



2018/2034(INI)

12.7.2018

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on employment and social policies of the euro area
(2018/2034(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Nikolaos Chountis

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. Notes with concern the persistent socio-economic disparities in the euro area; believes that equal access to inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for everyone is a precondition for socio-economic convergence; points, in this regard, to the persistent disparities across Member States and social groups with respect to the EU's headline education indicators;
2. Is deeply concerned that, in the EU19, the average rate of general government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP fell year-on-year from 2009 to 2016¹; regrets that the education and training sector has been severely hit by austerity policies and stresses that well-resourced public education systems are vital for equality and social inclusion; calls, therefore, for a shift in the euro area's macroeconomic policy priorities towards increased public spending on education and training as investments with a strong multiplier effect; calls on the Commission to introduce an indicator on spending (particularly public spending) on education as a share of GDP (or per student) in the Social Scoreboard, in order to monitor the performance of the Member States;
3. Stresses that social disadvantage is frequently a predictor of poor educational outcomes and vice versa; stresses, furthermore, that, in the constantly changing knowledge economies, employability, even among students with otherwise comparable hard skills, is often dependent to a non-negligible extent on 'softer' skills (communication, critical thinking, cooperation, creative innovation, confidence and 'learning to learn') beyond reading and mathematical and scientific literacy; insists that a properly funded, quality education and lifelong learning system, which genuinely promotes the right to study with flanking and supporting policies, including an effective system of scholarships, can help break this vicious circle and promote social inclusion and equal opportunities;
4. Stresses that, in spite of the improvement of the economy in the euro area and the creation of new jobs, youth unemployment in some Member States remains unacceptably high and, while rates of youth unemployment have fallen since 2013, they differ widely between Member States;
5. Notes with great concern the still high number of European citizens with poor literacy skills or difficulties with literacy, including functional and media illiteracy, which gives rise to serious concerns in terms of meaningful and effective participation in public life and on the labour market;
6. Encourages the promotion of policies, such as the introduction of dual education systems; stresses that an effective link between education, research, innovation and the labour market can make a decisive contribution to job creation;
7. Stresses that a safe and adequate learning environment is vital for the well-being of students and teaching staff; calls, in this regard, on Member States to make robust

¹ Eurostat data.

investments in the maintenance of public facilities, particularly schools, and in the elimination of architectural barriers;

8. Calls on the Commission and Member States to develop specific measures within employment, educational and social policies to ensure the effective inclusion of people with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds;
9. Points out the need to plan and promote organised and up-to-date vocational guidance programmes in schools, particularly in the countryside and in border, mountainous and island regions;
10. Supports the mobility of students, workers, athletes and artists in the EU and the euro area; is concerned, however, that substantial differences in living and working standards in the euro area trigger involuntary migration, further exacerbating the effects of the so-called brain drain; points out that a key prerequisite for tackling the phenomenon of the brain drain is the creation of decent jobs, as is the promotion of effective education, training and career guidance strategies; calls for future education and employment policies to effectively address this phenomenon, including by means of the full development of the European education area; stresses the need to develop a European student card to promote learning mobility and facilitate the mutual recognition of certificates, diplomas and professional qualifications, reducing administrative burdens and costs for students and for education and training institutes;
11. Stresses that, according to the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) benchmarks, by the year 2020, fewer than 15 % of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science; welcomes the inclusion of the ‘underachievement in education’ benchmark for 15-year-olds (results for low achievement in mathematics from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey) in the new Social Scoreboard; invites, the Commission, however, also to include under-achievement in reading and/or scientific literacy;
12. Recalls that, according to the ET 2020 benchmarks, by the year 2020, at least 95 % of children (from the age of four to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education; stresses that the area of ‘early childhood care’ in the Social Scoreboard includes only one indicator, for children aged under three in formal care; highlights that it lacks information on the coverage of older children below compulsory school age, as well as information about the extent of childcare provision as measured by the number of hours provided;
13. Takes into account the positive role of open education and open universities in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, particularly on-line training programmes for employees, as this is a dynamic form of learning that meets current needs and the interests of participants;
14. Considers child poverty to be a major issue on which Europe should ‘act big’; calls for the swift implementation of a Child Guarantee in all Member States, so that every child now living at risk of poverty can have access to free healthcare, education and childcare, decent housing and proper nutrition; underlines the importance of pre-natal care and early childhood development; calls for inclusive education systems at all levels, including afterschool care; underlines that the implementation of the Child Guarantee

will require adequate financing at national and European level; calls, therefore, for an increase in its financing, possibly via the European Social Fund and a new convergence instrument for the euro area; requests that national public investments in the Child Guarantee be considered within a ‘silver rule on social investment’ under the Stability and Growth Pact;

15. Stresses that one of the objectives of the Youth Guarantee is to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education; calls, therefore, for full implementation of the Youth Guarantee, with an emphasis on quality offers and effective outreach to all NEETs¹; highlights that this requires adequate financing in the next multiannual financial framework (post-2020 MFF), including an increase in the European Social Fund and an extension of the Youth Employment Initiative to at least EUR 21 billion; requests that national public investments in the Youth Guarantee and integration of the long-term unemployed be counted within a ‘silver rule on social investment’ under the Stability and Growth Pact;
16. Supports a Skills Guarantee as a new right for everyone to acquire fundamental skills for the 21st century, including digital literacy; considers that the Skills Guarantee should involve an individualised assessment of learning needs, a quality learning offer as well as systematic validation of the skills and competences acquired, enabling their easy recognition on the labour market; underlines that the Skills Guarantee is an important social investment, requiring adequate financing at national and European level; calls, therefore, for an increase in the financing of the Skills Guarantee, possibly via an increased European Social Fund and a new convergence instrument for the euro area;
17. Reiterates the European Parliament’s call for the Erasmus+ envelope to be at least tripled in the next MFF with the aim of reaching many more young people, youth organisations and secondary school pupils and apprentices across Europe; calls for particular attention to be paid to people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to enable them to participate in the programme, as well as to people with disabilities, in line with the EU’s and the Member States’ obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
18. Calls for a ‘silver rule’ on social investment to be applied when implementing the Stability and Growth Pact, namely to consider certain public social investments having a clear positive impact on economic growth (e.g. the Child Guarantee, the Youth Guarantee and the Skills Guarantee) as being eligible for favourable treatment when assessing government deficits and compliance with the 1/20 debt rule; highlights that fiscal consolidation should not undermine national co-financing of European funding for social investment;
19. Calls for adequate financing under the next MFF in order to cope with increased needs; calls, in particular, for:
 - (a) the strengthening of the Youth Employment Initiative, with at least EUR 3 billion per

¹ NEETs: Young people not in employment, education or training.

- year in funding, available in a dedicated budget line;
- (b) a substantial increase of the financing envelope of the European Social Fund;
20. Recalls the strategic potential of the cultural and creative sector (CCS) as a generator of jobs and wealth in the EU; stresses that the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) constitute 11.2 % of all private enterprises and 7.5 % of all persons employed in the total EU economy, and generate 5.3 % of the total European gross value added (GVA); underlines the CCIs' role in preserving and promoting European cultural and linguistic diversity and their contribution to economic growth, innovation and employment, especially youth employment;
21. Calls on the Commission to fully exploit potential synergies between EU policies, so as to effectively use the funding available under EU programmes – such as Horizon 2020, the Connecting Europe Facility, Erasmus+, Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Creative Europe and COSME – and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) to support more projects in the field of CCIs; notes that, particularly in the case of Creative Europe, Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF), the role and impact of CCIs on growth, employment and territorial cohesion should be specifically evaluated and further promoted; stresses that this process should provide a solid and coherent basis for the revision of the MFF and the future EU programme architecture post-2020;
22. Calls for a genuine revision of EU and Member States' education, training and skills policies in order to combat the phenomenon of early school leaving and the increasing number of NEETs and thus to deliver education and lifelong learning for inclusion; highlights that these policies towards young people, which should also target lifelong learning, should promote personal and societal development in a holistic manner and not be merely designed to meet labour market demands;
23. Highlights that adequate investment and planning in the field of education, particularly in digital skills and programming, is essential to secure the Union's competitive position, the availability of a skilled workforce and the employability of the workforce;
24. Calls on the Commission to provide incentives and technical assistance to young people to set up their businesses and to propose measures to promote entrepreneurship also through school curricula in the Member States;
25. Calls on the national authorities to encourage companies, also through tax relief or incentives for social contributions, to invest in training their employees and recruiting new graduates from secondary schools and universities;
26. Takes the view that better matching of skills and jobs and improved mutual recognition of qualifications are necessary to address skills shortages and mismatches in the Union;
27. Acknowledges and condemns the abusive employment conditions often experienced by professional athletes, such as bogus self-employment, the non-payment of wages, inadequate health insurance and retirement pension standards, and points to the need to improve the existing regulatory framework; calls on the Commission to present a comprehensive action plan for the promotion of decent working conditions for

professional athletes, starting with the euro area countries and involving all relevant social partners in the sports sector.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| Date adopted | 11.7.2018 |
| Result of final vote | +: 22 -: 2 0: 4 |
| Members present for the final vote | Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Nikolaos Chountis, Silvia Costa, Damian Drăghici, Angel Dzhambazki, Jill Evans, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Petra Kammerevert, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Rupert Matthews, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver |
| Substitutes present for the final vote | Elena Gentile, Sylvie Guillaume, Morten Løkkegaard, Liadh Ní Riada, Algirdas Saudargas |
| Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote | Ivo Vajgl |

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| EFDD | Isabella Adinolfi |
| GUE/NGL | Nikolaos Chountis, Liadh Ní Riada |
| PPE | Andrea Bocskor, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Algirdas Saudargas, Michaela Šojdrová, Sabine Verheyen, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver |
| S&D | Silvia Costa, Damian Drăghici, Elena Gentile, Sylvie Guillaume, Petra Kammerevert, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Julie Ward |
| Verts/ALE | Jill Evans, Helga Trüpel |

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| ECR | Angel Dzhambazki, Rupert Matthews |

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| ALDE | María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Morten Løkkegaard, Ivo Vajgl |
| ENF | Dominique Bilde |