
The new European Consensus on Development: a response by members of the EU Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR) Multi-Stakeholder Group

Introduction

The European Commission's Communication on the design of a European Consensus on Development¹ addresses the challenges and opportunities for development cooperation programmes in responding to the UN's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

As it is, the Consensus as proposed by the Commission fails to include reference to key concepts and approaches that highlight the relevance of the 2030 Agenda to EU citizens. The following is submitted in response to the proposals made by Commission. It is offered as an improvement to those proposals in respect of the need for European citizens' engagement with the universal SDGs.

The paper has been drawn up in a personal but collective capacity by members of the EU Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR) Multi-Stakeholder Group. Invited by the European Commission Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development, the EU DEAR Multi-Stakeholder Group includes representatives of a wide range of international, national and local organisations, agencies, institutions, networks and platforms involved in policy formulation for, implementation of, and research into DEAR in the EU.

The universality of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals have a universal, worldwide remit. Achievement of the Goals will require efforts from all countries, societies, peoples, and their institutions and organisations. Additionally, the SDGs are interlinked: each goal is not a stand-alone aspiration but is linked to achievement of other goals too.

The European Consensus on Development

The Consensus as proposed by the Commission appears well organised around themes and issues that are not only relevant to people and countries outside the EU, but also to EU citizens, organisations and institutions.

To support the intentions of the Consensus, engagement of knowledgeable and skilled citizens in the European Union is required as much as the engagement of knowledgeable and skilled citizens elsewhere and at global level. However, the need for the development of such knowledgeable and skilled citizenry in the EU, acting as agents for and in change, has not been adequately addressed in the EC's draft Consensus.

To address this shortcoming, and to recognise that EU global development cooperation attempts can only succeed if they are underpinned by critical understanding and active engagement by the EU publics and decision makers, we propose that in responding to the challenges and opportunities of the universal SDGs:

- * **The European Consensus on Development should include reference to the importance of promoting European societies consisting of critical thinkers, problem-solvers and active citizens who are applying values inherent to just societies, such as solidarity, equity and cultural understandings in pursuit of the SDGs.**
- * **The European Consensus on Development should include recognition and promotion of the universal and interlinked character of the SDGs and their relevance to EU citizens, giving explicit**

¹ See https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/proposal-new-european-consensus-development_en

attention to the need for EU and Member States' policies that support formal and non-formal education and community engagement to:

- raise European public awareness of the interdependent nature of local, national, European and global environmental, economic and social sustainable development issues;
- whilst also developing understandings and skills that enable Europeans to respond knowledgeably and critically to the issues of the SDGs;
- and also offering European citizens opportunities to develop and be involved in actions in response to the SDGs.

Background:

DEAR IN THE 2006 EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT

DEAR is a policy and practice that can be implemented by a variety of actors and at all levels (European, national and local). In the first European Consensus on Development (2006), European institutions recognised its strategic importance:

"55. In addition, the Community strives to promote understanding of interdependence and encourage North-South solidarity. To that end, the Commission will pay particular attention to raising awareness and educating EU citizens about development."

DEAR IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

DEAR is included in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, explicitly under SDG4 (Education), target 7:

"By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development"

THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION & AWARENESS RAISING (DEAR) PROGRAMME

The European Commission's DEAR programme is a programme contributing to the EU public's awareness and critical understanding of global issues of (sustainable) development and the eradication of poverty, and of the practical skills and opportunities needed to engage with these issues. Implemented by civil society organisations and local authorities, the programme supports work with education institutions, youth and community organisations, trade unions, media outlets, religious institutions and business organisations, to name but a few. It is the only development cooperation programme of the Commission that is focussed on activities within the EU relating to global sustainable policies and attempts to eradicate poverty.

During the past four decades, European Commission DEAR programme activities have informed national and EU development policies, education curricula and personal and societal behaviours in support of efforts to eradicate poverty and in support of social justice, human rights and sustainable development – both locally and globally. Where projects are most effective and where they are having a sustained impact on participants and on policies and behaviours, they relate to issues of change and development that are of personal, local or national interest to EU citizens – connecting these to broader, global concerns and perspectives.

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