

Enhancing the right to education: emerging challenges and enabling factors

UN Social Forum 2025: Contribution of education to the respect, promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights for all.

Room VII (building A, floor 3)

Palais des Nations

Geneva, Switzerland

30 October 2025, 13h00-15h00 (CET)

*In person ONLY event

Registration link: <https://indico.un.org/event/1010443/>

Background

In a world transformed by accelerating technological change, globalization, climate disruption, and shifting social dynamics – and in a context of tightening financial constraints – **education itself is undergoing profound transformation**. Learning today spans the entire life course and takes place across different settings, from early childhood to adult upskilling across formal, non-formal and informal environments. While the central principles of the right to education remain firm, stakeholders are increasingly called upon to review human rights normative frameworks to respond to these new and complex realities.

Against this backdrop, UNESCO and the University of Geneva, with the valuable contributions of experts, are launching two complementary Special Issues that emerged from the discussions at the [2024 Geneva Human Rights Dialogue](#). These will be published respectively by [Frontiers in Education Journal](#) (focusing on Anglophone experts) and [L'éducation en débats Journal](#) (engaging Francophone experts). Each Special Issue tackles some of the most pressing questions, exploring the evolving dimensions of the right to education, its normative foundations, and its relevance in an increasingly complex and changing world.

Held in the framework of the [2025 UN Human Rights Council Social Forum](#), this interactive roundtable discussion will showcase key contributions from leading thinkers and foster an open discussion with participants. The roundtable will reflect on persistent and emerging challenges – from the commodification of education to the ethical dilemmas of AI and education in crisis contexts – and consider key policy innovations necessary to enforce the right to education for all, as a lever for the protection and fulfilment of all human rights for everyone, everywhere.

Aim, objectives and expected outcomes

Framed around the **launch of these new Special Issues**, the aim is to take stock of lessons learned and catalyze inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue on the evolving right to education in response to both persistent and emerging challenges.

Specific objectives

- Deepen understanding of how structural inequalities and global transformations shape the implementation of the right to education.

- Foster exchange and collaboration among experts, Member States, civil society, academia, private sector and other key actors on the future of the right to education.
- Share insights from experts about key challenges and forward-looking strategies to safeguard and advance education as a fundamental human right.

Expected outcomes

- Strengthened networks between academic contributors, human rights actors, and education stakeholders.
- Inform [UNESCO's Evolving Right to Education Initiative](#).
- Greater visibility of the Special Issues and 2024 Geneva Human Rights Dialogue key findings.
- Inputs for follow-up research and advocacy at the Human Rights Council and beyond.

Provisional Agenda

Thursday, 30 October 2025	
13:00 – 13:30	<p>Welcome & Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peter Larsen, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Geneva and member of Swiss Commission for UNESCO <p>Opening remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ana Luiza M. Thompson-Flores, Director, UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office ● Peggy Hicks, Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division, UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) ● Margaret Grogan, Chief Editor of Frontiers in Education, Frontiers Journal <p>Country perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● H.E. Mrs. Claudia Fuentes Julio, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations Office ● H.E. Mr. João António Mira Gomes, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations Office ● H.E. Mr. Sambue Antas, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu to the United Nations Office
13:30-14:20	<p>Expert Roundtable: Navigating the future of the right to education <i>This roundtable will explore evolving dimensions of the right to education in response to contemporary challenges. Drawing on the Special Issues, panellists will share perspectives on how to strengthen legal and policy frameworks to ensure education systems are inclusive, equitable, and resilient.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moira V. Faul, Executive Director, NORRAG ● Delphine Dorsi, Director, Right to Education Initiative ● Patrice Meyer-Bisch, UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Democracy and President of the Observatory for Diversity and Cultural Rights, University of Fribourg ● Sangheon Lee, Director of the Employment Policy Department, International Labour Organization (ILO) ● Manon Sala, PhD student in Education and Sociology, Learning Planet Institute ● Kevin Mary & Nora Nafaa, Université Perpignan Via Domitia & Université d'Aix-Marseille
14:20-14:55	<p>Interactive segment: participants will have an opportunity to pose questions, offer reflections and comment on key issues discussed.</p> <p>Moderation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rita Locatelli, UNESCO Chair in Education for Human Development and Solidarity among Peoples, Università Cattolica, Milan, and Co-editor in chief of <i>L'éducation en débats : analyse comparée</i>
14:55 – 15:00	<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rolla Moumné Beulque, Right to education, UNESCO