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Promoting online education and research across national borders

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 2250 (2023)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2250 (2023) "Promoting online education and research across national borders". The recommendation has been brought to the attention of the governments of the member States and forwarded to the relevant committees for information and possible comments.[2]

2. The Committee of Ministers shares the views of the Assembly in paragraph 1 of the recommendation, on the crucial role of the right to education, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, in creating and maintaining democratic societies and ensuring individual and social progress.

3. With this in mind, the Committee of Ministers has recognised the right to education as a priority for Council of Europe action towards more inclusive democratic societies. In the Final Declaration of the Reykjavík Summit (paragraph 18), the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe underlined "the importance of education to give children and young people the necessary references to grow up embracing our democratic values in culturally diverse societies".

4. In line with paragraph 4.2 of Recommendation 2250 (2023), it is noted that the 26th Session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe took place in Strasbourg on 28 and 29 September 2023. In order to give appropriate follow-up to the Summit, the Ministers of Education launched the new Council of Europe Education Strategy 2030 and adopted five resolutions reaffirming the critical role of education in promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The Ministers recognised the need for decisive action to address global challenges, recommitted to advancing education through a human rights-based digital transformation and focused on a civic renewal of education. They also encouraged the development of a recommendation to ensure that the teaching and learning of artificial intelligence (AI) takes into account the impact of AI on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and prioritises the active participation and empowerment of teachers and learners (Resolution No. 3).

5. The Committee underlines that, in line with paragraph 2 of the Recommendation, the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) has launched a new project on "Education in times of crises and emergencies" within the Council of Europe Education Programme. This project aims to identify the resilience principles of education in times of emergencies and crises with a view to building resilient education ecosystems. The project will develop, test and implement the Council of Europe's toolbox based on the above principles, digitise it and make it available to member States. Ministers also invited the CDEDU to prepare a recommendation on the Resilience Principles for Education in Emergencies and Crises (Resolution No. 2)

1. Adopted at the 1480th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (8 November 2023).
2. The Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU), the European Support Fund for the Co-production and Distribution of Creative Cinematographic and Audiovisual Works (Eurimages), and the Joint Council on Youth, comprised by the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ).

6. The Committee of Ministers takes note of the invitation by the Assembly, in paragraph 4.3, to update the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165, Lisbon Recognition Convention), possibly through a protocol, in order to establish common standards for the recognition of online learning periods and qualifications.

7. The Committee of Ministers also takes note of the specific invitation by the Assembly, in paragraph 4.4 of the Recommendation, to support the work of the Council of Europe on library legislation and policy in Europe, including encouragement to online learning and research through libraries. The Committee of Ministers recalls that its recently adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)3 on library legislation and policy in Europe emphasises in the associated Council of Europe/EBLIDA Guidelines the role of libraries in providing open access to information and the need to provide access to digital content.

8. Regarding point 4.5 of the recommendation, the Committee of Ministers shares the views of the Parliamentary Assembly on the statutory mission of European Youth Centres and considers that a nuanced approach should be adopted when it comes to expanding the offer of online education programmes for young people across Europe. In particular, it is of utmost importance that the European Youth Centres continue to implement their important mission of providing an inclusive physical, participative space for learning and development, as well as the necessary educational support. Due consideration will be given to the integration of digital solutions consistent with this approach, such as those allowing for the organisation of online or "hybrid" activities when needed, or the online availability of many youth policy documents and educational resources.

9. The Committee of Ministers also takes note of the specific invitation by the Assembly, in paragraph 4.7 of the Recommendation, that the scope of the European Support Fund for the Co-production and Distribution of Creative Cinematographic and Audiovisual Works (Eurimages), as defined in the founding Resolution Res(88)15 of the Partial Agreement and the recent amended Resolution CM/Res(2020)8, is widened to include targeted help for the co-production and distribution of creative and socially responsible European video and computer games, designed to help an interactive learning process.

10. The Committee of Ministers underlines the work undertaken by the CDEDU on this field. The Digital Citizenship Education project promotes a positive video game culture by generating pedagogical reflection around video games. A series of initiatives to be held in 2023 includes online webinars called "EduTalks" on gender roles in video games, on migrants and on the links with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

11. The Committee of Ministers finally recalls that, in line with paragraph 4.8 of the Recommendation, Education Ministers launched the "2025 European Year of Digital Citizenship Education" at the 26th Conference of Ministers of Education, with possible co-operation and co-financing with partner institutions and national institutions through voluntary contributions.