



Press Release

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EU humanitarian aid for education should be longer-term and reach more girls

In recent years, EU aid for education in emergencies and protracted crises has worked quite well through relevant assistance projects. But a special report published today by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) also identifies several shortcomings. Overall, EU support reaches more boys, even though it is girls who are more likely to be out of school in conflict regions. The efficiency of EU aid would also benefit from longer-term projects, improved cost analysis and greater sustainability of cash-for-education programmes.

An estimated 64 million children in developing countries do not attend primary school. Half of them live in conflict-affected areas. Access to education offers them learning opportunities, and also provides immediate physical protection as well as life-saving knowledge and skills. The European Commission has recently increased aid for education to 10 % of its total humanitarian aid, equating to some €160 million in 2019.

The auditors found that EU aid helped to restore and maintain access to safe and good-quality education during humanitarian crises. Projects were relevant and well coordinated, and the European Commission addressed the problems it had identified during monitoring visits. As a result, projects were able to achieve most of their objectives.

“With relatively limited means, the EU has been able to help many out-of-school children in crisis-affected areas”, said Hannu Takkula, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report. “However, its support for education in emergencies needs to be fine-tuned in order to reach the level of efficiency and relevance this noble cause deserves.”

Most projects are too short-term (10-12 months long) to cover the multi-year educational needs of children in long-lasting crises. This meant that EU aid was less efficient and less able to deliver sustainable solutions. As regards efficiency, the auditors recommend that the Commission should improve cost analyses to achieve more with the same amount of money.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors’ special report. The full report is available at eca.europa.eu.

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Girls are more at risk than boys of dropping out of school because they are more likely to be engaged in household work, experience violence and marry early. However, the auditors point out in their report that the proportion of girls targeted and/or reached does not reflect the greater disadvantages they faced.

Lastly, EU cash-for-education projects do little to reduce beneficiaries' dependence on cash assistance. The auditors therefore recommend that the Commission should plan to make results sustainable once its humanitarian aid ends, for instance by fostering self-reliance and referring more beneficiary families to livelihood solutions.

Background information

Through the Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the EU provides humanitarian aid for those affected by disaster. It supports many types of education activities, such as building or rehabilitating classrooms, supplying learning materials and furniture, training teachers, providing accelerated education to help children return to school, raising parents' awareness of the importance of education, and providing cash for families so that children can attend school.

The audit published today covers projects in Jordan and Uganda, where EU commitments from 2017 to 2019 were €18 million and €16 million, respectively. Turkey, the largest recipient of EU funding for education in emergency situations (€84 million), was the subject of [another audit published in 2018](#).

Special report 02/2021: "EU humanitarian aid for education: helps children in need, but should be longer-term and reach more girls" is available on the ECA website (eca.europa.eu) in 23 EU languages.

The ECA presents its special reports to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, as well as to other interested parties such as national parliaments, industry stakeholders and representatives of civil society. The vast majority of the recommendations made in its reports are put into practice.

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