

United Nations Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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**Recommendation against Discrimination in  
Education**

Adopted by the General Conference at its  
eleventh session, Paris, 14 December 1960



# **Recommendation against Discrimination in Education<sup>1</sup>**

## **Introduction**

*The adoption by the General Conference of this Recommendation at the same time as the Convention against discrimination in education meets the desire to take account of the difficulties that some Member States might have, for various reasons, in particular owing to their federal structure, in ratifying the Convention. Apart from the inherent differences in wording and legal scope of these two categories of instrument, the Recommendation is identical in content with the Convention.*

1. Adopted on 14 December 1960 by the General Conference of Unesco at the eleventh session, held in Paris.

I.B.1 Intro.

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris from 14 November to 15 December 1960, at its eleventh session,

*Recalling* that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts the principle of non-discrimination and proclaims that every person has the right to education,

*Considering* that discrimination in education is a violation of rights enunciated in that Declaration,

*Considering* that, under the terms of its Constitution, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has the purpose of instituting collaboration among the nations with a view to furthering for all universal respect for human rights and equality of educational opportunity,

*Recognizing* that, consequently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, while respecting the diversity of the national educational systems, has the duty not only to proscribe any form of discrimination in education but also to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all in education,

*Having before it* proposals concerning the different aspects of discrimination in education, constituting item 17.1.4 of the agenda of the session,

*Having decided* at its tenth session that this question should be made the subject of an international convention as well as of recommendations to Member States,

*Adopts* this Recommendation on the fourteenth day of December 1960.

The General Conference recommends that Member States should apply the following provisions by taking whatever legislative or other steps may be re-

quired to give effect, within their respective territories, to the principles set forth in this Recommendation.

## I

1. For the purposes of this Recommendation, the term 'discrimination' includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and in particular:

- (a) Of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level;
- (b) Of limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard;
- (c) Subject to the provisions of section II of this Recommendation, of establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons; or
- (d) Of inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with the dignity of man.

2. For the purposes of this Recommendation, the term 'education' refers to all types and levels of education and includes access to education, the standard and quality of education, and the conditions under which it is given.

## II

When permitted in a State, the following situations shall not be deemed to constitute discrimination, within the meaning of section I of this Recommendation:

- (a) The establishment or maintenance of separate educational systems or institutions for pupils of the two sexes, if these systems or institutions offer equivalent access to education, provide a teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard as well as school premises and equipment of the same quality, and afford the opportunity to take the same or equivalent courses of study;
- (b) The establishment or maintenance, for religious or linguistic reasons, of separate educational systems or institutions offering an education which is in keeping with the wishes of the pupil's parents or legal guardians, if participation in such systems or attendance at such institutions is optional and if the education provided conforms to such standards as may be laid down or approved by the competent authorities, in particular for education of the same level;

- (c) The establishment or maintenance of private educational institutions, if the object of the institutions is not to secure the exclusion of any group but to provide educational facilities in addition to those provided by the public authorities, if the institutions are conducted in accordance with that object, and if the education provided conforms with such standards as may be laid down or approved by the competent authorities, in particular for education of the same level.

### III

In order to eliminate and prevent discrimination within the meaning of this Recommendation, Member States should:

- (a) Abrogate any statutory provisions and any administrative instructions and discontinue any administrative practices which involve discrimination in education;
- (b) Ensure, by legislation where necessary, that there is no discrimination in the admission of pupils to educational institutions;
- (c) Not allow any differences of treatment by the public authorities between nationals, except on the basis of merit or need, in the matter of school fees and the grant of scholarships or other forms of assistance to pupils and necessary permits and facilities for the pursuit of studies in foreign countries;
- (d) Not allow, in any form of assistance granted by the public authorities to educational institutions, any restriction or preference based solely on the ground that pupils belong to a particular group;
- (e) Give foreign nationals resident within their territory the same access to education as that given to their own nationals.

### IV

Member States should furthermore formulate, develop and apply a national policy which, by methods appropriate to the circumstances and to national usage, will tend to promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the matter of education and in particular:

- (a) To make primary education free and compulsory; make secondary education in its different forms generally available and accessible to all; make higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity; assure compliance by all with the obligation to attend school prescribed by law;
- (b) To ensure that the standards of education are equivalent in all public educational institutions of the same level, and that the conditions relating to the quality of the education provided are also equivalent;

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- (c) To encourage and intensify by appropriate methods the education of persons who have not received any primary education or who have not completed the entire primary education course and the continuation of their education on the basis of individual capacity;
- (d) To provide training for the teaching profession without discrimination.

### V

Member States should take all necessary measures to ensure the application of the following principles:

- (a) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace;
- (b) It is essential to respect the liberty of parents and, where applicable, of legal guardians firstly to choose for their children institutions other than those maintained by the public authorities but conforming to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the competent authorities and, secondly, to ensure, in a manner consistent with the procedures followed in the State for the application of its legislation, the religious and moral education of the children in conformity with their own convictions; and no person or group of persons should be compelled to receive religious instruction inconsistent with his or their convictions;
- (c) It is essential to recognize the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools and, depending on the educational policy of each State, the use or the teaching of their own language, provided however:
  - (i) That this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole and from participating in its activities, or which prejudices national sovereignty;
  - (ii) That the standard of education is not lower than the general standard laid down or approved by the competent authorities; and
  - (iii) That attendance at such schools is optional.

### VI

In the application of this Recommendation, Member States should pay the greatest attention to any recommendations hereafter adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization defining the measures to be taken against the different forms of discrimination in education and for the purpose of ensuring equality of opportunity and of treatment in education.

## VII

Member States should in their periodic reports submitted to the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, on dates and in a manner to be determined by it, give information on the legislative and administrative provisions which they have adopted and other action which they have taken for the application of this Recommendation, including that taken for the formulation and the development of the national policy defined in section IV as well as the results achieved and the obstacles encountered in the application of that policy.

The foregoing is the authentic text of the Recommendation duly adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization during its eleventh session, which was held in Paris and declared closed the fifteenth day of December 1960.

IN FAITH WHEREOF we have appended our signatures this fifteenth day of December 1960.

*The President of the General Conference*

*The Director-General*