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

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The European Parliament adopted by 495 votes to 27, with 115 abstentions, a resolution 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, 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.

Parliament stressed the key role of education as a vehicle for sharing values, raising awareness and reducing the risk of conflict.

It 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

Members recognised that access to quality education for all, particularly basic education, enables developing partner countries to unlock the economic and human potential of their young populations. They 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**. The role that European overseas territories can play in building cooperation and mobility and exchange programmes with developing countries in their regional basins, in particular with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

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 and stressed the importance of promoting the education and training of girls and women in STEM.

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

- ensure access to **quality education for all** as a fundamental right, irrespective of socio-economic status, cultural background, religion and belief, gender, sexual orientation, disability, geographical location and urban-rural divide;

- **support the efforts of developing countries** to ensure equal educational opportunities for all and good quality education that meets the challenges of today's world and current standards;

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

- support programmes that facilitate young people's **access to water**, sanitation and hygiene services in education and training establishments;

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

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

- take measures to ensure **accessibility** to schools and school transport, particularly for disabled children;

- support cooperation programmes that facilitate young people's access to **free school meals**.

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 resolution 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. 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 and development partners are called on to fulfil their commitment to spend 0.7 % of their gross national income (GNI) on official development assistance (ODA).

Domestic ownership

Parliament 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**. It 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 resolution 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.