



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 26 November 2018
(OR. en)

14719/18

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 26 November 2018
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 12817/18

Subject: Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises
- Council Conclusions (26 November 2018)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on education in emergencies and protracted crises, as adopted by the Council at its 3654th meeting held on 26 November 2018.

Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises**Council Conclusions**

1. The Council is gravely concerned that more than 75 million children affected by emergencies and protracted crises have no access to quality education and some 7.8 million displaced young adults/adolescents aged 18-24 are currently at risk of education disruption, dropout and poor quality education. The Council is equally concerned that violence is on the increase in and around education settings. Education is a human right that must be upheld in all contexts as an essential means to help children and young people meet their full potential, to strengthen individual, community and country resilience, to achieve sustainable development and to ensure peaceful, inclusive and prosperous societies. Due to the increasingly protracted nature of crises, entire 'lost generations' risk growing up without the opportunities, means and skills to build a better future.

2. The EU is committed to ensuring access to inclusive lifelong learning and safe, equitable quality education and training at all levels in emergency and crisis situations, in line with previous Council conclusions^[1], the EU Global Strategy, the European Consensus on Development^[2] and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is essential for 'leaving no one behind' and achieving the goals of the 2030 Education Agenda. The Council welcomes the Commission Communication on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises^[3]. The Council also welcomes the Commission's significant increase in humanitarian funding for education in emergencies and notes its intention to reach 10 % of the EU's humanitarian budget for education in emergencies in 2019. It underlines that funding prospects for the sector in protracted crises go beyond the humanitarian portfolio which, according to its mandate, should target those in the most vulnerable situations. This will facilitate the 'new way of working' envisaged at the World Humanitarian Summit, enlisting the strengths of both the humanitarian and development sectors, including multi-year funding and greater predictability and continuity for education in emergencies and protracted crises. This should complement development financing that meets systemic and longer-term education needs.

^[1] Conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the World Humanitarian Summit, conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the EU approach to forced displacement and development, conclusions of 19 May 2017 on operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus and conclusions of 12 November 2017 on a strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action.

^[2] A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, June 2016 and European Consensus on Development OJ C 210, 30.6.2017, p. 1–24.

^[3] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises. COM(2018) 304 final of 18.5.2018.

3. The Council also welcomes the comprehensive approach to Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises, which includes preparedness, disaster risk reduction, prevention, mitigation, rapid response, and a commitment to building resilient education systems. In this context, initiatives that allow the delivery of better and faster learning opportunities with a view to providing durable solutions, such as the Education Cannot Wait Fund aimed at fulfilling the educational needs of children and young people aged 3-18, should be scaled up and further supported. Initiatives for higher education in emergencies, such as the Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies (RRM) targeting the 18-24 age bracket, should also be further encouraged.
4. Where crises interrupt education, the EU is ready to support rapid response mechanisms and make education an integral part of its emergency response, in partnership with relevant stakeholders and with a view to ensuring, wherever feasible, the hand-over of actions to development actors. The EU commits to bring out-of-school children and young people, including those forcibly displaced, back into quality learning within a few months, in line with the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.
5. Recognising the specific needs of those displaced and the importance of durable solutions, the Council calls on Commission services, the EEAS and Member States to work with host governments and partners towards integrating refugees into national education systems, while also meeting the needs of host communities, and developing and strengthening capacity and existing education structures and services, including certification, accreditation and recognition schemes.
6. The Council stresses that strengthened coordination, dialogue and partnerships among education stakeholders are needed at all levels to ensure effective and complementary responses. Effectiveness also requires available, predictable, transparent and sustainable financing for education, as well as more robust evidence and disaggregated data. The Council recognises that affected populations must be at the centre of humanitarian responses, and calls on the Commission services, the EEAS and Member States to promote and facilitate inclusive community participation in the analysis, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education responses.
7. The Council stresses the importance of engaging civil society, humanitarian and development actors, considering that civil society organisations are characterised by their close interaction with populations and their insight into local communities that can translate into effective access to vulnerable groups.
8. The Council underlines that universal access to free, inclusive and equitable quality education is essential for upholding the right to education for all. In this respect, access to modern technologies and innovations must be scaled up to reduce barriers and ensure quality learning outcomes. The private sector can be an important resource and source of innovation. Especially in fragile contexts with weakened state structures, its involvement must be sufficiently regulated.

9. The Council stresses the importance of focusing on the most marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in line with a needs-based approach in emergencies. Given the disproportionate effects of emergencies and protracted crises on the education of girls and women, an intersectional gender perspective must be mainstreamed throughout all education actions, accompanied by targeted actions addressing any context-specific disadvantages and barriers. Specific solutions should also be developed with regard to the situation of persons with disabilities and stateless persons, to ensure their equal access to education.
10. The Council recognises the important role education plays in fostering peace and ensuring protection. The EU is at the forefront of promoting conflict-sensitive approaches, non-violent school policies and practices, and the respect for diversity, tolerance and active, responsible citizenship. Integrated education and protection approaches can address the physical, psycho-social and emotional needs of children and young people and prevent and mitigate the risk of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, child association with armed conflict, as well as the risk of radicalisation leading to violent extremism. The Council recalls that disrupting young people's access to education and economic opportunities has a dramatic impact on durable peace and reconciliation, as acknowledged in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.
11. The Council strongly condemns all forms of attacks on schools and universities; military use of schools; abductions of students and education personnel; recruitment and the use of children in armed conflict; sexual violence; and the presence of landmines, unexploded ordnances and remnants of war in and around schools. The Council urges Commission services, the EEAS and Member States to use political, policy and operational dialogues with parties to a conflict to call for compliance with obligations under international law. The Council asks all Member States to support initiatives to protect education in conflicts, including the Safe Schools Declaration and to promote its implementation at the Third International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration, to be hosted by Spain in 2019.
12. The Council stresses that quality education must be ensured at all levels: from early childhood to primary, secondary and tertiary education, technical and vocational training. Qualified teachers, adequate teaching and support materials and infrastructure are cornerstones of quality education. The involvement of caregivers and communities is also essential. Basic education is the precondition for children to progress through the education cycle. Higher education is a powerful driver for change, enabling young people to act as catalysts for the recovery, rebuilding and resilience of their countries. Education and technical and vocational training must be linked with the demands of labour markets. Responses integrating education with protection, livelihood, WASH, health and nutrition should be promoted to improve learning outcomes and ensure that education can act as an entry point for the delivery of services for other sectors.
13. A daily school meal can contribute to better nutrition and health and also increases access to education by giving an additional incentive to send children to school. It can also be beneficial for the local economy by fostering the capacity of local farmers to supply food for school meals. Ensuring the delivery of nutritious school meals to children, in order to support their healthy growth and development and ability to learn, requires close cooperation with host governments and development and humanitarian partners.

14. The Council calls on the Commission services, the EEAS and the Member States to implement this policy framework through continued strengthening of cooperation, complementarity and engagement between humanitarian and development actors and instruments, with due regard to their respective mandates, in order to meet both short- and long-term education needs at all levels through the most appropriate means. Greater longer-term investment in education that supports preparedness and risk reduction, and has the flexibility to respond to changing needs and new waves of displacement, is needed, understanding that short-term humanitarian financing and ex post responses have specific mandates and cannot substitute effective systemic responses. Education should be embedded in the implementation of the nexus and resilience approaches, in both emergencies and protracted crises. In this regard, Commission services and Member States should coordinate on disaster risk reduction, preparedness, assessments, analyses, programming and planning of education measures. This should include sharing evidence and best practices, and improving data collection, availability and transparency.
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