Call for Stories

Global stories - A storytelling competition

Global Education Week 2026

An initiative of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

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Introduction

Throughout history, fiction has been one of the most powerful tools for shifting perspectives and sparking empathy. A story can take us inside lives we will never live, across borders we may never cross, and into experiences we might otherwise dismiss as distant or abstract. Where statistics and reports inform the mind, stories move the heart. It is often through a novel, a film, or a tale that people have first understood what injustice truly feels like or imagined that another world might be possible. This initiative invites participants to harness that power: to take a global issue they care about and make it land in the heart of others.

Concept

In the framework of the Global Education Week 2026, the North-South Centre launches an international initiative, inviting people of all ages to write a fiction story covering a topic related to global education, human rights or sustainable development, such as freedom of speech, refugees' rights, democratic participation, women's rights, environmental justice, or digital rights.

Beyond the wide range of topics that may be explored, two principles are essential:

1) **Critical thinking** must be the central thread woven throughout your story, as this year's Global Education Week places special emphasis on this theme[1].
2) **Fiction** must be the vehicle: the message must be conveyed through a story, not an essay.

Instead of explaining an issue, the story should let the reader experience it. Through a character's journey, an important decision, a moment of loss, or a surprising encounter, the story should show the issue naturally, through feeling rather than explanation. The theme should come from the story itself; it doesn't need to be spelled out or named directly.

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[1] To know more about this edition, we invite you to read the Concept Note of the Global Education Week 2026.

The most compelling stories will not tell audiences what to think; they will allow them to see, feel, and understand the world from a different perspective.

Who can participate?

Everyone is welcome to join the initiative. Proposals can be submitted by individuals, groups, schools, or organisations.

How to participate?

Participants must submit their story to the following email address: global.education@coe.int

and fill in the form available at the following link:

Call for applications - Global Stories - Form

Participants are invited to **read all the criteria listed below** before submitting their story.

Timeline

Proposals (along with the form duly completed) should be submitted no later than 22 November 2026, at 12AM (CET). Any proposal submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

The author(s) of the selected story will be notified by 7 December, and the winning story will be publicly announced on 18 December.

Minimum criteria

To be eligible, proposals must be:

- A story in which critical thinking is the central thread, addressing a topic related to global education, sustainable development, or human rights, as explained in the concept section of this call.
- A written text, respecting the following format:
    - Maximum 3500 words

- Written in one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe: English and French
- Submitted in PDF or Word format

The participants must agree in advance, through the form provided, to sign an agreement with the Council of Europe regarding the use of their production, should their proposal be selected.

Submissions that do not meet all the above criteria will be considered ineligible.

Selection criteria

Eligible proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria (score out of 100):

1. **Impact**: The extent to which the story offers a compelling perspective and draws the reader in, through vivid characters, a clear point of view, or a moment that makes them stop and think. (60 points)
2. **Originality**: The extent to which the story brings a fresh angle to the chosen topic, avoiding overused narratives. (20 points)
3. **Clarity of message**: The extent to which the story's message is clearly conveyed and accessible to a wide audience. (20 points)

Jury

Submissions will be evaluated by a committee of 3 staff members of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, working on Global Education initiatives.

Prize

The winning story will receive the following:

- **Professional Illustration:** The selected story will be brought to life as a graphic novel by a professional illustrator.
- **Official publication:** The selected story will be published as an official Global Education resource on the North-South Centre website, made available in printable and downloadable formats.
- **Author spotlight:** A dedicated article will be featured both on the newsroom of the North-South Centre and promoted on its social media (Facebook, LinkedIn).

- **Winner's certificate:** The winner will receive an official signed certificate from the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, attesting their achievement.

All participants having submitted eligible stories will receive a Certificate of Participation issued by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.

This initiative is organised in the context of the Global Education Week, an awareness-raising initiative implemented by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and the Global Education Network in the framework of iLEGEND III, a joint project of the European Union and the Council of Europe: co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded and implemented by the Council of Europe

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- Global Education Week
- Global Education Week 2026
- Global Education Network
- Global Education publications