Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Resolution 2411 (2021)**[1]

# The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and culture

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Long periods of isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic have shown to what degree education and exposure to culture are vital for individual and collective well-being. The Parliamentary Assembly urges that both sectors must continue to play their fundamental role in upholding an inclusive and democratic society by reducing inequalities, creating opportunities and helping people, particularly young people, to develop positive attitudes and the competences required to be active and creative citizens in a healthy and vibrant democracy.

2. During the first lockdown in spring 2020, nurseries, primary and secondary schools and universities were closed, as a result of which a hybrid solution of limited physical presence and distance learning has become the norm. Different cultural sectors have been particularly hard hit, suffering substantial economic losses. It is of concern that smaller independent cultural institutions are particularly at risk of disappearing if left without any public support. Seven million artists and cultural professionals in Europe are under threat of losing their jobs due to the precariousness of their situation.

3. The Assembly welcomes the fact that both the European Commission and the European Parliament have taken important political steps to ensure that the education and cultural sectors are considered to be among the priorities and will be eligible for support through the European emergency Recovery and Resilience Facility, with an increased European Union budget for the period 2021-2027. However, to benefit from this support, member States must include education and culture in their national recovery programmes. All democratic countries have a particular responsibility to ensure that education and culture can effectively respond to any challenges and obstacles which may derail the democratic process. In this respect, a series of measures must be adopted to ensure that this objective is fulfilled.

4. The Assembly considers, *inter alia*, that national strategies ought to build on synergies and acknowledge that cultural and education policies should be mutually reinforcing. The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture provides an excellent basis on which to develop innovative partnerships and projects between schools and different cultural sectors to guide young people in developing key democratic competences.

5. In the context of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the European Union's European Green Deal, the Assembly considers that investments in education and in cultural and creative sectors in Europe could also be an integral part of investments in innovation, leading to more sustainable and creative economies. Building synergies, mainstreaming culture and education in other sectors and providing incentives for creative partnerships with the private sector could therefore be key for the future.

6. The digital space has become the main place in which schools and higher education institutions provide education and where numerous actors in cultural and creative sectors perform and connect with their audiences. While this trend can be very positive for democratising access to education and culture, it also brings with it serious threats. The swift change to almost exclusive use of digital technologies has deepened the existing digital divide and inequalities and has deprived artists and creative sectors of fair revenue due to

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 26 November 2021 (see Doc. 15397, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Constantinos Efstathiou).
See also Recommendation 2217 (2021).

the lack of regulation. The Assembly therefore believes that there is an urgent need to resolve ongoing problems with global digital providers and to establish a strong European digital framework that is well adapted for online education and for various online cultural offerings.

7. Accordingly, the Assembly calls for the governments and parliaments of the member States of the Council of Europe to evaluate the lessons learned from the implementation of emergency measures and to review their policies, putting more emphasis on the long-term perspective, and to address structural weaknesses that have intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic. Policy makers should, in particular:

7.1. concerning the overall policy framework:

7.1.1. incorporate education and culture into national Covid-19 recovery plans and long-term strategies;

7.1.2. re-engage in a broad debate on policies for education and culture, encouraging citizen participation in the debate and the involvement of relevant stakeholders;

7.1.3. consider taking a broader view across sectors where investments in education and in cultural and creative sectors can also be an integral part of investments in innovation, leading to more sustainable and creative economies in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals;

7.1.4. build synergies between the cultural sectors and the education system, including formal education and lifelong learning, encouraging innovative partnerships to promote social inclusion and a culture of inclusion;

7.2. concerning the cultural sectors:

7.2.1. uphold the right of everyone to participate in cultural life as a core human right;

7.2.2. secure sustainable funding for cultural policies and develop strategic thinking at interministerial level to mainstream culture and creativity in other policy areas, such as education, vocational training, employment, research and innovation, social services, welfare and health; and increase public participation in the formulation of cultural policies;

7.2.3. provide support mechanisms for artists and culture-related microenterprises and continue to financially support European exchanges and co-productions to sustain the diversity of cultural and creative expression and cultural pluralism, which reflect the vitality of European cultural identities and are also positive factors for innovation, global competitiveness and sustainable development;

7.2.4. improve working arrangements for contractual and freelance cultural workers to ensure social security and decent income levels, and provide them with training in income generation and project financing as well as in digital competences;

7.2.5. co-operate at European level to strengthen the legal protection of authors and regulate digital platforms to ensure fair remuneration for and legal protection of online artistic and creative work;

7.3. concerning education:

7.3.1. make every effort to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through high-quality inclusive education, in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education, and make best use of the available Council of Europe educational materials, guidelines and practical tools;

7.3.2. stimulate both the acquisition of knowledge and personal development of learners, consider different models of delivery – ranging from classroom teaching and working in smaller groups to making use of quality online and blended learning resources and possibilities – and expand further the role that schools play in developing students' competences for democratic culture;

7.3.3. develop a rights-based approach as part of inclusive education, valuing human dignity and human rights, together with a critical understanding of social inequalities;

7.3.4. develop mechanisms that will ensure that quality online education is free from gender, ethnic, cultural, age and other stereotypes;

7.3.5. give due consideration to the right of learners from minority language groups to learn in their own language, especially in primary education;

7.3.6. provide safe learning environments (in schools, libraries or other public institutions) to avoid learning loss and exclusion;

7.3.7. reassess and review the provision of education for disadvantaged students and those with special needs; consider setting up school-based or local support groups consisting of various stakeholders (trained volunteers, parent peer groups, specialised psychologists and other professionals, and information technology specialists) to provide adequate learning support in co-operation with teachers;

7.3.8. provide pre-service and in-service training and guidance for teachers and support staff on how to implement the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture in an open and creative way in schools; consider creating the conditions for innovative partnerships while involving cultural institutions and individual artists in this process;

7.3.9. facilitate online professional development and peer-to-peer learning opportunities for teachers, enabling them to meet remotely and share experiences; include relevant methodological training and access to educational resources as part of digital learning opportunities for teachers;

7.3.10. guarantee free access to virtual learning environments, which give access to open educational resources, to alleviate dependence on digital platforms provided by private companies.

8. The Assembly invites the European Union to co-operate with the Council of Europe and support innovative projects and European exchange programmes that could provide guidance for the development of new models that would ensure the viable and sustainable operation of the education and cultural sectors. Building synergies, mainstreaming culture and education in other sectors and providing incentives for creative partnerships with the private sector are key for the future, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the European Union's European Green Deal initiative. Moreover, the Assembly believes that there is an urgent need to resolve ongoing problems with global digital providers and to establish a strong European digital framework to further democratise access to education and culture, while ensuring that it is well adapted for online education and guarantees fair treatment and fair remuneration for online cultural offerings.