Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Resolution 2097 (2016)**[1]

# Access to school and education for all children

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Europe has seen significant progress in the last two decades as regards access to school and education. Such progress, however, is of varying degrees according to the different European regions and groups of population concerned. Barriers to access to school still exist in the Council of Europe member States, which in practice deprive children of the opportunity to take their place in society.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly calls for these barriers to be lifted. It also underscores that the goal is not only to give all children the opportunity to attend school, but also to ensure that they can access quality education that will contribute to the development of their personal capacities and help them reach their full potential.

3. Moreover, access to school and quality education is not only an issue of individual justice and of equal opportunities, it is also in the interest of our societies to make the best use of each person's talents and to avoid social costs linked to unemployment and dependency, which may be much higher than investment in education.

4. The Assembly therefore calls on member States to enhance their education systems in order to ensure access to quality education for all and regular class attendance until the end of the study programme. Member States should, in particular:

4.1. identify priority education zones, and devise measures for urban and rural environments;

4.2. identify groups at risk of exclusion and draw up action plans for vulnerable groups, providing measures to support education of children who are at risk of dropping out of school, and bring back to school those who left it before having finished the school programme;

4.3. promote networking, exchanges and mutual learning on inclusive education between schools, and the development of relations between schools and the wider community;

4.4. strengthen co-operation between public authorities and families and put in place the necessary measures to protect children and ensure that they get access to school and attend classes regularly if families fail to do so;

4.5. improve access to pre-primary education for all children, with a special focus on children from disadvantaged families, children of migrants and asylum seekers, and those attending schools in rural areas;

4.6. support programmes that help children from minority and migrant communities to acquire adequate knowledge of the language of schooling;

4.7. invest in programmes that support parental engagement in their children's early literacy activities with the potential to promote literacy in the early primary grades; these programmes should be tailored to the cultural, ethnic and socio-economic contexts;

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2016 (9th Sitting) (see Doc. 13934, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Gvozden Srećko Flego). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2016 (9th Sitting).

4.8. encourage parental involvement in school activities, particularly in schools with a higher proportion of students whose parents have low levels of education or a low level of proficiency in the language of their children's schooling (for example migrant families);

4.9. promote academic resilience and academic success (including success "against all odds" for children from disadvantaged families), for instance by setting up programmes fostering a positive school climate and motivation to learn for socially disadvantaged students;

4.10. promote the inclusion in high-profile schools of students from disadvantaged families and migrant backgrounds in order to provide an equal opportunity to achieve;

4.11. enhance, through targeted training, the ability of school heads to implement a policy of inclusiveness, to stimulate a democratic atmosphere in school and to further develop co-decision procedures on school matters;

4.12. step up, through targeted training of school heads and teachers, measures to prevent violence among pupils, in school and outside of it, offline and online, in order to minimise possible conflicts among and with new students;

4.13. include in curricula more teaching on human rights, democracy, social justice, multicultural society, tolerance, peaceful conflict resolution and mutual respect in order to advance, in the most efficient and smoothest manner, the inclusion and socialisation of new students;

4.14. enhance teachers' initial professional education and in-service training to enable them to implement the above-mentioned values and to foster a co-operative atmosphere in the classroom, by acting as role models;

4.15. support teachers' continuing professional development and, in particular, implement teacher education programmes to raise teachers' awareness of the role played by language in children's cognitive and social development and teachers' ability to manage linguistically diverse classrooms;

4.16. foster access to pedagogical professions for students from minority and migrant families;

4.17. ensure gender equality at all levels of the education system, with a special focus on women and girls from disadvantaged groups, such as Roma, migrants and refugees, and women and girls with disabilities;

4.18. ensure access by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children to quality education by promoting respect and inclusion of LGBTI persons and the dissemination of objective information about issues concerning sexual orientation and gender identity, and by introducing measures to address homophobic and transphobic bullying;

4.19. provide adequate financial support for programmes promoting social inclusion and access to education for all, bearing in mind not only the cost of investing in education, but also the long-term costs of not doing so.

5. The Assembly calls on member States to support action worldwide to promote access to school and education for all and, in particular, to implement the Incheon Declaration entitled "Education 2030: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all", adopted at the World Education Forum held from 19 to 22 May 2015 in Incheon (Republic of Korea), and its Framework for Action adopted at the UNESCO High-level meeting on 4 November 2015. Concerted efforts with UNESCO, UNICEF and the European Commission should assist governments and national parliaments to fulfil their duty to offer every child an appropriate education, prepare children for future challenges and give them the chance to live in dignity.

6. Finally, the Assembly notes that education expenses are an investment for a better future for individuals, their surroundings and humanity worldwide. It therefore calls on governments of member States to consider adhering to the international benchmarks of 4% to 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) and/or 15% to 20% of total public expenditure for domestic investment in education. Furthermore, Europe should also reiterate its commitment to the international target of providing 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA) at United Nations level.