



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Culture and Education

2010/2234(INI)

28.1.2011

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the
Europe 2020 strategy
(2010/2234(INI))

Rapporteur (*): Maria Badia i Cutchet

(*) Associated committee – Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure

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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 in its motion for a resolution:

1. Points out that in the new digital economy, creativity and ICTs are building a new business culture that can facilitate cooperation and exchanges of good practice among Member States with a view to improving the quality of VET, and that it is therefore time to put VET at the centre of the agenda, especially in order to face the challenges posed by the 2020 strategy, such as the EU headline target of 40% of 30- to 34-year-olds completing tertiary or equivalent education;
2. Emphasises the importance of social and inclusive economy models for this new enterprise culture, and points out that it is vital that institutions providing vocational education and training, including higher education, should equip their students with a detailed knowledge of all forms of entrepreneurship, including in the social and inclusive economy, and of responsible and ethical management principles;
3. Emphasises the need to establish an inventory of those areas in which the European Union holds, or could hold, a comparative advantage worldwide, and for which further training strategies should be developed;
4. Recalls that investing in education and training is essential for a better future for Europeans; takes the view that key competences and new skills, in particular those required by jobs in strategic growth sectors, provide people with new opportunities and, moreover, lay the basis for long-term sustainable economic and social development; considers it important, in this connection, that the Member States and all actors involved ensure that workers acquire the basic competences they need;
5. Points out that lifelong learning will be crucial if unemployment is to be prevented and due account taken of diverse employment biographies; with that aim in view, workers must be made more aware of the need for constant further training;
6. Reiterates its criticism of the cuts made by the Council of Ministers in the 2011 budget as regards funding for the main EU programmes in the education sphere (the ‘Lifelong Learning’ programme and the People programme – cuts of EUR 25 million and EUR 100 million respectively); the ambitious Europe 2020 strategy is thus clearly out of step with the reality of budgetary constraints;
7. Believes that existing European vocational training programmes are effective and should be given more support in future;
8. Recommends that incentives be provided to employers to encourage their employees to take part in training programmes;
9. Stresses the importance of encouraging regular further training courses as part of lifelong learning;

10. Points out that the link between education and training, particularly the pathway from vocational to higher education, demands that the opportunities for link-ups between vocational training and university education be expanded, with special emphasis on integrating them into mechanisms for the provision of career information, guidance and counselling; also takes the view that switching between training and employment ensures that recipients of vocational training acquire the skills in demand on the labour market;
11. Emphasises the importance, at local and regional level, of fostering effective synergies and reliable forms of cooperation between schools, training agencies, research centres and firms in order to overcome the inward-looking nature of education systems and the mismatch between knowledge and skills and the needs of the labour market and to make young people, in particular women, more employable, with specific reference to vocational further education qualifications;
12. Suggests that setting up a new language-learning strategy to improve general knowledge in specific skill areas will facilitate the mobility of teachers and students; points out that, in addition, the guarantee of a smooth transition from vocational education to higher education will help to make vocational training courses more attractive;
13. Sees the opportunity for mobility as an important part of VET, and consequently recommends upgrading the Leonardo da Vinci programme;
14. Believes that cross-border mobility in the area of vocational education and training is as important as mobility in the area of general education, and believes that more effort should be put into developing such mobility;
15. Recommends boosting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship at all levels of education including vocational training, and recognising skills obtained through any form of learning, including non-formal and informal learning; also recommends encouraging projects that sustain the transmission of knowledge and skills from generation to generation;
16. Points out that rising population ageing rates in Europe are increasing the importance of lifelong learning and education programmes and making it necessary to provide support for them;
17. Maintains that education for entrepreneurship should form an important part of VET with a view to making it more attractive to all students and enhancing entrepreneurship in accordance with the provisions of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
18. Acknowledges the significant role played by gender stereotypes in our educational practices, and emphasises, therefore, the importance of drawing up strategies designed to lead to the establishment of gender-neutral education, which would help to bring about, for example, equal access for women and men to VET and employment;
19. Takes the view that regional and local authorities play an essential role in cooperating with VET centres and the business world and in helping VET providers to develop a friendly environment facilitating the successful entry of VET students into the labour market;

20. Calls on the Member States to create pathways for young people with no or poor educational qualifications, so as to enable them to enter employment; calls, given the explosive nature of the problem, for a pilot project to combat youth unemployment and help the Member States establish local networks linking schools, industry, youth services and young people;
21. Encourages the Commission to develop and update regularly a chart giving a region-by-region picture of training qualifications and demand;
22. Calls on the Commission to continue to support and consistently implement quality certification that gives a fundamental boost to innovation processes in terms of action, efficiency and effectiveness, such as those recommended in the European Quality Assurance in VET Network (EQAVET) and the instruments developed through the Copenhagen process, such as the Europass and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF); calls on the Member States to simplify the procedures for recognising foreign professional qualifications so as to ensure that job skills can be demonstrated not just on the strength of formal qualifications, but also by means of probationary periods, theoretical and practical examinations, and expert assessments;
23. Takes the view that the challenges posed by the Copenhagen process and the EU 2020 strategy call for the provision of adequate financial resources, inter alia through the Structural Funds, in particular the ESF, and for fuller involvement in promoting high quality VET through concrete action and the inclusion of new models and methods of training, such as giving visibility to student success stories in the labour market, advertising the prestige attached to VET in major companies and providing fuller information and guidelines on VET matters prior to the completion of mandatory schooling; notes that encouraging exchanges of experience regarding support programmes and periods spent abroad, such as participation in the Leonardo da Vinci programme, would be of great value;
24. Recommends that the autonomy of VET centres be promoted in the areas of planning, financing, managing and assessing activities, and that more dynamic forms of cooperation be introduced between VET centres and enterprises;
25. Urges governments to promote flexible VET, geared to the specific needs of organisations and enterprises, that enables all the training accomplished to be turned to good account, the reconciliation of that training with private life and other professional activities, and the boosting of European mobility, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to VET for organisations at risk of marginalisation, so as to prolong their training;
26. Recalls that VET programmes should be extended to comply with the principles of life-long learning and initial and continuing training;
27. Takes the view that better harmonisation among the Member States' different education systems – bridging those differences and ensuring mutual recognition of certificates and diplomas among the Member States – should be emphasised in order to heighten cross-border collaboration and aid mobility.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	25.1.2011
Result of final vote	+: 30 -: 0 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Maria Badia i Cutchet, Zoltán Bagó, Malika Benarab-Attou, Lothar Bisky, Piotr Borys, Jean-Marie Cavada, Santiago Fisas Ayxela, Mary Honeyball, Cătălin Sorin Ivan, Petra Kammerevert, Morten Løkkegaard, Emma McClarkin, Marek Henryk Migalski, Doris Pack, Chrysoula Paliadeli, Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, Marietje Schaake, Marco Scurria, Joanna Senyszyn, Timo Soini, Emil Stoyanov, Hannu Takkula, László Tőkés, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Gianni Vattimo, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Sabine Verheyen, Milan Zver
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Ivo Belet, Nadja Hirsch, Seán Kelly, Iosif Matula, Georgios Papanikolaou, Hella Ranner, Mitro Repo, Olga Sehnalová, Rui Tavares