
Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on fostering a culture of ethics in the teaching profession

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 October 2019 at the 1357th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity among its members and that this aim can be pursued notably by common action in educational and cultural matters;

Having regard to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5, 1950) and its Protocol (ETS No. 9, 1952), in particular Article 2 of the latter on the right to education;

Having regard to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18, 1954);

Having regard to the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163, 1996);

Having regard to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165, 1997);

Having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);

Having regard to the Final Declaration of the 24th Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, which met in Helsinki on 26 and 27 April 2013;

Having regard to Resolution Res(97)24 of the Committee of Ministers on the twenty guiding principles for the fight against corruption;

Having regard to Recommendation Rec(2000)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on codes of conduct for public officials;

Having regard to Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the public responsibility for higher education and research;

Having regard to Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender mainstreaming in education;

Having regard to Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education;

Having regard to Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy;

Having regard to Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on ensuring quality education, and noting that ethics, transparency and integrity are prerequisite conditions for achieving quality in education;

Having regard to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1762 (2006) on academic freedom and university autonomy;

Having regard to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997);

Having regard to the International Labour Organization (ILO)/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966);

Having regard to the UNESCO/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (2005);

Having regard to the Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988;

Bearing in mind the International Association of Universities-Magna Charta Observatory Guidelines for an Institutional Code of Ethics in Higher Education;

Considering that promoting ethics, transparency and integrity in education is the responsibility of the public authorities;

Bearing in mind the ethical principles put forward by the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED),

Recommends that the governments of member States, in accordance with national responsibilities, regulations and practices:

1. foster a culture of ethics and integrity in the teaching profession through the effective implementation of codes of ethics in their education systems;
2. take the necessary measures to facilitate the drafting, implementation and impact of codes of ethics in conformity with the guiding principles contained in the appendix to this recommendation;
3. promote the implementation of these provisions by education institutions and relevant education stakeholders at all levels and in all sectors of education and training;
4. ensure that this recommendation is widely disseminated;
5. facilitate international co-operation and peer-learning in the field through the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED);

Instructs the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to transmit this recommendation to the governments of the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention which are not members of the Council of Europe.

Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)9 on fostering a culture of ethics in the teaching profession

1. Aim and scope

This recommendation aims to foster ethics, transparency and integrity in education through the drafting, implementation and review of codes of ethics for the teaching profession.

All principles contained in this recommendation are understood to apply to the different stages of drafting, implementation and review of codes of ethics. These principles should be considered as complementary to the provisions governing the employment of public officials.

The promotion of the principles and values included in codes of ethics, combined with guidance on their implementation, should be the responsibility of teachers' professional bodies or of the public authorities, in conformity with national policies.

2. Definitions

The following definitions shall hold for the purposes of this recommendation.

- a. A "code of ethics" is a statement of ethical norms for the teaching profession that spells out the standards of ethical conduct expected of teachers and informs education stakeholders about what to expect when dealing with the teaching profession in terms of conduct and attitude.

b. A “teacher” is any person who provides education and/or training to pupils or students of all levels and in all sectors of education and training in the context of formal and/or informal learning processes. The definition of the term “teacher” extends to all staff members with teaching responsibilities, including for example researchers, postdoctoral researchers, PhD candidates and/or experts in professional education.

c. The “teaching profession” is the collective body of professional teachers within the structural and organisational context in which they operate.

d. A “public authority” is any executive, legislative or administrative body at national, regional or local level, including individuals, exercising executive power or administrative functions.

e. A “professional body” is an organisation with individual members practising a profession or occupation for which the organisation maintains an oversight of the knowledge, skills, conduct and practice of that profession or occupation, including trade unions.

f. The terms “pupils” and “students” designate all learners in education and training.

g. The term “education stakeholders” designates: school teachers, academic staff in higher education, school pupils, higher education students, parents/guardians/carers of school pupils, parents/guardians/carers of higher education students, employers and managers within the education system, relevant public officials and the political leaders and representatives of broader civil society.

3. Purpose of codes of ethics

Codes of ethics are expressions of moral and ethical values and principles. For the purposes of this recommendation, they serve to develop and maintain the ethics of the teaching profession. Codes and their implementation measures can guide, support and make teachers professionally aware that they have a duty to perform their teaching responsibilities with the utmost regard to quality education, students’ well-being and non-discrimination.

Public authorities and professional bodies should aim, at all stages of the development of codes (design, implementation and review), at fostering a culture of ethics for the teaching profession and be guided in their actions by the following principles.

4. Guiding principles

In the development of codes of ethics for the teaching profession, public authorities and professional bodies should:

Values-based processes

4.1. Commitment to fundamental ethical principles

1. ensure that codes of ethics are consistent with a set of moral and ethical principles and standards based on the core values of the Council of Europe; aim at furthering democracy, human rights and the rule of law; and reflect a strong commitment to equity, justice and inclusion in education;

4.2. Commitment to achieving quality education

2. consider ethics, transparency and integrity as key conditions for achieving quality in education and therefore take them into account in quality assurance processes;

Empowerment of education stakeholders

4.3. Context-related and relevant codes

3. ensure that professional codes fit the professional context of the education community in the country and the policy environment within which teachers and schools operate, and that they are accessible and relevant for all teachers;

4. ensure that ethical codes and their application reflect the shared values and principles of the teaching profession and the broader education community;

5. review and amend the codes as required to reflect changes in the education environment;

4.4. Shared responsibility of all stakeholders in education

6. encourage and enable the participation of education stakeholders in the development and review of codes of ethics for the teaching profession in order to establish ownership and responsibility for the standards enshrined in the code. The participatory approach ensures that the codes are embedded in the culture of the education community;

4.5. Training and professional development

7. ensure that the knowledge and understanding of ethical issues are an integral part of teachers' professional development;

8. encourage the ethical behaviour of teachers through the empowerment of the teaching profession, *inter alia*, by adequate support and resources, high professional standards and awareness of rights and responsibilities;

9. include in the implementation phase of the codes awareness raising and training, which should be adapted to different stages of teachers' professional development, beginning with initial teacher education and continuing with induction into the profession and further professional development;

4.6. Support ongoing professional development

10. create the conditions for ongoing support for the professional development of education professionals;

11. promote professional development schemes that reflect the existing codes and respond to new challenges facing society;

4.7. Empowerment of professional bodies

12. encourage ongoing guidance from the professional bodies responsible for the codes to help teachers implement them;

13. support schools, higher education institutions and professional bodies in enforcing the codes fairly and impartially;

14. ensure that, if challenged, all decisions on the enforcement of codes of ethics are subject to judicial review, to make certain that the process and decision are impartial, fair and duly grounded;

Institutional arrangements

4.8. Democratic and ethical governance of education systems and institutions

15. take appropriate measures to base the governance and management of the education system, and individual education institutions within it, on the democratic involvement of all relevant stakeholders and ensure that institutional leaders exercise their leadership in an ethical way;

4.9. Autonomy and independence of individual institutions

16. develop measures to grant appropriate autonomy to individual institutions with a view to avoiding excessive political control of education;

4.10. Balance between accountability systems and ethical principles

17. ensure a proper balance between measures for the enforcement of professional norms and the development of a culture of ethics through the promotion of principles of ethical and professional behaviour;

4.11. International co-operation

18. draw on the experience of international partners and organisations in the development of their policies;

19. encourage the participation of all education stakeholders in relevant international organisations and networks, and provide the resources to make this possible;

5. Evaluation and review

20. Member States should regularly evaluate the strategies and policies they have adopted with respect to this recommendation and adapt these strategies and policies as appropriate. Member States are invited to share the results of these evaluations within the ETINED Platform. They may request assistance from the Council of Europe and ETINED when needed.