



## Invest more in education and youth mobility, say MEPs

Committees: Committee on Culture and Education

**MEPs issued a call on Tuesday for a range of measures to promote mobility among young Europeans and improve educational and training opportunities.**

Increased funding for EU youth mobility programmes and EU-wide recognition of qualifications are among the measures needed, according to a draft resolution by the Culture and Education Committee. Support for education-business cooperation, paid traineeships and measures to tackle discrimination in education are also urged.

"Even in times of economic crisis, financing youth and education should not be considered as a cost in the present time but as an investment in the future of Europe", stresses the committee. MEPs particularly welcome the new political initiative of the Commission entitled 'Youth on the Move', which includes an EU target for 40% of young people to complete higher or vocational education. Member States should invest at least 2% of their GDP in higher education and take action to reduce early school leaving to below 10%, say MEPs. The committee also calls for more dialogue with youth organisations and greater participation by young people in decision-making.

### More efforts needed to foster mobility

Funding for EU mobility and youth programmes such as Lifelong Learning (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Grundtvig), Marie Curie, Erasmus Mundus and Youth in Action, must increase, believes the committee. It wants practical barriers to mobility removed but adds that "this must not lead to a brain drain away from certain parts of the EU" and suggests more "internationalisation at home", such as creating international cooperation networks at universities and making use of virtual mobility.

Mobility programmes should not be restricted to university students but be available to vocational students, teachers and youth workers, argue MEPs. They call for EU-wide recognition of school, vocational and university qualifications, adding that children should learn two non-native languages from an early age, including those of neighbouring countries, and young people from neighbouring non-EU countries should be allowed to take part in EU mobility programmes.

### Employability of students and graduates

Ties between education and business must be improved and university programmes brought closer to labour market needs, with vocational education being modernised and public-private partnerships encouraged. However, higher education should not only ensure employability but also "nurture the creativity and innovativeness of young people and help them develop intellectually and socially", stress MEPs.

Open universities, online education and more flexible university timetables for working students should be encouraged, says the committee. MEPs also highlight the need to encourage entrepreneurship among students and promote the recruitment of young people, for example through publicly funded work programmes. They point out that "unemployment at a young age puts the individual at a very high risk of poverty in the long term".

# Press release

Higher and vocational education institutions are asked to introduce recognised traineeships into their study programmes, yet MEPs point out that they "must not take the place of real jobs and must be combined with adequate pay and welfare protection". They call for legally binding EU rights for insecure jobs and traineeships "to prevent trainees from being exploited".

## **Tackling discrimination and inequalities**

"Access to education must not be contingent on the social background or financial situation of a young person's parents", emphasises the Culture Committee. It also calls for extra support for disabled young people, young parents and those seeking to get back into education. Gender inequalities in higher education should be tackled, it adds, particularly by raising girls' interest at an early age in mathematics, informatics, natural sciences and technology, and boys' interest in teaching, caring and social professions.

The draft resolution was adopted by 27 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions, and will come before the full Parliament in May.

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