

Tuesday 13 November 2018

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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P8_TA(2018)0441

EU development assistance in the field of education

European Parliament resolution of 13 November 2018 on EU development assistance in the field of education (2018/2081(INI))

(2020/C 363/01)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which stipulates that '[e]veryone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages',
- having regard to the document entitled 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, which recognises that equity, inclusion and gender equality are inextricably linked to the right to education for all,
- having regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 4: 'Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning', and to the 2015 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of SDG 4, which states that 'gender equality is inextricably linked to the right to education for all',
- having regard to Recommendation No 36 (2017) of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women General on the Right of Girls and Women to Education,
- having regard to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 27 July 2015,
- having regard to United Nations Human Rights Council resolution 35/L 2 of 22 June 2017, entitled 'The right to education: follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution 8/4',
- having regard to the 2002 Commission Communication entitled 'Education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries' (COM(2002)0116),
- having regard to the 2010 Commission working document on strengthening and improving education in the developing countries, entitled 'More and Better Education in Developing Countries' (SEC(2010)0121),
- having regard to the 2018 Commission Communication entitled 'Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises' (COM(2018)0304),
- having regard to the Charlevoix Declaration on quality education for girls, adolescent girls and women in developing countries, adopted by the G7 on 9 June 2018,

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- having regard to the European Consensus on Development and the EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour in Development Policy (COM(2007)0072),
 - having regard to its resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the Joint Staff Working Document (SWD (2015)0182) — Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020 ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2018 on enhancing developing countries’ debt sustainability ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report published in 2017, entitled ‘Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments’,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Development (A8-0327/2018),
- A. whereas education is a fundamental human right and is central to the achievement of all the SDGs; whereas education prevents the transmission of poverty between generations and plays a pivotal role in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment; whereas the rights that should be respected in education go beyond mere arithmetical equality and include promotion of genuine gender equality in and through education;
- B. whereas the Commission’s latest communication on education in developing countries dates back to 2002 and was updated only in 2010 by a working document;
- C. whereas education aid accounted for 8,3 % of total development aid in 2009; whereas this share had fallen to 6,2 % by 2015; whereas for the Union and its Member States this share fell from 11 to 7,6 % over the same period;
- D. whereas the aid allocated to basic education by the Union and its Member States decreased by 33,9 % between 2009 and 2015, i.e. more than education aid in general (15,2 %);
- E. whereas in 2015, 264 million children and young people of primary or secondary school age were not enrolled in school;
- F. whereas at the end of 2017 there were more than 25,4 million refugees around the world, 7,4 million of whom were primary school-age children, and whereas 4 million of those children did not have access to any form of primary education; whereas in countries affected by fragility and conflicts there are 37 % more girls than boys out of primary school, and whereas young women are nearly 90 % more likely to be out of secondary school than their male counterparts in countries not affected by conflict;
- G. whereas the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report (2017) states that, in 2011, only around one quarter of schools in sub-Saharan Africa had electricity and fewer than half had access to drinking water; whereas sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest percentage of trained teachers in both primary and secondary education;
- H. whereas support for education in developing countries has previously focused too much on the quantity of students enrolled and not enough on the quality of the education provided; whereas the aim of SDG 4 is to deliver quality education for all by 2030;
- I. having regard to the difficulties experienced by some businesses in developing countries in finding staff with the skills that they require;

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0239.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0104.

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- J. whereas the efforts made since 2016, welcome though they are, have not been sufficient to clear the backlog and must therefore be continued over time and increased;
- K. whereas, according to UNESCO, support for education in low-income countries and lower middle-income countries would need to be increased sixfold if SDG 4 is to be achieved by 2030; whereas, according to the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, education aid must reach USD 89 billion by 2030, as against USD 12 billion today;

Placing education at the centre of development

- 1. Is convinced that education aid must be a priority, because education is a fundamental right, but also because it is essential for the achievement of the other SDGs: for economic development and reducing inequalities, for gender equality, to help girls and women to become self-sufficient, for the social inclusion of persons with a disability and for health, democracy and the rule of law and conflict prevention;
- 2. Deplores, therefore, the fact that education aid is not a priority for international donors; urges that education be placed at the centre of the development policies of the European Union and its Member States;
- 3. Acknowledges that achieving SDG 4 calls for massive investment in education systems; takes the view that this investment will first have to be made by developing countries, but that international aid will continue to be indispensable to bridge the gap in funding;
- 4. Calls on the Commission to update its communication on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries, which dates back to 2002, and its working document of 2010; considers that the new communication will need to set out a plan for achieving SDG 4 by 2030;
- 5. Calls on the Union and its Member States to devote 10 % of their official development assistance (ODA) to education by 2024, and 15 % by 2030;
- 6. Observes that the greater efforts needed on the part of developing countries to promote fair tax systems and combat illegal financial flows and increases in ODA will not be sufficient to bridge the funding gap; calls, therefore, for the creation of innovative funding instruments which leverage and are aligned with existing funding mechanisms and initiatives, in order to bolster national education systems;
- 7. Is following with interest the proposal made by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity to set up an International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd), provided that it genuinely complements and does not replace current efforts; considers that this initiative should be pursued in synergy with the work of the Global Partnership for Education; considers that particular attention should be paid to the creditworthiness of eligible countries before funding is granted;
- 8. Notes that the EU's 20 % ODA target for social inclusion and human development, which covers basic social services, including health and education, is imprecise and does not make proper monitoring of expenditure possible; calls for the quantified targets to be included in the next Multiannual Financial Framework;

Tackling the priorities

- 9. Recalls that basic learning, including digital literacy, is a prerequisite for skills development and induction into working life, that girls' education is a key lever for achieving the SDGs, for health and well-being and for the establishment of peaceful societies, and that the least developed countries (LDCs) are suffering most from a lack of funding, although they are the countries where investment generates the greatest human, social, economic and health benefits;
- 10. Recalls that empowering vulnerable groups is critical to ending poverty; insists that all persons, irrespective of sex, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, as well as persons with a disability, migrants and indigenous peoples, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities;

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11. Considers, therefore, that the European Union's education aid must first and foremost cater for two priorities: quality, inclusive basic education, and enhanced support for the LDCs;

12. Stresses, in particular, the importance of SDG 4.1, whose aim is a full, quality 12-year primary and secondary education cycle, provided free of charge for all; reiterates that education should be a key pillar of the Africa-EU partnership, in keeping with the strategic priorities approved at the 2017 European Union-African Union summit; considers that the condition of being 'free of charge' should apply not only to schooling itself, but also to hidden costs, such as school supplies, transport and food; Takes the view that States should consider scholarship schemes to provide schooling for the most disadvantaged children; points out that it is important to guarantee pluralism and freedom of choice for parents; insists, nevertheless, that the European Union and the Member States, in accordance with SDG 4.1 and Article 26 of the UDHR, must not use ODA to support private, commercial educational establishments, which do not uphold the Union's principles and values;

13. Calls on the Union and its Member States to devote at least half of their education aid to basic education by 2030;

14. Calls, further, for at least 40 % of education aid from the EU and Member States to be channelled to the LDCs;

15. Calls for particular attention to be paid to equality between girls and boys in school, a vital factor in achieving sustainable development and the upholding the principle of leaving no one behind; calls on the EU to promote inclusive, quality education, in order to remove barriers to girls' access to, participation in and completion of education; recalls the objective that 85 % of new EU programmes should have gender equality as their primary objective, or as a significant objective, by 2020; calls, lastly, for support to shape education systems which address the needs of students with a disability and other minorities and vulnerable groups, taking account of specific local circumstances;

16. Welcomes the Commission's adoption of its communication on education in emergencies and protracted crises and the objective of devoting 10 % of the Union's humanitarian aid to education from 2019;

17. Recalls that the education of refugee or displaced children must be regarded as a priority from the very outset; emphasises the importance of supporting countries affected by fragility and conflict to improve the resilience of their education systems and guarantee access to quality education — including secondary education — for refugee children and young refugees, internally displaced children and their host communities;

18. Stresses the need for a more integrated — i.e. involving all stakeholders — rapid, systematic and effective response to education needs in emergencies, in line with the principle of linking emergency aid, rehabilitation and development;

19. Notes that some targeted countries are unable or unwilling to meet the basic needs of their population, including educational needs; calls for the most suitable civil society partner to be identified and for good practices employed in the field by NGOs and other actors to be enhanced and scaled up;

20. Recalls the importance of secondary and technical education and vocational training for youth employability and sustainable development; considers that the latter must lead to decent jobs and be geared to countries' development requirements and the needs of businesses, in coordination with them and, as far as possible, financed by them; draws attention to the existence of projects by means of which the private sector supports training centres, and calls on the Commission to consider how the development of such initiatives could be funded; points out that the EU's External Investment Plan could be used to achieve these objectives, and calls for the strategic involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in planning and implementation in this field;

21. Is concerned about the phenomenon of the 'brain drain'; notes that some Member States allocate more than half their education aid to meeting the costs of schooling on their territory; considers that increases in education aid must lead to this proportion being reduced; calls on Member States to explore and employ good practices and experiences, such as academic and professional exchanges; considers that multiple-entry visas would enable the students involved to update their knowledge and promote circular mobility; calls, at the same time, for incentives or measures to be introduced which encourage students to work in the economic or governmental sector of their home country after their return for a minimum period, so that the knowledge acquired primarily benefits the partner countries;

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22. Notes that good teaching is critical for learning; notes with concern that the quality and availability of teacher training, the scarcity of textbooks and equipment and class size remain serious problems, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa; emphasises that efforts must be made to improve the initial and in-service training of teachers, with a focus on their pedagogical knowledge and skills, and their recruitment, remuneration and working conditions, not least in order to encourage them to stay and pass on their knowledge to future generations; calls for more exchange programmes between teachers from developing countries and from EU Member States, e.g. through Erasmus+;

23. Notes the massive investment needed in school infrastructure and equipment, in particular in rural or underpopulated areas, to ensure equal access to education for all, without discrimination;

24. Stresses the importance of new technologies as a way of improving access to education and its quality, particularly for the dissemination of knowledge, training, teacher development and pedagogy and the management of educational establishments; emphasises the need to seize the opportunity offered by digitalisation to bring knowledge and modern teaching methods to developing countries; draws attention to the fact that these new technologies must support educational efforts, rather than replacing them and lowering teaching standards; calls for better assessment of the impact of technological investment on learning outcomes; emphasises the need to improve digital skills in order to promote the empowerment of women and girls;

25. Calls for increased efforts to address the challenges of digital exclusion through education and training in essential digital skills and initiatives to facilitate the use of ICTs; calls, further, for digital literacy to be introduced in school curricula at all levels of education in developing countries, so that pupils can acquire the skills needed to improve access to information;

26. Points out that education must pave the way for the next generation to live fully productive lives in a world which will have been changed by robotisation and automation; takes the view that, in order to meet the expectations of both job-seekers and businesses, the training available must genuinely make people more employable and that, if that aim is to be achieved, partnerships with the private sector in the field of vocational education should not be ruled out; stresses, in that connection, the importance of flexibility and skills, and also of life skills and social skills, in education; is convinced that, in addition to academic knowledge, at school children need to acquire thinking skills, so that they can ask the right questions, and creative skills, so that they can put ideas into action, and that lifelong learning should prepare them for lifelong action;

27. Stresses the link between education and health; observes that school medicine and health education, in addition to promoting learning, are a way of reaching out to large sections of society; emphasises the need to develop a comprehensive, integrated approach to sex education for girls and boys that addresses health issues, such as HIV, family planning and pregnancy, and also helps to achieve broader outcomes, such as improving access to education for girls; stresses the importance of care providers in offering psycho-social support, especially in conflict-hit countries, in order to improve young children's resilience;

28. Encourages States to arrange for young children to receive at least one year of free pre-primary schooling, in accordance with SDG 4.2;

29. Reiterates that an enabling environment, including the involvement of parents, nutritional aspects, health and safety and access to electricity, water and proper sanitation, is a prerequisite for quality education, so that boys and girls can genuinely benefit from school and completion rates, especially in primary education, improve;

Improving the quality of aid

30. Considers that assessments of education systems, including education provided by non-State institutions, of the quality of teaching and of learning outcomes are a prerequisite for any improvement in the effectiveness of aid; calls on the Commission and the Member States to finance research, aggregation of data and reliable, technical, non-discriminatory and independent assessment tools;

31. Considers it vital to improve coordination of donors in local groups for education, in order to prevent duplication of and even conflict between aid efforts; calls on Member States to make more systematic use of joint programming and delegation; recalls that development aid must not be subordinated to a strategy geared to wielding influence;

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32. Emphasises that governments have an obligation to ensure that their people enjoy the right to education; stresses, therefore, the need to ensure that duty bearers at all levels can deliver services for all and establish equitable, accessible and non-discriminatory national education institutions, strategies and plans with genuine ownership, and based on significant consultation and strategic involvement of key stakeholders, including civil society, with specific objectives and monitoring mechanisms, continuous assessments and inspections, a clear and transparent demarcation of responsibilities, and allocation of resources subject to independent monitoring; encourages the adoption of national regulatory frameworks for the establishment and operation of education services;

33. Emphasises the importance of the predictability of aid and its ownership by the partner States; points out, in that connection, that budget support and aid from multilateral organisations are the most effective ways of meeting these requirements;

34. Calls on the Commission and Member States to give priority to sectoral budget support where possible, subject to strict criteria, including good governance, and extensive checks, in particular to prevent corruption; recalls that beneficiary third countries undertake to reimburse payments in the event of serious irregularities; advocates involving civil society in the monitoring of financing agreements; stresses the need to establish a monitoring mechanism to determine whether development aid has been misused and impose penalties accordingly, including the reallocation of financial resources in order to increase support for countries which employ more effective practices in this field;

35. Encourages the Commission and Member States to promote the role of local authorities and CSOs in the preparation and implementation of education support programmes, including in the framework of budget support;

36. Notes that only one-third of education aid is channelled through multilateral bodies, as against two-thirds in the field of health; calls, therefore, on the Commission and Member States to increase their funding for the Global Partnership for Education and the Education Cannot Wait Fund; takes the view that, in its next Strategic Plan for the years after 2020, the Global Partnership should be put in a position to extend its programming period from three to six years to facilitate more stable and predictable funding, which is particularly necessary in order to strengthen national education systems;

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37. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
