European Commission - Speech

Remarks at Panel VI "Education and Child Protection", Brussels III Conference: Supporting the future of Syria and the Region

Brussels, 13 March 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The last part of our dialogue today focuses on education and child protection. Inside Syria. And across the region.

Quality, inclusive and protective education is a top priority of our humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis.

Because education in itself is the **best response** to any crisis.

During emergencies, education empowers.

- **First,** it ensures continuity in the **learning process**. Until formal schooling becomes possible.
- **Second,** it acts as a **protective shield** for children. Against radicalisation. Early marriage. Forced recruitment. Exploitation and abuse. Forced labour.
- **Third,** it offers children a sense of **normality**. In classrooms and in schoolyards, children are again children.
- **Finally,** it has an enormous potential for **reconciliation** and peaceful coexistence. As children learn, play, and live together.

My dear friends, education in emergencies is a basic **humanitarian need**. Like food, water and shelter.

Unfortunately, in Syria, the road to education is not easy.

Inside the country, education is not an option for more than two (2) million children for years.

Security is among the main reasons for school dropouts. Education becomes impossible when children, teachers and classrooms become hubs of violence.

Another reason is **socio-economic**. Vulnerable parents are often obliged to make painful choices for their children. Like early marriages. And child labour.

Families in displacement also struggle with other barriers to education.

- Lack of clear legal status;
- Lack of necessary documents like residency certificates, vaccination and school records;
- And restrictive policies;

This is why education must be an absolute priority. This is why we have to do more for education.

First, funding. Ten percent (10%) of European humanitarian funding now goes to education in emergencies. Across the world. This is ten (10) times more than in 2015.

This allows us to better support crucial initiatives. No Lost Generation is one of these initiatives.

And to complement the outstanding efforts that countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan are making. To offer young Syrian refugees the education opportunities they deserve.

Second, focus. We pay special attention to:

- Displaced.
- Unaccompanied.
- Children in hard-to-reach areas.
- Children with disabilities.

- Girls and female adolescents.
- Children who have been out of school for long.

Third, connecting learning with protection.

Through programmes like the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Syrian refugee children. Hosted in **Turkey.**

Parents receive additional cash assistance. Used to cover schooling expenses. So that their children can go back to school.

The programme has helped more than **four hundred and ten (410) thousand** children return to school.

Finally, policy and advocacy. The European Union has in place its first ever-dedicated **policy framework** on education in emergencies and protracted crises.

One of our main policy priorities is to protect teachers, schools and learning facilities from attacks. And advocate for the endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration.

Linking up our **different funding instruments** is key. Since the beginning of the crisis, we have mobilised **two point two (2.2) billion euro** for education in Syria and the region.

Putting European solidarity into practice. Investing in education. Investing in peace. Investing in the future.

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