



2016/2101(INI)

28.9.2016

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation
of 2016 priorities
(2016/2101(INI))

Rapporteur: Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Acknowledges that youth unemployment is a perpetual challenge for Europe; notes that the employment situation varies significantly across the EU; acknowledges the vulnerable situation of youth of Roma, other minority or immigrant origin and of young people with disabilities in the labour markets of most Member States; points therefore to the need for labour market reforms, reflecting the fact that education is a right for every citizen and is the most fundamental requirement for integration, social inclusion and the fight against poverty and exclusion;
2. Stresses, moreover, the urgent need for reform in the direction of twin-track education and training projects adapting the skills of young people to current and future labour market requirements, while making a determined effort to combat discrimination and inequalities in line with the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy; notes the recent adoption by the Commission of the new skills agenda for Europe; expresses, in this context, its further support for the Youth Employment Initiative as part of the Youth Guarantee scheme, as a tool to assist Member States in offering young people tailored support based on their needs; calls for continued commitment by the EU to the Erasmus project;
3. Emphasises the need to continue the efforts to reduce early school leaving and foster the education of disadvantaged young people, in line with the targets set by the Europe 2020 strategy; notes that the results of the Education and Training Monitor 2015 show that in spite of some advances towards the achievement of the Europe 2020 targets, there is a rising risk of increasing the inequalities gap by leaving out the most vulnerable, including young people having different socio-economic backgrounds and disadvantaged groups; draws attention to the need to increase participation levels in the labour markets among young women – particularly for women following maternity leave and for single mothers – and young migrants, the low-skilled, young people with disabilities, and all young people who are at risk of discrimination;
4. Highlights that labour market policies generally, and skills matching in respect of vocational education and training (VET) policies specifically, must aim to create and promote high-quality and secure jobs, in line with the ILO Decent Work agenda; notes that these policies must contribute to combating the phenomena of precarious employment, zero-hour contracts and unpaid internships;
5. Welcomes the Commission's initiatives to launch consultations over setting up a European pillar of social rights; considers it crucial for this initiative to be able to trigger a more flexible development of skills and competences, lifelong learning actions, and active support for quality employment;
6. Highlights that social entrepreneurship is a growing field that can boost the economy whilst simultaneously alleviating deprivation, social exclusion and other societal problems; considers, therefore, that entrepreneurship education should include a social dimension and should address such subjects as fair trade, social enterprises, and alternative business models such as cooperatives, with a view to striving towards a more

social, inclusive and sustainable economy;

7. Calls for measures to facilitate young people's transition from education to work by ensuring quality internships and apprenticeships, giving young people clearly defined rights that include access to social protection, written and binding contracts and fair remuneration, in order to ensure that they are not discriminated against when it comes to accessing the world of work;
8. Recalls that the level of education funding across Member States remains low in comparison to the pre-crisis situation, and calls for increased investment in infrastructures and for ensuring the quality and relevance of the education and training system through all available European funding instruments, in particular the Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF) and the EFSI; reiterates that sustainable investments in education and culture reinforce employability and contribute to sustainable growth and quality job creation in the EU; furthermore, calls on Member States to channel investment into an inclusive education which responds to societal challenges with regard to ensuring equal access and opportunities for all, including by broadening early childhood education and adult learning opportunities and facilitating the return to education and training for young people who have left initial education;
9. Underlines the need for structural reform and modernisation of school education and vocational education and training systems in the Member States, including a holistic policy approach to learning and teaching, fostering innovation, creativity and the use of digital technologies; also stresses the need to foster better interaction between the EU and the Member States and to facilitate the exchange of best practices among the Member States;
10. Highlights the need to strengthen synergies between culture and education and promote arts education as a crucial tool for the development of critical thinking and creative and transferable skills and competences, as well as civic values which enable learners to become active, responsible and open-minded members of society; takes the view that it is essential to boost public investment in order to preserve and enhance the quality of health and education systems and the quality of services provided for the public, as well as in order to create favourable conditions for economic development;
11. Underlines that the still-too-high unemployment rates show that the capacity to create jobs in most Member States is still limited; emphasises that further action is needed, in consultation with social partners and in accordance with national practices, to make labour markets more inclusive overall; expresses concern at the fact that most of the new jobs created are low-quality jobs, characterised by low wages and precarious conditions, and are therefore unable to significantly stimulate consumption and internal demand;
12. Recalls the key role that non-formal education and informal learning can play in developing and sustaining necessary skills for youth employability, such as entrepreneurship, leadership and capacity-building, especially amongst marginalised groups;
13. Emphasises the need to improve the EU's overall capacity to create and sustain quality jobs and thus tackle high levels of unemployment, while considering that migration could play an important role, including through education schemes complemented with efficient

public expenditure with a view to making high-quality social and environmentally sustainable investments in order to integrate workers into the labour market and reduce unemployment;

14. Highlights the need to consider the specific educational needs of minority and immigrant youth as well as of young people with disabilities, with due respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Union;
15. Calls on Member States to increase the attractiveness of sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programmes and studies, in order to address the existing shortage in this field as well as to intensify the development of digital skills and media literacy at all levels of education;
16. Underlines the fact that education and training reforms have proved successful where social partners have been involved within the European Semester consultations;
17. Welcomes the contribution of Erasmus+ to fostering mobility and cultural exchanges across the EU and with third countries; calls for better promotion and use of the European tools for transparency, mobility and recognition at European level of skills and qualifications acquired, in order to ensure greater guarantees and more certainty of professional and social integration for young people who are willing to take advantage of mobility to increase their opportunities for training and employment; reaffirms the need also to ensure mobility opportunities for vocational training, disadvantaged young people and people suffering from different forms of discrimination;
18. Stresses the importance of achieving validation of competences, skills and knowledge acquired through informal, non-formal and lifelong learning by 2018, as stated by the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012; notes in this regard that recognition is crucial in enhancing access to formal education and new professional opportunities, while also reinforcing self-esteem and motivation to learn; emphasises the fact that some Member States have made significant progress in developing the relevant legal framework, while others have difficulties in creating comprehensive validation strategies; highlights, therefore, the need to develop comprehensive strategies to enable validation;
19. Emphasises that the cultural and creative industries contribute significantly to youth employment, employing, on average, more young people than any other sector; recognises that more than 6 million people in the EU are working in the cultural sector; stresses that further promotion of and investment in the cultural and creative industries will be beneficial in creating new jobs and combating youth unemployment, and therefore calls for strengthening of the use of EU funding schemes, in particular Horizon 2020 and EFSI; underlines in this context that cutting-edge technologies, creative media and ICT are of particular interest to young people;
20. Reiterates that the Europe for Citizens programme is the only EU programme exclusively dedicated to promoting active European citizenship, strengthening social cohesion and creating economic opportunities by the creation of transnational partnerships, town twinning and networks of towns;
21. Highlights the key role of research and science for building sustainable economic development and international cooperation; recommends, therefore, continued investment

in academic and scientific research, in the framework of the Horizon 2020 agenda to reach the 3 % objective for R&D, as outlined by the Europe 2020 strategy.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	26.9.2016
Result of final vote	+ : 16 - : 4 0 : 2
Members present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Nikolaos Chountis, Silvia Costa, Mircea Diaconu, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Petra Kammerevert, Andrew Lewer, Stefano Maullu, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Lybacka
Substitutes present for the final vote	Ernest Maragall, Emma McClarkin, Martina Michels