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*Committee on Culture and Education*

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**2014/2235(INI)**

7.5.2015

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on creating a competitive EU labour market for the 21st century: matching skills and qualifications with demand and job opportunities, as a way to recover from the crisis  
(2014/2235(INI))

Rapporteur: Ilhan Kyuchyuk

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Highlights that labour market needs are changing rapidly, as are skills, technologies and jobs; believes that one of the reasons for the high unemployment rate in the EU is the existing skills mismatch: in 2014, several million jobs could not be filled because of a lack of adequately skilled workers; emphasises that a comprehensive long-term strategy, paired with immediate measures, is needed to adapt education systems at all levels, including vocational training, to the current and future needs of the labour market; encourages, in this regard, closer collaboration between business and educational institutions in order to involve employers in the development and assessment of study programmes in order to ensure that the skills demanded by the labour market are developed in an effective way;
2. Is of the opinion that merely investing in ways of matching skills to labour market demands – in order to creating job opportunities – is not a sufficient means of ensuring economic recovery from the crisis; stresses that the lack of jobs is commonly the result of a lack of growth in Europe, and that, at present, skills mismatches are not yet the main cause for the high unemployment rates; agrees, however, that the existing skills mismatch will be a growing problem as the economy gradually recovers, and that continued efforts to bring education, training and the labour market closer together should therefore be reinforced at all levels; reiterates that generating smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and job creation in Europe should be achieved through a holistic approach, with a clear economic and social vision boosted by a strong, smart and skilled workforce to complement the labour market needs;
3. Stresses the importance of EU initiatives aimed at making labour market and education systems more transparent, stimulating mobility and creating opportunities, such as the European Qualifications Framework, the Europass CV, the European Skills Passport, the European Job Mobility Portal (EURES), the Knowledge Alliances and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships; calls for better promotion of these initiatives in order to improve the labour market in Europe;
4. Emphasises that initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee Scheme, the Youth Employment Initiative and the EU Skills Panorama, aimed at tackling youth unemployment, should be continued and even supplemented, both in terms of their duration and of their funding allocations; stresses that the EU Skills Panorama provides a central access point for information on skill needs in occupations and sectors in Europe; underlines that the information, available on its website, can help policy makers and all actors involved to take more informed decisions, with the aim of achieving the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market and facilitating the transition from education to work;
5. Stresses that young people often face increasing difficulties in their transition from education to work and, therefore, are usually more vulnerable to unemployment, and are more likely to be in low-quality and precarious jobs;
6. Highlights the importance of the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and

Occupations (ESCO) initiative, which identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training, in 25 European languages;

7. Stresses the need to include elements of entrepreneurial training at all levels of education and training, since instilling entrepreneurial spirit among the young at an early stage is an effective way of combating unemployment and especially youth unemployment; urges, in this regard, active dialogue and cooperation between the academic and business communities aimed at developing educational programmes that equip young people with the requisite skills and competences;
8. Calls for a better understanding of present and future skill needs, and for the enhancement of the existing EU Skills Panorama, in order to better identify skill gaps and deficits in specific sectors, occupations and specific regions, and to ensure that the information about evolving skill needs is gathered, processed and disseminated among decision-makers and public authorities, education and training providers, and employers, so that future trends can be anticipated in a better way;
9. Reiterates the importance of vocational education and training (VET) for enhancing employability and clearing the pathway of professional qualifications for young people; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce the relevance of VET to labour market needs by making them an integral part of the education system, and to guarantee high qualification standards and quality assurance in this regard;
10. Urges the Member States to adopt quality apprenticeships and traineeships schemes allowing young people to work on innovative projects in the development of new products, technologies or markets, with clear links to the existing educational programmes, in order to enhance their prospects to build links with the labour market and gain useful work-related skills;
11. Highlights the important role that education and training institutions play in developing students' skills and competences; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop high-quality and targeted career guidance throughout the education cycle to help young people take the right decisions with regard to their education and career choices;
12. Highlights the importance of dual education and training programmes, combining theory with practical training, as a key element in developing skills and competencies that respond to labour market needs, and encourages the Member States to integrate such programmes into their curricula in order to provide the practical experience needed to facilitate a smooth transition from education and training to the labour market;
13. Stresses the need to strengthen, and better target, measures aimed at reducing the rate of early school leaving (ESL) to below 10 % by 2020, as agreed in the Europe 2020 strategy, taking into account that ESL is a persisting problem in the EU that has a detrimental impact on the employability and social integration of the young people concerned;
14. Recalls that investing in education and in developing skills that respond to the demands of the labour market and society is essential for growth and competitiveness, as well as for European awareness, personal development and self-confidence; points out that entrepreneurship requires the development of transversal skills such as creativity, critical

thinking, teamwork and a sense of initiative, which contribute to young people's personal and professional development and facilitate their earlier entry into the job market; stresses that such investment should be supported by stronger synergies between European and national initiatives, involving the various education and training sectors as well as other relevant sectors, such as employment, social policy, youth policy and culture, along with closer collaboration with all stakeholders concerned, such as social partners and businesses, with a view to keeping curricula in tune with labour market needs;

15. Reiterates the Member States' commitment to invest in higher education and calls, in the light of this, for a gradual improvement of education and training standards across the European education systems; calls on the Member States to recognise education as an essential investment, to commit to invest at least 2 % of their GDP the sector, and to safeguard it from spending cuts; calls on the Commission to strengthen further the role of education in the Europa 2020 strategy by associating the overall objectives of the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) strategic framework with the revision of Europe 2020;
16. Stresses that life-long investment in human capital and skills, and – in particular – in up-skilling the existing workforce and unskilled workers, is essential in order to combat long-term unemployment and provide wider access to high-quality jobs; calls on the EU to set clear goals on life-long learning methods for missing skills, and to expand training and education in communication, languages and digital skills for older workers and, in particular, for low-skilled workers over the age of 30 and for early school leavers;
17. Believes that education is crucial for driving research and innovation output, thus furthering the possibilities for job creation in highly skilled sectors and in turn boosting the competitiveness of the European economy;
18. Emphasises the importance of ensuring equal opportunities, and access to education and training, particularly for disadvantaged groups, and of providing effective support in the fight against social exclusion and in facilitating access to work;
19. Highlights the important role of non-formal and informal learning, volunteering and lifelong learning in developing skills and qualifications, particularly transversal skills such as entrepreneurial skills, ICT, and personal and language competences that are widely applicable; calls on the EU to improve access to adult learning and second-chance education; calls for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning by employers and education providers;
20. Underlines the importance of developing digital skills as part of lifelong learning, of integrating new media and new technologies in the curricula, and of developing digital and media literacy from the earliest stage at school and going through the whole education cycle; stresses the need to develop innovative ways of learning, and to extend the availability of online and distance learning through open educational resources (OER) that facilitate equal access to education and training for everyone; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support access to information and communication technologies in all education and vocational training institutions; maintains that teachers need to be given training geared to these skills and to effective ways of imparting them to young people;

21. Stresses the key role of teachers and educators for the future development of their students; supports various initiatives addressing the shortage of well-qualified teachers and trainers in the Member States, and recommends further efforts for attracting, recruiting and training teachers and educators, including modernising curricula and in-service training; calls on the Member States to refine the competences of teachers and trainers and to provide them with continuous professional development, support and conditions to maximise their teaching skills, in particular in the field of vocational education and training, transversal skills and adult learning;
22. Recalls that in an economic downturn individuals face bigger challenges in finding jobs, and that at times they have to accept jobs with lower educational requirements than those which they hold; stresses that growth through the creation of high-skill jobs and efforts to stimulate job creation through the facilitation of investment in new sectors are therefore relevant means of mitigating the prevalence of over-qualification within EU economies;
23. Emphasises the need to ensure flexible pathways between higher education, secondary education, tertiary education and vocational education and training, and between formal, non-formal and informal learning; stresses the importance of credit transfer and the recognition of academic and equivalent professional qualifications, and transnational study periods, in particular when earned through studies at non-home universities, such as in the context of the Erasmus+ programme; underlines that effective and independent quality assurance is a prerequisite for better recognition of qualifications;
24. Highlights the fact that the EU faces a shortage of skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), while it has an over-supply of social science graduates; is of the opinion that supplementary initiatives at European and national level are necessary to respond to the bottlenecks in STEM-related jobs and studies; recommends that the Commission and the Member States take measures to enhance the attractiveness and value of STEM subjects and to encourage young people, including women, to take up STEM studies;
25. Stresses the importance of addressing the needs of children at school from a very young age; recommends the Member States to adopt innovative measures and incorporate them in learning processes in- and outside of school, and to reform or update school environments, teaching methods and teacher competences; suggests that school curricula in Member States be adapted to include class visits to other countries during the school years, bringing education beyond the class room at a very early stage;
26. Points out that even in the 21st century there is still a place for traditional know-how that creates stable jobs that cannot be outsourced and underpins a number of fields in which Europe excels; calls for support that allows these traditional skills to be preserved and passed on to future generations through training, combining them, whenever possible, with new kinds of know-how, including digital skills, in order to maximise their potential;
27. Notes that the EU is built on the principle of free movement of persons, not least workers; points to the importance of making language learning, especially where European languages are concerned, an element of lifelong learning to be encouraged as a means of facilitating worker mobility and widening the range of job prospects;
28. Calls for a forward-looking and output-oriented European Skills Strategy to guide national

skills strategies, and to integrate them in the National Jobs Plans while providing a comprehensive framework for the sectoral action plans proposed in the Employment Package;

29. Points to the importance of revitalising the Bologna Process by taking the opportunity offered by the May 2015 Yerevan Ministerial Conference to embark on new and more advanced forms of cooperation, to be implemented without delay;
30. Believes that the Commission should ensure that the Erasmus+ programme – with all its different actions, including the sport component of the programme – is properly implemented; considers it important to simplify the access arrangements so that the programme can reach as many individuals and organisations as possible;
31. Considers that the synergies deriving from sport, one of the powerhouses of the European economy, should be used to enhance the employability of our young people.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	5.5.2015
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+ : 22 - : 4 0 : 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Isabella Adinolfi, Andrea Bocskor, Silvia Costa, Damian Drăghici, Angel Dzhambazki, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Fernando Maura Barandiarán, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Yana Toom, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Lybacka
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Therese Comodini Cachia, Marc Joulaud, Kashetu Kyenge, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Ernest Maragall, Emma McClarkin, Algirdas Saudargas, Hermann Winkler