

Education in the renewed EU-AU partnership

- A joint reaction from civil society -

The long-awaited Africa Union - European Union Summit, held in February 2022, resulted in the adoption of « [A Joint Vision for 2030](#) » and in the announcement of an [Africa-Europe Global Gateway Investment Package](#) of EUR 150 billion to support a common ambition for 2030 and African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, composed of an Investment, a Health and an Education Package.

We, civil society organisations and networks working in the field of education, welcome that education is one of the key pillars of the renewed strategic partnership. This represents an important achievement, in particular if we consider the limited place that education had in the European Commission's Communication "[Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa](#)", released in 2020. We appreciate the language on "inclusive, equitable and quality education for all", as well as the references to "basic education" and "education at all levels", key concepts that very much align with the positioning expressed in [our open letter on education in the AU-EU partnership](#).

Nevertheless, while the Summit's outcome documents highlight girls as a specific group it neglects to mention other marginalised groups who are at higher risk of exclusion from quality education, including children and youth with disabilities, refugees and people with migratory background, people from lower socio-economic background, and indigenous populations. **Identifying and responding to the educational needs of people who face the most significant barriers to education, with an intersectional lens, is a precondition to reduce inequalities and leave no one behind.**

The Education & Training component of the package is structured around four initiatives: 1. on vocational education and training; 2. the Regional Teachers Initiative; 3. joining forces with the Global Partnership for Education for quality basic education for all; and 4. Youth Mobility (in Africa and between Africa and Europe).

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is crucial to ensure better employment perspectives and foster inclusion. This is important as technical, vocational and informal education sectors are severely underdeveloped in many countries and there is wide mismatch between supply and demand for skills leading to the phenomenon of "unemployed graduates", as recognized by the AU. **At the same time, too many children and young people miss out on early childhood, primary and secondary education, thus not being able to access TVET opportunities.** Exclusion from educational opportunities needs to be tackled, starting as early as possible, in order to reduce inequalities and ensure a coherent chain of opportunities throughout life.

A specific initiative on teachers is timely and relevant: well-trained and motivated teachers are indeed central to quality education and improved learning outcomes. However, **it is not only a matter of enhancing teachers' competences and skills, but also to ensure that there is an adequate number of teachers across countries and geographical areas, and that they are offered decent conditions to work.** Teacher shortages, if not properly addressed, will continue to hamper progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where 4.1 million more teachers are needed to achieve universal primary and secondary education.

A number of aspects - in particular budget-related - remain unclear in the Africa-Europe Global Gateway Investment Package. The actual budget ambitions in relation to the Investment Package Education and Training are not openly disclosed in the outcome documents. **Because of the lack of openness and details at this stage, tracking where financing would come from has been difficult.**

Announcements appear to be a consolidation and repackaging of geographic programming in some circumstances. The Global Gateway itself, a broader and already existing European Union (EU)-driven initiative, has been adapted and re-shaped to fit the AU-EU partnership, with the risk of lacking ownership at the AU level.

The final declaration states that the joint vision will be implemented via Official Development Assistance, infrastructure trusts, and capital market instruments. **We are concerned about the use of financial tools, such as loans, guarantees for private investments and public-private partnerships, which can be very risky and inadequate** when they finance basic services like education in already fragile countries, leading to greater debt and to compromised sustainability and access.

Another matter of concern regards the lack of explicit references to the much needed **partnership with civil society, across the two continents, in order to translate strategic ambitions into concrete actions** that are people-centred, enhance human development, and reduce inequalities. The limited space provided to civil society in the process leading to the renewed strategy was highlighted in the “[CSO Forum Outcome Document](#)”, and we regret that this aspect has not been properly addressed in the Summit’s outcomes either.

We remain committed to strengthen collaboration, across sectors and actors, in order to jointly deliver on the education and training component of the renewed AU-EU partnership. We call on the African and European leaders to mobilise adequate resources to meet the commitments, considering the need to ensure an inclusive recovery from the pandemic and to truly leave no learner behind.

This reaction is endorsed by (in alphabetical order):

ACT Alliance EU	Humanity & Inclusion – Handicap International (HI)
Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA)	International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)
Caritas Europe	Light for the World
ChildFund Alliance	Liliane Fonds
Coalition Education	Plan International
European Disability Forum (EDF)	Save the Children
Finn Church Aid	World Vision EU Representation
Global Campaign for Education International	

