



Doc. 15200

16 December 2020

Role of education in the digital era: from “digital natives” to “digital citizens

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2167 (2019)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully considered Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2167 \(2019\)](#) on “The role of education in the digital era: from “digital natives” to “digital citizens”. It has forwarded it to the relevant Council of Europe bodies for information or comments.²
2. The Committee of Ministers is convinced of the role and importance of education in “the digital era” and of the need to prepare tomorrow’s “digital citizens” for future challenges. It welcomes the initiative by the Parliamentary Assembly aimed at encouraging member States to draw on relevant Council of Europe instruments and implement them appropriately.
3. In the current circumstances linked to Covid-19 and in view of the widespread recourse to online learning, for which no member State was fully prepared, the Committee of Ministers believes that the implementation of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and of the Digital Citizenship Education project are more relevant than ever. It notes that the challenges for the future include ensuring the provision of inclusive, accessible, equitable and sustainable digital learning, enabling all students to participate.
4. The Committee of Ministers draws attention to other instruments and tools to be taken into account on this subject. In addition to Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2019\)10](#) on developing and promoting digital citizenship education and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)7](#) on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment, which the Assembly mentioned, reference should be made to Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)2](#) on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 and to the Council of Europe Internet Literacy Handbook published in 2017 when assessing the Council of Europe instruments aimed at promoting children’s participation in modern society. Additionally, the European Commission recently adopted the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027), which outlines its long-term strategy for inclusive, high-quality and accessible digital education. The Action Plan proposes 14 initiatives and 2 priority areas that aim to support EU member States with building up the digital capacity and readiness of their education and training systems and are complementary to the Council of Europe’s instruments.
5. Bearing in mind these key instruments of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers has taken due note of the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Assembly and would point out that some of them are already being implemented.
6. For instance, with a view to implementing the current Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), the organisation of activities in follow-up to [CM/Rec\(2018\)7](#) is provided for in the specific tasks of the CDENF. In this context, it is important to take appropriate account of the essential components of digital literacy education, in terms both of the positive use of online tools and resources and also of protection against online risks.

1. Adopted at the 1391st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (8 December 2020).

2. Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) and Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI).



7. Moreover, an informal Conference of Ministers of Education organised under the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers was held online on 29 October 2020. One of the themes discussed, “Making the right to education a reality under a pandemic”, sought to devise a European response to challenges created by the health crisis in order to ensure that the right to education was effective also in times of crisis and to ensure equal access to quality education.

8. At the conference, a Political Declaration on the education response to the Covid-19 crisis was approved by the Ministers and a Roadmap for Action was presented to them setting out how the Council of Europe can help member States face the education challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Among other things, it is proposed that examples of relevant practice of online or hybrid education provision in times of crisis be supported and brought together through the Democratic Schools Network (DSN), and that a full-scale online training programme be developed for educators on Digital Citizenship Education to enhance their capacity to teach effectively in the digital age.

9. In this context, the Committee of Ministers notes with interest the Assembly’s proposal that guidelines be provided for establishing an ethical and pedagogical framework governing partnerships between educational institutions and the private sector.

10. Lastly, the Committee of Ministers considers that promoting the use of artificial intelligence in education, as mentioned in the last paragraph of the Assembly’s recommendation is a positive measure in itself. However, it believes it is important that this is done alongside reflection about the risks presented by artificial intelligence to children’s and young people’s rights and well-being, including and especially in education.