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REPORT

Towards an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world:
mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
(2021/2209(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Rapporteur: David Lega

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(*) Associated committees – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

Towards an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world: mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (2021/2209(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989,
- having regard to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021,
- having regard to the General Comments of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child¹,
- having regard to the UN guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children of 18 December 2009,
- having regard to the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty of 11 July 2019,
- having regard to the UN policy brief of 15 April 2020 entitled ‘The impact of COVID-19 on children’, and to the positive response thereto co-led by the EU and the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries and signed by 173 countries,
- having regard to the policy response of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 19 October 2020 entitled ‘What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and their children?’,
- having regard to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, adopted on 14 December 1960,
- having regard to the UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank brochure entitled ‘Mission: Recovering Education in 2021’,
- having regard to Article 49 of the Charter of the Organization of American States of 1967,

¹ In particular General Comment No 5 on general measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; No 6 on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin; No 10 on children’s rights in juvenile justice; No 12 on the right of the child to be heard; No 13 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence; No 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration; No 15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health; and No 16 on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children’s rights.

- having regard to Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of 1990,
 - having regard to Articles 17 and 25 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981,
 - having regard to Article 31 of the Human Rights Declaration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations of 2012,
 - having regard to Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU,
 - having regard to Articles 3(5) and 21 of the Treaty on European Union,
 - having regard to the UN Development Programme report of April 2021 entitled 'Leaving No One Behind: Impact of COVID-19 on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)',
 - having regard to the European Child Guarantee,
 - having regard to the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour 2021 and the Commission's zero tolerance approach towards child labour,
 - having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2019 on children's rights on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2021 on the Syrian conflict – 10 years after the uprising³,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinions of the Committee on Development and the Committee on Culture and Education,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0058/2022),
- A. whereas almost five million people globally have died because of the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting governments all over the world to enact extraordinary measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, including closing schools and limiting access to educational facilities;
- B. whereas new variants are intensifying the COVID-19 health crisis, while conflicts and other crises, including the climate crisis, continue to put children around the world at an increased risk of falling below minimum proficiency levels;
- C. whereas access to education is an internationally recognised fundamental human right that is indispensable for the exercise of other human rights; whereas the right to education entails that primary education is compulsory and universal and is accessible

² OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 2.

³ OJ C 474, 24.11.2021, p. 130.

to all;

- D. whereas UNICEF estimates that more than 168 million children have lost a full year of education because of school closures due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, while UNESCO data shows that education has been significantly disrupted for 800 million students worldwide, who lost two thirds of an academic year on average;
- E. whereas since March 2020, around 194 countries have been forced to close schools nationwide because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected more than 1.8 billion school learners globally and cut off their access to education and other vital benefits provided by schools; whereas schools in some regions are still closed; whereas the closure of schools has increasingly exposed children to violence, abuse and exploitation, including in a domestic setting; whereas partial or total school closures impact vulnerable and marginalised children the most by increasing the existing disparities within education systems and disrupting all aspects of their daily lives;
- F. whereas according to UNICEF, one third of children worldwide do not have access to the internet, which creates a barrier to access to remote/digital learning; whereas the need for remote learning and teaching programmes will remain after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in countries affected by natural disasters and conflict; whereas e-learning has created new challenges for teachers in terms of facilitating student learning and maintaining social interaction; whereas the COVID-19 pandemic and the fast-tracked innovative measures taken to ensure continuous learning for children represent an opportunity to reimagine education as more forward-looking, inclusive, flexible and resilient; whereas remote learning programmes must be accessible for all children, taking into account the socioeconomic challenges children may face, as well as their lack of access to the internet, broadcasts or digital media;
- G. whereas the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on parents have in turn impacted the health, well-being and access to education of their children; whereas school closures have found parents unprepared for remote and home schooling; whereas some working parents without financial means or alternatives have been forced to leave their children home alone, and others, mostly women, have been forced out of work, thereby pushing families into poverty;
- H. whereas more than 90 % of countries introduced some form of remote learning during the emergency school closures; whereas remote learning mostly benefited children in primary and secondary education, leaving children at pre-primary level at risk of being unprepared for primary school;
- I. whereas schoolchildren around the world have already lost around 1.8 trillion hours of in-person learning since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 39 billion in-school meals have been missed globally because of school closures⁴;
- J. whereas well before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was already facing a global learning crisis caused not only by hampered access to education due to poverty, long commutes to the nearest school, harmful gender norms, discrimination against

⁴ UNICEF Office of Research, *COVID-19: Missing More Than a Classroom – The impact of school closures on children's nutrition*, January 2021.

vulnerable groups, environmental risks and conflicts, but also by schooling that does not necessarily lead to learning; whereas the pandemic has compounded the critical situation of children in a number of conflict regions, which is often characterised, inter alia, by increasing insecurity, greater vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and attacks on educational institutions, leaving children at a heightened risk of being recruited into conflict, which constitutes a serious violation of children's rights and international humanitarian law; whereas 617 million children and adolescents worldwide are unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading⁵ and mathematics, even though two thirds of them are at school;

- K. whereas COVID-19 has wiped out 20 years of education gains; whereas an additional 101 million children – 9 % of those in grades 1-8 – fell below minimum reading proficiency levels in 2020⁶;
- L. whereas an estimated additional 825 million children will not reach adulthood with the secondary-level skills they need for work and life by 2030; whereas millions of children and young people who regularly attended schools are not developing the knowledge and skills they need to successfully enter the job market, achieve their full potential and contribute to their communities;
- M. whereas school closures have a large economic impact as they prevent children and young people from developing necessary skills, reaching their full potential and preparing for life, which frequently gives rise to unemployment and, consequently, increases in inequality, thereby resulting in fewer opportunities;
- N. whereas according to the UN, there are 11 million primary and secondary school learners worldwide – 5.2 million of whom are girls – at risk of not returning to education following COVID-19-related school closures⁷; whereas the longer children are out of school, the higher the likelihood that they will drop out of education altogether; whereas this situation risks undermining the results obtained in the area of education and towards the achievement of the SDGs, and in particular those related to poverty reduction, health and well-being, and quality education;
- O. whereas school closures have distinct gendered impacts and carry risks of widening inequalities; whereas it is estimated that school closures during crises may lead to increases in teenage pregnancy; whereas girls out of school are disproportionately exposed to the risk of early and forced marriage and sexual exploitation; whereas it is estimated that two million more cases of female genital mutilation could occur over the next decade; whereas a significant number of girls may be blocked from returning to schools once they reopen given the existence of certain discriminatory policies that ban pregnant girls and young mothers from school;
- P. whereas 129 million girls worldwide are out of school, including 32 million of primary-school age, 30 million of lower-secondary-school age, and 67 million of upper-secondary-school age; whereas fewer than half of countries worldwide have achieved

⁵ UNESCO, Fact Sheet No 46, *More Than One-Half of Children and Adolescents Are Not Learning Worldwide*, September 2017.

⁶ *UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021*, 15 July 2021.

⁷ UNESCO, *How many students are at risk of not returning to school?*, 30 July 2020.

gender parity in participation in primary education; whereas the shift to remote learning puts children, in particular girls, from the poorest and most vulnerable households at a significant risk of dropping out of school permanently or for extended periods;

- Q. whereas 9 of the top 10 most difficult nations for girls to be educated in are in Sub-Saharan Africa and the other is Afghanistan, where the Taliban have effectively deprived girls of education past primary school by ordering secondary schools to reopen only for boys; whereas the Taliban's unclear policy and vague and unfulfilled promises about girls' education makes millions of Afghan girls understandably fearful for their education; whereas several international initiatives by universities and private individuals emerged offering remote education for Afghan girls and women;
- R. whereas according to several national and regional law enforcement authorities, children out of school – in particular girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as children of minorities, rural, indigenous and migrant children, including refugees, children with disabilities, children in care and children who have lost their parents and/or grandparents due to the COVID-19 pandemic, among others – are disproportionately vulnerable to exploitation, child labour and domestic violence, including the witnessing of violence, online bullying and other crimes such as sexual exploitation and abuse⁸;
- S. whereas in addition to the enormous social costs, the World Bank estimates that a global school shutdown of five months could generate learning losses that have a present value of USD 10 trillion; whereas loss of learning may cost economies up to USD 161 million per day;
- T. whereas school closures have unfortunately been essential to limit the spread of COVID-19; whereas schools are more than places where children can learn, as they also constitute meeting places and hubs for mental health and psychosocial support; whereas according to UNESCO and UNICEF, school closures do not only affect the right to education but also the right to health, with more than 80 million children missing primary vaccinations as a result of school closures; whereas school closures mean that teachers are not able to look out for signs of abuse or a lack of proper care on the part of parents; whereas according to the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and the World Food Programme, school closures also impact the right to good nutrition and access to a daily meal; whereas school food programmes can provide incentives for the most vulnerable children to return to school; whereas school closures seriously affect children's mental well-being as children can be exposed to violence and stress in the home; whereas school closures may have acute and long-lasting psychosocial consequences, including depression, increased anxiety and suicide, as children are deprived of social contact;
- U. whereas dropping out of school reinforces social inequality and may affect a country's stability and prosperity, thereby jeopardising the futures of millions of the world's children and severely impacting a whole generation; whereas education has proven essential to countering extremism and the radicalisation of children and young people;

⁸ Press release of 19 June 2020 by Europol entitled 'Exploiting isolation: sexual predators increasingly targeting children during COVID pandemic'.

- V. whereas according to the UNHCR Education Report 2021 half of all refugee children remain out of school; whereas refugee children are excluded from remote learning opportunities; whereas the overcrowded living conditions of child refugees, especially those living in refugee camps, often facilitate the spread of the virus and hamper compliance with sanitary rules; whereas the COVID-19 situation in the camps constitutes a crisis for children, as many children often already have weakened immune systems or underlying health conditions during their formative years, which puts them at higher risk of developing more severe cases when coping with this deadly virus; whereas most refugee camps do not have suitable health services to adequately respond to children's and their families' needs;
- W. whereas the unequal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide disproportionately affects low-income countries;
1. Acknowledges and expresses appreciation for the work of teachers, educators of all kinds and support staff, who rapidly adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensured the continuation of the learning process for children and adolescents; commends initiatives by international and local civil society organisations, private citizens and businesses to provide children with information and communication technology, remote learning courses and other learning materials, especially in countries where children have limited access to remote learning or no access to learning at all; urges the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States to promote a children's rights-based approach to global efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to education for children, and one which is based on the principles of non-discrimination, acting in the best interests of the child and child participation;
 2. Acknowledges that education is a cross-cutting issue relevant to all dimensions of sustainable development;
 3. Welcomes the commitments made at the 2021 UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development and the adoption of the Berlin Declaration; insists on ensuring quality education for all children as an enabler for all SDGs and underscores the importance of integrating sustainable development into all levels of education and training from early childhood to tertiary and adult education, including vocational education and training, non-formal education and informal learning;
 4. Insists that the EU lead the way as an educational power that enables Member States to fully exercise their capacity to support education for children the world over and assert their convictions on this issue; underlines the key role of the future European Education Area in providing an important opportunity for more international cooperation to build synergies on education beyond Europe in order to develop common approaches and solutions to common challenges; urges the Commission to redouble its efforts to define a strategy to that end, including a clear outline and objectives;
 5. Stresses the key importance of guaranteeing children's right to education and giving every child the opportunity to go back to school and calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support the authorities of third countries in prioritising school reopening in their recovery plans, including support for teachers to help children

catch up with lost learning and support for children's well-being, as schools are critical for children's learning, safety, health, nutrition and overall well-being; calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support third-country authorities in ensuring that all children can enjoy their right to primary education and to take action to ensure that secondary education is available and accessible; calls, furthermore, on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support third-country authorities in developing and implementing digital teaching and learning methods and to facilitate internet access for all;

6. Considers that improving domestic resource mobilisation, protecting and strongly increasing domestic expenditure on social sectors, notably education and health, and improving the quality of this expenditure must be prioritised in national recovery plans and assistance programmes run by EU and international financial institutions; insists, in this context, on ensuring equitable allocation and financing so that disadvantaged, impoverished and marginalised children – with a particular focus on girls – young people and families are not left behind; highlights that the best interests of the child must guide all efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to education and that such measures must respect children's rights to be informed, empowered and given the opportunity to have their voices heard;
7. Stresses that it is essential to take into account the social situation of parents and to support families whose income has been reduced as a result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
8. Acknowledges that achieving quality education must be a priority for the official development assistance of the EU and the Member States;
9. Notes that forced displacement leads to rising numbers of people living in refugee settings; calls on the Commission to support skill transmission in refugee camps and strong education support for refugees and displaced people in order to support their integration and engagement in income generating activities;
10. Is concerned by the lasting financial impact of the pandemic on funding for education, as the majority of UNESCO member states have not yet reached the threshold of 4–6 % of GDP or 15–20 % of public expenditure;
11. Highlights the inequity in efforts to tackle the pandemic owing to unequal access to vaccines, resulting in unequal protection capabilities; emphasises that the pandemic can only be brought to an end if it is done so globally and that vaccines must be accessible to all; calls on the Member States to increase their contributions to and the overall efficiency of the UN COVAX programme to guarantee sufficient access to COVID-19 vaccines for third countries in order to allow them to put national COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in place that are in line with the guidelines set by competent national public health authorities and the World Health Organization, so as to ensure a speedy return to schools; urges the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to work closely with their transatlantic allies and international partners in order to boost the global supply of COVID-19 vaccines, ensuring fair distribution to the countries and populations that are most in need, and aiming to enhance global access to affordable COVID-19-related medical products and to address global production constraints and

supply shortages;

12. Urges the EU, in conjunction with the US and other members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), to scale up the production and range of supply options to ensure equitable access to diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics and other relevant health products needed to contain, prevent and treat COVID-19 and to ensure that these objectives are achieved by the 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO;
13. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support the authorities of third countries in financing and implementing 'safe school' operations, including providing hygiene supplies and sharing information on handwashing and other hygiene measures, as well as on maintaining the continuity of nutrition services for school-age children and adolescents; stresses that school meals and clean water are vital in ensuring children's nutrition, growth and development as they provide a strong incentive for children – especially girls and those from the poorest and most marginalised communities – to return to school once restrictions are lifted; highlights, in this regard, the key role that teachers and civil society actors, including faith-based organisations, religious communities and NGOs, can play in health promotion and in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in supporting children and their families in overcoming the challenges and difficulties posed by the health crisis, improving their well-being and providing training and education programmes;
14. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support the authorities of third countries in establishing education risk mitigation and management plans through resilience planning; highlights the importance of developing and guaranteeing contingency planning and crisis response plans now to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools and to minimise the impact of school closures on children and their families, especially on the poorest and most marginalised children, as well as those with severe disabilities; highlights, in this regard, the need to prioritise children in conflict-affected areas and their access to quality education;
15. Underlines the impact that school closures could have on parents' professional responsibilities while they simultaneously take care of their children; stresses the importance of providing working parents with proper resources and guidance on distance education, extracurricular activities, and psychological support methods for balancing working from home and home schooling;
16. Stresses the importance of providing educational and psychosocial support to children and families who must self-isolate to minimise the risk of contagion, with a view to reducing stress and anxiety in the home;
17. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support the authorities of third countries in proactively issuing guidance on best practices in remote learning, and in ensuring that appropriate and safe tools, curricula and technology are used and are made accessible to children from low-income families, rural, indigenous and migrant children, marginalised children and children with disabilities or learning difficulties, children in alternative care, children in places of detention, and children living in remote areas or in environments where they are deprived of liberty or where internet access is not ubiquitous; highlights the potential for digital learning to enable educational

institutions to reach all children at speed and scale, while at the same time fostering partnerships and working with a wide range of actors from civil society as well as the public and private sectors; insists, however, that investment in digital learning must seek to reduce the digital divide and must be context-specific, consistent with the best interests of the child and not to the detriment of supporting basic education infrastructure and staff, as well as in-person learning; recalls, however, that access to digital technologies has still not been equitable or widespread during the pandemic; considers that heavy investment is needed in this sector, in terms of both training and funding; calls for the EU and its Member States to continue to provide accessible educational resources and open access to digital tools for teachers, parents and students; stresses, in this regard, that children's privacy and the protection of personal data must be guaranteed in connection with all digital tools and that due account must be taken of gender-responsive content and the different realities of children's lives;

18. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to maintain robust funding for education through all EU financial instruments available, in line with the 10 % benchmark on education in the Global Europe instrument, and to make more funding available in order to increase resilience to ongoing and future crises;
19. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support the authorities of third countries in ensuring appropriate care for children, including by putting in place a contingency plan for the care of children orphaned or left without appropriate care because of severe cases of COVID-19 that require hospitalisation of adult caregivers;
20. Calls on the Commission to establish a link between possible investment de-risking activities and financial support for access to education and vocational training, particularly to establishing proper infrastructure and training for teachers, under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe;
21. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to support the governments of third countries in building and further developing stronger gender-responsive and inclusive education systems accompanied by the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls; recalls that women's access to education has been established as a fundamental right by the UN; believes that increasing girls' education and supporting women's participation in education and careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as a matter of priority should be a central policy target for the EU and the international development community; insists, in this regard, on the need for girls to be able to complete their education and have access to age-appropriate information and services, free from discrimination and gender bias and with equal opportunities to fulfil their potential; stresses the urgent need to address gender-related barriers to education, such as laws, policies and harmful socio-cultural norms that prevent girls from continuing education in the event of pregnancy, marriage or motherhood; encourages the tackling of gender stereotypes and harmful socio-cultural norms through education, and the prevention of violence through gender-sensitive education programming;
22. Condemns the fact that millions of girls worldwide do not have access to education, thus leaving them exposed to dependence and at a higher risk of violence and

exploitation, especially in cases where women and girls are systematically denied access to education, work and public life by the authorities in power; rejects the misuse and instrumentalisation of any practice that discriminates in access to education and imposes the closing of schools; calls for an end to these practices and urges the reopening of all schools for girls and women;

23. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to preserve and further strengthen the achievements of the past 20 years in education for women and girls in Afghanistan; urges that the requisite funding be allocated within the EU humanitarian aid package for Afghanistan to enable international and local organisations to facilitate the reopening of educational facilities for women and girls and to develop remote learning programmes as a temporary measure; calls for similar attention to be paid to the education of Afghan children and young people in countries hosting Afghan refugees;
24. Underlines that the right to education and information on sexual and reproductive health, family planning, modern contraceptive methods, safe and legal abortion, and maternal, prenatal and postnatal healthcare must be guaranteed for all people;
25. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States, as well as the national governments of third countries, to develop specific programmes to manage and mitigate the mental health and psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on children, teachers and their communities, and to design specific preventive campaigns aimed at children, parents and teachers on the risks when using the internet, such as harassment, trafficking, sexual abuse and online bullying as well as promote special plans to assist children who have been a victim of these practices, and their parents;
26. Underlines the need for age-appropriate, evidence-based, comprehensive sexuality education programmes to reduce the vulnerability of girls and young women to early childbirth and unintended pregnancy, child marriage, prostitution, HIV transmission and gender-based violence;
27. Notes that the ratio of pupils to trained professionals in the Sub-Saharan region remains high, despite the EU's various efforts and the assistance it provides; highlights the regional averages of 58 pupils per trained teacher at primary level, and 43 pupils per trained teacher at secondary level; points out that many developing countries struggle to make efficient use of resources and that 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; recalls that according to 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 SDG 4;
28. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to support the authorities of partner countries in addressing the challenges in their education systems with the aim of making them capable of withstanding future crises, and making systems more resilient and inclusive, implementing learning recovery programmes and protecting educational budgets, with dedicated investments in high-quality, affordable and inclusive education, including investments in education technology tools, teacher training and other resources to ensure that children and young people reach their full potential, are

prepared for life and do not miss out on opportunities to enter the labour market later in life, while respecting the education needs and rights of every child; highlights that remote learning programmes designed to address future crises must encompass different learning materials, including printed material, in order to be accessible to the most disadvantaged and marginalised children;

29. Welcomes the UNESCO Paris Declaration: a Global Call for Investing in the Futures of Education; urges countries around the world to consider education as an investment rather than an expense; believes that adequate and effective financial assistance in education is a prerequisite to eliminate poverty and enhance well-being, especially at a time when public resources are increasingly constrained with competing demands in badly affected sectors such as health and education; urges the Commission and the Member States to substantially increase funding for education in their international development and assistance strategies;
30. Underlines that young people are the most valuable assets for boosting developing countries' economic development;
31. Recalls that the global community is committed to improving the quality of education by 2030 (SDG 4);
32. Calls for international educational exchanges between young people in Africa and the EU to be increased, through programmes such as Erasmus and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, aimed at helping new entrepreneurs to acquire the relevant skills for managing businesses;
33. Calls on the Member States to take account of the fact that the COVID-19 health crisis has exacerbated the situation of those detained in camps in Syria and to immediately repatriate all European children held in those camps, ensuring that the best interest of the child prevails as the primary consideration;
34. Stresses the importance of including vocational training and 'second chance programmes' in the recovery plans to help children and young people enter the labour market; calls on the Commission, the EEAS, the Member States and third countries to offer desirable future prospects for young people;
35. Stresses the importance of accompanying investment in training and education with support for job creation to provide a better future outlook for the next generation of young people in Africa and other developing regions; notes the particular importance of public-private partnership in achieving SDG 8 on access to decent work; stresses the importance of secondary education and vocational training, which are essential for youth employability and sustainable development; further notes that the increasing youth population of Africa requires first and foremost the support of quality education and the advancement of vocational skills training to increase mobility and access to markets and rights;
36. Calls for 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;

37. Highlights the importance of continuous professional development and enhanced financial support for teachers, empowering them to address learning losses among their students so as to be able to respond to their individual social, family and mental health conditions, and to incorporate digital technology into their teaching; stresses the urgent need to seize the opportunity and employ COVID-19 recovery funds and fast-tracked innovative measures used to ensure remote learning during the pandemic to reimagine education and build systems that are more forward-looking, inclusive, flexible and resilient; believes that these new approaches must address learning losses, prevent dropouts, and ensure the social and emotional welfare of students, teachers and staff;
38. Emphasises the role of non-formal and informal education, citizenship education and volunteering; calls on the Commission to support third countries in improving the recognition of soft skills; insists on the promotion of practices of intergenerational solidarity and mentoring to reduce inequalities, exclusion or early school leaving;
39. Calls for the acceleration of global knowledge exchanges and mobility at all levels of education and between and within countries and regions, while acknowledging the complex and contested history of global relationships and emphasising the importance of promoting heritage, cultural identity, history, art and global citizenship through education; notes the potential of combining online exchanges and travel to this end;
40. Stresses the importance of developing and strengthening awareness-raising activities related to climate change and environmental protection and their impact on children and future generations; calls for environmental education to be made a core component of school curricula;
41. Emphasises the important role of physical education in schools, as physical activity and a healthy lifestyle are key to improving learners' health; calls on the Commission and the EEAS, therefore, to support national authorities in ensuring sufficient and safe sports facilities in schools and the training of qualified sports teachers;
42. Draws attention to the need to harness the synergies between culture and education in order to shape sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies; calls on the Commission and the EEAS, in this regard, to support national authorities in including arts and culture in school curricula and extracurricular activities in order to enrich the educational and learning experiences of learners in third countries;
43. Considers that national governments – and their competent national, regional or local authorities – must communicate with children in a child-friendly manner to explain the measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19 in order to raise awareness about the impact, risks and threats of COVID-19 and to inform children of their rights;
44. Stresses the importance of the acquisition of skills, notably through face-to-face learning, that will enable children to progress throughout their lives, such as on personal relationships, study skills, empathy and cooperation; highlights the importance of children being able to engage in play and leisure activities as a key element of their development, as recognised in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; calls for steps to be taken to enhance the enjoyment of leisure and cultural activities for children, both as rights in and of themselves and as a means to improve their mental health and general well-being;

45. Reiterates its call for all UN member states which have not done yet done so to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, while stressing the importance of making this core human rights instrument effective worldwide;
46. Stresses the need to properly evaluate, follow up on and monitor the impact of initiatives introduced during the crisis, in order to identify the gaps and shortfalls and determine how they can be remedied;
47. Commits to making education a key topic of discussions in parliamentary delegation work, notably through joint parliamentary assemblies such as the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly;
48. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

MINORITY POSITION

pursuant to Rule 55(4) of the Rules of Procedure
Bernhard Zimniok

This Report appears to tackle educational deficiencies in third countries due to the imposed Covid-sanctions; however, the Report includes a multitude of semi-related and unrelated issues. Thus, the Report loses focus, and detracts from the important issue of children's education, due to this the Report should be re-drafted. The other and more glaring problem is that the aim of the Report is ensuring that the taxpayers of the Member States shall have as their duty to ensure education for most, if not all, of the children in the developing world. Despite being, an honourable commitment it is neither feasible today, nor in the future due to the vast financial implications it entails, bearing in mind the explosive population-growth. Instead of wasting resources on value-signalling, I call on my fellow members of Parliament to vote no to this Report in Plenary. Instead, we can together create a realistic proposal to ensure care and support for all the children in the EU Member States who suffered and still suffer as a consequence of the disproportionate measures taken during the last two years, with Covid-19 as a pretext, and ensure adequate temporary schooling for the refugee children from Ukraine.

4.3.2022

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Towards an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world: mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
(2021/2209(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion (*): György Hölvényi

(*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Recalls that education is a fundamental human right and must be guaranteed; emphasises that the principle of the best interests of the child must always be safeguarded; calls on the EU, in this context, to put children's rights at the core of its efforts and policies to mitigate the effects of the COVID19 pandemic at global level;

Barriers to access to quality education

2. Notes that developing countries, particularly in the Sub-Saharan region, are combating various and diverse challenges to securing access to quality education, such as shortcomings in national regulations and strategies, a lack of trained professionals and adequate funding, the absence of the necessary infrastructure, equipment, facilities and learning materials, a lack of stability and security, and inequalities, which are barriers to the right to and access to quality education at all levels in several developing countries; calls on the Commission, in this context, to develop country-specific strategies for the implementation of funding for education, taking into account regional and national sensitivities; notes with deep concern that according to UNESCO, COVID-19 has wiped out 20 years of education gains;

Population growth and young people

3. 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 youth population of 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 youth populations; 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 post-secondary education;

4. Is alarmed that according to the joint report by the World Bank and UNESCO of 22 February 2021 entitled ‘Education Finance Watch 2021’, two thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have cut their public education budgets since the onset of the pandemic;

Young people and economic participation

5. Notes that 10 to 12 million young people enter the workforce each year in Africa but only 3.1 million jobs are created in Africa, and that the economic recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated this gap; underlines that young people are the most valuable assets for boosting developing countries’ economic development, but that the teaching and learning of skills and competences that respond to the needs of local economies and life in the 21st century are essential;

Schools and COVID-19

6. Emphasises that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the learning crisis and has amplified the existing vulnerabilities in social services in Africa and in many developing countries, 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; calls for the EU to work with partner countries to increase the resilience of their school systems in the face of emergencies and crises, especially with regard to ensuring that all children can access online education when they need to; underlines with deep concerns that school closures impacted around 250 million students in Sub-Saharan Africa, adding to the 100 million children that were out of school before the pandemic; underlines that the cost of school closures for students’ learning, health and well-being has been devastating and that the repercussions for children, their families, their communities and economies could last for years; reiterates that education should be a key pillar of the Africa-EU partnership;

Build back better after COVID-19

7. Underlines that this crisis could serve as an opportunity to build more inclusive, efficient and resilient education systems; stresses that investing in education is a prerequisite for building a sustainable future and recalls that the right to education is a fundamental right and that the global community is committed to improving the quality of education by 2030 (UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4);

Education as a cross-cutting issue

8. Acknowledges that education is a cross-cutting issue relevant to all dimensions of sustainable development; points out that education is also a primary tool to empower young people and to support sustainable economic growth and human development in Africa and in all developing countries, and that in the long term, it makes a direct and strong contribution to the eradication of poverty;
9. Stresses that 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 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

SDGs;

10. Is concerned about the persistence of child labour and calls for coherent strategies to prevent this phenomenon and rehabilitate former child workers; underlines that providing access to affordable quality education and empowering families with decent work are primary tools to prevent child labour;

Education and non-discrimination

11. Affirms that if given the right opportunities, every person can have an impact on progress, sustainable development and growth; underlines, in this context, that access to quality education for all must be ensured regardless of socio-economic status, cultural background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, geographical situation of the rural-urban divide, and ensured in fragile and conflict-affected countries; notes the particular importance of supporting girls in accessing quality education based on a gender equality approach 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 a lack of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities within schools; underlines that special attention should be given to disadvantaged groups in order to guarantee the right to education for all, including through support for the most vulnerable families;

Education, health and nutrition

12. Notes with concern that according to the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, two out of every five 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; emphasises, accordingly, the importance of providing basic water, sanitation and waste management facilities in schools; calls for the EU, to this effect, to step up its technical and financial support; underlines that 17.7 million children currently lack access to basic vaccinations, an increase of 3.1 million due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impacts, rolling back progress that had been achieved; calls for an integrated and gender equality-based approach between education and child immunisation policies, which also takes into account the fact that, in some contexts, schools are essential in the distribution strategy for basic vaccines; emphasises that school-related vaccination strategies need to be considered in order to ensure the continuity of schooling in low- and lower-middle-income developing countries;
13. Underlines that the right to education is closely linked to the rights to health and nutrition, given the fact that school nutrition programmes contribute to feeding millions of children;
14. 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;
15. 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; stresses that improvements in the resilience of water, health

and education systems have the potential to decrease climate risk for more than 400 million children;

16. Underlines the need for age-appropriate, evidence-based, comprehensive sexuality education programmes to reduce the vulnerability of girls and young women to early childbirth and unintended pregnancy, child marriage, prostitution, HIV transmission and gender-based violence;
17. Emphasises that in order to ensure quality education in the communities of the developing world, solutions need to involve parents, students and teachers, and address the needs of the local community first, and then society at large;

Shortcomings of financing for education

18. Points out, in this context, the need to scale up national and international financial resources to tackle the financing gap to meet SDG 4; recalls that governments should ensure that all students have access to free primary and secondary education; notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated education funding gaps, adding up to one third to the annual funding gap, which is now reaching USD 200 billion¹, and that loss of income and school dropouts became more frequent, which has significantly increased the risk of child marriage, radicalisation and irregular migration;
19. 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 systems, particularly in infrastructure and the training of teachers, and welcomes the commitment made by the Commission, in this regard, to increase funding for education from 7 % to at least 10 % of total development funding;

Teacher training

20. Notes that the ratio of pupils to trained professionals in the Sub-Saharan region remains high, despite the EU's various efforts and the assistance it provides; highlights the regional averages of 58 pupils per trained teacher at primary level, and 43 pupils per trained teacher at secondary level; points out that many developing countries struggle to make efficient use of resources and that 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; recalls that according to 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 SDG 4; 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 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 to the job market; stresses the need to strive for a more flexible approach to individual career development and lifelong education and training across personal career paths;

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

Vocational training, education and job creation

21. Stresses the importance of accompanying investment in training and education with support for job creation to provide a better future outlook for the next generation of young people in Africa and other developing regions; notes the particular importance of public-private partnership in achieving SDG 8 on access to decent work; stresses the importance of secondary education and vocational training, which are essential for youth employability and sustainable development; further notes that the increasing youth population of Africa requires first and foremost the support of quality education and the advancement of vocational skills training to increase mobility and access to markets and rights;

Digital skills

22. Recalls that the lack of access to an internet connection is, today more than ever, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a major obstacle to learning for children; 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 the use of information and communications technologies to be facilitated; 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 improve the quality of education in some of the most marginalised communities; stresses that digital literacy and skills development are key to addressing youth unemployment; underlines the need to ensure diverse distance learning solutions in poorly-resourced and isolated environments;

Education in fragile settings

23. Notes that forced displacement leads to rising numbers of people living in refugee settings; calls on the Commission to support skill transmission in refugee camps and strong education support for refugees and displaced people in order to support their integration and engagement in income generating activities; calls on the EU to work with partner countries to increase the resilience of their school systems against emergencies and crises; stresses the need to provide remedial education for children who are unable to follow distance education, particularly for children with disabilities, children living in poverty, refugee and migrant children, children who work, and children in rural areas, paying particular attention to girls within these groups;

EU actions and cooperation with the EU

24. Recalls that current levels of government spending in low- and lower-middle-income countries fall short of the levels required to achieve the SDGs; calls on the Commission to establish a roadmap to provide and step up its technical and financial assistance in the education sector to developing partner countries, together with Member States, in order to draw up proper national regulations and strategies, to establish effective data collection and management systems that allow proper policy implementation and to share best practices in this context;
25. Calls on the Commission to establish a link between possible investment de-risking activities and financial support for access to education and vocational training,

particularly to establishing proper infrastructure and training for teachers, under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe;

26. Calls for international educational exchanges between young people in Africa and the EU to be increased, through programmes such as Erasmus and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, aimed at helping new entrepreneurs to acquire the relevant skills for managing businesses;
27. Calls for 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;
28. Calls for the EU to support the governments of developing countries to ensure that any technology they recommend for online learning protects children’s privacy rights; stresses in particular that governments and schools should include data privacy clauses in any contracts they sign with technology or ‘EdTech’ providers;
29. 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; emphasises the need to engage with reliable local partners, particularly with civil society, NGOs 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 the return to schools; calls on the Commission to define clear and enforceable benchmarks and indicators to improve access to and the quality of education in developing countries.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.2.2022
Result of final vote	+: 25 -: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Barry Andrews, Eric Andrieu, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Hildegard Bentele, Dominique Bilde, Udo Bullmann, Catherine Chabaud, Antoni Comín i Oliveres, Ryszard Czarnecki, Gianna Gancia, Charles Goerens, Mónica Silvana González, Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, György Hölvényi, Rasa Juknevičienė, Beata Kempa, Karsten Lucke, Pierfrancesco Majorino, Erik Marquardt, Janina Ochojska, Christian Sagartz, Tomas Tobé, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Bernhard Zimniok
Substitutes present for the final vote	María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Caroline Roose

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

25	+
ECR	Ryszard Czarnecki, Beata Kempa
ID	Dominique Bilde, Gianna Gancia
NI	Antoni Comín i Oliveres
PPE	Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Hildegard Bentele, György Hölvényi, Rasa Juknevičienė, Janina Ochojska, Christian Sagartz, Tomas Tobé
Renew	Barry Andrews, Catherine Chabaud, Charles Goerens, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos
S&D	Eric Andrieu, Udo Bullmann, Mónica Silvana González, Karsten Lucke, Pierfrancesco Majorino
The Left	Miguel Urbán Crespo
Verts/ALE	Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Erik Marquardt, Caroline Roose

1	-
ID	Bernhard Zimniok

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

7.2.2022

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs

towards an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world: mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
(2021/2209(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion (*): Sabine Verheyen

(*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the commitments made at the 2021 UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development and the adoption of the Berlin Declaration; insists on ensuring quality education for all children as an enabler for all UN Sustainable Development Goals and underscores the importance of integrating sustainable development into all levels of education and training from early childhood to tertiary and adult education, including vocational education and training, non-formal education and informal learning;
2. Underlines that the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing temporary school closures must not hamper the fundamental right to quality and lifelong education; emphasises that all children must be provided with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need to act as citizens and realise their socioeconomic empowerment and personal development, regardless of who they are, where they live, their socioeconomic background, or any physical or mental disability they may have;
3. Urges the authorities of non-EU countries to make it a key objective to keep schools open during pandemics, while ensuring continuity of learning for all children, including through protective health and security measures, vaccination strategies and distance learning capacity; calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to increase its guidance and support to enable governments around the world to fulfil these objectives, giving priority to low- and lower-middle-income countries by ensuring that their educational institutions have access to basic health and sanitary infrastructure;
4. Is concerned by the lasting financial impact of the pandemic on funding for education, as the majority of UNESCO member states have not yet reached the threshold of 4–6 % of GDP or 15–20 % of public expenditure; encourages non-EU countries to invest in

education beyond their recovery plans across pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education; stresses that despite dedicated funding, low- and lower-middle-income countries have devoted less than 1 % to education in their COVID-19 stimulus packages¹ and 67 % of them rely on external support for COVID-19 related costs in the education sector²;

5. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the national governments of non-EU countries to develop strategies and guidelines for the education sector in order to respond to subsequent waves of the pandemic in a coordinated and organised manner with the aim of minimising the repercussions for the learning process;
6. Welcomes the UNESCO Paris Declaration: a Global Call for Investing in the Futures of Education; urges countries around the world to consider education as an investment rather than an expense; believes that adequate and effective financial assistance in education is a prerequisite to eliminate poverty and enhance well-being, especially at a time when public resources are increasingly constrained with competing demands in badly affected sectors such as health and education; urges the Commission and the Member States to substantially increase funding for education in their international development and assistance strategies; calls for the creation of a global partnership for education and the concomitant establishment of a set of international standards;
7. Stresses the importance of improving cost and impact analysis when selecting and monitoring education projects, of ensuring that projects last long enough to adequately address children's educational needs, of avoiding excessive administrative burdens for implementing partners, and of addressing long-term sustainability in cash-for-education projects; calls for more public-private partnerships for material infrastructure projects in education for children;
8. Calls for strict evaluation and controls on the allocation of EU funding to education projects in non-EU countries in order to ensure that assistance is effectively provided to structures and non-governmental organisations that accord with European values, ensure proper training for teachers, and provide children with educational material that does not incite hatred against others;
9. Calls on the Commission to develop methodologies and guidelines that enhance the ability of its aid projects to reach all learners, in particular those who may be unable to access education, such as girls, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, learners with special educational needs and others, by tackling barriers to good-quality, safe and inclusive education and training at all levels; stresses the importance of the whole community, including families, being involved in this process; asks the Commission to support the collection and effective monitoring of comparable data, disaggregated by gender and age, in order to better tailor responses to different subgroups of learners;
10. Points out that COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on children and young people with disabilities, who have required special care and attention during lockdown and are

¹ UNESCO, 'UNESCO Member States unite to increase investment in education', 10 November 2021.

² Bae, H., Costinot, M., Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Education and Skills Today, 'A long road to recovery: National education responses to COVID reveal key equity concerns', 13 July 2021.

now having to face the consequences;

11. Underlines the fact that as a result of the pandemic, learners all over the globe have paid a heavy price in terms of learning and knowledge losses, coupled with a severe impact in terms of methodology, which has affected their development of critical thinking skills; calls on the Commission and the EEAS, therefore, to support national authorities in strengthening education systems at both national and regional levels and investing in equality and skills for the future;
12. Calls on the Commission to take appropriate legislative measures in the field of international trade and cooperation to avoid exacerbating child labour, as every child has a fundamental right to enrol in quality education; encourages countries around the world to implement legal frameworks for public school enrolment and to set a minimum school-leaving age;
13. Highlights the need to further develop and strengthen programmes in low and lower-middle-income countries aimed at countering disinformation, mitigating parents' fears following the pandemic, and illustrating the advantages and potential benefits of schooling in order to boost school attendance and help children to progress through education as far as possible;
14. Urges that teachers be placed at the heart of education systems and that the teaching profession be promoted and given proper recognition; stresses the importance of improving working conditions and the need for educators and teachers to be adequately remunerated for their work; draws attention to the potential of online platforms such as eTwinning and teacher academies under Erasmus+ in order to further empower teachers – even beyond the EU – to help them communicate with their peers, exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities; calls for increased support for continuous training for teachers; recalls the importance of informing teachers about national preventive health measures; stresses the need to address the challenge of teacher replacements during a pandemic;
15. Emphasises the role of non-formal and informal education, citizenship education and volunteering; calls on the Commission to support non-EU countries in improving the recognition of soft skills; insists on the promotion of practices of intergenerational solidarity and mentoring to reduce inequalities, exclusion or early school leaving;
16. Calls for the acceleration of global knowledge exchanges and mobility at all levels of education and between and within countries and regions, while acknowledging the complex and contested history of global relationships and emphasising the importance of promoting heritage, cultural identity, history, art and global citizenship through education; notes the potential of combining online exchanges and travel to this end;
17. Calls on the Commission to urgently convene an international donor conference under the auspices of the EU and the UN in order to reinforce the Covax initiative and establish a common target to make an approved paediatric vaccine available to all children in view of the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the education of young people the world over; believes that this goal should be included in a global health pact and financed through the extraordinary issuance of special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund and donations from developed countries;

18. Draws attention to the need to harness the synergies between culture and education in order to shape sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies; calls on the Commission and the EEAS, in this regard, to support national authorities in including arts and culture in school curricula and extracurricular activities in order to enrich the educational and learning experiences of learners in non-EU countries;
19. Stresses the importance of vocational education, non-formal education, mentoring and training for all learners; believes that vocational education and training for learners in non-EU countries represents a fundamental additional choice that would help them to successfully manage their transition into the labour market and give them and their families a reason to finish school; calls for vocational education and training to be promoted as a pathway of excellence towards employment; reiterates the importance of the external dimension of the European Education Area and the corresponding field of vocational education and training; insists on the need for international mobility and the exchange of best practices in the sector, including the promotion of intercultural and learning experiences with non-EU countries beyond formal education; calls for effective steps to be taken to reduce the mismatch between education systems and the demands of the labour market;
20. Stresses the importance of developing and strengthening awareness-raising activities related to climate change and environmental protection and their impact on children and future generations; calls for environmental education to be made a core component of school curricula;
21. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to promote and support comprehensive sexuality education that is accessible, adapted and stigma-free for all children, adolescents and young people, in both formal and non-formal educational settings, including information on sexual and reproductive health services;
22. Emphasises the important role of physical education in schools, as physical activity and a healthy lifestyle are key to improving learners' health; calls on the Commission and the EEAS, therefore, to support national authorities in ensuring sufficient and safe sports facilities in schools and the training of qualified sports teachers;
23. Deplores the fact that discrimination against refugee children, who have had little or no access to education, has been compounded by the COVID-19 crisis; affirms that segregated classes in reception camps, which are often run by volunteers, cannot be a substitute for schooling; calls for the compulsory education of refugee children in the school system of the host country to be made a prerequisite for accessing EU funding in the field of migration; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to support refugee-hosting countries in strengthening their local education systems and assisting host communities to facilitate the inclusion of refugees in a sustainable manner; calls on the EEAS to promote coordination between education, social and health services; recalls that schools should provide safe refuge for children and serve as public spaces for the enjoyment of democratic rights and freedom of expression; reaffirms that education fees should not be an obstacle to quality education, not least because the pandemic has led to the impoverishment of children and their families;
24. Calls for technologies, digital tools and educational resources to be readily available,

affordable and accessible for teachers, students and apprentices worldwide and emphasises the need to further support and expand these technologies and tools; urges the Commission and the EEAS to support the authorities of non-EU countries in providing digital training to teachers and educators to help them acquire or improve their digital skills and develop the necessary awareness to be able to use digital learning materials; calls on the Commission to support non-EU countries through bilateral and multilateral initiatives to facilitate digital access to educational materials and develop solutions to enable cross-border use; recalls the importance of ensuring that no child is left behind by digitalisation and calls on the Commission and the EEAS to cooperate closely with non-EU countries and the private sector to provide broadband access and internet connections in classrooms; calls for education on ICT and digital technology to be included in curricula and for girls to be encouraged to take up subjects in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM); calls for digital learning to become an emergency service in school systems around the world; stresses that while it should not replace in-person education, hybrid learning can bring opportunities in line with the digital transition; encourages world leaders to consider connectivity and access to digital infrastructure, such as access to an affordable and good-quality network, as an associated right of the fundamental right to education;

25. Insists that the EU lead the way as an educational power that enables Member States to fully exercise their capacity to support education for children the world over and assert their convictions on this issue; underlines the key role of the future European Education Area in providing an important opportunity for more international cooperation to build synergies on education beyond Europe in order to develop common approaches and solutions to common challenges; urges the Commission to redouble its efforts to define a strategy to that end, including a clear outline and objectives;
26. Acknowledges that the COVID-19 crisis has made it all the more pressing to clamp down on violence against children; highlights the need to take all the appropriate measures to ban all forms of corporal punishment against children and to explicitly condemn and commit to ending harmful practices, including child labour, child trafficking, gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, and early and forced child marriage; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to promote good-quality education in situations of conflict or emergency in accordance with the minimum standards of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies; stresses the importance of ensuring that children's voices are heard in decisions that affect their access to good-quality, safe and inclusive education in line with the EU strategy on the rights of the child and the global dimension thereof; stresses the importance of the acquisition of skills, notably through face-to-face learning, that will enable children to progress throughout their lives, such as on personal relationships, study skills, empathy and cooperation; highlights the importance of children being able to engage in play and leisure activities as a key element of their development, as recognised in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; calls for steps to be taken to enhance the enjoyment of leisure and cultural activities for children, both as rights in and of themselves and as a means to improve their mental health and general well-being;
27. Commits to making education a key topic of discussions in parliamentary delegation work, notably through joint parliamentary assemblies such as the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	7.2.2022
Result of final vote	+: 24 -: 1 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Asim Ademov, Ilana Cicurel, Gianantonio Da Re, Laurence Farreng, Tomasz Frankowski, Alexis Georgoulis, Catherine Griset, Sylvie Guillaume, Hannes Heide, Irena Joveva, Petra Kammerevert, Niyazi Kizilyürek, Predrag Fred Matić, Dace Melbārde, Victor Negrescu, Peter Pollák, Marcos Ros Sempere, Monica Semedo, Andrey Slabakov, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Michaela Šojdrová, Sabine Verheyen, Salima Yenbou, Theodoros Zagorakis
Substitutes present for the final vote	Christian Ehler, Loucas Furlas, Elżbieta Kruk, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

24	+
ECR	Dace Melbārde
PPE	Asim Ademov, Christian Ehler, Loucas Furlas, Tomasz Frankowski, Peter Pollák, Michaela Šojdrová, Sabine Verheyen, Theodoros Zagorakis
Renew	Ilana Cicurel, Laurence Farreng, Irena Joveva, Monica Semedo
S&D	Sylvie Guillaume, Hannes Heide, Petra Kammerevert, Predrag Fred Matić, Victor Negrescu, Marcos Ros Sempere, Massimiliano Smeriglio
The Left	Alexis Georgoulis, Niyazi Kizilyürek
Verts/ALE	Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Salima Yenbou

1	-
ID	Catherine Griset

3	0
ECR	Elżbieta Kruk, Andrey Slabakov
ID	Gianantonio Da Re

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	15.3.2022
Result of final vote	+: 65 -: 2 0: 6
Members present for the final vote	Alviina Alametsä, Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, François Alfonsi, Maria Arena, Petras Auštrevičius, Traian Băsescu, Anna Bonfrisco, Reinhard Bütikofer, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Susanna Ceccardi, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Katalin Cseh, Tanja Fajon, Anna Fotyga, Michael Gahler, Giorgos Georgiou, Sunčana Glavak, Raphaël Glucksmann, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Márton Gyöngyösi, Sandra Kalniete, Peter Kofod, Andrius Kubilius, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Jean-Lin Lacapelle, David Lega, Miriam Lexmann, Nathalie Loiseau, Leopoldo López Gil, Antonio López-Istúriz White, Jaak Madison, Claudiu Manda, Lukas Mandl, Thierry Mariani, Pedro Marques, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Sven Mikser, Francisco José Millán Mon, Javier Nart, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Urmas Paet, Demetris Papadakis, Kostas Papadakis, Tonino Picula, Manu Pineda, Giuliano Pisapia, Thijs Reuten, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Andreas Schieder, Radosław Sikorski, Jordi Solé, Sergei Stanishev, Tineke Strik, Hermann Tertsch, Dragoș Tudorache, Hilde Vautmans, Harald Vilimsky, Idoia Villanueva Ruiz, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Thomas Waitz, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Charlie Weimers, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Bernhard Zimniok, Željana Zovko
Substitutes present for the final vote	Özlem Demirel, Peter van Dalen
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Alexandr Vondra

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

65	+
ECR	Anna Fotyga, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Alexandr Vondra, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Charlie Weimers
ID	Anna Bonfrisco, Susanna Ceccardi
NI	Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Márton Gyöngyösi
PPE	Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, Traian Băsescu, Peter van Dalen, Michael Gahler, Sunčana Glavak, Sandra Kalniete, Andrius Kubilius, David Lega, Miriam Lexmann, Leopoldo López Gil, Antonio López-Istúriz White, David McAllister, Lukas Mandl, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Radosław Sikorski, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Željana Zovko
Renew	Petras Auštrevičius, Katalin Cseh, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Nathalie Loiseau, Javier Nart, Urmas Paet, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Dragoș Tudorache, Hilde Vautmans
S&D	Maria Arena, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Tanja Fajon, Raphaël Glucksmann, Claudiu Manda, Pedro Marques, Sven Mikser, Demetris Papadakis, Tonino Picula, Giuliano Pisapia, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Andreas Schieder, Sergei Stanishev
The Left	Özlem Demirel, Giorgos Georgiou, Manu Pineda, Idoia Villanueva Ruiz
Verts/ALE	Alviina Alametsä, François Alfonsi, Reinhard Bütikofer, Jordi Solé, Tineke Strik, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Thomas Waitz

2	-
ID	Bernhard Zimniok
NI	Kostas Papadakis

6	0
ECR	Hermann Tertsch
ID	Peter Kofod, Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Jaak Madison, Thierry Mariani, Harald Vilimsky

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention