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*Committee on Culture and Education*

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**2015/2088(INI)**

19.10.2015

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on skills policies for fighting youth unemployment  
(2015/2088(INI))

Rapporteur: Zdzisław Krasnodębski

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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. Stresses that ‘a new boost to jobs, growth and investment’ is an essential priority of the Commission and that in its Work Programme for 2015, the Commission committed to taking practical initiatives to promote integration and employability in the labour market, particularly measures to support Member States in getting young people into work; reiterates that Parliament has regularly proposed different solutions stressing that youth employment, education and training should be one of the highest political priorities for the EU;
2. Urges the Member States to implement urgent structural reforms of all levels of education, but in particular vocational education and training (VET), including apprenticeships and internships that include a strong work-based learning component, in order to help young people acquire the skills needed for their successful entry into the labour market and thus facilitate school-to-work transitions, to improve the employability and life skills of young people, and to contribute to the competitiveness of the EU economy; underlines, in this context, that exploitation of the potential of mutual learning and a successful exploration of best practices are only possible if the specific strengths of each respective national system are fully taken into account;
3. Highlights the fact that youth unemployment remains at a very alarming level in the EU and in certain Member States in particular; calls for the Member States and the EU to put an end to this situation by immediately putting in place social protection measures to counter the economic and social effects of unemployment;
4. Recalls that education and skills policies should be aimed not only at fulfilling labour market needs but also at equipping individuals with the necessary transversal competences to develop as active and responsible citizens; calls on the Commission and the Member States to respect the fact that education and training constitute a fundamental right and carry a strong value in themselves;
5. Recalls the need to promote curriculum objectives for formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning, targeting all students and including both theoretical modules and practical modules (such as student entrepreneurial projects, which could include social enterprise projects working with local communities);
6. Encourages Member States to adopt long-term policies through effective investment, increased cooperation and strategic partnerships in order to promote innovation, competitiveness and excellence in VET;
7. Points to Erasmus+ as a key instrument for ensuring the quality of VET across the EU and encourages international exchanges for the purposes of professional training;

8. Highlights the importance of reviving and promoting VET and increasing its attractiveness to young people so that it is not perceived as being inferior to other types of education; stresses the need to introduce or to further develop dual VET systems or elements of VET and work-based learning at all levels of education, in order to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, insight, core employability and job-specific skills and competences; stresses, moreover, the need to ensure quality control and guidance by public institutions over the general content, learning goals, implementation, assessment and certification procedure of VET, in addition to the recognition and equivalence of qualifications; underlines that the exchange of best practices related to dual education systems could contribute to structural changes in the labour market and lead to higher levels of youth employment; stresses the advantages of work-based learning, which is of great help to young people at the beginning of their careers as they seek to enter the job market;
9. Emphasises the importance of developing ‘soft skills’, which make it easier to successfully negotiate the job market and develop a professional career, and which are an essential complement to professional knowledge and experience;
10. Recalls that there are currently two million vacancies in the EU and emphasises the importance of addressing skills shortages and mismatches by promoting and facilitating mobility for learners, as well as cross-border recognition of qualifications, through a better use of all EU tools and programmes, such as Erasmus+, the European Qualifications Framework, the European Skills Passport, the Youth Guarantee, the Europass CV, the Entrepreneurial Skills Pass, EURES, Knowledge Alliances, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the European Credit Transfer System, the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET); highlights the importance of ESCO, which identifies and categorises the skills, competences and qualifications relevant for the EU labour market and education and training, in 25 European languages; underlines in this context the importance of the adequate transferability of social rights within the Union and reiterates the importance of Erasmus+, the European Social Fund and EURES in this respect; calls on the Member States to promote training courses in particular sectors in which there are particular gaps between supply and demand;
11. Welcomes the transformation of the existing EU Skills Panorama website, which provides a more comprehensive and user-friendly central access point for information and intelligence on skills needs in occupations and sectors in the EU, and which helps policymakers, experts, employment agencies, careers advisers and individuals to take better and more informed decisions;
12. Highlights the importance of teaching and learning general basic skills such as ICT, maths, critical thinking, foreign languages, mobility etc., which will enable young people to easily adapt to the changing social and economic environment;
13. Emphasises the importance of building students’ capacity to learn and the need to provide them with effective learning strategies; stresses that learning to learn will facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and aptitudes which enable individuals to set,

plan and reach their own learning goals and become autonomous learners able to cope with the intensive labour market changes;

14. Highlights that developing networking skills is of great importance for all young people, but particularly for those with limited work experience and those coming from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups; stresses that teaching networking can be a strategy for facilitating employment, career development and exploration;
15. Notes the constant evolution of the labour market and stresses the importance of meeting labour market demands with appropriate qualifications and skills, by revising and developing existing curricula and by addressing technological, social, cultural and environmental changes in close cooperation with employers, professional organisations, business communities, policymakers, local authorities, education and employment services, youth organisations and all relevant stakeholders; points out, furthermore, that it is necessary in this context to provide and develop quality lifelong career guidance, also involving families, in order to help future students and young people to make the correct choices regarding their field of study and make better choices regarding their education and professional careers, taking into account their work preferences and the needs of the labour market; recalls, however, that education and skills policies should not only aim to meet labour market needs, but should also contribute to the personal development and growth of young people in order to make them proactive and responsible citizens; stresses, therefore, the need for civic education, both formal and non-formal, throughout the whole educational system;
16. Highlights the importance of internships and apprenticeships as part of secondary and higher education curricula for the acquisition of work experience and transversal skills; stresses the importance of mentoring programmes that link students with professionals or young workers and give students access to networks and a clear understanding of the work process; encourages businesses, therefore, to establish lasting links and partnerships with educational establishments in order to facilitate entry into the employment world for their students and ensure that the skills taught are constantly matched to the real needs of the working world; points out, however, that while for students, traineeships are a learning opportunity, businesses shall perform their role of mentoring and training, taking into account the Commission's recommendations on high-quality traineeship provision as a means of improving young people's chances of finding work;
17. Calls on the Member States to act, as soon as possible, on education- and labour market-related country-specific recommendations in the European Semester and other Commission recommendations;
18. Emphasises the role higher education institutions play in developing the knowledge and competence graduates require in order to be successful on the job market;
19. Underlines the importance of a holistic approach to skills; stresses the need to provide multiple pathways within the education system and flexible educational approaches that can be customised and adjusted to individuals' needs; calls for work-based learning programmes to be developed across all types of education and training, as well as practical curricula, flexible schedules, and less formal instruction methods;

20. Emphasises the need for broad-based education and training that provide basic and portable high-level skills, entrepreneurial skills, and problem solving, information and communications technology (ICT) and language skills, which enable individuals to constantly acquire and apply new knowledge and facilitate their adaptation to the changes in the world of work;
21. Stresses the need to include elements of entrepreneurial learning at all levels of education and training, since instilling entrepreneurial spirit among the young at an early stage and developing transversal skills linked to entrepreneurship, such as creativity, critical thinking, empathy, teamwork and a sense of initiative, contribute to young people's personal and professional development and facilitate their transition into the job market; urges, in this respect, active dialogue and cooperation between universities and businesses aimed at developing educational programmes which equip young people with the requisite skills and competences, and which facilitate and encourage participation by entrepreneurs in the educational process; considers, however, that entrepreneurship education should include a social dimension and address subjects such as fair trade, social enterprises, and alternative business models such as cooperatives, in order to strive towards a more social, inclusive and sustainable economy;
22. Encourages the Member States to urgently incorporate new technologies in the learning process, and to intensify and improve ICT and digital skills training at all levels and in all types of education and training, including for teaching staff, in order to provide more digitally aligned degrees and curricula and to motivate young people to study ICT and pursue related careers; stresses the need to build a better technological base in schools and universities and to provide the necessary infrastructure; underlines, furthermore, in this regard, the importance of open educational resources (OERs), which ensure access to education for all and enhance employability by supporting the lifelong learning process; recalls the need to encourage girls and young women to pursue ICT studies;
23. Encourages the optimal use of existing EU funding such as the Erasmus+ programme in stimulating the development of transversal skills and competences among young people in order to tackle youth unemployment in the EU more effectively;
24. Stresses that literacy in ICT should become an integral part of the educational process, being integrated into the curriculum at all levels of studies; emphasises that equipping young people with ICT skills benefits both their work life and their private life by providing them with the technical skills, confidence and flexibility they need to adapt over the course of their lifetime;
25. Calls on the Member States to encourage girls and young women to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and to increase the representation of women in STEM areas;
26. Notes that the lack of language skills is a major obstacle to young people's competitiveness on the EU labour market, and stresses that the Member States need to equip young people from a very early age with various communication and language skills in order to address the problems caused by current skills mismatch;

27. Highlights the fundamental importance of non-formal education and of lifelong learning offerings for the learning of key skills, in tandem with or subsequent to schooling, so as to prevent or offset exclusion and thus provide people with more opportunities for personal development and, on the basis of their talents, to develop within society and within the world of work;
28. Highlights the essential role of competent and supportive teachers and trainers in reducing early school leaving, especially in underdeveloped areas, and in improving the employability of young people; stresses that teachers need to be better supported by schools, training institutions, local communities and educational policies, e.g. through more efficient and up-to-date training in new skills, such as entrepreneurial and ICT skills, promotion of peer learning and exchange of best practices, and easier access to training opportunities and improved systems of continuous VET; stresses, in this regard, the importance of investing in lifelong learning development for teachers; strongly opposes any cutbacks in education budgets, especially when combined with the reduction of scholarships and grants and the increase in educational fees;
29. Encourages the integration of new teaching and training methods, developed by teachers in response to the specific needs of the class;
30. Calls for a forward-looking and output-oriented European Skills Strategy to guide national skills strategies and integrate them into the National Employment Plans while providing a comprehensive framework for the sectoral action plans proposed in the Employment Package;
31. Notes that the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative have an important role to play in developing education and training for young unskilled and low-skilled unemployed people, but stresses that there is a need for better financing and a proper and speedy implementation of these schemes, followed by appropriate monitoring of the situation in each Member State;
32. Stresses the need to strive for an individual approach to career development and lifelong education and training, and believes that guidance and counselling which address individual needs and focus on the evaluation and expansion of individual skills must be a core element of education and skills policies from an early stage on;
33. Believes that non-formal education, particularly as developed in youth organisations, fosters creativity, a sense of initiative and self-responsibility, and can increase young people's chances on the labour market and positively contribute to the success of VET; calls, henceforth, on the Member States to implement the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>1</sup> as a means to recognise competences acquired through non-formal education, particularly in the volunteer and youth sector, and support the implementation of lifelong learning policies;
34. Recalls that the creative industries are amongst the most entrepreneurial and fast-growing sectors, and that creative education develops transferable skills such as creative thinking,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

problem-solving, teamwork and resourcefulness; acknowledges that the arts and media sectors are of particular appeal to young people;

35. Highlights that labour market policies generally, and skills matching in respect of 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;
36. Notes the important role of civil society organisations, trade unions and social dialogue in the formulation of VET policies;
37. Calls on the Member States to channel investments into inclusive education that responds to societal challenges, with a view to ensuring equal access and opportunities for all, including young people from different socio-economic backgrounds, as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
38. Calls on the Member States to increase the attractiveness of STEM programmes and studies in order to address the existing shortage in this field; stresses, however, that humanities and general humanistic knowledge are indispensable in making effective use of the opportunities presented by STEM disciplines and thus should receive effective support within their institutions and play an explicit role in curricular development; calls on the Member States to encourage a cross-sectoral approach between different areas within educational institutions, such as joint programmes involving arts, science, ICT, engineering, business and other relevant fields;
39. Recalls the wealth of jobs connected to traditional skills, often ones that cannot be relocated elsewhere, which, moreover, help stimulate local economies and are of cultural interest; encourages the Member States to ensure, therefore, that crafts and professions with traditional and cultural elements are preserved and effectively passed down to younger generations through the implementation of specialised programmes;
40. Highlights the role and importance of non-formal and informal learning in youth employability; underlines the importance of involvement in youth organisations, volunteering and grassroots sport in equipping young people with entrepreneurial spirit and a set of cognitive and non-cognitive competences and transversal skills, and calls on the Member States to facilitate the involvement of young people in these extracurricular activities complementing formal education;
41. Underlines that playing sports provides participants with opportunities to develop a wide range of transversal skills which enhance their employability as well as help them to succeed as leaders and to achieve their goals; further stresses the link between sports, employability, education and training.



## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	15.10.2015
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:           22 -:           5 0:           2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Nikolaos Chountis, Silvia Costa, Mircea Diaconu, Damian Drăghici, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Rikke Karlsson, Andrew Lewer, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Stefano Maullu, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Łybacka
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Mary Honeyball, Marc Joulaud, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Ernest Maragall, António Marinho e Pinto, Algirdas Saudargas
<b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b>	John Stuart Agnew