

Joint letter from the Foreign Ministers of Ireland, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden

H.E. Olivér Várhelyi
EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

8th April 2022

Dear Commissioner Várhelyi,

I am writing on behalf of Ireland, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

We wish to reiterate our concern at the continued delay in the disbursement of EU assistance to Palestine for 2021 due to Commission proposals to condition funding on education sector reform.

As you know, the Palestinian Authority is in a challenging situation and is experiencing a severe fiscal crisis, further compounded by the inflation of oil and wheat prices caused by the war in Ukraine. The EU objective, and the objective of the international community, must be to strengthen the Palestinian Authority. The continued delay in releasing EU assistance risks having the opposite effect. It is essential that we release funding as soon as possible.

It is clear that the Commission's current proposal, which seeks to introduce conditionality in the education sector, does not enjoy broad support. When put to a vote, eighteen Member States voted against it or abstained. All those Member States, and others, have since called on the Commission to resubmit its original proposal as a matter of urgency.

The introduction of conditionality at a time when the Palestinian Authority is already engaged in an ambitious programme of educational reform risks undermining, or even reversing, progress achieved to date and could damage our on-going dialogue with the Palestinians on this and other issues. In addition, it is imperative that we do all we can to empower moderate voices vis-à-vis more radical actors.

The clear way forward is to return to the original proposal circulated by the Commission on 15 December. We urge you to resubmit this proposal as a matter of urgency.

We are copying this letter to President von der Leyen, High Representative / Vice-President Borrell and our colleagues in the Foreign Affairs Council.

Yours sincerely,

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Minister for Foreign Affairs
IRELAND

Sophie Wilmès
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for
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BELGIUM

Ioannis Kasoulides,
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