

First-ever International Day of Education: Statement by Commissioners Christos Stylianides, Tibor Navracsics, Neven Mimica, and Marianne Thyssen

“Today marks the first International Day of Education. This is an important occasion to celebrate education’s fundamental role in giving people the skills, values and knowledge to build their futures. Education also drives economic growth, social cohesion and fosters our European values such as democracy, equality and the rule of law.

Universal education will also play a crucial role in resolving the challenges humanity faces. Only through education will we succeed in eradicating poverty, fighting climate change, and achieving a fairer society enabling people to develop their own projects.

Today, we should recall the fundamental principles. First and foremost education is a human right for everyone, wherever they live. Moreover, compulsory education should be free everywhere. Finally, education should benefit each individual and strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The reality often is different. 262 million children and youth do not go to school. 617 million children and adolescents cannot read and know maths. Less than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school while 4 million children and youth refugees are out of school. This is also why the world is far from achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education.

The EU is committed to investing in more and better education within the Union and worldwide.

In Europe, the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights recalls the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning for everyone. Moreover, the Commission is advancing work to build a European Education Area by 2025 to enable all young people to receive the best education and training, and to create a sense of belonging. In addition, the EU’s flagship Erasmus programme is more successful, inclusive and international than ever before. In 2017, Erasmus+ provided support for almost 800,000 people to study, train or volunteer abroad – a record.

The EU has now also become a world leader in supporting education in emergencies for children caught up in humanitarian crises. For these children, education is a shield against radicalisation and a chance to live a normal life despite difficult circumstances.

But we need to do more, especially for girls, migrants and displaced persons. Not to reach any benchmarks, but out of an obligation, as education is a public good and a public responsibility.”

Background

On 6 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 January as International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education for peace and development.

The European Union is funding education cooperation both in Europe and in partner countries to support education initiatives and to share good practice worldwide.

More information

[Erasmus+: a tool for international education cooperation](#)

[European Education Area by 2025](#)

[Erasmus+: Another record year in 2017](#)

[European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

[Education in Emergencies](#)

[Communication on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises](#)

[Education in international cooperation and development](#)