



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament



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Input Paper

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Decent Work and Education: Investing in Equal Opportunities for All

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela

I. Education as A Basic Human Right for All:

An Imperative for Peace, Development and Aiming for Prosperity on the one hand; for Social Cohesion, Living with Global Change, and Learning all through Life on the other hand.

Educational needs, how education is actually financed and national systems per se vary dramatically across the globe. From a disastrous lack of elementary education among the poorest, particularly for young girls to reforming long-established educational systems in the “developed” world so as to keep working people including older workers abreast of changing requirements in the workplace as well as empowering all sorts of vulnerable people to participate in society at large or to maintaining the vibrant R&D necessary for the good performance of “post-industrial” economies.

- Overall, education is at breaking point. We do not only need to rescue our economies. We need to rescue our education. Only by developing it can we come out of the crisis standing. Inevitably, we will fall behind if we do not properly **invest in education and lifelong learning and make it more inclusive**. We cannot speak about participation of everyone in our welfare societies, make our economies competitive, and the global system fair, if we do not change how we tackle education.



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- Education and lifelong learning for all (i.e., all income levels, all ages, all sexes, all races and nationalities...) provides **essential public goods, on a global scale** – which are far too often overlooked. They include, but are not limited to:
 - Empowering people to participate in society and through that finding new opportunities
 - preventing extremism and violence - promoting tolerance, diversity and freedom of thought;
 - enabling dialogue across different cultures, languages, traditions, human development and income levels;
 - literacy as a basic condition for all societies to escape poverty;
 - literacy as a basic condition for all societies to “work their way” to prosperity and social justice;
 - literacy as a basic condition for all societies to work towards gender equality;
 - literacy as a basic condition for all societies to improve public health;
 - literacy as a basic condition for all societies to safeguard social rights in the workplace;
 - sharing more justly in the global economy, both among nations and *within* them;
 - giving working-class and esp. more aged people the means to adapt to change and to continue being valued for the work they perform, rather than risk social exclusion – across any society, “developing” or “developed”, etc.
- We must insist on the **commonalities and the overall shared purpose of all humanity**: WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER (to safeguard international peace, security and exchange of people, societies and economies; respect and empowerment for every human being, regardless of their gender, race, income, place & date of birth etc.). The differences between the levels of education systems and between education systems themselves (formal education, non-formal and informal learning, vocational education and training)



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in different parts of the world can be a challenge, but also an opportunity – for a real partnership with obligations and investment by all partners involved, according to their best ability, and for the sharing of best practices among very many different models and experiences.

II. The Right Financing – and the Right Structures, for Lasting Systemic Change.

In general terms, our goals must include the following:

- Guaranteeing access for people of all ages to education and lifelong learning
- Continued modernisation of all higher education systems
- Increased mobility for students, teachers and trainees
- Long-term initiatives to tackle the increase in school drop-outs
- Specific actions to boost the teaching of sciences and technology
- Better training and re-skilling to meet employment needs
- Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning
- Fostering media literacy
- Cultivating an interest in innovations and creativity from an early age
- Promoting vocational education and training learning opportunities for young people

We must not forget that the public sector, civil society and trade unions should be engaged in the preparation of the working people by helping them to develop and/or validate the necessary skills, competences, and knowledge required to get decent jobs - rather than "automatically" relying on the raw demands of the markets to orient the right choices for education.

We need better targeting of the available resources, we need more programmes that help young people expand their horizon and skills, competences, and knowledge - and a talent development programme through which decision-makers would ensure that talented



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children living in poverty and social exclusion have the opportunity to study whatever they choose and so will have the chance to live up to their full potential

In concrete terms:

- Education should be thought of in terms of investment and not costs. Education is not simply about manufacturing future employees. It should focus on individuals and give them more opportunities to develop.

We demand that austerity measures do not lead to cuts in Education!

- Matching Skills, competences, and knowledge with the Needs of the Workplace – There where possible financing should come (partly) from the private sector, stimulated by a better-performing public financing framework for instance vocational education and training or research and development.

We demand that everyone contribute and pay their "just part" in financing education for all!

- Addressing the problems of Shifting Skills, competences, and knowledge and Lifelong Learning / Continuing Education, also linked to the above (evolution of the “real economy” needs for specific job training)
- ***We demand that education lead to quality jobs, both for first-time entrants, and older workers re-entering the job market, who in turn will generate financing for further education!***
- Conceptually, it is important to underline not only the EQUALITY of all individuals - but also the EQUALITY of all State actors. Rather than solely imposing "conditionalities" on "developing" countries – not only aid recipients, but all States should undertake to increase their own investment (e.g., the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has set an indicative target of at least 20% of the national budget (or 6% of GDP) for nations



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"catching up" - other "categories" / groupings of States should also quantify and make real efforts to implement concrete pledges.).

We demand that an artificial division into "developed" and "developing" financing not be perpetuated, but rather a general realisation and undertaking of obligations tailored to everyone's specific capacities. For that reason we recommend (in line with UNESCO) that Ensuring equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030 should become a goal of the post-2015 Agenda!

- Good Governance and Better Tax Collectability / Government Revenue inflow as an imperative improvement of national systems, especially for those States which have had problems with their public finances and revenue streams.

We demand transparency and good governance in all national budgets and their shares reserved for education!

- Global, and regional, exchange of Best Practices and Lessons Learned in financing education systems– not only “North-to-South”, but also “South-to-North”, and “South-South”.

We demand equal access to lessons learned by all participants of the process of progress on financing education across the world!

- Sharing And Opening proven successful programmes such as Erasmus+ and Erasmus Mundus [e.g., *Intra-ACP*], to as many partners as possible around the world: open programmes to more participants, and attempt to replicate successful programmes and solutions across the world.

We demand that national systems with proven plentiful resources open and share them more and better with systems having less resources at their disposal!