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REPORT

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

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2010 on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status¹,
- having regard to the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2013 on a Youth Guarantee²,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 April 2014 entitled ‘How can the European Union contribute to creating a hospitable environment for enterprises, businesses and start-ups to create jobs?’³,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 October 2014 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2014 priorities⁴,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences on lifelong learning⁵,
- having regard to the Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, and having regard to Parliament’s written question of 2 July 2015 on the Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of April 2015 on enhancing cross-sectoral policy co-operation to effectively address socio-economic challenges facing young people⁶,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
- having regard to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ ‘List of issues in relation to the initial report of the European Union’⁷,
- having regard to the Cedefop briefing note of June 2013 entitled ‘Roads to recovery: three skill and labour market scenarios for 2025’,

¹ OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 29.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0016.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0394.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0038.

⁵ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁶ OJ C 88, 27.3.2014, p. 1.

⁷ CRPD/C/EU/Q/1

- having regard to the Cedefop briefing note of March 2014 entitled ‘Skill mismatch: more than meets the eye’,
 - having regard to the Cedefop study of November 2014 entitled ‘The validation challenge: how close is Europe to recognising all learning?’,
 - having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Sixth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: investment for jobs and growth’ (COM(2014)0473),
 - having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘European Disability Strategy (2010-2020) – A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe’ (COM(2010)0636),
 - having regard to the Commission report of April 2015 entitled ‘Piloting Youth Guarantee partnerships on the ground – A summary report of key achievements and lessons from the European Parliament Preparatory Action on the Youth Guarantee’,
 - having regard to the Eurofound report of 2015 entitled ‘Youth entrepreneurship in Europe: values, attitudes, policies’,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006, and in particular Chapter IV thereof on the ‘Youth Employment Initiative’¹,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0366/2015),
- A. whereas at present 4.5 million young people aged between 15 and 24 are unemployed in the European Union and whereas more than 7 million young Europeans aged between 15 and 24 are neither employed nor in education or training;
- B. whereas the rate of unemployment across the Union was 9.9% at the end of 2014, and whereas the unemployment rate for young people was more than double this figure, at 21.4%;
- C. whereas young people have been especially hit by the crisis;
- D. whereas a lack of relevant skills for available jobs and an education and training mismatch are important factors causing youth unemployment; whereas, despite being more educated and skilled than previous generations, young people continue to face significant structural hurdles in obtaining quality employment which respects EU and national standards; whereas without efficient and sustainable quality job creation in Europe, the youth employment crisis cannot be solved;

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 470.

- E. whereas delays in access to the labour market and long periods of unemployment adversely affect career prospects, pay, health and social mobility;
- F. whereas young people are an asset to the European economy and whereas they should commit themselves to acquiring the skills sought by the labour market, anticipating tomorrow's needs;
- G. whereas young people fall into three main groups – students, workers and the unemployed – and whereas distinct political approaches should be adopted for each of these groups in order to ensure that members of the group are integrated into the labour market, which means that young students must have the skills needed by the labour market, young workers must update their skills and training throughout their careers and, in the case of jobless young people, the distinction must take into account the fact that they may be active jobseekers or not in education, employment, or training (NEETs);
- H. whereas every effort must be made to ensure that education systems adequately prepare students for professional realisation and to guarantee close cooperation between representatives of the education sector, social services where appropriate, employers and students;
- I. whereas the planning of training and education improves significantly when student and youth organisations are included in decision-making processes and it better meets the demands of society, the labour market and skills needs;
- J. whereas persons who are disadvantaged, discriminated against and vulnerable are often excluded from the possibility to develop their talents, abilities and skills when the social dimension is not taken into consideration in education, employment and social policies; whereas sufficient financial resources should be allocated to the education sector;
- K. whereas the implementation of effective education, training and skills policies with the support of employers, employment agencies and other relevant stakeholders can help reduce youth unemployment;
- L. whereas appropriate training for recruiters, human resource managers, employment services, employers and the education sector is necessary;
- M. whereas the financial crisis of 2008 created additional problems in the access of young people to the jobs market, as youth unemployment is more sensitive to the economic cycle than overall unemployment because young people are generally less experienced;
- N. whereas micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are one of the most important generators of employment in the EU, accounting for considerably more than 80 % of all jobs and have led the way in many 'green' sectors, but may face particular difficulties in anticipating the skills needed and in fulfilling the potential for jobs;
- O. whereas youth entrepreneurship can contribute to reducing youth unemployment and through education and training it can boost the employability of young people;
- P. whereas internships and apprenticeship schemes vary in success across the Union,

according to their characteristics;

- Q. whereas the Youth Guarantee, when effectively implemented, constitutes a comprehensive approach to helping young people to successfully transition to the labour market or high-quality education, as demonstrated by the achievements of the European Parliament Preparatory Action on the Youth Guarantee;
- R. whereas, in order for the Youth Guarantee to achieve effective results, it is vital to assess the real employment needs of young people and the real sectors offering future work opportunities, such as the social economy and the green economy, backed up by constant and careful monitoring not only of the projects concerned but also of the agencies that provide them, drawing up regular reports on the progress of this measure to combat youth unemployment;
- S. whereas the Youth Employment Initiative is an essential tool for delivering targeted support to young people who are NEETs;

Co-operation, participation, partnerships

1. Notes that individual skills development and dissemination of knowledge and skills are one of the key elements of integrated employment and social policies and that it can make it possible to generate long-term growth, promote European competitiveness, combat unemployment and build a more inclusive European society if skills development policies acknowledge the multi-layered needs and abilities of unemployed youth; recalls that skills development will remain without effect if job creation and appropriate social security protection are not addressed in parallel;
2. 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;
3. Recalls that engaging young people, relevant stakeholders, organisations and social partners in promoting the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of relevant initiatives aimed at supporting youth employment at EU, national and local level is of the highest importance;
4. Points out that there are, on one hand, 24 million unemployed people in Europe, including 7.5 million young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and on the other 2 million unfilled vacancies in the EU; notes that there are many over-qualified youth unemployed whose skills do not match the demand of the labour market; stresses, therefore, the need to build up strong partnerships between local authorities, education and employment services – both mainstream and specialised – and social partners and the business community to support the creation, implementation and monitoring of short- and medium-term sustainable, inclusive and quality employment strategies and action plans; calls for closer and structural co-operation and interaction between schooling and vocational education, public administration, business,

civil society, especially student and youth organisations, with a view to better matching skills to labour market needs, including though second-chance options, in order to maximise the quality of education and training; highlights that this better cooperation is also crucial for an effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee;

5. Welcomes the tools for skills development and the forecasting of skill needs proposed by the Commission; highlights the fact that skills development should encourage the development of STEM skills, which are widely useful in an economy; stresses, however, that more ambitious action and investment is needed; believes that in order to anticipate future skills needs, all labour market stakeholders must be strongly involved at all levels;
6. Calls on the Member States, regional governments and local authorities to adopt and implement, together with the social partners and training providers, skills development and anticipation strategies with the objective of improving generic, sectoral and occupation-specific skills; stresses, furthermore, the importance of partnerships and trust between educational institutions, businesses, the social partners and authorities;
7. Emphasises the role higher education institutions play in developing the knowledge and competence graduates require in order to be successful on the job market;
8. 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;
9. Encourages the integration of new teaching and training methods, developed by teachers in response to the specific needs of the class;
10. Stresses that providers of education and training and businesses should work together to devise qualifications which faithfully reflect the actual skills that holders of those qualifications have acquired throughout their lives;
11. Stresses the importance of bringing young, innovative employers into the ongoing dialogue between educational institutions and employers in an effort to better tailor education and specialist training to job market requirements; welcomes and stresses the importance of mentoring programmes designed to prepare young people for future jobs;
12. Stresses the importance of administrative capacity and functioning employment agencies; calls for the strengthening of the partnership principle between public authorities and civil society as well as for the provision of relevant training for local and regional authorities and other relevant stakeholders in order to ensure the more effective and strategic use of European funds; calls furthermore on governments to be more ambitious and to make efforts in anticipating the needs of young people, businesses and

civil society as well as of academic and vocational training establishments, in implementing employment programmes more quickly and in monitoring progress achieved;

13. Stresses the importance of close cross-sectoral cooperation, particularly between employment and education services;
14. Recalls that policies should focus on helping NEETs, including those who have become disengaged, to further their education or integrate into the labour markets;
15. Notes that European funds, when used in a more efficient and strategic manner, can be an extraordinary tool for the growth and development of universities and businesses; calls for greater financial resources to be used to spread information on European financing instruments and to broaden, in universities and businesses, the knowledge and skills that are necessary for seeking funds, studying and managing funding projects;
16. Stresses that in order to guarantee that EU funds are used properly, it is paramount that a supervisory and monitoring system be implemented in order to ascertain how those funds are being used;
17. Calls for an EU award for the best projects in combating youth unemployment, which could be linked to the pan-European contest 'European Youth Award' and to the European Prize 'For youth employment in the Social Economy'; calls on the Commission to give visibility to such initiatives in order to raise awareness and to become closer to citizens' needs; stresses however the need for budgetary responsibility and calls therefore for such initiatives to be financed from within the existing budget;
18. Calls for a forward-looking and output-oriented European Skills Strategy to guide national skills strategies and integrate them into the National Job Plans while providing a comprehensive framework for the sectoral action plans proposed in the employment package;
19. 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;
20. Points out, in addition, that in order to reduce the risk of early school-leaving, it is vital to move beyond austerity policies;

SMEs and entrepreneurship

21. Stresses the key role of enterprises, including SMEs, social and solidarity economy actors and micro-enterprises in training for working-life skills and job creation for young people; stresses the need to provide young people with education preparing them for entrepreneurship in the broadest possible way; encourages including in curricula the development in a safe environment of the vocational skills needed in starting and managing businesses as well as fostering transversal entrepreneurship competence, skills and knowledge, that are effectively delivered through hands-on and real-life experiences; suggests that entrepreneurship may be taught across various subjects or as a separate subject and stresses the need for access to high-quality traineeships and

professional training throughout and after the university stage of education; underlines that obtaining democratic and teamwork skills, learning to take responsibility, analysing situations is a part of life-long learning which supports active citizenship; draws attention to the opportunities and advantages of getting more people (e.g. successful young entrepreneurs, NGOs whose aim is to promote entrepreneurship) involved in providing education on entrepreneurship;

22. Recalls that supporting entrepreneurship, an understanding of economics and fostering a sense of responsibility and initiative are important factors in promoting an active approach towards one's own career; believes that it is the responsibility of public bodies, the education sector, businesses and civil society to promote entrepreneurship; reiterates the need to develop mobility within businesses; reiterates the role of financial institutions in business starts-up and access to financing and calls for investment, skills development and forecasting in emerging and potential sectors, including clean technologies and green jobs as they have great potential to create quality jobs;
23. Underlines that entrepreneurial skills can also be acquired through skills development programmes organised outside of the general education system and that these programmes may include coaching and mentoring activities supplied by experienced trainers, entrepreneurs and business experts that facilitate not only valuable business know-how, advice and feedback to potential entrepreneurs but also allow them to develop valuable networks of contacts with existing enterprises and entrepreneurs that could otherwise take very long time to achieve;
24. Stresses the need to ease existing administrative and financial requirements when starting and managing businesses, through the simplification of procedures, easier access to credit, venture capital and microfinance for start-ups, guaranteed high-speed internet access, multidisciplinary tailor-made counselling, the introduction of incentive measures for entrepreneurs employing young unemployed when possible; underlines the importance of microfinance and the EU Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme, as well as the Investment Plan for Europe, for achieving these goals; stresses the need for the creation of one-stop-shops to deal with all relevant administrative procedures related to setting up and running a business; recalls that all administrative requirements should take into account the respect for workers' rights;
25. Encourages Member States to take part in the Erasmus Programme for Young Entrepreneurs and to promote it among young people who wish to engage in business projects, so that they can gain experience abroad and acquire new skills which will help them to carry out their business projects successfully;
26. 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, problem-solving, teamwork and resourcefulness; acknowledges that the arts and media sectors are of particular appeal to young people;
27. 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;

28. Calls for the creation of favourable conditions for the social economy in order to combine job creation for young people and social capital development; calls for better inclusion of social and solidarity economy enterprises into national and European action plans for employment, skills development and social integration, with a view to unlocking and exploiting their job creation potential and their contribution to meeting the EU 2020 headline targets;
29. Recalls that employers and entrepreneurs play an important role in training in the workplace and in providing apprenticeships and that this should be further supported and developed;
30. Points out that policies for promoting youth entrepreneurship require mid-term and long-term planning; stresses that policies for promoting entrepreneurship should take account of the different requirements of each Member State;
31. Calls for effective support of socially responsible, green and sustainable entrepreneurial projects as well as the promotion of sustainable alternative models such as cooperatives, which are based on a democratic decision process and that try to have an impact on the local community;

Skills for employability

32. Stresses the urgent need to improve the qualifications and motivation of advisors working at public employment agencies, so that they can proactively respond to the needs of young job seekers, help them to gain additional qualifications and identify the skills they need for the job market;
33. Recalls that good quality educational tailor-made guidance and support at all stages of education and training is necessary and can lower the risk of early school-leaving as well as help to overcome difficulties in accessing the labour market; stresses that this occupational guidance should be anchored in the curriculum and must be provided in cooperation with economic actors and employment agencies; recalls that language learning and digital literacy are fundamental;
34. Points out the lack of high-quality career guidance in the Member States; emphasises the need to improve the quality of career guidance in schools and to provide ongoing professional training for careers advisors so that they are properly qualified to help students and pupils choose a suitable career path;
35. Calls on the Member States to examine best practices in the school career guidance system where pupils are monitored from an early school stage to the first steps in the labour market;
36. Stresses the importance of regular monitoring of future skills needs and therefore encourages the Member States and all relevant stakeholders to share good practices in this regard and to further develop monitoring and forecasting tools;
37. 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;

38. Calls on the Member States to exchange good practices in vocational education and the development of training through skills, thus ensuring greater access to the labour market for young people, and to revise training programs anticipating market needs where necessary; emphasises the importance of practical, entrepreneurial, coding and e-skills as indispensable for professional development in the 21st century; points to the importance of implementing the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan and the EU e-Skills strategy; recalls that lifelong guidance on professional career development should be available over the whole working life to maintain and develop one's skills and knowledge;
39. Encourages the Member States to promote and support opportunities for professional mobility among young apprentices to enable them to develop their skills through contact with other training systems and other types of business, but also to give them the opportunity to practise speaking a foreign language, which will help them to find a lasting place in the jobs market;
40. 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;
41. Stresses the urgent need to promote non-formal and informal learning, which includes volunteering, and which is an invaluable resource in helping young people get the skills they need for working life;
42. Recalls that non-formal and informal learning are crucial for soft skills development such as communications and decision-making skills; calls therefore for investment in inclusive opportunities providing for non-formal and informal learning and for recognition of the impact and value of experience, skills and competences gained;
43. Urges the establishment of a system of training and studies, which adopts innovative but accessible approaches, and which focuses on developing basic skills as well as intellectual and technical capacities;
44. Stresses the importance of pursuing the development of the EURES tool, particularly in border areas, to encourage young people to take an interest in offers of jobs, traineeships or apprenticeships abroad, and to support them in their mobility projects by providing them with assistance and advice on their projects;
45. 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;
46. Emphasises the importance of holistic education, for example in the form of civic education, which should be an integral part of all streams of education and can help to prepare young people in the transition to working life;

47. 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;
48. 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;
49. Expresses its concern about the fall in scores observed in the last PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey in certain European Union Member States; calls on Member States to make education a leading priority in order to attain the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
50. Stresses that training in the workplace and high-quality and formative apprenticeships, backed by partnerships between schools, training establishments and businesses, are ways of improving youth access to the labour market and a better use of these opportunities could, by improving career orientation, enlarge the pool of potential candidates for vacancies and also improve their preparedness for work; notes the success of such measures in some Member States; suggests that the sharing of best practice in this area would contribute to reducing youth unemployment; stresses that disadvantaged trainees need special support, e.g. in the form of extra tuition and support courses, and assistance for undertakings in coping with their administrative and organisational tasks;
51. Stresses the value of high-quality apprenticeships in all employment sectors and calls on the Commission and Member States to encourage women to undertake traditionally male-dominated apprenticeships and occupations;
52. Stresses that a smooth transition from education to employment should be promoted by linking theoretical education with practical training and integrating employability skills into the core academic curriculum, providing high-quality internships as stipulated in the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships as well as through the recognition of qualifications gained during formal and non-formal education, or during volunteering experiences; stresses that high-quality internships/traineeships should always have clear learning outcomes and the trainees should not be exploited;
53. Recalls that high-quality traineeships and apprenticeships reflecting actual needs should lead to employment and that traineeships should prepare trainees for a job, and condemns any abuses including false traineeship which undermines workers' acquisition of social security rights; underlines that traineeships should lead to increased skills and employability; calls on the Member States to take dissuasive measures to prevent abuses of traineeship status and intensify information campaigns about the rights of trainees;
54. Welcomes the Quality Framework for Traineeships and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships; stresses the importance of the Commission monitoring their implementation in the Member States closely; urges the Alliance for Apprenticeships to

promote access for young people to apprenticeships by calling for the removal of barriers such as education fees for apprentices;

55. Recalls, with respect to the Member States' competences in this area, that the dual model of education and the acquisition of practical, social and communication skills are of high importance; emphasises that societal and communication skills could help young people's confidence and make it easier for them to enter the labour market; stresses that the dual model must be targeted for the social, economic and cultural context of each country and is not to be seen as the one and only correct VET system; calls therefore for recognition and strengthening of dual learning at all levels;
56. Calls for enhanced cooperation between education institutions – both at vocational and higher level – and entrepreneurs in developing curricula adjusted to the labour market needs;
57. Points out the advantages of a flexible, student-focused approach to education which makes it possible to change or adapt the direction of study in line with the student's needs and does not bind them to their initial choice;
58. Warns the Member States against dispersion in the types of contract offered to young people; calls for greater thinking along these lines in order to increase effectiveness;
59. 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;
60. 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;
61. Stresses the need to develop measures to encourage girls to engage in STEM subjects and establish quality career guidance to support them in continuing their professional careers in this field since women remain largely under-represented in STEM-related professions, accounting for just 24% of science and engineering professionals and since STEM occupations are among the top 20 bottleneck vacancies in the Member States;
62. Points out that, despite high youth unemployment rates in some Member States and unfilled job vacancies in others, intra-EU labour mobility remains low; recalls therefore the importance of the mobility of workers for a competitive labour market, and stresses

the need to reduce the linguistic and cultural barriers that are liable to restrain it by providing sector-specific language courses and training on intercultural communication for the unemployed;

63. 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;
64. 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;
65. 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;
66. Recalls that the effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative can also help to improve the labour market opportunities of young people by overcoming educational deficits and by providing skills relevant to the needs of a sustainable labour market and economy, and can offer valuable work experience and facilitate the establishment of successful businesses; points out, to that end, that it is vital to assess the real employment needs of young people and the real sectors offering future work opportunities, such as the social economy and the green economy, backed up by constant and careful monitoring not only of the projects concerned but also of the agencies that provide them, drawing up regular reports on the progress of these measures to combat youth unemployment;
67. Stresses the need to simplify administrative measures for implementing the Youth Guarantee and the urgency of removing any red tape that might limit its effectiveness;
68. Welcomes the recent decision by EU co-legislators on increasing pre-financing for the Youth Employment Initiative, which aims to smooth the implementation of this important initiative for regions and states facing financial difficulties; calls on the Member States and local and regional authorities to use the available funds for bringing forward the necessary improvements and creating sustainable instead of ad hoc solutions; calls on the Member States to rapidly and effectively implement the Operational Programmes of the Youth Employment Initiative;

Equal opportunities

69. Stresses that skills development, if carried out as an integrated concept, could become a mechanism leading to and promoting equal opportunities for people from disadvantaged groups, including disadvantaged minorities, in particular for children and young people from families affected by poverty, the long-term unemployed, disadvantaged immigrants and people with disabilities; stresses that prevention and lifelong support and counselling from the earliest stage possible for disadvantaged groups are of the utmost importance for providing productive and highly-skilled workforce for the labour market; stresses, furthermore, the need to provide support and skills development via training for employers, recruiters and human resource managers to support the inclusion of disadvantaged groups into the labour market; stresses that, in order for the most disadvantaged to be included, appropriate training must be provided for employers, human resource teams and teachers, in order to support the most disadvantaged in society in the best possible way so as to make their integration as effective as possible; reiterates the importance of universal access to education for all;
70. 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 under-represented and disadvantaged groups; stresses that teaching networking can be a strategy for facilitating employment, career development and exploration;
71. Points out that while women represent the majority (60%) of university graduates in the European Union, their employment rate and promotion trajectories do not reflect their full potential; stresses that the achievement of inclusive and long-term economic growth depends on closing the gap between women's educational attainment and their position in the labour market, primarily through overcoming horizontal and vertical segregation;
72. Stresses the need for employment agencies to do more to make sure that disabled persons are not physically prevented from accessing their services, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
73. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to promote best practices and support the inclusion of young people with disabilities in education, including lifelong learning programmes, and employment, through measures such as investments in social entrepreneurship initiatives that support these young people, or financial incentives for organisations that recruit them;
74. Stresses the importance of making sure that persons with disabilities have access to financial support and grants, which should be an integral part of informational and educational programmes intended to promote entrepreneurship;

New generation, new opportunities, new challenges

75. Notes that young people, raised in an era of rapid technological progress have not only potential, talents and skills, but also values and priorities that differ from those of previous generations and that it is therefore worthwhile stressing the need for programmes and initiatives that would overcome the gap between generations; notes that this will also help in understanding the younger generation's assets such as multitasking, creativity, mobility, readiness to change and, above all, teamwork; stresses that education and training systems should be flexible enough to allow for the full development of the skills and talents of young people; emphasises moreover that

recruitment and employment services staff should be well trained and equipped with skills that would give them an understanding of the new generation; notes also that not all youth automatically have the skills and abilities for fully meeting the digital demands and reiterates therefore that giving everyone equal access and training to digital tools is even more important than before;

76. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Alarmingly high level of youth unemployment is nowadays one of the most challenging problems in the EU, with almost 5 million unemployed young people. At the same time there are 2 million unfilled vacancies. This situation causes a serious threat for the social cohesion and economic development of the EU.

Discussing this situation, the following factors should be considered: globalisation, demographic changes, the economic crisis, new technologies and changes in the organisation of work.

Business creation and self-employment also constitute an opportunity for participation in the labour market.

Skills development as a multidimensional process requires a holistic approach and a move beyond the “silos” of sectorial policies.

Due to changes on the labour market there is a need for more flexible education systems that would allow for complementing and developing knowledge and skills at all stages of professional career.

Two dimensions of skills allow entering the labour market and remaining employed: key competences (adaptability, learning to learn, initiative and entrepreneurship, communication) and specific skills related to particular posts or jobs.

At the same time it is necessary to link (also financially) institutions providing higher education with the economy sector (industry, services).

Due to the differences on the Member States labour markets, there is also a need to determine which level of governance has the most effective tools in identifying and describing skills needs.

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

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 learning¹ 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, 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

¹ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

succeed as leaders and to achieve their goals; further stresses the link between sports, employability, education and training.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	15.10.2015
Result of final vote	+: 22 -: 5 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	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
Substitutes present for the final vote	Mary Honeyball, Marc Joulaud, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Ernest Maragall, António Marinho e Pinto, Algirdas Saudargas
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	3.12.2015
Result of final vote	+: 49 -: 1 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Laura Agea, Guillaume Balas, Tiziana Beghin, Brando Benifei, Mara Bizzotto, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Enrique Calvet Chambon, David Casa, Ole Christensen, Elena Gentile, Arne Gericke, Marian Harkin, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Agnes Jongerius, Jan Keller, Ádám Kósa, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Jean Lambert, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Jeroen Lenaers, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Javi López, Thomas Mann, Dominique Martin, Anthea McIntyre, Joëlle Mélin, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Emilian Pavel, Georgi Pirinski, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Siôn Simon, Jutta Steinruck, Yana Toom, Ulrike Trebesius, Marita Ulvskog, Tatjana Ždanoka, Jana Žitňanská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Heinz K. Becker, Lynn Boylan, Mircea Diaconu, Tania González Peñas, Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Paloma López Bermejo, Monika Vana
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Dita Charanzová, Diane James, Martina Michels, Estefanía Torres Martínez

