

CALL TO ACTION: A EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY

Rilli Lappalainen

Introduction

It is ten years since the Council of the European Union approved its resolution on Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR), and yet the European Union (EU), one of the biggest DEAR funders, still does not have a strategy for development education (DE). Considering the ongoing negotiations for the multiannual financial framework and the values which the EU has been built upon – dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizenship and justice – it would be reasonable for the Union to take stronger action committing to DEAR. The European Commission (EC), Council and the European Parliament should build on recent successful processes and set up without delay a European DEAR strategy, based on the DE Consensus, the EC DEAR Study and its follow-up discussions.

Back in 2005, the European Union agreed in the European Consensus on Development that the EU would pay particular attention to development education and raising awareness among EU citizens (Council of the European Union, 2005). Seven years later we can acknowledge that member states, the European Parliament and the Commission as well as civil society have indeed paid greater attention to DEAR. Concepts that are closely linked to DEAR, like global learning, active global citizenship and education for sustainable development, have gained importance both nationally and regionally. This can be seen in the increasing number of national as well as organisational strategies (CONCORD, 2009) and European initiatives (European Commission, 2010) that have been formulated in recent years.

The European Commission is funding DEAR through the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities (NSA-LA) in development framework as well as funding mechanisms beyond overseas development assistance (ODA) such as Youth in Action. However, unlike a growing number of its member states, the European Union still does not have an explicit strategy for development education and the opportunity to develop such a strategy has never been better than today. This article argues the case for a DE strategy and its potential benefits to development stakeholders.

Are there real commitments to development education?

The need for a DE strategy is already underlined in a growing number of existing commitments like the 2001 resolution on DE issued by the Council of the European Union which underlined that:

“[...] Given the global interdependence of our society, the raising of awareness by development education and by information contributes to strengthening the feeling of international solidarity, and also helps to create an environment which fosters the establishment of an intercultural society in Europe. Heightening awareness also contributes toward the changing of lifestyles in favor of a model of sustainable development for all” (2001: 2).

Taken into consideration the challenges of intercultural understanding, sustainable lifestyles and international solidarity, the Council called for increased support for development education in 2001 (Ibid.).

Just one year later in 2002, the participants attending the Maastricht Global Education Congress organised by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, agreed a European Strategy Framework for improving and increasing Global Education in Europe to the year 2015 as the final declaration of the conference (North-South Centre, 2002). This Congress was a good example of how to bring a range of actors in DE together in common cause and the outcome report is an important reference document that reflects the diversity of representatives from state- and non-state actors that committed to the strategy. However, this paper was not politically binding and lacked systematic implementation through action plans and monitoring mechanisms, leaving its application to each individual actor's will and capacity. Thus, the need for a coordinated 'strategy framework' was recognised by a broad range of actors, including member states, the European Parliament, the Commission and civil society representatives.

The next step to systematise DEAR efforts at a European level was the reaction to the commitment to pay particular attention to development education in the European Development Consensus. The European Development Education Multi Stakeholder Process was created at the 2006 Helsinki Development Education Conference and it led to the European Development Education Consensus, unveiled by (then) European Development Commissioner Louis Michel at in Lisbon in 2007. The consensus outlines principles, objectives and challenges for DEAR and contains recommendations for various actors (Multi Stakeholder Group, 2007). A broad range of state- and

non-state actors such as national development agencies and ministries, international organisations (Council of Europe, OECD) and civil society platforms participated in the rolling out of this document, which became a reference framework for the whole sector. The recent Portuguese and Czech national development education strategies refer to the European Development Education Consensus (IPAD, 2010: 16; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2011: 31). However, the ‘DE Consensus’ does not have any legally binding character so is no substitute for a properly endorsed DEAR strategy for the European Union.

In parallel to all of these developments, the interest of the European institutions in a DE strategy increased. The European Parliament stressed the importance of raising awareness of development issues and called for an overall communication and education strategy, underlining that development education for the European public has been a constant priority for the [development] committee and recommending the inclusion of global/development education within all fields of education (European Parliament, 2008: 1; 2009: 2; 2010: 7). The European Commission, after a general evaluation of DEAR actions funded over ten years, made development education an integral part of the structured dialogue on the involvement of civil society and local authorities in EC development cooperation (European Commission, 2008: 88). The ‘concluding paper’ recommended that:

“The EU Member States and the European Commission should strengthen their strategies for Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR), outlining concepts and objectives, and addressing questions of coherence, complementarity, coordination and the added value of different DEAR actors” (Structured Dialogue, 2011: 21).

The concluding paper of structured dialogue also specified that the EC should use results and recommendations from the DEAR study as the basis for developing its strategic policy statement (Ibid.). The DEAR Study was one of three supporting initiatives to the process, and produced a comprehensive overview and analysis of DEAR policy and practice in the 27 EU member states by the European Commission. Based on this research, 55 short- and long-term recommendations to the EC were formulated in order to improve its activities in the field of DEAR, including one to develop and endorse a strategic DEAR policy statement based on the core recommendations and intermediate objectives suggested in this report. The time was never better to actually do so.

Why a European DEAR strategy?

Many leading European Union institutions have stated the importance of DEAR and the need for it to be supported and strengthened. So why are we still lacking an EU strategy for DE? Conversely, you might ask why the European Union should go through the difficulty of formally adopting a 'strategic DEAR policy statement', when documents such as the DE Consensus and the DEAR study already provide detailed guidance on concepts, objectives and implementation of EC DEAR activities. There are five reasons outlined below why I believe a European strategy should be implemented. They are: conceptual clarity, legitimisation and recognition; long-term directions; creating synergies; and coherence between actors to improve the quality of evaluation and learning. These strong arguments for a formal strategy have come from a national level within EU member states.

1. Conceptual clarity

Development education concepts are in steady evolution. While, for example, public relations might have been considered part of DEAR some years ago (and unfortunately still are for certain actors), there is today a consensus that DE is not concerned with charity, organisational publicity or public relations exercises (Multi-stakeholder group, 2007: 7). On the other hand, concepts like global learning, active global citizenship, education for sustainable development and DEAR as a global endeavour have evolved. The EU should be able to state clearly its concept of DEAR.

2. Legitimation and recognition

Institutional recognition of DEAR as a policy field is crucial to ensure that DEAR policies are consistently delivered over the long term supported by the provision of organisational and financial resources.

3. Long-term direction

A strategy would allow the European Union to outline a long-term perspective for its DEAR activities, beyond the EC Annual Action Programmes of the Development Cooperation Instrument, which reduces DEAR to a minor activity within civil society ODA funding.

4. Creation of synergies and coherence between actors

While objective 2 of the EuropeAid NSA-LA programme is among the most important funding sources for DEAR, the scope of development education goes beyond ODA. For example, activities related to active global citizenship are already implemented through a range of EC programmes under Directorate General (DG) Education and Culture or DG Environment. A strategy would

have the potential to operationalise cooperation between different EC services, but also clarify roles and complementarity with other non-EC actors such as member states and civil society, and possibly reinforce the role of the European Development Education Multi Stakeholder Process.

5. Quality, evaluation and learning

A dedicated EU DEAR strategy, including evaluation procedures and an action plan, would allow for the systematic monitoring of the effectiveness and impact of actions and enhance organisational learning.

What should the EU DEAR strategy look like?

A good basis for an EU strategy would be the European DE Consensus, in particular its sections on the role, principles, objectives and target groups of DEAR. The Consensus has been widely agreed, and it has been used as a reference document by a broad range of state- and non-state actors which is proof of its value. Building on this, the recommendations of the DEAR study, and in particular its ‘core recommendations’, could form the more operational part of the strategy, particularly that concerning EuropeAid’s DEAR activities, but also beyond this particular budget line. It could outline the EU’s overall objective in development education, and clarify the following aspects in specific objectives, which are comprehensively treated in the DEAR study:

- Coherence and coordination, including synergies within the EC services and complementarity with member states, through a multi stakeholder mechanism (ideally based on the existing multi stakeholder process);
- Quality and learning, including monitoring, organisational learning and knowledge management;
- Global perspectives, including involvement of non-European actors and global initiatives in DEAR;
- Grants and administration, including general EC grant management, the introduction of mini grants, and structural support mechanisms;
- Management of DEAR within the EC, including staff roles and structures, role of grant assessors and information provision.

Clear indicators should be attributed to each specific objective. The strategy should cover a seven year period, accompanied by a three year action plan. After the first three years, a mid-term review of the strategy should take place and result in possible adjustments. The figure below outlines a possible structure for an EU DEAR strategy.

We need the strategy now more than ever

The Directorate General of Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO) could raise awareness of the importance of DEAR in other DGs. Drafting a EU DEAR strategy should be a relatively straightforward task, as the DE Consensus and the DEAR Study could provide an excellent basis for this work as they already outline most of the elements needed. Such an EU development education strategy, based on an EC proposition (e.g. in the form of a communication) and formally discussed and endorsed by the European Parliament and the European Council, would be a milestone towards clear, systematic and ambitious development education policies in the European Union.

The DEAR strategy would have political added value if endorsed by the EU. Adopting such a strategy in the EU would give a stronger position for DEAR in the member states and could be incorporated into national education plans. The actors already working in the DEAR sector could strengthen their capacity and would get more legitimacy for their work. By adopting the strategy the EU could better support global civil society, enhance coordination, provide fiscal support and strengthen capacity building and joint learning.

The good news is that things are already moving forward. Some MEPs took the initiative to table a ‘written declaration on Development Education and Active Global Citizenship’ in the European Parliament in early 2012 making a strong case for DEAR and calling for more ambitious and strategic DEAR policies (European Parliament, 2012). To be adopted, the declaration needed the signatures of at least 377 MEPs and ultimately secured the support of 398 (European Parliament, July 2012). With a majority of MEPs signing this text, it became automatically an official declaration of the European Parliament and will be forwarded to the Council, the Commission and all national parliaments in the EU. While the declaration does not have legal effects at the European level, it is crucial in the context of the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI) negotiations, when it comes to setting up future instruments for development education. At member state level on the other hand, especially in countries where many MEPs signed the declaration, it showcases the need for reinforced national development

education strategies. The increasing recognition of DEAR in the EU, which was augmented by the declaration, has also inspired the Library of the European Parliament to publish a library briefing on the matter (Library of the European Parliament, 2012).

The EC organised a follow-up meeting in May 2012 as a part of its ongoing structured dialogues with DEAR actors. The majority of participants concluded that the EC should take a more active role on DEAR and stressed the importance of those member states that currently do not offer financial support for civil society organisations (CSOs) to start delivering DEAR projects. Also the EC can support information sharing and build the capacities of project implementers. But a final decision from the EC side has yet to be taken. The European Commission should participate in the European DE multi-stakeholder group as many actors see this as an open and neutral environment to discuss DEAR. This gives many different stakeholders the possibility to be heard on a level playing field. The European DE multi-stakeholder group shares best practices, new innovative ideas and visions for the future.

With the future in mind, one should also not forget that the planning of a post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) development framework is under way and DEAR could open a new direction for the negotiations on the education goals. Consultations on this post-2015 framework provides DEAR actors with an opportunity to emphasise the importance of development education and awareness raising in generating public support for whatever initiative follows the MDGs.

References

Council of the European Union (2001) Council Resolution on development education and raising European public awareness of development cooperation.

Council of the European Union (2005) 'The European Consensus', http://www.fp7.org.tr/tubitak_content_files/268/dokumanlar/eu-consensus-development.pdf (accessed 24 July 2012).

European Commission (2008) 'General Evaluation of Actions to Raise Public Awareness of Development Issues in Europe / Development Education EC', http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/civil-society/documents/de-ar_evaluation2008.pdf (accessed 24 July 2012).

European Commission (2010) 'DEAR in Europe - Recommendations for future interventions by the European Commission',

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/aidco/images/d/d4/Final_Report_DEAR_Study.pdf (accessed 24 July 2012).

European NGO confederation for relief and development, CONCORD (2009), CONCORD Strategic Plan 2009-2015.

European Parliament (2008) Resolution on the Challenge of EU Development Cooperation Policy for the New Member States, (P6_TA(2008)0097).

European Parliament (2009) Resolution on the draft Commission decision establishing the 2009 Annual Action Programme for Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development, (P6_TA(2009)0358).

European Parliament (2010) Resolution on key competences for a changing world: implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, (P7_TA(2010)0164).

European Parliament (2012) Text of written declaration on 'Development Education and Active Global Citizenship', adopted on 5 July 2012, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7_TA\(2012\)0302&language=EN](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7_TA(2012)0302&language=EN) (accessed 24 July 2012).

European Parliament (2012) 'Written Declaration pursuant to Rule 123 of the Rules of Procedure on development education and active global citizenship', <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=//EP//NONSGML+WDECL+P7-DCL-2012-0007+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN> (accessed 24 July 2012).

IPAD - Instituto Portugues de Apoio ao Desencolcimento (2010) National Strategy for Development Education. <http://www.ipad.mne.gov.pt/SociedadeCivil/educacaodesenvolvimento/EstrategiaNacionalENED/Documents/ENED%20EN.pdf> (accessed 24 July 2012).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (2011) 'National Strategy for Global Development Education 2011-2015', http://www.mzv.cz/public/60/2b/90/612337_522538_National_Strategy_for_Global_Development_Education_2011_2015.pdf (accessed 24 July 2012).

Multi-stakeholder group (2007) 'The European Consensus on Development: The contribution of Development Education & Awareness Raising', http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/PUBLICATION_CONSENSUS_EN-067-00-00.pdf (accessed 24 July 2012).

North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (2002) 'Global Education in Europe to 2015 - Strategy, policies, and perspectives',

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/Resources/Publications/GE_Maastricht_Nov2002.pdf (accessed 24 July 2012).

Rilli Lappalainen is the Secretary General of Kehys, the Finnish NGDO platform to the EU, board member of CONCORD, and co-chair of the European Development Education Multi-Stakeholder Group.