

DEVE Opinion ‘Towards an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world : mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic’

Rapporteur for Opinion: György Hölvényi

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COMP 1 (AM 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 16) *Barriers of access to quality education*

Paragraph 1

1. *Notes that developing countries, particularly in the Sub Saharan region are combating various and diverse challenges in securing access to quality education, such as (AM 16 Hölvényi) shortcomings in national regulations and strategies, lack of trained professionals, of adequate funding, (AM 5 Goerens et al.), absence of the necessary infrastructure, proper equipment, facilities and learning materials, lack of stability and security (AM 5 Goerens et al.) and inequalities (AM 4 Comin i Oliveres), which are barriers to the right and access to (AM 6 Majorino et al.) quality education at all levels (AM7 Kósa) in several developing countries; in this context calls on the Commission to develop country specific strategies in implementation of the funding for education, taking into account the regional and national sensitivities (AM 16 Hölvényi); notes with deep concern that according to UNESCO, Covid-19 has wiped out 20 years of education gains (AM 3 Rivasi);*

COMP 2 (AM 11, 15) *Population growth and young people*

Paragraph 2

2. *Takes note of the fact that the world’s population is projected to reach 9.7 billion in 2050, with a particular population increase in developing countries; notes that the number of youth in the world is projected to grow to 1.3 billion by 2030 and that Central, Southern and Eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are home to the largest number of youth (AM 15 Majorino et al.); takes note of the fact that Africa’s population will double by 2050 and that a majority of the current population is under the age of 25; regrets that less than 10% of Africa’s population under the age of 25 is enrolled in some form of postsecondary education (AM 11 Comin i Oliveres);*

COMP 3 (AM 15, 18, 31) *Young people and economic participation*

Paragraph 2a

- 2 a. *Notes that 10 to 12 million youth enter the workforce each year but only 3.1 million jobs are created in Africa, and the economic recession in consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic further aggravated this gap (AM 18 Hölvényi); underlines that young people are the most valuable assets for boosting developing countries’*

economic development (AM 15 Majorino et al.), but for that teaching and learning skills and competences that respond to the needs of local economies and life in the 21st century are essential; (AM 31 Kosa);

COMP 4 (AM 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26) *Schools and COVID-19*

Paragraph 3

3. Emphasises that the COVID-19 pandemic *has exacerbated the learning crisis and (AM 23 Kempa)* has amplified the existing vulnerabilities in social services in Africa *and in many developing countries (AM 21 Majorino et al.; AM 26 Goerens et al.),* in particular in the field of education *and that the impact on the human capital of this generation of learners is likely to be long lasting (AM 23 Kempa); calls on the EU to work with partner countries to increase the resilience of their school systems in face of emergency crises, especially with regard to ensuring that all children can access online education when needed (AM 19 Comin i Oliveres); underlines with deep concerns that school closures impacted around 250 million students in Sub-Saharan Africa, adding to the 100 million out of school children before the pandemic (AM 22 Hölvényi); underlines that the cost of school closures on students' learning, health and well-being has been devastating and that the repercussions on children, their family, their community and economies could last for years (AM 21 Majorino et al.); reiterates that education should be a key pillar of the Africa-EU partnership (AM 25 Rivasi);*

COMP 5 (AM 24, 27, 28) *Build back better after COVID-19*

Paragraph 3a

- 3a. *Underlines that this crisis could serve as an opportunity to build more inclusive, efficient and resilient education systems (AM 27 Comin i Oliveres); stresses that investing in education is a prerequisite for building a sustainable future and (AM 24 Kosa); recalls that the right to education is a fundamental right and that the global community is committed to improved quality of education by 2030 (SDG4) (AM 28 Ochojska);*

COMP 6 (AM 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 75) *Education as a cross cutting issue*

Paragraph 4

4. Acknowledges that education is a cross-cutting issue relevant to all dimensions of sustainable development; points out that education is also a *primary (AM 30 Ochojska)* tool to empower young people and to support sustainable economic growth *and human development (AM 33 Comin i Oliveres)* in Africa *and in all developing countries (AM 29 Majorino et al.; AM 34 Goerens et al.),* and that in the long term, it *directly (AM 30 Ochojska) and strongly contributes to assist the eradication of (AM 34 Goerens et al.)* poverty;

- 4a *Stresses that the lack of access to education has both short and long-term consequences, leading both to higher drop-out rates and increased risks of child labour, child marriage (AM 29 Majorino et al.) and sexual exploitation, and, in the long term, to socio-economic consequences, increasing the risks of poverty and inequality, and undermining the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (AM 36 Majorino et al.);*
- 4b *Is concerned about the persistence of child labour, and calls for coherent strategies to prevent this phenomenon and rehabilitate former child workers, underlines that access to affordable quality education and empowering families with decent work are primary tools to prevent child labour (AM 75 Hölvényi);*

COMP 7 (AM 38, 39, 41, 42, 44, 48) *Education and non-discrimination*

Paragraph 5

5. *Affirms that if given the right opportunities, every person can have an impact on progress, sustainable development, and growth (AM 41 Hölvényi); underlines in this context (AM 41 Hölvényi) that access to quality education for all must be ensured regardless of socio-economic status, cultural background, religion, gender, sexual orientation (AM 44 Goerens et al.), geographical and (AM 39 Majorino et al.) the rural-urban divide, and ensured in fragile and conflict-affected countries (AM 42 Ochojska); notes the particular importance of supporting girls in accessing quality education based on a gender equality approach (AM 39 Majorino et al.) and of addressing the issue of girls dropping out of school at an early stage; stresses the importance of tackling barriers that prevent girls from effectively accessing education, such as the lack of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities within schools (AM 38 Comin i Oliveres; AM 48 Ochojska); underlines that a special attention should be given to disadvantaged groups in order to guarantee the right to education for all, also through support for the most vulnerable families (AM 39 Majorino et al.);*

COMP 8 (AM 27, 35, 46, 51, 52, 53, 72, 90) *Education, health nutrition*

Paragraphs 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d

- 5a. *Notes with concern that according to the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, 2 out of 5 children without a basic drinking water service at school lived in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2019; stresses that access to water is intrinsically linked to health and education; accordingly, emphasises the importance of providing basic water, sanitation and waste management facilities in schools; to this effect, calls on the EU to step up its technical and financial support (AM 35 Rivasi); underlines that to date 17.7 million children lack access to basic vaccinations, an increase of 3.1 million due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impact on progress that had been achieved; calls for an integrated and gender equality based approach between education and child immunization policies, which also takes into account the fact that, in some contexts, schools are essential in the distribution strategy for basic*

vaccines (AM 51 Majorino et al.); emphasises that school-related vaccination strategies need to be considered to ensure the continuity of schooling in low and low-middle income developing countries (AM 72 Comin i Oliveres);

- 5b. Underlines that the right to education is closely linked to the right of health and nutrition, given the fact that school nutrition programmes contribute to feeding millions of children (AM 53 Majorino et al.);
- 5c. Underlines that this crisis could serve as an opportunity to build more inclusive, efficient and resilient education systems, and for school health and nutrition services to be scaled up appropriately, leveraging cross-sectoral partnerships (AM 27 Comin i Oliveres);
- 5d. Underlines the importance of building resilience and disaster preparedness directly into health, social protection, WASH and education systems to ensure that people are more protected not only from pandemics but also from the effects of climate change and environmental degradation; improvements in the resilience of water, health and education have the potential to decrease climate risk for more than 400 million children (AM 46 Majorino et al.);
- 5e. Underlines the need for age-appropriate, evidence-based, comprehensive sexuality education programmes to prevent girls and young women's vulnerability to early childbirth and unintended pregnancy, child marriage, prostitution, HIV transmission and gender-based violence (AM 52 Ochojska; AM 90 Comin i Oliveres);

COMP 9 (AM 54, 55, 57, 58, 60)_Shortcomings of financing for education

Paragraph 6

- 6. Points out in this context the need to scale up national and international financial resources to tackle the financing gap to meet SDG 4 (AM 58 Hölvényi); recalls that governments should ensure that all students have access to free primary and secondary education (AM 55 Rivasi); notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated education funding gaps, adding up to one third to the annual funding gap and reaching USD 200 billion¹ and that the loss of income and school dropouts became more frequent, which has significantly increased the risk of child marriage, radicalization and irregular migration (AM 57 Kosa);
- 6 a. Acknowledges that achieving quality education must be a priority for the official development assistance (ODA) of the Union and the Member States; calls for massive investment in education system particularly in infrastructure and training of teachers and welcomes in this regard the commitment made by the Commission to increase funding for education from 7% to at least 10% of total development funding (AM 60 Hölvényi; AM 54 Comin i Oliveres; AM 55 Rivasi);

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-warns-funding-gap-reach-sdg4-poorer-countries-risks-increasing-us-200-billion-annually>

COMP 10 (AM 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 88) *Teachers' training*

Paragraph 7

7. *Notes that the pupil-trained professional ratio despite various efforts and assistance provided by the EU so far remained high: one trained teacher per 58 students at primary level, and 43 pupils per trained teacher at secondary level in the Sub-Saharan region (AM 61 Hölvényi- slight change to clear the text); points out that many developing countries struggle to make efficient use of resources and very often increased education spending does not translate into more learning and improved human capital; stresses the role of teachers at all levels in facilitating learning, the importance of technology for learning and efficient management of schools and education systems in these countries (AM 88 Kempa); reminds that according to the UNESCO, there is a need to hire at least 15 million teachers to reach the education-related goals in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030, in line with the No. 4 of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (AM 62 Rivasi); considers that in the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, appropriate preparation and resource support for teachers and education systems and infrastructure are needed, and (AM 63 Comin i Oliveres; AM 66 Goerens et al.) particular efforts must be undertaken to invest in well-trained teachers in order to equip children with skills which are relevant to their future and (AM 68 Majorino et al.) to the job market; stresses the need to strive for a more flexible approach to individual career development and lifelong education and training across one's personal career path (AM 64 Ochojska);*

COMP 11 (AM 13, 69, 74) *Vocational training, education and job creation*

Paragraph 7a

- 7 a. *Stresses the importance to accompany the investment in training and education with support to job creation to provide better future outlook for the next generation of the youth of Africa and other developing countries; notes the particular importance of public-private partnership in achieving SDG 8 (access to decent work) (AM 69 Hölvényi); stresses the importance of secondary education and vocational training, which are essential for youth employability and sustainable development (AM 74 Hölvényi); further notes that the increasing youth population of Africa requires first and foremost the support of quality education and advancement of vocational skills training to increase mobility and access to markets and rights (AM13 Kosa);*

COMP 12 (AM 59, 70, 73, 74) *Digital skills*

Paragraph 7b,

- 7b. *Recalls that the lack of access to an internet connection is, today in the context of the COVID-19 more than ever, a major obstacle to learning for children (AM 70 Majorino et al.; AM 74 Hölvényi); underlines the challenge of digital exclusion, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and calls for increased efforts for education and training in digital skills and for facilitating the use of ICTs (AM 74*

Hölvényi); points out that the digital transformation represents a tremendous development lever for access to education, which can enable young people and teachers to access digital educational content and improving the quality of education in some of the most marginalised communities; stresses that digital literacy and skills development are key in addressing youth unemployment **(AM 73 Ochojska)**; underlines the need to ensure diverse distance learning solutions in poorly-resourced and isolated environments **(AM 59 Comin i Oliveres)**;

COMP 13 (AM 19, 37, 47, 76) *Education in fragile settings*

Paragraph 7c

- 7c. *Notes that forced displacement leads to rising number of people living in refugee settings; calls the Commission to support skill transmission in refugee camps and a strong education support for refugees and displaced people in order to support their integration and engagement in income generating activities **(AM 76 Hölvényi)**; calls on the EU to work with partner countries to increase the resilience of their school systems in face of emergency crises **(AM 19 Comin i Oliveres)**; stresses the need to provide remedial education for children who were unable to follow distance education, particularly for children with disabilities, children living in poverty, refugee and migrant children, children who work, children in rural areas, paying particular attention to girls within these groups **(AM 47 Rivasi)**;*

COMP 14 (AM 71, 77, 80, 81, 82, 91) *EU actions and cooperation with the EU I*

Paragraphs 8, 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d

8. *Recalls that current levels of government spending in low- and lower-middle-income countries fall short of the levels required to achieve the SDGs **(AM 77 Rivasi)**; calls on the Commission to establish a road map to provide **and step up** its technical **and financial** **(AM 77 Rivasi)** assistance in the education sector, together with Member States, to developing partner countries in order to draw up proper national regulations and strategies, **to establish effective data collection and management systems that allow proper policy implementation** **(AM 80 Comin i Oliveres)** and to share best practices in this context;*
- 8 a. *Calls on the Commission to establish a link between possible investment de-risking activities and financial support to access to education and vocational training, particularly to establishing proper infrastructure and training of teachers, under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe **(AM 81 Hölvényi)**;*
- 8b. *Calls for increasing international educational exchanges between young people in Africa and the EU via e.g. Erasmus and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs aimed at helping new entrepreneurs to acquire relevant skills for managing business **(AM 91 Ochojska)**;*

- 8c. *Calls on the EU to foster investment in vocational training and lifelong learning, and the strengthening of educational structures in cooperation with the private sector to harness human capital (AM 71 Ochojska);*
- 8 d. *Calls on the EU to support governments of developing countries to ensure that any technology they recommend for online learning protects children's privacy rights in particular, stresses that governments and schools should include data privacy clauses in any contracts they sign with technology or "Ed Tech" providers (AM 82 Rivasi);*

COMP 15 (AM 84, 86, 87, 92)_EU actions and cooperation with the EU II

Paragraph 9

- 9. *Calls on the Commission to take the absorption capacities of partner countries into account in the context of increased funding for education **to ensure the continuity of education and the return of all learners when schools reopen (AM 84 Comin i Oliveres)**; emphasises the need to engage with reliable local partners, particularly with civil society, NGOs (AM 86 Ochojska; AM 87 Majorino et al.) and local faith-based organisations, in the implementation of education funding **and to address cross-cutting health, social and education issues that impact on the continuity of learning and return to schools (AM 84 Comin i Oliveres)**; calls on the Commission to define clear and accountable benchmarks and indicators to improve access to quality of education in developing countries (AM 92 Hölvényi).*