



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**  
**Claude VIVIER LE GOT President – Karl DONERT Vice-President**

**June 2020 session**

**Tuesday, 23 June 2020 – 10:00am-12:30pm**  
**Webinar – Kudo online platform**

**AGENDA**

**What lessons from Covid-19 should be taken  
for the topic of education and the digital era?**

*The webinar is divided into 5 sessions of 30 minutes each.*

**10:00am-10:30am**

**Topic 1: “Data reliability and hate speech”.**

Speakers:

**William Acker**, jurist, blogger, "traveller" of Romani origin (Sinti).

**Henri Braun**, lawyer, specialized in minority law and the fight against racism.

Hate speech on the Internet is an illustration of conflict among diverse groups, both within and between societies; it is a definite sign that transformative technologies such as the Internet allow both innovative opportunities and challenges, which demand a stable balance between fundamental rights and principles, including freedom of expression, and the defense of human dignity.

During this unique lockdown, the Internet has provided a significant opportunity for people to access information and this raises the question of the confidence in the information that is being presented (fake news, hate speech, freedom of speech also).

- In a crisis situation, data is considered an essential tool for crafting responses, allocating resources, measuring the effectiveness of interventions, such as social distancing, and telling us when we might reopen economies.
- However, incomplete, inaccurate or incorrect data can obscure important nuances within communities, ignoring important factors such as socioeconomic realities, and creating false senses of panic or safety, not to mention other harmful aspects such as needlessly exposing private information, fake news and hate speech.

On the other hand, control would result in limiting freedom of speech.

Is the alarming trend of hate speech and fake news an opportunity for leaders to curb free speech?  
Should we be advocating for laws that regulating hate speech and fake news that might also be used to suppress free speech?

What is the borderline between securing information and freedom of expression?

**10:30am-11:00am**

## Topic 2: “Is the current health crisis and the transformation of society likely to destroy the boundaries of civil liberties? Will data tracking destroy fundamental freedoms?”

### Speakers:

**Gilbert Flam**, President of the "International" Commission of the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA).

**Henri Braun**, lawyer, specialized in minority law and the fight against racism.

In looking at civil liberties and the governmental responses to the current pandemic, there is a significant paradox between the freedom and rights of democracies on the one hand and the security of the State, in terms of the health and welfare of its population and the need for policies of lockdown on the other hand in response to the terror of a global pandemic.

- Will the freedoms of association, expression and movement enjoyed in a liberal democracy be conducive to the planning and execution of acts of civil disruption, designed to destabilise or destroy State structures, post-pandemic, when severe economic hardship and exclusion become recurrent themes resulting from the measures ?
- Is this an illustration of the difficult juxtaposition of civil liberties and national well-being and security, in which the delicate balance between health and economic welfare is disrupted?

As data is increasingly used to inform policy, to what extent is it necessary to guarantee that the required data protection safeguards are implemented when dealing with exceptional measures for instance to defend public health and well-being?

Will states be at risk in becoming engaged in a permanent state of emergency on their own soil. Does the loss of economic stability and functioning in turn pose a threat to the fundamental rights and freedoms which characterise democratic societies?

Is it, consequently, imperative to ensure that steps are taken to secure people’s rights, and the sensitive data processing that is proportionate to the legitimate purpose for which the information is being sought? How can we ensure data is erased?

Should we forgo the protection of our data for the good of the community?

### 11:00am-11:30am

## Topic 3: “The right to connection as a fundamental right” .

### Speakers:

**Sandra Coulibaly Leroy**, Deputy Director, in charge of Foresight, Analysis and Strategic Intelligence within the Programming and Strategic Development Department of the International Organisation of La Francophonie.

**Lune Taqqiq**, author, lecturer, founder of Freebip, member of the Association for Voluntary Action in Europe (AVE).

According to the World Economic Forum, “among the many inequalities exposed by COVID-19, the digital divide is not only one of the starkest, but also among the most surprising. Even in developed countries, internet access is often lower than you might think.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has required immediate and fundamental shifts that influence all perspectives of our lives. Public health policies have been introduced to attempt to control the spread of the virus.

- The result has been to severely limit mobility.

Schools, businesses and cultural venues have been ordered to shut and to establish online social communication for work and education.

- This placed an immense reliance on the services offered by the Internet and Cloud Computing through the pandemic.

Many people are already accustomed to the seamless interconnection of online and offline lives, where networks meet the demand of more schooling, working, and playing at home in response to pandemic strategies.

- We also are aware that those who are in higher-paid jobs have more opportunities for teleworking than others and that students in low income families face a widening 'homework gap' because they are unable to get online.
- Therefore these children and the youth are a highly disadvantaged group in Europe and have the right to be connected.

Various factors define child and youth poverty: social and family changes and the growing incidence of lone-parent families, changes in the world of work (low economic growth, migration of unskilled workers and job insecurity) and changes in social systems that are becoming harder.

- Child or youth poverty is not merely a rejection of children's or youth's fundamental rights but also a warning to the future well-being of European civilisations.
- Parents' health difficulties have a meaningful influence on them. Parental poverty and social exclusion have an inherent impact on children's and youth's cognitive growth and educational achievement.

It is necessary to understand the poverty of parents and to give them the first place in their children's future by providing the assistance they need.

But the current crisis is exposing a widening gap between digital 'haves' and 'have-nots.' And what's missing from many of the conversations around digital inequality during lockdown is the immense importance of shared public spaces and human connectivity in closing the digital divide.

- How can we ensure the right to connection for all?
- What measures need to be put in place?
- Whose responsibility is it?
- What education lessons are needed?

## 11:30am-12:00pm

### Topic 4: "Gender equality".

#### Speakers:

**Isabelle Collet**, founder of the Association for Gender Research in Education and Training (ARGEF), professor at the section of Educational Sciences of the University of Geneva.

**Anne Nègre**, attorney at law, Vice-President in charge of Equality at the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, President of University Women of Europe (UWE).

According to the UN Chronicle, education is a pathway towards gender equality. Karam (2018) suggests gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of deep-rooted differences in society. Disparities, whether in terms of poverty, ethnic background, disability, or traditional attitudes about their status and role all undermine the ability of women and girls to exercise their rights.

Gender equality in education means equal educational possibilities, in terms of entrance retention and learning, for every girl and boy, as well as having a gender balance in teaching staff and administrators. This leads to gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the power, governance, services and funding of the education systems, including for states, local education associate groups, school administration organisations and other points of contact with local people.

To stop the perpetuation of gender inequality through schools as well as to address its existence in society at large, it can be argued that initiatives to promote gender equality in and through schools are imperative.

- This is because schools have enormous potential to effect change in gender relations, views and practices vis-a-vis gender, and create gender-sensitive and gender-equal generations of men and women.

On the other hand, perhaps the problem belongs to society and not to the school system as such.

- Is it embedded in the role models portrayed by women?
- For instance, in terms of equality, should women forsake the tradition of seizing sole responsibility for the upbringing of children?

It might be argued that gender inequality is not the outcome of specific legislation nor was it the fault of girls.

- However, was it the result of an education system and curriculum that helped boys by continually pointing to male role models and patriarchal culture?
- If so, should this state of affairs be replaced, and an emphasis placed on equality, intercultural relations and democratic values?

It is clear that the media has an important role to play to educate society.  
What should media be doing?

## 12:00pm-12:30pm

### Topic 5: “The education industry: between democratization and content control”.

#### Speakers:

**Janice Richardson**, expert to the Council of Europe on digital security and education issues.

**Sandra Coulibaly Leroy**, Deputy Director, in charge of Foresight, Analysis and Strategic Intelligence within the Programming and Strategic Development Department of the International Organisation of La Francophonie.

Even before COVID-19, there was already high growth worldwide in the adoption of education technology. Now, online and recorded courses are a regular part of students' daily lives.

- One can wonder about what this means for the future of learning and whether the content and educational forms of these courses are influencing the students and teachers involved based on the platforms, networks and learning approaches used.

Online courses are a break from face-to-face teaching and mainly provide an asynchronous mode of communication. Is learning online as effective?

- Does it remove creativity and spontaneity and provide highly controlled, managed learning situations? Does this result in poorer learning experiences?
- Should there be a concerted effort to provide structured learning environments but go beyond replicating a physical class/lecture through video capabilities?
- Or should educators be using a range of collaboration tools and engagement methods that promote “inclusion, personalisation and intelligence”
- Does recent experience imply that the integration of information technology in education will be further accelerated and that online education will eventually become a fundamental component of school and university education?

Will the “new normal” lead to the emergence of a new hybrid model of education, with significant benefits?

Post-pandemic, what sort of education do we want?

- How will the methods of production and dissemination of rich educational content take place? Will there be merchandising, standardization of content, globalization of teaching methods, dissemination through networks, commercialisation of learning etc.
- How can we ensure the quality of online education? What will the level of autonomy (empowerment) of learners be, how will critical awareness be developed, transmission of values and construction of the democratic citizen, or will it just be the massive dissemination of “knowledge” on networks controlled by GAFA?

What are the challenges that need to be overcome?