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Demanding the right to free and compulsory quality education for all!

Enhancing EU impact on education

Key Asks and Priorities

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The European Union is a large player in education and the EC and member states can play an important role in meeting the current challenges of inequality in access to quality education and life-long learning, poor quality of education and insufficient financing of education. The coming months will decide whether the EU takes the lead to ensure a strong, independent and ambitious education goal in the post-2015 era, or whether the education crisis will deepen and prevail. The choices and priorities made in the process of selection of a limited set of goals, could determine whether quality education and training becomes a reality for all, or whether a majority of citizens will continue to pay too high a price for poor quality services.

At a critical time in the countdown to the Millennium Development Goals, and as the international community shapes the post-2015 development agenda, it is clear that there are significant challenges to be addressed around the unfinished work of the MDGs. The goal on education of ensuring that every child will be able to complete basic education, regardless of their circumstances, and have basic literacy and numeracy skills will not be achieved by 2015. Moreover, large numbers of children in school are not learning. While an ambitious agenda and goal setting is needed in order to ensure provision of quality and relevant education, issues of equality and quality in education have yet to be dealt with adequately and appropriately while aid to basic education has dropped by 16% since 2009.

Against this backdrop and as part of a three-year EC fundedⁱ advocacy project to strengthen structured dialogue with the EU, Alliance2015 undertook a studyⁱⁱ to analyse recent trends and changes in the European Union's aid to education. The analysis focuses on the EC and provides brief profiles of six member states: Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Together these countries provide around eighty per cent of total aid to education from EU member states, making them important actors in education. The findings of the study were presented and discussed at an Alliance2015 Roundtable on Education in Copenhagen on March 31st, 2014. The event gathered around sixty policy experts, practitioners and partners from across the EU and from partner countries in Africa and Latin America. At the Roundtable the participants generated a rich list of ideas and possible solutions in relation to how the EU can contribute to building better education systems, ensure quality learning and enhance financing for education.

This policy brief presents key findings and recommendations from the education study and the education Roundtable with reference to the EC's position on a new transformative post-2015 agenda as outlined in the communication: 'A decent Life for all: from vision to collective action' (June 2014)ⁱⁱⁱ. Building on previous communications^{iv}, the European Council's conclusions on the Post-2015 Agenda of June 2013^v and the work of the Open Working Group (OWG) related to the Post-2015 agenda, this communication sets out possible priority areas and potential target topics for the post-2015 framework and proposes options to cluster priority areas. Alliance2015 believes that education must be a driving force in this framework.

Emerging issues

I. Targeting inclusion and inequalities

At the heart of the EU's vision is an intention that the post-2015 framework should be right-based and people-oriented. In its recent Communication of June 2014 the EC states that "Access to quality education and training for every child, youth and adult is a fundamental human right, a prerequisite for breaking cycles of inter-generational poverty, and instrumental in fostering active citizenship and enabling knowledge-based and innovative societies". Politically and strategically the EC is taking on a leading role in eliminating inequalities in education by using a right-based approach, by proposing a possible target topic for post-2015 under the education priority area on elimination of inequalities in education and by taking specific measures to reach the disadvantaged individuals and groups at risk of discrimination (EC, June2014). The latter is exactly what the Rapporteur on

the Right to Education, Kisore Singh, referred to in his presentation at the Copenhagen Roundtable when he called on Europe to play a leading role in *ensuring the fulfilment* of quality education for all.

A lot still needs to be done to close the gap between ambitious policies in relation to human rights and inequality and practice as experienced by the most marginalised of our world. An independent evaluation states that the EC has contributed ‘substantially’ to ensuring equitable access for boys and girls by supporting the enrolment of girls and recruiting female teachers (MDG3).^{vi} However, the EC focus on inclusion has so far mainly been a matter of gender inequality, leaving out a host of other inequalities and disadvantages.^{vii} Clearly, equity and inclusion are areas where the EU can scale up its impact. In order to do so a much more sophisticated elaboration of inequalities and social imbalances extending beyond gender is required, building on the EU’s own experiences but also on the many experiences of NGOs working with specific forms of inequality and inclusion. An EC-commissioned study on donor policies from 2011 argues that a specific priority for the EU should be, ‘Education for social inclusion’. This requires EC and member states to work together in stronger alignment, building on their collective longstanding tradition of working to address social inclusion within Europe.^{viii}

Recommendations to EU

1. Implement ambitious right-based policies to ensure the fulfilment of quality education for all
2. Broaden equal access and strengthen implementation of inclusive education and non-discrimination
3. Reflect inter-linkages with inequality, gender and human rights in an independent goal for education post-2015

II. Ensuring better quality and accountability

In the EU publication ‘More and Better Education’ (2010)^{ix} it is recognized that defining and measuring quality is difficult and that it requires: *“An enabling environment both in and out of school, including nutritional and health aspects, a relevant curriculum, school leadership, community involvement and accountability”* Moreover, a sufficient and well trained taskforce of teachers is key to providing quality education. Evidence from Sierra Leone, presented at the Copenhagen Roundtable, showed the challenges related to developing functional education systems with very limited resources and the need to improve teaching quality and teacher training. That quality education is a priority target for the EU is also reflected in its Communication of June 2014 listing potential target topics, including: *“Ensure access to and completion of a full cycle of quality basic education including lower secondary, equally to boys and girls”*

Quality is a priority for the EU, but this must be reflected and measured through clear equity and quality targets and

indicators. In practice policy impact is lacking and improvements are difficult to find. The evaluation of EU support to the education sector in partner countries highlights the efforts made to assist partner governments in tackling the lack of quality in education, but it concludes that funding is inadequate and that the EU response is still not strong enough.^x Only a few of the intended improvements in quality were achieved. Contributions from the roundtable discussions in Copenhagen emphasized the need to focus on basic education and learning outcomes around literacy and numeracy, to promote the use of mother tongue education, to use attendance as measure instead of enrolment; and to go beyond the basics to include higher level cognitive skills and to develop simple but clear ways of measuring the quality of learning outcomes.

One of the key challenges in demonstrating learning outcomes is the lack of data, targets and indicators. The EU has a strategic focus on learning achievements, but these are difficult to measure without sufficient and suitable data. There is also a need to pay more attention to developing indicators for quality education. The EU has contributed to single indicators in different contexts but none of them are in any way sufficient to ensure quality. Monitoring of EU-funded interventions, Structural Business Statistics (SBS) especially, is primarily done through joint reviews with development partners in the sector. Such reviews cover mostly financial issues and activities or processes rather than educational outcomes and impact^{xi} therefore not measuring equity and quality issues. Moreover, learning achievements have mainly been measured according to quantitative measures of examination pass rates, numbers of trained teachers and the school environment.

Quality is not well defined and there is lack of clarity on the linkages between the different areas of human and social development and the content of the curriculum. It is acknowledged that to ensure quality learning, the EU must prioritize ‘soft’ skills and go beyond measurable targets. According to the report from the EU High Level Conference on Education and Development in 2013, quality is not only important to ensure that pupils learn to read and write: it also means promoting non-violence, peace, tolerance, critical thinking and decision-making abilities. The EU mentions curriculum development as an important point but how this is linked to different areas of human and social development is not explained. These issues are of fundamental importance, especially in fragile states.^{xii}

The EU is commended for its structured involvement of civil society. This is important in bridging the EC, member states and partner countries, and is key to enhancing impact through innovative new ways of working, scaling up, and a bottom-up approach to ensuring proper governance. More strategic use of the thematic instruments would ensure that non-state actors and civil society/NGOs support the scale up of initiatives which can demonstrate impact, and develop

innovative practices to ensure equity, quality learning and good governance. To this end, procedures for NGOs to acquire thematic funding need to be simplified. Procurement processes are bureaucratic and limit access by smaller NGOs to funding, despite the intention to diversify and have strong involvement by and use of NGOs and civil-society actors.^{xiii}

In this context the current shortage of education expertise in the EC is alarming and a serious limitation to increasing impact. The EC needs technical expertise and proper capacity to influence global processes, carry out education sector support and engage in a qualified policy dialogue involving marginalised groups and ensuring quality learning.

Division of labour which builds on strengths can enhance impact, and positive examples can be up-scaled and used as role models. The EU as a whole has comparative advantages in ensuring equality for marginalised groups in access and participation, in involving civil society actors in provision and management of education. Innovative practices like the BACK-UP initiative and DfID's Girls Education Challenge are new ways to potentially scale up impact in areas hitherto unexploited.

Considerable coordination takes place, but it is often not systematic. Member States coordinate with each other and the EU delegations in concrete geographical settings and for specific tasks, but there is room for improvement in relation to coordination not least when bilateral donors withdraw their support to the education sector. Some division of labour is already in place, but more systematic use of the comparative advantages of each country would enhance overall impact.

Recommendations to EU

4. Back up ambitious policies with practice to enhance impact
5. Be a 'broker' on quality, specify equity, quality and learning with clear and appropriate definitions and targets, preferably through an education strategy
6. Support data collection and developing indicators for quality and equity issues and go beyond measurable targets
7. Continue to enhance civil society involvement for innovation, good governance and accountability
8. Simplify procedures for CSOs to access thematic funding
9. Strengthen education expertise in the EC, especially in partner country delegations
10. Compile the strengths of the EC and Member States, promote role models, and enhance and systematise coordination.

III. Ensuring financing for education

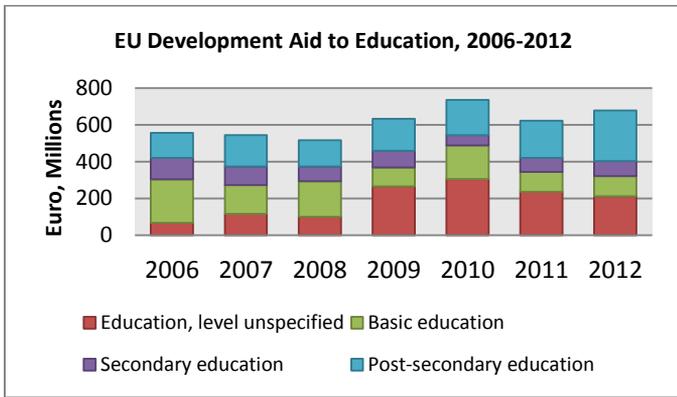
EC financing of education has increased, but more is needed. While OECD–DAC commitments indicate a doubling of aid to education in 2006–2012, EU external assistance annual reports show that EC aid to education grew modestly

from €559 million in 2006 to €678 million in 2012, with the lowest provision (€517 million) being granted in 2008 and the highest (€737 million) in the global 'peak year' of 2010, when the EC committed an extra €1 billion to achieving the MDGs^{xiv}, and EU institutions were the third largest contributor of aid to education. While aid in general rose from 2006, education's share of total aid only increased slightly from 5.8% to 6.2%.

EU direct support to basic education has declined, and secondary education is being neglected. From 2006 to 2013 EU direct support to basic education was more than halved, from €237 to €110 million. In 2012, total support to basic education (including estimated provision through GPE and others) was slightly below the 2006 level, despite a commitment to increase aid to meet MDG2^{xv}. Decline also characterizes secondary education support, which was already at an alarmingly low level (€116 million in 2006 to €81 million in 2012). At the same time, direct support to post-secondary education went up from €137 million in 2006 to €275 million in 2012.

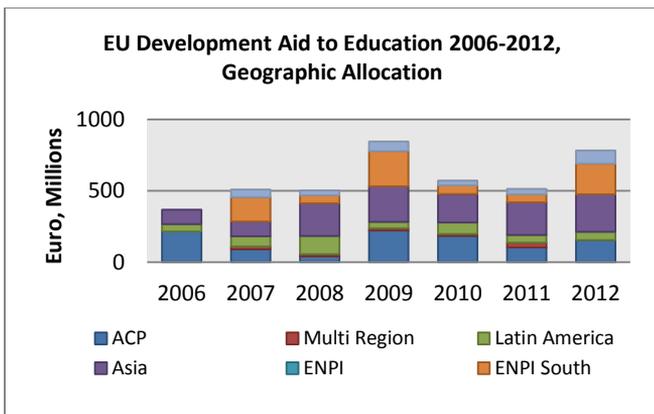
If the EU is serious about prioritising quality basic education and technical education and training for youth as target topics in education post-2015 (EC Communication, June 2014) it needs to put efforts and funding behind these. Current aid to basic education is inadequate. In 2007–2013 EU education assistance amounted to €4.2 billion, of which €2.9 billion went to primary, secondary and vocational education in 42 countries, and €1.3 billion to higher education.^{xvi} These figures reveals that there is inadequate support to those same areas – basic and secondary education – which are cited as central to the EU's post-2015 vision. The EU is supporting Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) programmes for young people in several countries, but there is a lack of exact data on how much is spent on this. The low contributions for secondary-level education will have to be reversed to meet the large education and training needs of young people. In the case of EC and member states' exchange programmes for students from European and neighbourhood countries there is a general tendency to record the costs of student exchange programmes as ODA inflating actual expenditure of education aid in developing countries^{xvii}

Allocation of EC aid favours own neighbourhood and middle-income countries. Data from the EU External Assistance Annual Reports 2006–2012, show that Asia receives by far the largest share of EC aid to education followed by European neighbouring countries and Africa and the Pacific. In fact, EC aid to education to Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific declined from 2006 to 2012, while aid to Asia more than doubled. This is especially because of large support provided to Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and India.^{xviii} These middle-income countries are home to a large part of the poor in the world despite recent economic development, and thus the EC argues that education is a high priority here.^{xix}



The European Court of Auditors has shown that only 2.8% out of total programming allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa in the 2007–2013 was provided to education. This is a decline from the period 2003–2007 when 4.5% went to education. A similar picture is revealed when looking at income levels.

In 2009–2010 only 14% of direct aid to education went to low-income countries, 39% to middle-income and 27% to upper middle-income countries, especially Turkey.^{xx} These numbers are alarming and have been criticized by several member states.^{xxi} However, the OECD–DAC peer review states that the EC’s main aim of poverty reduction and commitment to help those most in need has now been followed up with a move towards more blending of grants and loans with involvement of private investment in middle-income countries in order to be able to direct more funding to countries most in need.^{xxii}

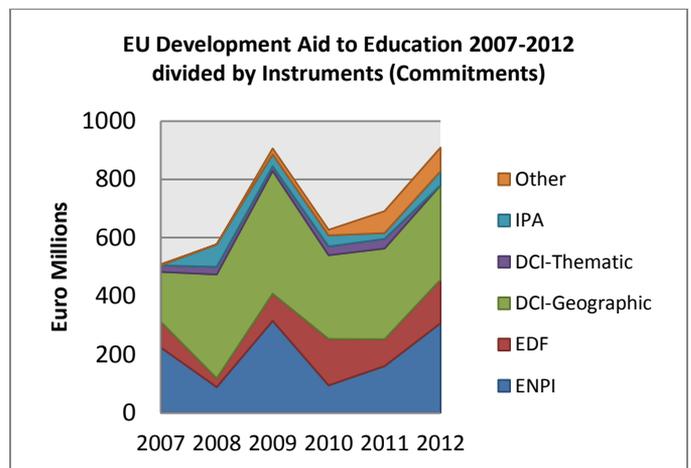


The European Development Fund (EDF) and the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) are the main EC instruments for ensuring education in the poorest countries. The EDF finances cooperation with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) and overseas territories of EU member states, and EDF has a strong poverty focus, with about 85% of its aid delivered to low-income countries.^{xxiii}

The DCI thematic instrument ‘Investing in People’ is directly aimed at education (alongside health, youth and children, and culture). A 2010 mid-term review concluded that ‘Investing in People’ can increase the overall impact of EU

assistance if it is more specifically directed at promoting policy dialogue, knowledge generation and innovation in education. Funding for Global Partnership on Education (GPE) is provided through ‘Investing in People’. Another DCI thematic instrument, ‘Non-State actors and Local Authorities in Development’, can be applied for by NGOs working to assist involving civil society in service provision and management.

Use of General Budget Support (GBS) and Sector Budget Support (SBS) is a clear priority of the EU strategy document ‘Agenda for Change’. From 2007 to 2010 the amount channeled through GBS almost doubled from \$873 to \$1621 million. While in line with international agreements, indicators are vague and impact difficult to measure. An evaluation of EU aid to basic and secondary education in 2000–2007 further concluded that SBS and GBS have led to increased coordination and policy dialogue, especially when provided together with technical assistance.^{xxiv} A joint evaluation of EC, Danish, Irish and Dutch aid to Tanzania concludes that, despite the challenges, neither project, nor basket funding, could have achieved the same results with the same degree of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability as GBS did.^{xxv}



The analysis of six member states’ aid to education reveals different trends in terms of the size and direction of this support, as well as in the political priorities and interests of the specific countries. Whereas member states such as Denmark, Germany and the UK are increasing their aid to education, the Netherlands, who has been a lead donor in education, will phase out all their bilateral programme support to the sector in the course of a few years due to a shift in strategic priorities. Member states such as Denmark, Ireland and the UK align with national priorities and have been among the frontrunners of budget support. The UK is the most influential member state donor financially and also has strong technical expertise. Both the EC and Member States play unique roles in supporting and enhancing GPE impact. France, for instance, is leading many local education groups in partner countries and Germany has launched the BACK-UP initiative to support the impact of partner country constituencies in the GPE board.

There is a lack of coordination when EU Member States reduce their support to education at country programme level. Decisions to decrease aid, withdraw from countries or redirect to other geographical areas and levels of education are not always coordinated with other EU donors, nor is there sufficient considerations given to ensuring the long-term sustainability of education support to countries and people most in need. The Netherlands and Denmark have withdrawn their bilateral assistance, which – if other forms of support are not provided - leaves a funding gap in the affected countries and is a serious blow to long-term sustainability in education support.

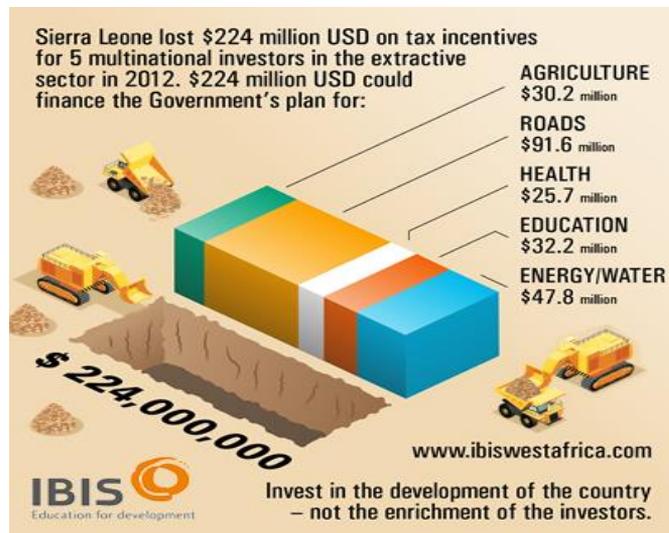
Recommendations to EU

11. Specify education's share of the 20% of the current development budget committed to social sectors
12. Stand out as a role model in financing when hosting the 2nd replenishment of the Global Partnership Fund in June 2014
13. Encourage GPE to provide data to the OECD-DAC which would enable greater monitoring and accountability in relation to commitments made
14. Re-direct aid for education towards low-income countries and marginalised groups
15. Use EC instruments more strategically to enhance impact on education and promote a balance between bilateral and multilateral support enhance

IV. Collective commitments to ensure sustainable financing of quality education for all

It is the responsibility of national government primarily to fulfil the right of its citizens to free public and compulsory education. Domestic financing is slightly increasing and remains the most important source.^{xxvi} At the Alliance2015 Education Roundtable findings and results presented from a study of taxation and education in Sierra Leone and Zambia drew attention to the scale of tax evasion (through commercial deals, fraud and corruption) in natural resource rich countries and demonstrated how the oil and mining industries hold a great potential for financing education and social development in Sub-Saharan Africa^{xxvii}

Collective commitments are needed to ensure alternative sources of financing. UNESCO suggests four other ways: blended financing, financing instruments linked to results,^{xxviii} solidarity funding (global charity foundations, diaspora communities etc.) and private-sector support. New donors are emerging (such as Brazil, Russia, India and China) who do not yet commit much to education. Convincing them, as well as the private sector and the public in countries whose taxes finance development aid, that long-term support to building education systems is one of the best investments in development they can pursue, remains a continuous challenge.



The EC and EU Member States need to enhance their collective efforts and contributions to identifying and developing new domestic and foreign sources of financing for education, using Europe's position in policy dialogue to explore, with governments, prospects for domestic financing, using its relations with the private sector to leverage funds, and encourage philanthropic funds and diaspora groupings within the EU to support education. It is important to ensure that alternative, especially private sector financing of education does not compromise policy priorities. The EU is uniquely placed to find new forms of financing for education. There are already several initiatives underway.

Knowledge and understanding in Europe about the importance of education and its transformative role in development is inadequate. In order to create public support and pressure on governments, private sector actors and other potential donors to finance or increase to education, it is necessary to increase and disseminate knowledge in Europe about the importance of education in development.

Recommendations to EU

16. Set targets, for encouraging and developing new sources of financing for education
17. Push for global regulation to strengthen transparency and end capital flight
18. Push for fair tax systems and capacity to enforce systems, e.g. through strengthening civil society to demand accountability, monitor agreements and track funds
19. Support government's ability to negotiate contracts with, and promote transparency of Multi-National Companies, and leverage and management of funds from taxation and other domestic and foreign sources to support education.
20. Increase knowledge dissemination in Europe about the importance of education in development to generate increased financing of education.

End Notes

ⁱ Alliance2015 is a partnership of eight European NGOs which was founded in 2000 with a shared commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Its members - Concern Worldwide (Ireland), Welthungerhilfe (Germany), Ibis (Denmark), Cesvi (Italy), Hivos (Netherlands), People In Need (Czech Republic) Acted (France) and Helvetas (Switzerland) - work together across 78 developing countries, sharing skills, resources and learning in order to be more effective on the ground. Over the last 10 years, Alliance2015 has also advocated for a stronger European commitment to the MDGs and to Aid Effectiveness.

ⁱⁱ "[Scaling up EU Impact on Education on Post-2015](#)" By Birgitte Lind Petersen (2014)

ⁱⁱⁱ EC Brussels, 2.6.2014

^{iv} A DECENT LIFE FOR ALL: Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future. EC Brussels, 27.2.2013 COM(2013) 92 final

^v The Overarching Post 2015 Agenda - Council conclusions, General Affairs' Council meeting, Luxembourg, 25 June 2013

^{vi} The European Court of Auditors report on EU aid to basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (2010). For example, a targeted programme in Pakistan was highly successful in increasing girls' enrolment in primary schools and in ensuring their access to secondary school. One way to ensure this was by training female teachers and promoting their leadership through quota in management roles. EC, 2010 'Thematic Evaluation of the European Commission's support to the education sector in partner countries' including basic and secondary education.

^{vii} EC 2011, Study on donor policies, practices and investment priorities to inform the preparation of an EU sector strategy for education in developing countries. Independent report by the HTSPE Limited and Euro Trends.

^{viii} 'Can the EU confront inequality in developing countries?' Briefing paper number 14, 2012.

^{ix} More and Better Education in Developing Countries ec.europa.eu/development/.../SEC2010_0121_EN.pdf.

^x 'Thematic Evaluation of the European Commission's support to the education sector in partner countries (including basic and secondary education.)' EC, 2010.

^{xi} European Court of Auditors (2010). Petersen 2013.

^{xii} 'Regaining a future: lessons learned from education of youth in fragile situations', Petersen DIIS report 2013: 16.

^{xiii} The mid-term review of the thematic instrument "Investing in People" states that annual calls for proposals have received large numbers of applications (2007-2009) and only few have got funding. EuropeAid, 2010: Investing in people; Mid-term review of strategy paper for thematic programme 2007-2013.

^{xiv} The EC asserted its commitment to pursuing the MDGs and to achieving the target for Member States' ODA of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015, EC Annual Report 2011.

^{xv} UNESCO GMR has calculated that an average of 50% of 'education, level unspecified' is allocated to basic education which means that around €270 million was provided in 2006, and €226 million in 2012.

^{xvi} EC (2013), "EU contribution to the Millennium Development Goals: Key results from European Commission Programmes". Development and Cooperation EuropeAid.

^{xvii} There is mounting criticism of inflated aid measures. GCE 2013; International Development Committee, 2012. The OECD-DAC is currently discussing a revision of the ODA to avoid inflation: "A new measure of total official support for development: issues and options". Background Paper for OECD-DAC meeting 3rd December, 2013.

^{xviii} EC 2011, study on donor policies, practices and investment priorities to inform the preparation of an EU sector strategy for education in developing countries. Independent report, by HTSPE Limited and Euro Trends.

^{xix} EC Annual Report on Development Assistance 2011

^{xx} In comparison, 45% of total EC bilateral aid went to least developed countries (OECD 2012). As a report from the International Development Committee of the House of Commons asserts, the numbers also reflect the problematic definition of the ODA that allows for very wide definitions of what qualifies as aid.

^{xxi} DfID's 2011 Multilateral Aid Review of European Commission, International Development Committee, the House of Commons (2013) EU development aid.

^{xxii} Peer Review of the European Union, OECD-DAC, 2012. This would also be a substantial step towards closing the financing gap as called for by UNESCO 2014.

^{xxiii} See also DfID's appreciation of this in the report by the International Development Committee, the House of Commons (2013) EU development Aid

^{xxiv} Thematic Evaluation of the European Commission's support to the education sector in partner countries (including basic and secondary education). EC, 2010.

^{xxv} 'Joint Evaluation of Budget Support to Tanzania. Lessons learned and recommendations from the future'. Final Report: volume 1. Danida/EC/Irish Aid/MFA of the Netherlands, 2013.

^{xxvi} Policy paper by EFA GMR (2013) prepared for Consultation on Education in the post-2015 agenda: North America and Western Europe Region, 5-6 December 2013.

^{xxvii} Financing EFA in Zambia and Sierra Leone. IBIS/ANCEFA, 2013.

^{xxviii} The World Bank's Programming-for-results is highlighted as relevant to education.

