

DEVELOPMENT-EU: CONCERN ABOUT AID TO BASIC EDUCATION

by TVE Monitor

BRUSSELS (IPS) - The EU is failing to deliver on its commitments to support education in developing countries, says a new report launched by Alliance2015, a strategic partnership of European non-governmental development organizations.

The report titled 'The EU's contribution to the Millennium Development Goals -- Special focus: Education', highlights a number of major weaknesses in the EU's development policy with regard to supporting basic education, particularly in terms of funding and country programmes.

"Basic education is a key to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals," said Jaap Dijkstra, President of Alliance2015. "Despite strong political commitments and an improved policy framework, the EU is simply not translating its rhetorical support for basic education into real implementation on the ground."

Despite a benchmark in the EU budget for a 20 percent allocation to basic education and health since 2000, statistical evidence from the OECD/DAC shows that the proportion for EU aid allocated to basic education decreased from 6.38 percent in 2000 to just 1.53 percent in 2004. Also, support for basic education is largely absent from the EU's country programmes.

Alliance2015 has launched its report in the wake of last month's agreement on the EU's aid regulation. A major component of this new legally-binding piece of legislation will be a 20 percent benchmark for allocating EU aid to basic health, basic education and secondary education to be achieved by 2009.

"We are still not reaching the benchmark, but the work is going in the right direction, and hopefully we will be able to reach the 20 percent benchmark by 2009," said Lieve Franssen, Head of the Unit of Human Development, Social Cohesion and Employment at the Directorate General for Development in the Commission, at a press conference to launch the new report.

"The Commission needs to work closely with the Member States and members of the Fast Track Initiative (a global partnership between donor and developing countries to ensue accelerated process towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015) in order to be able to help providing free schooling and an increased number of teachers in EU partner countries," said Franssen. (END)