BESANÇON | Association Square, France
Laure DEMOLY | Centre pour l'Éducation aux Médias et à l'Information (CLEMI), France

Policy lab 2 – Draft legal instrument

Convenors: Jen PERSSON | Council of Europe Expert
Wayne HOLMES | Council of Europe Expert

Round table: Manon LETOUCHE | 5Rights Foundation, United Kingdom
Jessica NIEWINT-GORI | Istituto Nazionale Documentazione Innovazione Ricerca Educativa (INDIRE), Italy

Group discussions

Group 1

Moderator: Jen PERSSON | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Stephane CHAUDRON | International expert (independent)

Table leads: Malgorzata CYNDECKA | University of Bergen, Norway
Elodie WEIL | Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés (CNIL), France

Group 2

Moderator: Christian M. STRACKE | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Alex KAISERLIS | Council of Europe Expert

Table leads: Caitlin BISHOP | Privacy International, United Kingdom
Francesco LAVANGA | University of Florence, Italy

Group 3

Moderator: Vitor TOMÉ | Council of Europe Expert

Supporting facilitator: Wayne HOLMES | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Denise AMRAM | Council of Europe Expert

Table leads: Chiara ALTAFIN | Global Campus of Human Rights
Øystein FLØ BASTE | University of Oslo, Norway

Policy lab 3 – Usability of the policy toolbox

Convenors: Ron SALAJ | Council of Europe Expert
Ilkka TUOMI | Council of Europe Expert

Expert presentation: Daniel BURGOS | Universidad International de La Rioja, Spain

Group discussions

Group 1 | Governance

Moderator: Gianluca MISURACA | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Alina PISICA | Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Speakers: Monika HOANG | European Federation of Education Employers
Vivekanand SHANMUGAM | École Supérieure Coévolution Management et Technologies, France

Group 2 | Education

Moderator: Ron SALAJ | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Anders HYLDIG | Aarhus University, Denmark

Speakers: Sara ELNUSAIRI | Google
Aline GERMAIN-RUTHERFORD and Jackie ROBBINS | European Centre for Modern Languages

Group 3 | AI literacy

Moderator: Maroun JNEID | Council of Europe Expert

Rapporteur: Serena SPITALIERI | CIMEA

Speakers: Chiara FINOCCHIETTI | ENIC President, CIMEA, Italy
Alexandre MARTINEZ | Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires, France
Andrej NOVIK | K-12 Teacher, SCIO, Czech Republic

Policy lab 4 – Validating a reference framework

Convenor: Beth HAVINGA | Council of Europe Expert

Panellists: Milja LAAKSO | UNICEF EdTech for Good Framework
Lisa-Maria MÜLLER | Chartered College for Teaching – EdTech Evidence Board, United Kingdom
Lukas PEH | FWU, eduCheck Digital, Germany

Rapporteurs: Veli HILLMAN | Founder of EDDS Institute, United Kingdom
Diana KNODEL | Founder and CEO, fobizz, Germany

Plenary **"**The work of the Council of Europe across sectors"

Moderator: Ahmet-Murat KILIC | Head of the Digital Transformation Unit, Council of Europe

Panellists: Célia CHAMIÇA | Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), Council of Europe
Flurina FREI | Gender Equality Policy Advisor, Council of Europe
Vadim PAK | Co-secretary to the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI), Council of Europe

General rapporteur

Anna LINDROOS CERMAKOVA, European EdTech Alliance

Supporting the conference organisation

Michelle DUQUETTE, Council of Europe Facilitator

Council of Europe Secretariat

Villano QIRIAZI, Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe
Ahmet-Murat KILIC, Head of the Digital Transformation Unit, Council of Europe
Milena NAHAPETYAN, Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe
Benedita SANTOS SILVA, Junior Project Officer, Council of Europe
Gülden SERBEST, Project Assistant, Council of Europe
Sara CALOEIRO, Trainee, Council of Europe

On 8 and 9 October 2025, the Council of Europe held the 3rd working conference on artificial intelligence (AI) and education, entitled "Ensuring quality education in the AI era – Introducing the Council of Europe Compass for AI and education". Bringing together policy makers, educators, academics, experts and representatives of civil society and the private sector, the event explored how AI can be implemented responsibly and ethically in education, and how it can support quality learning and democratic values across Europe.

The conference introduced the Council of Europe "Compass for AI and education" (the Compass), a practical framework designed to translate Council of Europe standards into concrete guidance for member states, educational institutions, teachers, students and private sector actors. The Compass is structured around four components: AI literacy, regulation and governance, teaching, learning and assessment with AI, and the evaluation of educational technologies.

Participants took part in interactive "policy labs" to explore the practical application of the Compass's components. These sessions enabled attendees to contribute directly to the Council of Europe's work by sharing insights, identifying challenges and co-designing approaches to implementation at national and local levels. The conference also provided a platform to discuss the draft Committee of Ministers recommendation on AI literacy, ongoing work on a legal instrument to regulate AI in education and the development of a policy toolbox and evaluation frameworks to support evidence-based and rights-aligned practice.

The event reaffirmed the importance of dialogue, shared learning and forward planning. A strong consensus emerged on the need for collaborative, human-centred approaches to AI in education, grounded in the Council of Europe's core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The conference marked an important step towards ensuring that AI contributes to, rather than undermines, inclusive and quality education for all.

PREMS 004926

ENG

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 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.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE