EU development cooperation to enhance access to education and training in developing countries

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The Committee on Development adopted the own-initiative report by György HÖLVÉNYI (EPP, HU) on EU development cooperation to enhance access to education and training in developing countries.

Members reaffirmed that everyone has the right to education and that education, notably basic education, must be free, quality, inclusive, accessible without any form of discrimination and compulsory in order to meet the SDGs by 2030, while technical and professional education, as well as higher education, must be equally accessible.

Universal education has the unique potential to improve living conditions, reduce inequalities, combat poverty, fight child exploitation and trafficking, foster democratisation and the foundation of inclusive societies and facilitate social mobility to ensure that all children and adults, including refugees, displaced people and other vulnerable groups are able to realise their full potential.

Condemning any use of schools and educational institutions to spread hate speech, the report called on the EU to support cooperation programmes that contribute to educating and raising awareness among young people on the **fight against hate speech, xenophobia**, violence against women, violence based on sexual orientation or disability and all forms of discrimination in developing countries.

Promoting education and training

The report stressed the importance of promoting education and training to foster sustainable livelihoods as a prerequisite for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly for girls and women. In this respect, it stressed the great potential of sharing knowledge, skills and know-how in areas such as **adapting to climate change, preserving biodiversity and agro-ecological transitions**. It calls for the Erasmus + programme to be further extended to African countries.

Members called on the European Union to **guide young people towards the jobs of the future** by supporting the development of training and skills linked to the green and digital transitions and technological innovation in developing countries.

It is important to support the efforts of developing countries to provide equal educational opportunities and good quality education that addresses contemporary challenges and meets modern standards for all.

The report stressed the need to, *inter alia*:

- dialogue with partner countries, particularly those in the sub-Saharan region, taking account of local sensitivities;

- develop methods and guidelines to make the Commission's aid projects more effective in reaching all learners;

- take appropriate legislative measures in the areas of cooperation and international trade in order to avoid exacerbating child labour;

- work with partner countries to encourage the provision of comprehensive sexuality education;

- ensure that all school environments are safe and promote the health and well-being of all young people;

- take measures to ensure that schools and school transport are accessible, particularly for disabled children, and put in place programmes that provide the necessary support for disabled people to overcome barriers such as inaccessible environments for education and training.

Members called for electrification in developing countries to be a top priority, as the lack of electricity or insufficient access to electricity in many of these countries' territories seriously undermine the essential needs of people's daily lives, particularly in terms of health, food security, medical and hospital care, and education.

Noting, with concern, the rising number of **crisis-affected children**, Members called on the Commission and the Member States, together with the international community in this context, to implement innovative solutions to provide educational opportunities for boys and girls affected by conflicts, humanitarian crises and national policies that prohibit education, in particular for girls and women under totalitarian regimes.

Non-governmental organisations

The report highlighted the importance of international non-governmental organisations providing education in emergencies. It called on the Commission and the European External Action Service to enhance their cooperation and partnerships with local organisations, including faith-based organisations and democratic local governments, civil society organisations and organisations representing persons with disabilities, youth and women as well as international organisations providing educational opportunities to vulnerable and isolated groups.

Funding

Members urged the Commission to define a clear external action implementation strategy for its **at least 10 % spending target on education** without delay, and to use that funding in a more results-oriented manner, with clear, transparent indicators based on disaggregated data, accompanied by guidelines that align with the recommendations of the UN Transforming Education Summit.

The Commission should commit to dedicating a fixed share, at least 10 %, of the current and future EU development policy budget, moving towards 15 % as called for by the Transforming Education Summit, to supporting access to quality universal education and technical and vocational training in partner countries.

Member States are asked to redouble their efforts to increase their contribution to education in emergency situations.

Domestic ownership

Members noted that the programming of EU financial support for development, in particular as regards access to quality education and technical and vocational training, must be consistent with the **political and budgetary commitments and priorities of developing partner countries**. They stressed that the commitment of partner countries and domestic ownership are a prerequisite to ensure the sustainability of projects implemented with EU funding.

Preventing brain drain

The report highlighted the fact that it is estimated that African countries lost USD 2 billion to brain drain in the health sector alone between 2002 and 2015. The EU must ensure that its efforts do not lead to a

brain drain in Africa, but guarantee employment opportunities and access to decent work in developing partner countries.