



Presidency of Latvia
Council of Europe
MAY – NOVEMBER 2023

Présidence de la Lettonie
Conseil de l'Europe
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education

“The Transformative Power of Education: Universal Values and Civic Renewal”

26th Session

Strasbourg, France

28-29 September 2023

Programme of the Pre-Ministerial Session

Venue: Room 5, Palais

Introduction:

The draft Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030, titled “Learners first – Education for today’s and tomorrow’s democratic societies”, focuses on three major long-term goals: renewing the democratic and civic mission of education, enhancing education’s social responsibility and responsiveness, and developing a human rights-based perspective of the digital transformation in education.

These goals align with the [declaration](#) of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, adopted during the 4th Summit in Reykjavik, which emphasized the importance of investing in education for a democratic future and addressing emerging challenges in technology and the environment.

The Pre-Ministerial Session will delve deeper into these goals of the draft Education Strategy, with a particular focus on higher education, through dedicated panels to facilitate discussion and exchange of ideas. These panels will explore innovative initiatives and strategies to promote democratic values in and through education, enhance social responsibility in education, and effectively address the human rights dimensions of the digital transformation in educational settings.

The Session will foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among policymakers, experts, stakeholders and the members of the CDEDU (Steering Committee for Education) to shape the future of education in line with the Council of Europe’s objectives and priorities.

Panel 1 – Renewal of Civic Mission of Education: Boosting democratic participation of young learners

This panel discussion will highlight two significant Council of Europe initiatives that aim to promote the democratic participation of young people: the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) and the proposed development of a new Students’ Charter.

Since its adoption in 2016, the RFCDC has been a flagship project for the Council of Europe. One of its objectives is to encourage democratic experiences that strengthen the role of student participation in decision-making within the field of education. Many member States have embraced the RFCDC as a foundation to shape and develop their own education policies and practices. Currently, a review is underway to evaluate the extent to which member States have integrated the RFCDC into their formal education systems since 2018. This panel will present the initial findings of this review.

However, there is still significant potential for further progress in ensuring student participation at all levels. The panel will facilitate discussions on strategies to enhance student involvement in higher education democratic governance, exploring effective approaches to implement student-centred learning and empowering students to have agency in shaping their own learning experiences. To this end, the proposed Council of Europe Students’ Charter could serve as a new standard-setting instrument. Its development would involve close collaboration with the European Students’ Union and other relevant stakeholders, offering a comprehensive framework to enhance student participation and engagement within the higher education sector.

This panel discussion will finally provide an opportunity to collectively brainstorm and define the objectives of the Students’ Charter. Moreover, it will enable a deeper exploration of the role and responsibilities of public authorities in fostering and bolstering student participation, ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and respected in shaping their educational experiences.

Panel 2 – Education in times of emergencies and crisis: Resilient education systems and actors

The emergencies and crises our societies face are multifaceted, diverse, and constantly evolving. Their impact on education is severe, jeopardizing access to and the pursuit of quality education. To prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and crises, and ultimately to ensure educational continuity, it is crucial to build resilience in both individuals and the education system.

The Council of Europe has been actively engaged in addressing education in times of emergencies and crisis. The work of the focus group established under the auspices of the CDEDU has contributed to the development of principles and a participatory methodology. This work has led to the creation of a Resilience Toolbox, empowering educational stakeholders to provide inclusive and equitable quality education regardless of the type of emergency or crisis by fostering resilient education systems.

In order to enhance the resilience of learners to overcome future pandemics and natural disasters, the Council of Europe's Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE) has prepared a thematic report on pandemics and natural disasters as reflected in history teaching. This report examines how pandemics and natural disasters are taught across different levels of education in the 16 member States of the OHTE.

This panel discussion will provide an opportunity to delve into the findings of the OHTE report and explore the practical applications of the Resilience Toolbox for educational stakeholders. Participants will engage in an exchange of views on both individual and systemic resilience in times of emergencies and crisis. By sharing experiences and insights, the panel aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies and approaches that promote resilience in education and empower communities to overcome the challenges posed by emergencies and crises.

Panel 3 – Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education: Opportunities and risks

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the field of education, offering both opportunities and challenges. It has the capacity to drive advancements and innovations in educational settings. However, AI also introduces risks, including bias, lack of transparency, and privacy concerns.

Among the emerging AI tools applicable to education, ChatGPT stands out. It holds great potential for students, educators, and researchers, but it also poses significant challenges, particularly in relation to the development of analytical skills and critical thinking or encouraging plagiarism, which can complicate the assessment of educational outcomes.

While national authorities and institutions as well as international organisations have addressed several of the challenges posed by the digital environment and emerging technologies, the ethical implications of digital technologies including AI for humanity and, to a very limited extent, the ethics of AI in education, none have yet taken a holistic approach to the wider implications (particularly in terms of human rights, democracy and the rule of law) of the application and teaching of AI in education.

Furthermore, the last Council of Europe's [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2022\)18](#) on countering education fraud recognises that emerging technologies, including AI, have also the potential to contribute to building trust among all stakeholders in the education environment. In order to assist member States in countering education fraud and promoting ethics, transparency, and integrity in education, the Council of Europe aims to establish an Observatory on countering education fraud.

The use of AI in higher education is a complex and crucial topic that necessitates careful attention and discussion. This panel will provide a platform for exchanging perspectives on the challenges posed by AI in teaching and learning processes, with a particular focus on assessment. Furthermore, the panel will explore how member States can effectively leverage the potential of emerging technologies to combat its negative effects and notably fraudulent activities in education, while also considering potential medium and long-term solutions.

28 September 2023, 09h00-12h30 CET

08h30 Arrival of participants and welcome coffee

09h00-09h05 **Opening remarks**

Mr Villano QIRIAZI, Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe

09h05-10h00 **Panel 1 – Renewal of Civic Mission of Education: Boosting democratic participation of young learners**

Moderator: **Mr Matjaž GRUDEN**, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe

Panel:

Mr Horia ONITA, President of the European Students' Union (ESU)

Ms Natia NATSVLISHVILI, Democratic Culture and Human Rights Education Programme Manager and Head of International Relations and Strategic Communications, National Center for Teacher Professional Development, Georgia, Member of the CDEDU Bureau

Ms Barbara SANTIBANEZ, Researcher at the European Institute for Education and Social Policy (EIESP)

Q&A

10h05-11h00 **Panel 2 – Education in times of emergencies and crisis: Resilient education systems and actors**

Moderator: **Ms Laura TREIMANE**, Counsellor for Education and Science, Latvia

Panel:

Mr Raul CĂRSTOCEA, Vice-Chair of the OHTe Scientific Advisory Council

Mr Daniele DEL BIANCO, Director of Institute of International Sociology Gorizia (ISIG)

Mr Marios EPAMINONDAS, European and International Affairs Office, Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, Cyprus

Q&A

11h00-11h30 **Coffee break**

11h30-12h25 **Panel 3 – Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education: Opportunities and risks**

Moderator: **Ms Maija INNOLA**, Senior Ministerial Adviser, Department for Higher Education and Science Policy, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, CDEDU Chair

Panel:

Mr Luca LANTERO, Director General of Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence (CIMEA)

Mr Phil NEWTON, Professor at Swansea University

Ms Barbara WASSON, Professor at the University of Bergen

Mr Frédéric CLAVERT, Assistant-Professor at the University of Luxembourg

Q&A

12h25-12h30 **Closing remarks**

Mr Villano QIRIAZI, Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe