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Socialising at schools: for an inclusive and participatory education fostering democratic values

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2303 (2026)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2303 \(2026\)](#) “Socialising at schools: for an inclusive and participatory education fostering democratic values” and forwarded it to the Steering Committee on Education (CDEDU), for information and possible comments.
2. The Committee of Ministers notes that, as also recommended by the Parliamentary Assembly, a strategic policy review will be accomplished through the mid-term review of the Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030, ‘Learners First’, which will take place at the 27th Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, in December 2026 in Montenegro. The review will focus on inclusive education, the democratic mission of education, digital citizenship education, vocational education and training, early childhood education and care, and enhanced co-operation with other international organisations. The Committee also underlines that several of the Education Department’s initiatives directly contribute to both the Strategy and the goals of the recommendation, including the European Space for Citizenship Education, which will be launched at the 27th Ministerial Conference, as well as the European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025 and the curriculum framework for Digital Citizenship Education (DCE Planner).
3. As highlighted in the recommendation, the Committee of Ministers acknowledges that, to address the global democratic decline, learning and practicing democracy must be a core political and educational priority in Europe today. This includes allocating resources and developing policies that enable schools to respond to multiple societal and democratic challenges. The Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 “Learners First” supports member States in achieving this goal by promoting democratic citizenship and encouraging young people to engage in democratic processes. The Strategy helps to build more responsive and resilient education systems, emphasising a holistic approach to education that considers the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of learners. On a broader political level, the Committee also highlights that the New Democratic Pact for Europe will provide a framework to strengthen democratic resilience and build more resilient and responsive education systems.
4. As a result of the previous Ministerial Conference on Education in 2023, the Committee of Ministers recalls that the Council of Europe has launched the development of a European Space for Citizenship Education (ESCE) to support schools in becoming places where democratic, inclusive and participatory principles can be learned and practised. The ESCE is a new co-operation instrument aimed at reinvigorating the democratic purpose of education in Europe, based on shared values and principles, with the goal of advancing and innovating education for democratic citizenship. It is a comprehensive response to the decline of democracy structured around three pillars: (i) shared principles for Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC); (ii) a Quality Framework to support member States in self-evaluation and improvement; and (iii) a co-operation platform for knowledge sharing and innovation.

1. Adopted at the 1558th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (29 April 2026).



5. The Committee of Ministers underlines that the 2026 Ministerial Conference, entitled 'Empowering Educators for a Democratic Europe in the Digital Age', will focus on the role of educators, including teachers, school and university leaders, and civil society, in fostering democratic values in an ever-changing and increasingly challenging world. Teachers in early childhood education, primary and secondary schools, and vocational education and training (VET) institutions play a central role in developing the democratic competences and social trust of the next generation.

6. However, the teaching profession is under strain across Europe: rising polarisation, misinformation, social pressures and growing expectations are placing teachers at the centre of democratic dilemmas that they are not always equipped to manage. In this respect, the Committee of Ministers notes that, besides the work that will be accomplished at the conference, the Council of Europe has prepared several publications to support teachers, such as the Guidance document on RFCDC and VET (2024) and "Learning Democracy in VET in Europe: An Anthology (2025)". New initiatives on early childhood education and care will also provide practical guidance, while the co-operation component of the European Space for Citizenship Education will facilitate international co-operation also with other international organisations, innovation and the sharing of best practices.

7. The Committee of Ministers also notes that the main outcome of the European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025 is a Council of Europe Road Map for Strengthening DCE 2027-2031. The road map aims that learners in Europe are empowered to act as active, responsible and ethical digital citizens. It identifies six key enablers for a successful implementation that are in line with the recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly. These include financing and resource mobilisation, governance and institutional arrangements, data and digital infrastructure, peer learning and co-design, legal or regulatory reforms, and partnerships and collaboration at national, European and international level. The Education Department launched the DCE Planner – A curriculum framework for DCE as an essential tool for empowering young citizens in the digital era.

8. Finally, the Committee of Ministers highlights that the Council of Europe education policy is learner-centred and human rights-based. The recently published Toolkit for a Democratic and Inclusive School Culture was developed as part of the action planned under pillar 1 of the Education Strategy, 'Renewing the democratic and civic mission of education', which focuses on the right to quality education for all learners, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable. Consisting of high-quality, decontextualised materials on democratic school culture and inclusive education, it was developed by the Council of Europe within the framework of various capacity-building projects in member States. The aim is to make these resources widely available to promote inclusive school cultures and provide appropriate individual support at system, school, and classroom levels, with learners at the centre.