



Recommendation 2278 (2024)¹

Quality education for children with special educational needs: challenges of the pandemic, war and digitalisation

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its [Resolution 2550 \(2024\)](#) “Quality education for children with special educational needs: challenges of the pandemic, war and digitalisation”, considers that valuable lessons could be learned from emergency situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine to develop new guidelines on inclusive education, digital transformation and democratic citizenship, and to support member States in building more resilient and responsive education systems.
2. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the decision of the ministers of education to set new priorities and actions to implement the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy by adopting five resolutions and endorsing the Council of Europe education strategy “Learners First” 2024-2030. The well-being of learners is considered essential for their holistic, long-term development and academic success, and this must be achieved through a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Children with special educational needs must be an integral part of this strategy.
3. A human rights-based approach to education must be promoted to ensure access, participation, representation, equity and fairness in everyday practice across the different settings where children with special educational needs study and learn, either in regular or specialised schools, at home, in digital, social and physical learning spaces.
4. Therefore, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers develop Council of Europe guiding principles for a learner-centred and human rights-based approach to education of children with special educational needs, to make their education accessible, adaptable and acceptable, considering the following:
 - 4.1. teaching and learning strategies tailored to the specific needs of individuals and groups, to strengthen their motivation, self-esteem, competences and sense of autonomy and belonging, which would move away from educational programmes based on normative expectations that discriminate against children with special educational needs;
 - 4.2. the interconnection between physical, social and digital learning spaces, which should reflect a common vision of inclusion and learning;
 - 4.3. training and practical guidance for teachers and co-operation with professionals who work with children with disabilities and learning difficulties outside school, in order to develop well-adapted individual educational plans;
 - 4.4. a flexible curriculum as a key factor to promote inclusive education, allowing teachers to adapt content and respond to different needs;
 - 4.5. innovative learning environments to provide opportunities for changes in beliefs, values, policies and practices in inclusive education as means to overcome the current restrictions imposed by rigid curriculums, pedagogy and assessment strategies;
 - 4.6. teacher collaboration and the use of digital media to promote adaptive teaching;

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 24 May 2024 (see [Doc. 15984](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Pavlo Sushko).*



4.7. digitalisation of education in line with the principles of the Council of Europe Digital Citizenship Education Project, while also seeking a co-ordinated improvement of accessibility, adaptability and acceptability of digital resources and platforms, and increased transparency of underpinning algorithms and premises on which the learning process is built, to ensure that these platforms include and do not discriminate against atypical learners or users with functional limitations; children with special educational needs should be provided with equipment which corresponds to their particular needs (for visual or hearing impairment, autism, etc.).

5. The Assembly also urges the Committee of Ministers to co-operate with relevant international organisations, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, to redesign disability assessments with the aim of avoiding discrimination and labelling, and preventing educational achievements from falling short of the potential of children due to low expectations, discouragement and demotivation. In this respect, a social and contextual assessment of disabilities should be used as a future key component of WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, to identify barriers to participation in different educational settings rather than to unilaterally identify a child as having a problem. Disability assessments should be mutually recognised across national borders.