Developing countries, education and training: objectives and priorities in reducing poverty

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PURPOSE : to propose a new strategy on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries. CONTENT : the purpose of this Communication is to stress the vital importance of education in reducing poverty and in development and to present an overall framework for the objectives, priorities and methods of the Community in education and training in developing countries. The Communication refocuses sectoral support on reducing poverty in line with recent international undertakings, in coordination with developing countries' policies and on the basis of complementarity with other donors. Its purpose is to focus all of its methods on support for education and training and to set out guidelines for the Community. The Communication recognises the vital role of the countries and identifies three priorities for Community support: 1) basic education, in particular primary education and teacher training; 2) work-related training; 3) higher education, especially at regional level. The strategy to be pursued will involve support for basic education as first priority (at both qualitative and quantitative level) and ensuring that girls as well as boys have attained an acceptable level of schooling, before support of work-related training. Higher education will be supported at regional level in particular. The principles to be followed in the political dialogue on education and training strategies are as follows: - Total resources for education and training must be increased, in particular for the poorest countries and population groups; - The recurrent expenditure of "education" budgets can be covered by the Community subject to certain conditions; - Developing countries will have to improve the efficiency and quality of their education systems; - They will have to improve access to primary education by working towards making it compulsory and free; - Equality between the sexes is essential; - The links between AIDS and education should be taken into account in education programmes; - Account should be taken of education issues in conflict prevention and in conflict and post-conflict periods in order to protect children, in particular girls. As regards political and strategic dialogue, the Commission will use its programming framework (the Country Strategy Papers) and, for the countries eligible for the HIPC initiative, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers prepared by the partner countries. Lastly, the Community's strategic approach in developing countries will be based on the following guidelines: - the sector-wide approach; consideration of the macroeconomic and budgetary framework; consideration of the needs and participation of the poor; participation by education actors and civil society in the broad sense; support for institutional development and capacity-building; monitoring and results (indicators); increased coordination and complementarity between all the partners. Sectoral support for education will as far as possible be provided through macroeconomic support on the basis of sectoral programmes founded on dialogue with all the partners.