

ENACE Recommendations on International Cooperation: Education Financing for the European Parliament

The European and North American Campaign for Education (ENACE) presents the following recommendations¹ to the European Parliament as they engage in negotiations related to the 2028–2034 multiannual financial framework (MFF) and to strengthen the EU's leadership in advancing equitable, sustainable, and rights-based education financing.

ENACE is a regional network of civil society organisations and coalitions from countries in Europe and North America which are part of the [Global Campaign for Education \(GCE\)](#). It serves as the European and North American regional member to the GCE, an international civil society movement advocating for free, inclusive, and quality public education for all active in over 100 countries.

ENACE stands ready to support the European Parliament in advancing a bold and forward-looking education agenda within the 2028–2034 MFF and the forthcoming Global Europe Instrument. ENACE is committed to contributing evidence, expertise and partnership to strengthen the EU's leadership on global education.

Education Impact — Rationale

Education is one of the most powerful drivers of poverty reduction, improved health and well-being, gender equality, climate action, and peaceful and resilient societies. It opens pathways to [opportunity, self-reliance, and economic growth](#). It plays a [critical role in preventing child marriage, gender-based violence and unintended early pregnancies](#). Education is a powerful tool to tackle the climate crisis and fosters [global citizens](#) who can think critically, act with empathy, and uphold democratic and humanistic values. Additionally, education makes young people more likely to [participate in political processes non-violently](#) and research shows that countries with [higher school completion rates have fewer conflicts](#). It is no surprise that children, parents, and communities consistently [choose education](#) as their top priority, even during humanitarian crises and conflicts.

¹ENACE's recommendations are aligned with broader civil society and partner advocacy efforts, including recent proposals submitted by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and civil society organisations to Members of the European Parliament, reflecting a shared sector vision for strengthening education within the next EU budget framework.

Despite global progress achieved, this progress is eroding. The number of out-of-school children has risen for the seventh consecutive year, with [273 million children out of school](#). Among 234 million crisis-affected school-age children worldwide, approximately [85 million are out of school](#). In 2024, [242 million students experienced climate-related school disruptions](#) with heatwaves the predominant cause. At the same time, [44 million additional teachers](#) will be needed globally by 2030 to achieve SDG 4. And the cost of continued underinvestment for the world is immense: failure to ensure all children acquire basic skills results in global losses estimated at up to [\\$10 trillion annually](#).

Recent independent [evaluations](#) commissioned by DG INTPA further highlight education as one of the European Union's most strategic investments for achieving sustainable development, democratic governance, economic resilience and long-term stability and recommend maintaining education as a priority within the next MFF.

Investing in equitable and inclusive quality education systems is therefore not only a sustainable development imperative, but essential for economic resilience, stability and peace for the whole world.

Our Proposal

In this context, ENACE urges the *European Parliament* to champion a renewed agenda for education as a global public good, particularly at a time of intersecting global crises and growing pressure on public budgets.

As the World's largest development and humanitarian actor, the European Union (EU) has a vital role to play in ensuring that education remains at the heart of global efforts as a strategic investment in human development, economic growth, human resilience, peace and long-term global stability.

Within the current Global Gateway and Global Europe architecture, education risks being insufficiently prioritised in EU external action. While education is formally recognised as a pillar of the Global Gateway Strategy, the increasing focus of EU external action on infrastructure, economic investment, and security risks sidelining human development priorities, including education. However, as above evidence shows, these are not competing objectives. **On the contrary, investment in human development — particularly education — is a precondition for the long-term sustainability, effectiveness and local ownership of infrastructure, security and economic investment initiatives.** Without clear prioritisation and targeted investment in education, infrastructure projects and broader geopolitical investments risk delivering limited or unsustainable impact.

As discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) advance, alongside other key EU external policy processes, including the forthcoming Council Conclusions on

the Humanitarian Communication, **the EU should strengthen both the visibility of and targeted action towards education within its external action architecture through clear financing benchmarks, measurable implementation commitments and stronger integration across the Global Gateway and Global Europe Instrument (GEI).**

A stronger commitment to the full learning continuum – from early childhood education and foundational learning to secondary education, TVET, higher education, adult learning and education in emergencies – is essential to achieving the EU's broader development, employment and skills objectives.

1. Protect and Increase EU Public Financing for Education (EU External Action, Development & Humanitarian Funding)

ENACE emphasises that EU public financing for education in development cooperation and humanitarian action should be protected and strengthened.

- **Reaffirm education as a strategic priority** within EU external action, development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance, ensuring it is not deprioritised amid fiscal constraints or geopolitical shifts.
- **Commit to ambitious ODA levels**, progressing towards the EU collective target of **0.7% of GNI and reiterating the [commitment to allocating at least 20% of ODA to human development](#)**, while safeguarding predictable multi-year allocations for social sectors, including education.
- **Commit at least 10% of EU international cooperation and development financing to education**, in line with previous commitments made by both the [European Parliament](#) and the European Commission. ENACE notes with concern that this target was not retained in the Parliament's preliminary report on the Global Europe Instrument and calls for its reinstatement during negotiations. This financing should also be directed to support the full continuum of learning, from early childhood education to lifelong learning.
- Maintain strong **political and programming-level commitments to education in its external action**.
- **Ensure continued and predictable support to education in humanitarian settings**, including at minimum maintaining the ring-fencing 10% of humanitarian financing for education in emergencies, as previously [committed by the EU](#).
- **Commit to ringfencing adequate funding for education across INTPA and other financing instruments**, including those dedicated to basic education, in order to

ensure a coherent educational continuum that responds to all fundamental learning needs.

- In the context of the **ongoing replenishments of the two global education funds, the [Global Partnership for Education \(GPE\)](#) and [Education Cannot Wait \(ECW\)](#), for the European Commission to make meaningful pledges to both funds in 2026**, thereby reaffirming the EU's leadership and long-term commitment to both funds (see here for [GPE](#) and [ECW](#)). This is of particular importance as each fund serves a distinct but complementary, crucial purpose – one focused on emergencies and protracted crises, the other focused on long-term education system building and development goals. They are essential to ensuring that all children everywhere in all circumstances can access safe, quality education.
- In its commitments, **ensure to cover the full continuum of education support**, including foundational learning and education in emergencies, and ensure effective complementarity between bilateral and multilateral financing.
- **Invest in and strengthen Global Citizenship Education (GCE)** both within and outside the EU, securing investment within the 2028–2034 MFF.

2. Advance Equity and the Right to Free, Quality Public Education

- **Anchor EU financing in human rights frameworks**, including the Abidjan Principles, ensuring that EU funds strengthen **free, inclusive, quality public education systems**.
- **Prioritise marginalised learners**, using gender, disability, and vulnerability markers to direct resources to girls, children with disabilities, refugees, rural communities, and crisis-affected populations.
- **Avoid financing models that reinforce inequality**, including subsidies to commercial low-fee private schools or parallel systems that undermine public provision.
- As ODA budgets face increasing pressure, and **blended finance and public-private partnerships (PPPs) become more prominent**, ENACE calls for robust **ethical safeguards** governing private sector engagement in education. These should ensure:
 - alignment with national education plans
 - protection of the public good nature of education

- transparency and accountability
 - clear limits on commercialisation of core education services.
 - **Support the full learning continuum**, from early childhood and foundational learning to secondary education, TVET, higher education, research, and lifelong learning pathways linked to decent work.
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3. Expand Fiscal Space While Keeping Public Funding at the Core

- **Support fair and progressive domestic resource mobilisation**, including international tax cooperation and efforts to curb illicit financial flows, to help partner countries sustainably finance education.
 - **Promote debt relief and restructuring mechanisms** that explicitly protect or expand social spending—especially education—during fiscal crises.
 - **Use innovative finance cautiously**, ensuring blended finance, Private Public Partnerships, and results-based mechanisms:
 - Complement public funding rather than replace it
 - Align with national education plans
 - Meet strict equity, transparency, and accountability standards
 - In humanitarian contexts, such mechanisms should be avoided or used only under highly exceptional and tightly regulated conditions, given the need to preserve principled, predictable, and needs-based funding.
 - **Establish EU-wide ethical guidelines** for private sector engagement in education, preventing commercialisation of core services.
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4. Improve Effectiveness, Coordination, and Accountability of EU Education Financing

- **Align EU support with national priorities**, favouring budget support, pooled funds, and sector-wide approaches that strengthen public systems rather than fragmented projects.

- **Reduce donor fragmentation**, promoting joint programming, shared indicators, and harmonised reporting across EU institutions and Member States.
 - **Strengthen civil society participation**, ensuring predictable, accessible funding for local organisations, teacher unions, and youth groups. In line with the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) recommendations, consider establishing a target of at least **30% of funding allocated directly to national and local civil society organisations**, to reinforce locally-led action and ownership.
 - **Enhance transparency**, requiring public reporting on financing flows, beneficiaries, and results, including ex ante and ex post evaluations.
 - **Institutionalise youth and community participation** in EU-supported education planning and accountability processes.
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5. Prioritise Teachers and Education Quality

- **Invest in teachers as the backbone of education systems**, ensuring adequate financing for recruitment, training, and retention—especially in underserved and crisis-affected areas.
 - **Support continuous professional development**, including inclusive pedagogy, digital skills, and climate education.
 - **Finance safe, inclusive learning environments**, addressing school safety, gender-based violence, accessibility, and psychosocial support.
 - **Prioritise foundational learning and relevant skills**, including literacy, numeracy, digital competencies, and green skills.
 - Strengthen and scale up the **EU Regional Teachers Initiative as** a key instrument for addressing teacher shortages and improving quality across partner countries.
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6. Build Crisis-Resilient and Climate-Resilient Education Systems

- **Establish anticipatory and contingency financing mechanisms** to protect learning during conflicts, pandemics, and climate-related disasters.
- **Strengthen EU contributions to global education funds**, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), ensuring predictable, multi-year support.

- **Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure and green education**, integrating climate literacy into curricula and supporting sustainable school environments.
 - **Invest** in training and capacity programs for teachers and students on **risk reduction and resilience education**
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Conclusion

As the European Union defines its priorities for the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and its Global Europe Instrument, education must be recognised as a central pillar of external action, democratic resilience, and sustainable development.

In a rapidly changing global context, education remains one of the EU’s most powerful tools for promoting prosperity, peace, equality, opportunity, and long-term stability ([UNESCO](#)). ENACE therefore calls on the European Parliament to champion a bold, rights-based approach to education financing that reflects the EU’s values and global responsibilities by protecting and expanding public investment, strengthening public education systems, and ensuring resilience to crises and climate change.

These recommendations outline a clear pathway toward ensuring that every learner—regardless of gender, geography, or circumstance—can access free, quality education. ENACE stands ready to support the Parliament in advancing this agenda.