



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
SCIENCE, CULTURE
AND SPORT OF GEORGIA

HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2020

Side-event: Education and innovation –action to provide quality education for everyone

Co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia

Wednesday July 15 2020 | 16:00-18:00 and 18:20-19:20 | WebEx meeting

CONTEXT

Quality education is essential to achieving the SDGs as it plays a fundamental role in the social, economic and political development of countries. Access to quality education not only reduces inequalities but also improves economic growth, health and the advancement of civil society, democracy and political stability. On an individual level, quality education is a prerequisite for people to improve the quality of their lives and to have more opportunities to be productive.

Due to the unprecedented crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been major losses in learning around the world. It has revealed the necessity to accelerate action to build resilience and improve the quality of education even faster. Education systems need to be modernised and resilience increased.

As described by the UNICEF Education Strategy 2019-2030, “*a new, more radical approach that focusses on enhancing learning outcomes is long overdue*”. A shift from ‘schooling’ to ‘learning’ has to take place. Stakeholders, experts and the youth need to be involved in the acceleration of action and development of modern curricula and teaching methodologies. Education reforms have to adjust to the realities of contemporary times and children and youth have to be provided with skills and knowledge that is useful for their future and the sustainable development of societies.

PARTNERSHIPS

Estonia calls itself an ‘Education Nation’ as quality education has always been a firm priority of the country. Estonia’s students have been consistently achieving high scores in the OECD PISA survey.

ICT has played an important part in the modernisation of the Estonian education system, improving accessibility and reducing inequalities. There is wide use of digital textbooks, e-learning environments and ICT in school equipment. Technology has become an integral part of Estonian schools and it played an essential role amid the lock-down of schools during the emergency situation caused by the pandemic. To keep up with the changes and the interests and needs of students, teaching methods have also been adjusted and thoroughly modernised.



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Georgia has made consistent and remarkable efforts in modernising its education system. In 2019, the Georgian Ministry of Education announced a comprehensive reform of their education system. With the reform, new educational programs and resources will be introduced based on the principles of inclusive and civil education.

The New School Model is based on literacy, focusing on critical thinking and fast adaptation to the environment. Since 2019, the model has been piloted in 50 schools around Georgia and by 2024 the reform will be gradually rolled out to all schools in the country. Furthermore, Georgia was successful in tackling the educational challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent OECD study brought out that measures taken by the Georgian government to ensure continuous education and distance learning have been very successful.

UNICEF, Estonia and Georgia have established a longstanding partnership in their commitment to improve learning outcomes. Sharing best practices, including the Estonian experience, with Georgian partners in establishing a comprehensive education system has been important. The partnership will continue in 2020-2021 with the UNICEF projects "Promoting Quality Education for All Children through Grades 11-12 in Georgia" and "Technical Assistance to Strengthen Access to Quality Education for Children in Abkhazia, Georgia – Salme (Psou) Village".

PURPOSE

Against this background and in the light of both Estonia and Georgia presenting their Voluntary National Reviews on the progress of achieving the SDGs, the event will:

- Discuss how to build resilience and make up for the losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in education and beyond;
- Explore the importance of innovation to accelerate action to provide the quality of education for everyone;
- Estonia, Georgia and UNICEF will share experience and lessons learned and highlight the best practices of partnerships to achieve the shift in focus from 'schooling' to 'learning'.

REGISTRATION by July 13: <https://forms.gle/UXm3Sftwwd8qFBwJ6> (WebEx link shared after July 13)

AGENDA (may be subject to changes)

I Part "HLPF side-event" Moderated by Ms. Iivika Kalde, Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

16:00-16:20 Opening remarks by the Minister of Education and Research of Estonia, Ms. Mailis Reps and Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, Mr. Mikheil Chkhenkeli.



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16:20-16:30 Remarks by *Ms. Eva Lennuk, UN Youth Delegate from Estonia and Ms. Esma Gumberidze, UN Youth Delegate from Georgia,*

16:30-16:45 Presentation “Innovation in Education in times of the global pandemic and beyond”, *Mr. Robert Jenkins, Chief of Education, UNICEF.*

16:45- 17:45 Panel Discussion – Damage control or new opportunities? Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and lessons learned. Speakers: *Mr. Andres Rundu, Undersecretary, Economic and Development Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia; Ms. Ekaterine Dgebuadze, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia; Mr. Robert Jenkins, Chief of Education, UNICEF; and Ms. Kristel Rillo, Director of Digital Education, Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia.*

Q&A 15 min

18:00-18:20 Break.

II Part “Partnerships for Education” Moderated by *Mr. Kakha Khandolishvili, Head of Department of International Affairs and Strategic Development, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia.*

18:20-19:00 Panel Discussion: Partnerships and innovation for resilient education systems – how to accelerate action for SDG4? Speakers: *Ms. Kai Kaarelson Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Estonia to the Republic of Georgia and Armenia; Mr. Ghassan Khalil, UNICEF Representative in Georgia; and Mr. Einar Värä, Educational expert, advisor and trainer, Foundation Innove.*

Q&A 15 min

19:15-19:20 Closing.