



Regional consultation of Europe Region

in preparation for the Transforming Education Pre-Summit

Online meeting, 23 June 2022, (Strasbourg, France)

9.00-12.00

Convened by the Council of Europe and the European Commission

in partnership with UNESCO

SUMMARY REPORT

I. Introduction

The **Council of Europe** (Education Department, Directorate General II) and the **European Commission** (DG EAC and INTPA) organized jointly on **23 June 2022 the Regional Consultation for Europe Region** in preparation of the Pre-Summit and Summit on Transforming Education of the United Nation, to be convened 28-30 June and 19 September 2022 at the UNESCO and UN Headquarters respectively.

The Consultation meeting was held online from the Council of Europe Headquarters, (Strasbourg, France) with the participation of **110 participants** representing **41 member States** and partners.

The meeting was opened by **Ms Stefania Giannini**, Head of the Secretariat of the Transforming Education Summit and Assistant Director-General for Education of UNESCO followed by short keynote interventions by **Mr Leonardo Garnier**, Special Advisor for the Transforming Education Summit, **Mr Martin Seychell**, Deputy-Director General, DG International Partnerships European Commission and **Mr Matjaz Gruden**, Director of Democratic Participation, Directorate General II, Council of Europe

Member States representatives from Latvia, Portugal, Slovenia, Belgium, Romania, Greece, Italy and Montenegro, took the floor on behalf of TES Advisory Committee, HLSC Education 2030 Agenda, Co-leading groups of the five Thematic Action Tracks and countries that have launched national consultations.

Member States welcomed the statement of UNESCO's Assistant Director General for Education on the sense of urgency shared by the international community concerning the future of education and the necessity to act against a global outlook marked by the social economic

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repercussions of the pandemic of the climate crisis and the cascading consequences, unfortunately of the war in Ukraine in Europe. Now multiple crises are really deeply affecting many public sectors, including education and short-term action has to be combined with the long-term transformational vision. They are very much at the core of the European agenda and transform our economies, our societies along a more sustainable and equitable lines.

Education is essential both to enhance our ability to produce dynamically and sustainably, as well as for our capacity to live together peacefully, meaningfully in our rich diversity. Education is fundamental to tackling both poverty and inequality, underlined in his statement the Special Advisor for the Transforming Education Summit. He further underlined that the planet is increasingly threatened as the functioning of democratic societies and Education is central to our quest for a peaceful, just and sustainable world. He also emphasized that the commitments to the education related sustainable development goals have been severely undermined and there is a need to act decisively.

Member states also shared the need for a new concept of citizenship for this century. And in this context, all keynote speakers underlined the role education should play in equipping citizens with competences to navigate in a complex world, including climate crisis, disruption from technological revolution and the changing world of work accordingly.

Looking ahead, we need to offer to younger generation a strong vision for the future of education, built on the fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, underlined in his statement the Director of Democratic Participation of the Council of Europe.

We need to support the transformation of education based on universal values and civic renewal. This is the objective of the Education Strategy that the Council of Europe is currently developing. The three priority areas of the Education Strategy: the renewal of the civic mission of education, the human rights-based approach to digital transformation in education and the inclusive/social dimension of education for sustainable development and sustainable democracy with the transversal theme of competences for democratic culture strongly resonate with the agenda of the European Commission and the overall goals of the UN Summit on Transforming Education and its five Thematic Action tracks.

In support of the growing demand for better coordination and cooperation at European and global level, the Deputy director General of the DG International Partnerships of the European commission announced the launch of a unique approach in international cooperation, where the EU and its member states and its financial institutions collaborate together as one Team Europe based on the values and principles on which the union was built.

He expressed the EU's conviction that working as Team Europe will result in more impact and give more visibility and more recognition. As a major cooperation partner, the new EU Global

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Gateway strategy, includes education, which gives an even greater opportunity to share the European experience, expertise and tools with other regions and countries.

II. Summary of discussions

The Regional Consultation clearly demonstrated that the European region commits to a global agenda. Member States have fully assumed the idea of a universal agenda and everything to do with the transformation Education at all levels and strands. It was underlined during the discussions that the work towards the attainment of targets of Education 2030 Agenda should build on the existing achievements, create opportunities for further transformation and apply equally to all European countries and partners, as well as to the whole world, while at the same time considering the regional and national particularities.

Member States showed commitment to a holistic view on education at all levels and strands. While foundational learning remains an extremely important base, it appears that certain strands like higher education – including life-long learning - are sometimes overlooked. Higher education is the basis for teacher initial preparation and training, research and adult learning, and is particularly important in the context of a region with an ageing population.

It was emphasised throughout all the interventions a very strong vision on the role of education in building democratic societies and the **human rights-based approach** of such education which is applied in Europe. This includes education for democracy, for diversity, for inclusion and for sustainability, which also links with the four purposes of higher education by the Council of Europe ¹.

Given the current situation and the war in Ukraine, the Education sectors in all countries are going to face potential competition that could emerge in national budgeting between social sectors of policy and defence. In that situation Member States should truly adapt to emerging crises and act by investing in education and therefore drive progress across all the sustainable Development Goals. It was underlined that **transforming education** is the best investment a country can make for its future.

Member states highlighted the need for Europe to raise its voice in the global debate and to confirm its commitment to the global Education 2030 agenda.

Working groups met and focused around the four components outlined below.

¹ [Recommendation](#) CM/Rec (2007)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research

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Group 1 Recovery from COVID-19 disruption[short-term]: What additional targeted actions could ensure full recovery from the COVID-19 educational disruption?

The group analysed education policies and practices in light of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected every aspect of teaching and learning, but also served as an accelerator for change to ensure inclusive and quality education. Pre-pandemic education was already fell short of the targets of SDG 4 and the COVID-19 pandemic further deepened the gaps and inequalities in education.

Main actions and recommendations:

1. **Digital transformation** of education continues to prove essential during times of crises and beyond. If we are to face another crisis, **blended learning** is the way forward.
2. Support teachers to be innovative in pedagogical approaches and strengthen learners' autonomous learning skills and agency.
3. Given the impact of the pandemic on wellbeing, special attention should be paid to the **wellbeing and mental health** of students and teachers. Recovering from the pandemic and building a more sustainable and resilient world will require policies that tackle several challenges at once through system-level approaches. Systems for providing free school meals are one of those systemic solutions. Evidence shows that they produce high returns in learning performance, equity, health, social protection, as well as economic and agricultural development.
4. Implement a **whole-school** approach by strengthening the co-operation with families and civil society.
5. If we were to face another crisis, attention should be put towards ensuring the continuation of face-to-face education to the greatest extent possible.
6. Continue to build on data, monitoring and evaluation.

Group 2 Transformation of education [medium-longer-term]: What innovative approaches could be used as levers for game-changing transformations of education polices and practice in the medium and long-term?

The group examined the value of education for the whole society, as it continues to gain in importance. There is a key role for education in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with education for sustainable development holding transformative potential.

Main actions and recommendations:

1. Transform the **strategic governance** of education. A single multi-annual strategy for the whole education sector could be used that incorporates elements from democratic

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citizenship and inclusive education and involving different stakeholders, outside the education sector (for example, local authorities, or other Ministries).

2. Education should become more **competences-driven**, with competences for life in a democratic society underpinning the curricula. This could also include thematic-based curricula created in coordination with teachers and students.
3. Establish a closer link between in-school and out-of-school, to allow the informal and non-formal **lifelong learning** paths to gain more importance in education policies
4. When re-thinking the role of teachers, their autonomy and creativity must be supported and enhanced. **Teachers' preparation and remuneration** should correspond with the important role they play in society.
5. National governments and all other stakeholders involved in education should stress the importance of **financing** as a medium-term investment, which will most certainly pay off.

Group 3: Review of national education targets and benchmarks: What could be the revisions that need to be made regarding national education targets and benchmarks to reflect higher level of ambition required for recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and acceleration towards the achievement of the SDG4?

The main focus of the group was on how the world has changed since the development of the SDG agenda especially considering the global pandemic and the war against Ukraine, and how the targets and benchmarks should be revised and adapted in this context.

Main actions and recommendations:

1. The indicators and benchmarks should be adapted for those countries who have reached the targets and benchmarks already.
2. Create a mechanism to monitor not only the numerical data but also the **content-based outcomes** of the benchmarks and targets, which are often more difficult to measure.
3. Digitalisation continues to prove essential during times of crises, as the mechanisms created during the COVID-19 pandemic are being used to assist Ukrainian students as they apply **distance learning** in the countries in which they have taken refuge.
4. The development of **common educational approaches** across different countries would benefit those who have emigrated to another country to continue their education as they would be on the same schooling level as their home country.
5. Introducing the **awareness** of the 2030 SDG agenda as a national indicator to help countries assess how students comprehend the SDG agenda.
6. Maintain the use of **EU indicators** as an important influence for EU countries.

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Group 4: Ensuring sustainable public financing

The main focus of the group was on the challenges linked to conflicting priorities and competition for public funding that has now touched Europe in the (post-) pandemic context and exacerbated by military conflicts. In the times of multiple crisis education needs to be considered as investment, sustainable and long-term, for everyone and of every age.

Main actions and recommendations:

1. It is important to balance the **commitment to the global agenda** and international solidarity on the one hand side and the domestic financing and needs. European countries also require further investment and reform but also many international donors are based in Europe.
2. Making **best possible use of public funding available for education is key**; at the same time efficiency should not be the main criterium but be considered hand in hand with quality. If funds are scarce, even if used efficiently, they may not suffice – increase in **investment into education** is needed in many countries.
3. In addition to ensuring that an adequate proportion of budget is allocated to education from national sources, **blind spots for global companies should be addressed**, so that their contribution to public budgets is fair.
4. International donors should avoid competing and ensure complementarity and coordinated action, the existing **international financing mechanisms should be used more effectively** to leverage the funding for education.
5. **Transversal cooperation** involving all relevant stakeholders on all levels of governance is crucial - not only top-down but also bottom-up, so that real needs may be effectively identified, appropriately addressed and the situation - monitored.

As a conclusion the European regional consultation clearly reflected a commitment to the transformation of education for a future based on common fundamental values.

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