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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL**

on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises

1. A COMMITMENT TO SAFE, INCLUSIVE, AND QUALITY EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular its Goal 4,¹ recognises the importance of quality education and training as an essential foundation in addressing major global challenges. In 2016, this was recognised at the World Humanitarian Summit with the launch of the Education Cannot Wait Platform² to transform the delivery of education in emergencies and protracted crises.

The right to education is recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union³ which is addressed to the EU institutions as well as to the Member States when the latter implement EU law. It is essential for peaceful societal development⁴, economic growth and the realisation of individual potential. The Treaty on European Union expressly commits the EU to promote the protection of the rights of the child.⁵ The right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning is the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights.⁶ Children are assigned a special place in EU external action, anchored in children's rights⁷ and affirming that "progress in the condition of children is essential if we are to prevent state fragility and ensure long-term sustainable development, social cohesion, stability and human security at national, regional and global levels".⁸

Yet, the reality is that access to quality education is being denied to millions of children by increasingly protracted conflicts, forced displacement, violence, climate change and disasters. These are leaving uneducated, **lost generations** in their wake and are major root causes leading many to embark on perilous journeys to Europe⁹ and other regions of the world, affecting their stability and development.

Half of the world's out-of-school children live in contexts affected by crisis and conflict and almost half of refugees of primary school age are out of school. This compels the EU to respond by using its range of instruments and approaches. The EU has significantly **increased its support** to education in emergencies and protracted crises worldwide in recent years, recognising that education is the most chronically underfunded sector in crises, accounting for less than 3 per cent of total global funding for humanitarian aid¹⁰. The EU has increased financing to education in emergencies and crises from 1 per cent of its humanitarian aid in 2015, to 8 per cent in 2018, with an aim to reach 10 per cent as of 2019. A large proportion of its 2014-2020 bilateral development assistance to education is allocated to fragile and crisis-affected countries. The EU is a leading donor to education in response to

¹ Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

² <http://www.educationcannotwait.org/>

³ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 14. OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 391–407; UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 Nov. 1989, UN, Treaty Series, vol. 1577

⁴ A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy presented by the HRVP in June 2016 https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/pages/files/eugs_review_web_13.pdf

⁵ Article 3 (3) second subparagraph and (5) Treaty on European Union (TEU) expressly commits the EU to promote the protection of the rights of the child in EU internal and external action.

⁶ Commission Communication on Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights, COM(2017) 250

⁷ EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, adopted by Council in 2017.

⁸ COM(2008) 55 and the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, adopted by Council in 2017.

⁹ COM (2017) 211 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The Protection of Children in Migration

¹⁰ UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2016) Aid to education stagnates, jeopardising global targets and UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2017) Accountability in Education: meeting our commitments

the Syria regional crisis and is providing significant multilateral financing to global initiatives addressing education needs in emergencies and crises.¹¹

Current EU assistance to education in emergencies and protracted crises covers all levels of education, working with governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society, private sector actors, the Global Partnership for Education and other stakeholders. Bilateral support and policy dialogue with governments is accompanied by an array of initiatives to mitigate education disruption around the world, from the establishment of temporary learning spaces to the development of distance learning programmes for children who cannot reach school sites. For example, the EU has responded to the education needs of Syrian children at scale, using bilateral development financing, humanitarian aid, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

In recent years, needs on the ground have grown significantly and new challenges have emerged. While the scale of needs is beyond its resources, the EU has a role to play by scaling up its responses, focusing on **reaching those in greatest need of support**¹², and mobilising global support for further action.

This Communication therefore proposes an updated EU policy framework to address, through EU external action, the growing challenges of education in emergencies and protracted crises outside the EU. It proposes an approach that strengthens mutual responsibility among relevant EU external instruments to address education needs in emergencies and crises through humanitarian and development assistance, based on **coordination, complementarity and political action** ("nexus"¹³). It also reflects new and emerging priorities, such as the effects of violence on education.

Responding to education needs in emergencies and crises requires a holistic approach. This Communication sets out the Commission's **understanding of the term education in emergencies and protracted crises** in its broadest sense; rooted in a strategic and integrated approach to promoting safe, inclusive and quality learning opportunities for all. Education encompasses life-long learning, including formal and non-formal¹⁴ delivery of established levels of education systems, to include early childhood, primary, secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary, and tertiary education (including technical and vocational training, university, and other forms of skills development).

The Commission's approach to education in emergencies and crises encompasses sudden and slow-onset emergencies, conflicts, situations of violence, forced displacement, disasters (man-made and natural) and public health emergencies, protracted and recurrent crises or any combination of these. Aiming to support continuous education provision, this approach works across the humanitarian-development nexus to cover preparedness, disaster risk reduction, prevention, mitigation, emergency response, assistance during protracted crises and recovery.

¹¹ The EU, through its development assistance, has pledged EUR 475 million to the Global Partnership for Education and contributes EUR 16 million to Education Cannot Wait in the period 2018-2020, and, through its humanitarian assistance, EUR 1 million to the Global Education Cluster in 2018-2019.

¹² See section 3.2 for prioritisation of those most in need.

¹³ Implement EU commitments in the Communication 'Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance' (COM(2016) 234) and the new European Consensus on Development OJ C 210, 30.6.2017, p. 1-24.

¹⁴ Aligned with Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1-5: Formal learning takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; Non-formal learning takes place through planned activities, where some form of learning support is present, it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers.

1.1. The threat of lost generations

Children make up one third of the world's population, yet comprise more than half of all people affected by humanitarian crises. The number of girls and boys experiencing these crises accounts for half of the world's **out-of-school children**, and this is on the rise.¹⁵ Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are among some 35 crisis-affected countries where nearly 75 million school-aged children (3-18 years old) experience disruption to their education.¹⁶ This risk is considerably higher for displaced people. The United Nations Refugee Agency estimates that more than 65 million persons are currently displaced (the highest number since the Second World War), with the average duration of displacement often exceeding 20 years.¹⁷ Just over half of refugees of primary school age attend school, while less than a quarter of the equivalent age group is in secondary school and merely 1 per cent in tertiary education. Girls are notably more disadvantaged, being 2.5 times more likely to be out-of-school in affected countries.¹⁸

The future of millions of children and young people is threatened by increased **violence in education settings**¹⁹, including attacks on schools and universities, such as abductions of students, military use of schools, the presence of landmines, unexploded ordnances and remnants of war around schools and destruction of educational buildings. Education can be abused by authorities to foster hatred and intolerance, increase inequality and oppression and recruit vulnerable children to engage in acts of violence.²⁰ Inequalities in the provision of education can generate a sense of injustice and further disadvantage marginalised groups, which can ultimately fuel conflict.²¹

Children and young people who are out of school are **exposed to increased risks** of sexual and gender-based violence, violent extremism, forced marriage, early pregnancy, child labour and forced recruitment.²² Persistent, violent and often protracted conflicts, forced displacement, inequalities and limited economic opportunities and access to basic services further increase vulnerability to these risks. The effects of crises on access to education, such as school closure or military presence in schools, can prompt people's displacement in search of safer environments, very often under life-threatening circumstances.

Emergencies and protracted crises further weaken education systems that are already under-resourced, undermining the **learning outcomes and potential of children and young people**. Frequent school disruptions and the psycho-social damage caused by traumatic events impede learning and are compounded by teacher shortages and overcrowded classrooms.

¹⁵ World Bank Group (2017) World Development Report: Learning to Realise Education's Promise. Children living in the most fragile contexts make up about 20 per cent of the world's primary school age population, yet they constitute about 50 per cent of those not in school, an increase from 42 per cent in 2008.

¹⁶ Overseas Development Institute (2016) "A common platform for education in emergencies and protracted crises: Evidence paper." ODI, London

¹⁷ UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016

¹⁸ UNICEF (2017) Education Uprooted: For every migrant, refugee and displaced child, education.

¹⁹ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. Education Under Attack Report 2018.

²⁰ Burde et al (2015) What works to promote children's educational access, quality of learning and wellbeing in crisis-affected contexts.

²¹ UNESCO (2011) Education for All Global Monitoring Report, The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education

²² Nicolai et al (2015) Education in emergencies and protracted crises towards a strengthen response: Background paper for the Oslo Summit on education for development.

1.2. Strengthening EU external action

In pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, and in line with the Education 2030 Agenda, the EU will focus on four strategic priority areas of action:

1. Strengthening systems and partnerships for a rapid, efficient, effective and innovative education response;
2. Promoting access, inclusion and equity;
3. Championing education for peace and protection;
4. Supporting quality education for better learning outcomes.

To make progress against these priorities, the Commission will improve ways of working in terms of coordination, global leadership and financing.

Joint and coordinated programming and planning will be promoted within the Commission, with EU Member States and with other donors and partners, with a balance of short, medium and long-term responses. The EU will use its global role, reach and instruments to increase global attention to unmet needs and funding shortfalls, and to strengthen coordination and operational response capacities.

In the past three years, the increases in EU humanitarian financing to education in emergencies have resulted from increased political efforts, based on the scale of needs. This financing should now be sustained to enable the pursuit of EU strategic priorities, and ultimately to reach the millions of children and young people at risk of becoming lost generations.

- The Commission will aim to allocate 10 per cent of its humanitarian assistance to education in emergencies and protracted crises as of 2019.²³
- The Commission will support globally coordinated, timely, predictable and flexible financing for education in emergencies and protracted crises.

2. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES

2.1. Strengthening systems and partnerships for a rapid, efficient, effective and innovative education response

With the aim to ensure availability, predictability and transparency of financing to education in emergencies and crises and in line with the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit commitments²⁴, EU actions will improve the effectiveness of responses across the humanitarian-development nexus. In doing so, the Commission will adopt shared short, medium and long term perspectives, stronger coordination mechanisms, joint analyses, joint oversight of actions and shared contributions to reporting, among other measures. This will contribute to a contextually relevant mix of predictable, multi-annual and short to medium-term financing assistance.

The Commission will reinforce and streamline its actions for the provision of education as a global public good, through multilateral financing, technical assistance, global convening, participation in advisory bodies and other external engagement opportunities.

²³ Exceeding the level of recommendations of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (The Learning Generation report, 2016).

²⁴ Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Grand Bargain initiative includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations, including gearing up cash programming, greater funding for national and local responders and cutting bureaucracy through harmonised reporting requirements.

The Commission will take a targeted approach to strengthen education systems, leveraging its role in political dialogue and bilateral support to this end. Where possible and appropriate, Union financing will support government systems, including those hosting refugees²⁵, as the primary duty-bearers of the right to education. If direct support to governments is not possible or appropriate, system strengthening will support the most appropriate available education actors.²⁶

To facilitate needs-based prioritisation of EU assistance, aligned to the priorities of national authorities, the Commission will include education needs related to emergencies and protracted crises into support for education sector planning. Union financing will be based on strong needs assessments, including from education ministries, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, private sector actors and other relevant actors.

Actors at all levels will be supported to improve the collection, management and analysis of data, including on education funding and data on learning outcomes. Actions that identify best practices and effective and innovative ways for information sharing and management will also be supported. Capacity-building for all actors in the sector and at all levels will be prioritised, in coordination with the private sector where appropriate.

While the EU is committed to public education services²⁷, private sector and civil society actors can provide added value in supporting these services. The Commission will engage the private sector to identify and develop innovative approaches and to link education reforms to societal needs and labour market opportunities. Improved partnerships and coordination mechanisms are needed with other relevant sectors, such as health, livelihoods, protection and nutrition, to enable integrated and holistic responses to children's needs in emergencies and crises.

Examples of good practice:

In Lebanon, the EU supports the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's 'Reaching all Children with Education' strategy to facilitate the integration of Syrian refugees into the national system. EU support is coordinated through a Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework at country level, which includes a balance of bilateral assistance and support through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and humanitarian assistance. Implementation is supported by UN agencies and non-governmental organisations.

The EU plays a leading role in the Education Dialogue Forum, initiated under the Education Cannot Wait Fund, which brings together humanitarian and development actors engaged in supporting education inside Syria. This has enabled shared oversight of programming, joint analyses and better coordination.

The EU has supported recent efforts to apply the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework at regional level including through the Ministerial Conference on Refugee Education held in Djibouti in December 2017 under the auspices of the region's Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and the Government of Djibouti. The commitments

²⁵ The scope of this Communication is limited to action outside of the EU.

²⁶ In non-government supported areas, local authorities or alternative service providers, humanitarian/development coordination systems or others may be considered as part of the system to strengthen. Alternatives may be sought where a government is responsible for attacks on learners or denial of education rights to marginalised groups.

²⁷ COM (2016) 234. Commitments for education focus on: coordination and the nexus approach; the potential role of displaced teachers; supporting good functioning public education services; utilising technological advancements and facilitating access to higher education for displaced learners.

set in the resulting Declaration and Action Plan include integrating refugees in national education systems, developing minimum standards and targets and developing a regional mechanism to recognise qualifications.

In 2015 earthquakes in Nepal destroyed 35,000 classrooms and deprived about one million children of their schooling. The EU worked with the Government and other partners to supply transitional learning centres and essential supplies to enable as many as possible to return to school as soon as possible. The EU is supporting Nepal's School Sector Development Plan to "build back better" in earthquake-affected areas, reaching out to marginalised populations, strengthening planning and management capacities at all levels and ensuring better quality teaching and learning.

Key actions to improve governance, accountability and financing:

- Support the strengthening of EU-wide and global funding coordination, transparency and accountability, such as by supporting improvements to the International Aid Transparency Initiative standard for reporting on education in emergencies and crises;
- Promote stronger collaborative partnerships, including at global level, such as funding multi-stakeholder education actions that create added value and better impact through the expertise and experiences of all partners, particularly UN agencies and the private sector;
- In collaboration with national authorities, invest in innovative approaches for data management, transparency and reporting, including tracking teachers and out-of-school children, to facilitate the continuity of education and recognition of achievements;
- Support capacity-building of education actors in emergencies and crises, such as coordination bodies, response actors and governments, with an emphasis on civil society and local actors, through new and established capacity development initiatives, such as the Global Education Cluster courses.

2.2. Promoting access, inclusion and equity

Peaceful coexistence, inter-cultural sensitivity, successful integration within host communities and social cohesion are crucial functions of education in emergencies and crises. The EU will support the integration of displaced children and young people into education systems, including support to host communities, thereby actively implementing commitments in the new European Consensus on Development and the Lives in Dignity Communication.²⁸

Recognising the scale of need and the limitations of EU support in this regard, actions will focus on those *most in need*, such as:

- Out-of-school children and young people and those at risk of education disruption;
- Forcibly displaced children and young people (refugees and internally displaced people) and their host communities;
- Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including those children and young people who are separated and unaccompanied, in hard to reach areas, living with disabilities or additional needs, associated with armed forces and groups (including particular attention to their reintegration through education) and belonging to ethno-linguistic minorities and poorer socio-economic groups.

Proactive and rapid responses are needed at all levels to minimise education disruption and to foster inclusive, safe and protective education opportunities. Every week, month and year

²⁸ The new European Consensus on Development OJ C 210, 30.6.2017 and COM(2016) 234 Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance

spent out of school during their ‘school-aged’ years further disconnects children from their education pathway and reduces the likelihood of returning to school.

As the vast majority of forcibly displaced children and young people are hosted in low-income or middle-income countries²⁹, flexible short-term support needs to go hand-in-hand with predictable longer-term financing to strengthen the resilience and effectiveness of education systems. Education systems need to adapt to manage recurrent and protracted displacement and to address the needs of both forcibly displaced populations and host communities. This requires addressing the challenges of host communities in ensuring inclusive and quality education services, based on a commitment to responsibility-sharing with affected countries.

Emergencies and protracted crises have a disproportionate effect on the education of women and girls. Specific risks linked to gender, experienced by girls and boys in emergencies and crises, include early and forced marriage, early pregnancy, child labour, recruitment into armed groups and sexual and gender-based violence. Education services need to respond to the needs of girls and boys, such as prioritising sex-segregated toilets in the rehabilitation of schools, to address the safety concerns of students and parents. The Commission will further emphasise the importance of the inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Young people, who often "fall through the cracks" of education support as they take on adult responsibilities, should be given special attention, with particular emphasis on their gender-specific needs.

Examples of good practice:

Supported by the EU, the innovative Conditional Cash Transfer for Education project in Turkey has reached over 290,000 children in vulnerable refugee families supporting them to attend school regularly.

The EU supported the development of the Rapid Response to Population Movements in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This provides rapid needs assessments to ensure an integrated assistance package to populations in contexts of displacement, disease or natural disasters.

The EU, together with Member States, is the largest financial contributor to the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) operating in support of Palestinian refugees. UNRWA supports more than 513,000 children and young people to attend almost 700 elementary, preparatory and secondary schools and vocational training centres operating in Gaza, the West Bank and throughout the region.

When Ebola struck Sierra Leone in 2014, schools were closed for nine months. The Global Partnership for Education, with support from the EU, helped to provide alternative education via television and radio for children to watch and listen to while out of school. Once schools could re-open, the Partnership ensured the availability of safe learning environments by disinfecting schools and providing hand-washing stations and supplies.

Key actions to improve access, inclusion and equity:

- Support and promote proactive and rapid response mechanisms, including by humanitarian organisations and governments, to reach children and young people during emergencies and crises and **aim to return them to learning within three months**³⁰;

²⁹ UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016

³⁰ This target aligns with ambitions in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, 2017

- Prioritise support to children and young people most in need due to emergencies and protracted crises;
- Strengthen, where possible, the capacity of key actors in education systems, especially education ministries, to help them prepare and adapt education systems to manage recurrent and protracted displacement;
- Support the gender-specific needs of children and young people, especially with regard to education and protection, with special focus on the education of girls and young women, in line with the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020³¹.

2.3. Championing education for peace and protection

Education is a powerful tool for social transformation, improved equity, prosperity and peace-building. However, poor, abusive or manipulative education management can fuel conflict through oppression, inequality of opportunity and outcome or the promotion of hatred and violence. The EU will promote Conflict Sensitive Education³² and support evidence-based education policies that promote equality and protect children and young people from stigmatisation by others, hate promotion, violent extremism and recruitment into armed groups.

The establishment of safe, protective and quality learning environments is central to the Commission's approach. Good practices are required to protect children and young people, based on the 'Do No Harm' principle. Mindful of the breakdown of institutional and social safeguards that often happens during a crisis, child safeguarding systems are needed in the preparation, planning and implementation and transition stages of actions. The Commission recognises and supports the central role of parents and caregivers in the education and protection of children and the broader role of communities in both.

With particular relevance in emergencies and crises, protection should be at the heart of education systems at all levels, with an emphasis on non-violent school policies, processes and practices, including the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. Actions to strengthen child protection need assessments and planning will be supported, in addition to innovative interventions to address identified needs.

To support more resilient education systems, EU assistance will extend beyond infrastructural support to withstand disaster³³, to support disaster risk reduction and crisis sensitive education planning. Education infrastructure should be structurally safe and conducive to safe and inclusive learning. Support to infrastructure in emergencies and crises will include a range of options, aligned to nationally agreed standards, such as temporary learning spaces, rehabilitation of damaged schools and school construction.

Education is a key component in the Commission's approach to resilience³⁴, as it helps to build individual and societal resilience. Education is a cornerstone of individual resilience, ensuring the well-being of new generations, providing protection and fostering the social and emotional well-being and cognitive development of people affected by emergencies and crises. EU assistance will promote the provision of psycho-social support, such as support for teachers and other care providers and referral and response pathways for children and young

³¹ Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, Council conclusions (26 October 2015), 13201/15

³² Inter-Agency network on Education in Emergencies. Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education. 2013.

³³ COM (2014) 216 The post 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action: Managing risks to achieve resilience

³⁴ COM (2017) 21 and COM (2011) 637. The EU commits to enhancing support for quality education to give young people the knowledge and skills to be active members of an evolving society. The new European Consensus on Development commits the EU and its Member States to apply the nexus approach, actively building individual, community, societal and state resilience. This is linked to preventing and tackling crises, reducing chronic vulnerabilities and building self-reliance, societal and state resilience.

people in need of specialised services. Such actions should be embedded in existing and national referral and response mechanisms.

In order to address and work to eradicate attacks on education, the Commission recognises and supports the work of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack and will support initiatives to promote and roll out the Safe Schools Declaration.³⁵ Schools should be safe havens, as protected under International Humanitarian Law.

Examples of good practice:

The EU has supported the Schools as Zones of Peace project in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The project aims to secure girls' and boys' protection at school, avoid disruptions to education due to armed conflict and to ensure that every child thrives and is educated in an atmosphere free from interference, violence and attack.

The Better Learning Programme is supported by the EU in Palestine³⁶ to provide psycho-social support to children experiencing nightmares due to their experiences of violence. It combines group activities that teachers can deliver with specialised services for children in need of extra support.

To support the education of displaced children returning to their villages in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the EU has worked with local authorities and other agencies to 'build back better' for the longer term. Safe, protective and gender friendly learning spaces were provided for 45,000 children. Peace-building activities, vocational skills, apprenticeship programmes were provided for young people. These actions form part of a ten year local government education plan being developed by the regional administration, with EU support.

Key actions to support and strengthen education for peace and protection:

- Promote and implement the principles and guidelines of Conflict Sensitive Education, such as ensuring that teaching fosters respect for diversity, tolerance and active, responsible citizenship, through teacher training, curriculum development and professional development of teachers;
- Strengthen education systems to prepare for and respond to disasters, such as through the Comprehensive School Safety Framework³⁷;
- Support actions to prevent and respond to violence, including school related sexual and gender-based violence, through strengthening child safeguarding frameworks;
- Support innovative approaches to improving the personal resilience of children and young people affected by emergencies and protracted crises, including through actions incorporating psycho-social support and social and emotional learning interventions;
- Advocate through all channels available to the EU for the end to attacks on education and actively support initiatives and projects that seek to protect education from attack;
- Support actions that reach beyond school boundaries and promote wider community and caregivers' engagement in education and protection in emergencies and protracted crises.

³⁵ The Safe Schools Declaration (2015) provides states the opportunity to express broad political support for the protection and continuation of education in armed conflict, and is the instrument for states to endorse and commit to implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

³⁶ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

³⁷ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (2017) Comprehensive School Safety Framework.

2.4. Supporting quality education for better learning outcomes

EU assistance to education is anchored on the premise that education systems should be of good quality, to enable children and young people to succeed in their learning.³⁸ EU commitments to relevant curricula, trained teachers and principals, appropriate teaching materials and the availability of appropriate school infrastructure remain pivotal to assistance in emergencies and protracted crises.³⁹

In crisis contexts, particularly in low-income countries, the availability of qualified, trained teachers is often lacking. Teachers may not have the language or pedagogic skills to meet the needs of learners. They, and other education staff, may themselves have experienced trauma and require support. Displaced teachers may lack the documentation to teach in their host community. The EU will support policies and actions that ensure the availability of a trained teaching workforce.

The EU will support special measures, such as bridging and retention support, to offset the challenges learners may experience when integrating into an education system. Tailored responses for each level of education are required, based on the age, sex and education background of learners. This may include non-formal or alternative forms of education and will consider the different needs at each level of education.

The integration of forcibly displaced children and young people into national education systems requires the maintenance of essential links between language, identity and culture. EU expertise in language policies, as exemplified across the EU, will be leveraged through policy dialogue and assistance. This will support the promotion of evidence-based, progressive language policies related to the use of mother tongue and additional languages.

Recognising the increasingly protracted nature of displacement, and that displaced populations are likely to experience multiple displacements, mobility and accreditation between and within education systems need to be enhanced.⁴⁰ Lack of documentation should not form a barrier to accessing education in a timely manner on arrival for displaced children and young people, and protocols need to be established to ensure that the right to education takes precedence over any accreditation system. In particular, access to basic education should not be denied based on examinations.⁴¹ Rather, appropriate assessment mechanisms should be used to identify how access and support can be improved and to inform policy. Equally, all young people need to be able to access examinations and gain the certification that is usually the basis for further education opportunities and for employment.

The EU is committed to inclusive and equitable quality primary and secondary education, and understands that foundational skills, such as basic literacy and numeracy skills, are essential building blocks for further education.⁴²

The EU also recognises the importance of labour market related Technical and Vocational Education and Training and higher education.⁴³ Skills development and employability training in crises need to consider the economic and social pressures on learners, such as

³⁸ COM(2002) 116 Communication on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Learning could be applied from the European Commission's Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, in which the Commission has prioritised support for early assessment, documentation and recognition of skills and academic and professional qualifications.

⁴¹ This refers to examinations to any test/examination that is associated with consequences for the participant (high stakes examinations), such as an entrance examination.

⁴² COM(2002) 116 Communication on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries

⁴³ Ibid.

child labour, restricted movement and gender norms. EU commitments to skills development and to promoting employability, decent work and livelihoods, emphasise the need to ensure equitable opportunities for young women as well as young men and for other disadvantaged groups.

The EU will continue to support dedicated research and learning partnerships to strengthen the sector's evidence base. In this context, synergies should be sought with the EU Framework Programme for research and innovation with a view to addressing effectively the challenges of education in emergencies and crisis situations in EU external action.

Examples of good practice:

In Iraq, the EU has supported the reform of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training system to increase its competitiveness and relevance in line with international standards.

In 2018, the EU launched the 'Building Resilience: Education Opportunities in Fragile and Crisis Affected Environments' initiative. This combines research and multi-country programming in seven countries in Africa with funding of approximately EUR 20 million over 4 years.

In Kenya, the EU has supported training programmes for Somali refugees to become accredited teachers in the Kakuma refugee camp. Teachers used information technology to participate in the teacher training curriculum through distance learning.

Key actions to improve the quality of education:

- Support initiatives to allow certification, mobility, accreditation, recognition and transition of displaced children and young people between education systems, and actions that ensure entry and retention of children through various formal and non-formal education pathways;
- Advocate for and support education system reform, particularly curriculum reform, to adapt to changing needs in emergencies and protracted crises, such as expanding and strengthening the teaching workforce to meet the needs of learners in emergencies and crises and introducing accelerated learning programmes for children who have missed years of education;
- Support actions that take advantage of information technology and open educational resources to open access to digital learning and virtual exchange and other innovations;
- Support Technical and Vocational Education and Training linked to skills and livelihoods, with attention to the specific needs of young women and men, embedded in practical learning and relevant to livelihood opportunities;
- Support mechanisms to share, update and apply international standards⁴⁴ relevant to education in emergencies and crises.

3. CONCLUSION

The growing attention to education in emergencies and crises outside the EU in recent years reflects the alarming and increasing scale of the needs and challenges to be met. This Communication provides a holistic and effective policy framework for how the EU can advance this agenda and build on its leadership role in this policy domain. This ambition is supported by the example of children and young people who overcome adversity to pursue their education.

⁴⁴ Such as the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies' Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery. 2010

The Commission, with the support of the European External Action Service (EEAS), including EU Delegations, will actively engage Member States, other countries, international organisations and public and private sector actors, to promote and support more efficient and effective cooperation and coordination for more rapid, predictable and sustainable support to education in emergencies and protracted crises. In doing so, the Commission services and the EEAS will also promote the fulfilment of the objectives of the new European Consensus on Development and the Lives in Dignity Communication. The role of Member States is key in this respect.

The Commission invites the European Parliament to take note of the policy orientations set out in this Communication and the Council to endorse them through Council Conclusions.