# EU development assistance in the field of education

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The Development Committee adopted an own-initiative report by Vincent PEILLON (S&D, FR) on EU development assistance in the field of education.

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. 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%).

Members suggested **placing education at the centre of EU development policies**, because education is a fundamental right, but also because it is essential for the achievement of the other sustainable development goals (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.

The Union and its Member States are called on to devote **10% of their official development assistance (ODA) to education by 2024, and 15% by 2030**. Members called, therefore, for the

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.

**Tackling the priorities**: recalling the importance of basic learning, including digital literacy and empowering vulnerable groups to end poverty, Members stated that EU aid to education must first address two priorities: **focusing on quality and inclusive basic education and providing enhanced support to the least developed countries (LDCs),** which should receive at least 40% of the EU's education aid.

The report stressed 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**. Education should be a key pillar of the Africa-EU partnership. It called for particular attention to be paid to gender equality, the education of refugee and displaced children, support for countries affected by situations of fragility and conflict, and secondary, technical and vocational education for youth employability and sustainable development.

Concerned about the phenomenon of the '**brain drain**', the report called on Member States to explore and employ good practices and experiences, such as academic and professional exchanges. They considered that **multiple-entry visas** would enable the students involved to update their knowledge and promote circular mobility. They also called, 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.

In order to address the challenges of digital exclusion, Members advocated the inclusion of digital literacy in school curricula at all levels of education in developing countries. They also stressed the **link between education and health**, calling for a comprehensive and integrated approach to sex education for girls and boys that addresses health issues such as HIV, family planning and pregnancy.

**Improving the quality of aid**: Members stated that **assessing** education systems and the quality of teaching and learning outcomes are a prerequisite for any improvement in the effectiveness of aid. They invited the Commission and the Member States to fund research, data aggregation and reliable, technical, non-discriminatory and independent evaluation tools.

The report emphasised the need to:

- ensure **better donor coordination** within local education groups to prevent duplication;
- ensure the **capacity of duty bearers** at all levels to provide services for all and to develop fair, accessible and non-discriminatory national education institutions, strategies and plans with genuine ownership, based on meaningful consultation and strategic participation of key stakeholders;
- give priority to **sectoral budget support** where possible, subject to strict criteria, including good governance, and extensive checks, in particular to prevent corruption.

The report pointed out that only one-third of aid for education is channelled through multilateral agencies, compared to two-thirds in the health sector. It therefore called on the Commission and the Member States to **increase their funding for the Global Partnership for Education** and the Education Cannot Wait Fund.

Members considered 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.