The Netherlands' education ODA

Formerly a major focus area, emphasis on education has decreased since 2012

Education is not a priority of the Dutch development funding portfolio: In 2016 (latest year for which full data is available), the Netherlands spent just 4% of its total ODA on education, ranking 24th among donors within the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in relative terms. On average, OECD DAC donors spent 8% of their ODA on education. In absolute terms, the Netherlands is the 11th-largest donor country to education; it spent at US$217 million in 2016. Funding has declined by more than two-thirds since its peak of US$699 million in 2007, driven by cuts in bilateral ODA to education. Bilateral education ODA decreased from US$640 million in 2007 to US$113 million in 2016.

Despite not being a development priority, education is viewed as a cross-cutting theme of the four traditional development priorities: 1) security and the rule of law, 2) water, 3) food security, and 4) sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR, including HIV/AIDS). Before cuts in the education ODA budget in 2012 to free up funding for SRHR, the Netherlands took international leadership on the issue, with a specific focus on basic education. The current 2019 budget sets education ODA funding at €64 million (US$72 million), which is divided by the international program post-secondary and vocational training education, as well as the latest contribution to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

The Netherlands spends most bilateral education ODA on post-secondary education

The Netherlands provided more than half (US$113 million) of its education ODA as bilateral funding in 2016. Bilateral education ODA decreased to US$90 million in 2017, accounting for 2.5% of total Dutch bilateral ODA. The largest share of this was directed towards post-secondary education (69% or US$62 million). The second-largest share of bilateral education ODA went to basic education (12% or US$11 million), with a focus on primary education. 10% (US$9 million) was allocated to vocational training.

However, to get a full picture of a donor’s cross border flows of education assistance, it is important to exclude scholarships and other costs of students from developing countries studying in donor countries. These costs are reported as ODA by some donors but are not spent on development programs abroad. In 2016 (the latest year for which full data is available), the Netherlands reported 12% of all its education ODA (US$26 million) as costs for students from developing countries studying in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands provides almost half of its education ODA as multilateral funding: 48%, or US$104 million in 2016, mostly made up of assessed contributions to the World Bank and the EU. Assessed contributions to IDA make up the largest share of the Netherlands' multilateral education ODA (27% of total education ODA), followed by the EU (14%).

The Netherlands has at times been a strong supporter of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). It contributed US$702 million since GPE’s inception in 2002 but ceased its contributions to the Fund between 2015 and 2018. However, the Netherlands announced a new pledge of US$114 million (2018-2020) during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018. In 2018, the Netherlands contributed US$57 million to the GPE.

The coalition agreement of the current government states that education for refugee children will be given a priority and that scholarships will be doubled using funds from the development cooperation budget, particularly for the new focus countries Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. According to the policy document: 'Investing in Global Prospects: For the World, For the Netherlands' (also referred to as the ‘BHOS policy’), the Netherlands will invest €60 million annually in new programs supporting general and vocational education, employment and income equality for young people and women in the West African Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle

Further information: 'basic' and 'general' education

In this profile, ‘basic education’ refers to the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) sector code ‘basic education’ (112), which includes primary education, basic skills for youths and adults, and early childhood education. ‘General education’ refers to the OECD CRS sector code ‘education, level unspecified’, which includes education policy and administrative management, education facilities and training, teacher training, and educational research.

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East and North Africa.

The MFA’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation drives global development policy; there is no specific department focusing on education

The responsibility for development cooperation lies with the Netherland’s Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (MFTDC), part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Further, within the MFA, the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) is responsible for designing and coordinating the implementation of development policy. As education is not a priority, there is no specific department within the ministry that focuses on education.
THE NETHERLANDS' BILATERAL ODA TO EDUCATION ACROSS SUB-SECTORS, 2017

Total: US$90 million

- General education: 0.2% (US$7.4m.)
- Secondary education: 0.0% (US$0m.)
- Vocational training: 9.8% (US$6.0m.)
- Basic education: 12.8% (US$11.5m.)
- Post-secondary education: 69.2% (US$60.1m.)

OECD CRS. In 2017 prices.

TOP 15 DAC DONORS TO EDUCATION, 2016

Total education ODA; US$ millions; in 2017 prices; incl. bilateral and multilateral funding

Germany: 2,934
United States: 1,800
United Kingdom: 1,571
France: 1,357
Japan: 436
Norway: 737
Korea: 278
Canada: 274
Australia: 273
Italy: 234
Netherlands: 217
Sweden: 165
Austria: 157
Switzerland: 164
Spain: 156

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the education sector (DAC Secretary estimates)
DAC DONORS TO EDUCATION, 2016

Education ODA as % of total ODA

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the education sector (DAC Secretariat estimates)