



Plenary session

16.04.2021

RESOLUTION

on synergies between education and the economy in the EU and Eastern Partnership countries

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The Euronest Parliamentary Assembly,

- having regard to the development of the Eastern Neighbourhood policy since 2004 and its Eastern Partnership component since 2009, and in particular to the Commission’s progress reports on its implementation,
- having regard to Articles 5 and 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as well as Articles 145 to 149 (Title IX – Employment) and Articles 166 and 165 (Title XII – Education, vocational training, youth and sport),
- having regard to the Association Agreements between the EU and Georgia¹, the EU and Moldova², and the EU and Ukraine³, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the EU and Armenia⁴, and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan⁵,
- having regard to the Constituent Act of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly of 3 May 2011 (last modified on 26 June 2018)⁶,
- having regard to the Commission and European External Action Service joint staff working document of 9 June 2017 entitled ‘Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020 focusing on key priorities and tangible results’,
- having regard to the joint communication of the Commission and the Vice-President / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 18 March 2020 entitled ‘Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all’, and to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2020 on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020,
- having regard to the message of the Bureau of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly of 12 June 2020 on the occasion of the Video Teleconference of the Leaders of the Eastern Partnership of 18 June 2020,
- having regard to European Parliament recommendation of 19 June 2020 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Eastern Partnership, in the run-up to the June 2020 Summit⁷,

¹ OJ L 261, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

² OJ L 260, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

³ OJ L 161, 29.5.2014, p. 3.

⁴ OJ L 23, 26.1.2018, p. 4.

⁵ OJ L 246, 17.9.1999, p. 3.

⁶ OJ C 198, 6.7.2011, p. 4.

⁷ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0167.

- having regard to the remarks made by European Council President Charles Michel after the Video Teleconference of the leaders of the Eastern Partnership of 18 June 2020,
- having regard to the 2018-2020 action plan of the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership,
- having regard to the resolution of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly of 9 December 2019 on innovation in education and education reforms in the EU and Eastern Partners' countries: challenges and opportunities⁸,
- having regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, and in particular to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017, and in particular to Pillar 1 on the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning for everyone in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport⁹,
- having regard to the resolution of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly of 22 March 2016 on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, work experience and university diplomas within the Bologna process¹⁰,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 10 June 2016 entitled 'Analytical underpinning for a New Skills Agenda for Europe',
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2016 entitled 'A New Skills Agenda for Europe: working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness' (COM/2016/0381),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 December 2016 on improving and modernising education (COM/2016/0941),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 January 2018 on the Digital Education Action Plan (COM(2018)0022),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027: Resetting education and training for the digital age (COM/2020/624),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 17 January 2018 for a Council

⁸ OJ C 134, 24.4.2020, p. 16.

⁹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50.

¹⁰ OJ C 193, 31.5.2016, p. 17.

- recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching (COM(2018)0023),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 17 January 2018 for a Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning’ (COM(2018)0024),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 22 May 2018 on building a strong Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies (COM/2018/0268),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (COM/2020/625),
 - having regard to the Council recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad¹¹,
 - having regard to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué of 19 November 2020 following the ministerial meeting of the European Higher Education Area,
 - having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 11 December 2018 on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU policy design¹²,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2020 entitled ‘EUROPE 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
 - having regard to the European Economic and Social Committee opinion of 5 May 2020 on the Proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States’,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 entitled ‘Digital Action Plan 2021-2027: Resetting education and training for the digital age’ (COM(2020)0624), which builds on the 2018-2020 Digital Action Plan,
 - having regard to the International Labour Organization’s Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention of 25 June 1958,
 - having regard to the International Labour Organization’s Human Resources Development Convention of 23 June 1975,
 - having regard to the Commission proposal of 26 February 2020 for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (COM(2020)0070), and to the European Economic and Social Committee opinion of 5 May 2020 and the European Parliament legislative resolution of 10 July 2020 on this proposal¹³,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 10 March 2020 on a New Industrial Strategy for Europe (COM(2020)0102),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 27 May 2020 entitled ‘Europe’s

¹¹ OJ C 444, 10.12.2018, p. 1.

¹² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0485.

¹³ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0194.

moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation’ (COM(2020)0456),

- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 21 July 2020 and to the Parliament resolution of 23 July 2020 on the conclusions of the extraordinary European Council meeting of 17-21 July 2020¹⁴ and to the European Council conclusions of 10-11 December 2020,
- having regard to the Commission report ‘on the implementation of macro-financial assistance to third countries in 2019’ (COM(2020)296),
- having regard to the European Investment Bank Annual Report 2018 on Eastern Partnership Technical Assistance Trust Fund,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 6 July 2018 to establish ‘Digital Europe Programme 2021-2027’ (COM(2018)434),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 to set out The European Green Deal, in particular putting emphasis to ensure environment, energy and climate partnerships with the Eastern Partnership states (COM(2019)640),
- having regard to regulation of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 September 2017 establishing the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), the EFSD Guarantee and the EFSD Guarantee Fund (EU) No. 2017/1601,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 28 May 2020 for the European Parliament and to the Council on establishing a Recovery and Resilience Facility (COM(2020)408),
- having regard to the UN Paris Climate Convention of 12 December 2015,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 January 2021 to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council entitled ‘A united front to beat COVID-19’, in particular to ensure access to some of the 2.3 billion doses secured by the EU to the Eastern Partnership countries (COM(2021)35),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 March 2020 entitled ‘An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe’ (COM(2020)103),
- having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 10 October 2019 on foreign electoral interference and disinformation in national and European democratic process,
- having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 March 2020 on a new Circular Economy Action Plan (COM(2020) 98),
- having regard to Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) (2009/C119/02),
- having regard to the agreement of 15 December 2020 between the European Parliament

¹⁴ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0206.

and the Council on provisional deal on the EU4Health programme for 2021-2027 (COM(2020)405),

- A. whereas the Eastern Partnership (EaP), launched in 2009 as a joint policy initiative, aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the EU, its Member States and its six Eastern neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine);
- B. whereas collective efforts under the EaP project have already brought considerable, tangible benefits to people in Europe including more trade, mobility, increased economic development, more people-to-people contacts and a better quality of life;
- C. whereas the ‘Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020’ strategy put forward by the Commission and the Vice-President / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy stresses the importance for stabilisation of sustainable development achieved through investment in economic modernisation with a particular focus on youth and unemployment, with a view to boosting prosperity across Europe;
- D. whereas the EU strategy for international cultural relations (COM(2016)29) commits support for a vibrant cultural/social exchange between the EU and its Eastern partners, to engage citizens, state actors and cultural operators alike, strengthens civil society and afford greater economic opportunities;
- E. whereas the right to education is enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Article 2 of the Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms concerning the right to education;
- F. whereas human rights and fundamental freedoms are an integral part of all key EaP cooperation areas, with specific priorities identified for each country; whereas the human rights protection of minorities, including of LGBTI people, against all forms of intolerance and discrimination, is directly linked to access to quality education for the population;
- G. whereas the right to engage in work and pursue a freely chosen or accepted occupation is enshrined in Article 15 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
- H. whereas the EU Member States must regard their economic policies and the promotion of employment as a matter of common concern and must coordinate their actions accordingly within the Council;
- I. whereas the EU is working with its Member States to pursue a coordinated European Employment Strategy, encouraging cooperation between them, and supporting and evaluating their efforts, for example through the European Semester, guidelines on employment and the monitoring of national policies via the Joint Employment Report, the National Reform Programmes and the country-specific recommendations;
- J. whereas the EU must contribute to the promotion of quality education, vocational training and youth policies, as well as access to education for all, by encouraging its Member States and, when necessary, supporting, coordinating and complementing their actions;

- K. whereas the European Pillar of Social Rights, endorsed by the Council, Parliament and the Commission on 16 November 2017, highlights the importance of education, training, lifelong learning, equal opportunities regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, active support in gaining employment and fair working conditions, underlines in particular that young people have the right to further education, an apprenticeship, a traineeship or a job offer of good standing within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education, and stresses that children have the right to affordable early education;
- L. whereas the enabling framework of the European Education Area has been proposed by the Commission to succeed the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') and to continue to be a forum that allows participating countries to exchange best practices, learn from each other, gather and disseminate knowledge, and advance educational policy reforms at national and regional levels; whereas ET 2020 the new framework should also be based on a life long learning approach, addressing outcomes from early childhood to adult vocational training and higher education, and covering learning in all domains and in all forms (formal, non-formal and informal);
- M. whereas the Commission is currently working on a proposal for a Council recommendation on online and distance learning for primary and secondary education, focusing on an EU-wide, common understanding of how to make distance, online and blended learning effective, inclusive and engaging by the end of 2021;
- N. whereas a Council recommendation on the enabling factors for successful education by 2022 is currently being prepared;
- O. whereas the COVID-19 crisis has led to an unprecedented, massive shift to online learning, training and teleworking methods, that require innovative distance learning solutions and foster a positive long-term digital transformation, with the risk that large disparities in technology access may contribute to achievement gaps among students and workers;;
- P. whereas the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion highlights the importance for EU Member States to increase their investment in education and training policies at all levels;
- Q. whereas the Commission is currently working on a proposal for a Council recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training, and is cooperating with the business sector so as to identify and update skills needs as they emerge;
- R. whereas the persisting mismatch between the qualifications offered by academic and vocational institutions, and the rapidly changing demands of the labour market – marked in recent years by the development of information and communication technologies and of the tertiary sector as a whole – remains a major challenge for some EU Member States and, to an even greater extent, the Eastern Partners;
- S. whereas regular and substantial consultation and cooperation activities at national, regional and local levels, involving stakeholders such as education and training institutions, civil society organisations, businesses, social partners and employment

agencies and young people themselves, are key to reducing this mismatch;

- T. whereas within the revised multilateral architecture of the EaP, Platform 4 (mobility and people-to-people contacts) works to increase the participation of EaP countries in EU programmes in fields such as education, research and innovation, and aims to boost cooperation between education and training authorities, higher education institutions, schools and research institutions, and to enhance knowledge and foster the exchange of best practices in these domains;
 - U. whereas the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners must defend their citizens' rights to quality education, apprenticeships and traineeships, and to fair chances in an inclusive labour market, so that they can contribute in turn to a competitive and sustainable European economy;
 - V. whereas the New Skills Agenda is a five-year plan that will help EU citizens to develop more and better skills and put them to use, enabling them to find quality jobs and thereby strengthening sustainable competitiveness, as set out in the European Green Deal; whereas the agenda will also ensure equal opportunities, put into practice the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights (access to education, training and lifelong learning for everybody, everywhere in the EU), and build resilience to enable the EU Member States to react to crises, based on the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - W. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought havoc on Europe's families, workers and businesses, and therefore requires an unprecedented response;
 - X. whereas the EU needs a skills transformation in vocational education and training to ensure people can thrive during the green and digital transitions, and to facilitate its recovery from the socio-economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - Y. whereas it is essential that EU Member States and its Eastern Partners' governments measure the skills gap of their existing workforce and then invest heavily in closing it;
 - Z. whereas this recovery must be based on the European Green Deal, the Digital Agenda for Europe and the New Industrial Strategy for Europe, so that the Member State economies emerge from the COVID-19 crisis stronger, more resilient, more sustainable and more competitive, and can lead the twin transitions towards climate neutrality and digital leadership;
1. Recalls that the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit of 24 November 2017 highlighted the participants' commitment to strongly engage with all partners in modernising education and training, research and innovation systems and to lay the emphasis on supporting and empowering young people;
 2. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to work together toward resilient, sustainable and integrated economies, i.e. by increasing their investment in people, with a special emphasis on the young, and by better connecting education, research and innovation with the needs of the business sector;
 3. Urges the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to step up their efforts to pursue four common objectives, in line with the priorities set out in ET 2020 and to

be further developed in the European Education Area enabling framework: make lifelong learning and mobility a reality, improve the quality and efficiency of education and training, promote equity, democratic values, social cohesion and active citizenship, and enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training;

4. Insists that everyone in Europe should have access to attractive, innovative and inclusive quality life-long learning programmes, one of the reasons being that skills are becoming obsolete more quickly, which improves learners' life chances and lays the groundwork for active citizenship, social mobility and a more equitable society;
5. Stresses that well-calibrated education and lifelong learning policies play a central role in better aligning the skills of the workforce with the needs of the economy, and that people equipped with the skills truly needed on the labour market are bound to have better employment opportunities; notes that access to quality education for all, including vocational education, are key to adult education and skills learning as part of a lifelong learning approach; stresses that engaging education, business and workforce development leaders is key to create a framework for how countries can more effectively align educational systems and local labour market needs;
6. Stresses the importance of European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) continuation by the new NDICI instrument, including allocation of at least 19.2 billion euros to the Eastern Neighbourhood projects, for the period of 2021-2027;
7. Insists that educational reforms must be carefully promoted through implementation of key programmes, such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe and Horizon Europe, in order to prevent future shortfalls between the education systems and labour market demand in EaP states;
8. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to strengthen people-to-people contacts and to acknowledge the importance of cross-border mobility under EaP Platform 4 "Mobility and people-to-people contacts" programme;
9. Stresses the importance to promote multilateralism, strategic priorities and the achievement of key international commitments and objectives concerning climate change, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement;
10. Deplores expectation that digital technologies for education and training generally will enhance synergy between economy and education, and that investments in information and communication technologies by education and training institutions coherence will bring fruitful results; underlines the need to integrate ICTs into teaching and learning processes and to remodel education from knowledge transmission to knowledge co-creation; this should encompass a wide array of transformations including enhanced autonomy of schools and of teachers; introduction of new hybrid forms of learning as well as substantial reforms in student assessment while always prioritising in-person learning as schools ensure a pastoral role which cannot be replicated online;
11. Stresses the need for EaP countries to improve the quality of their education systems, notably by re-training teachers and by modernising the education system to make it

fit for the digital age; commends Georgia for leading the way in this regard, through its Education Reform Plan 2018-2023 aimed at aligning the Georgian education system with European standards, with special emphasis put on secondary schools and vocational training centres;

12. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to step up their strategies and increase their investments in education and training systems, so as to provide high-performing, accessible and inclusive education, including vocational education and training, lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling, focusing in particular on providing effective support to workers and the unemployed, and making full use of the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies including emphasis on circular economy benefits, while taking digital and green competence requirements into account;
13. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to pursue these objectives by providing better infrastructure, connectivity and digital equipment, training teachers to embrace technology and apply digital methodologies,, and promoting top-quality learning content, user-friendly tools and secure platforms that respect privacy and ethical standards and strengthens resilience towards cyberthreats;
14. Notes that education and learning mobility foster the development of key competences and experiences that are crucial for active participation in the labour market and in society in general, and emphasises the importance of mutual recognition of diplomas in order to enhance this mobility; underlines in this respect that Erasmus+ (2014-2020), a flagship EU programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport, has been a key contributor to ET 2020, as it has provided opportunities for over four million Europeans to study, train and gain experience abroad, thus making the principle of lifelong learning a reality; calls on the Commission to explore way to increase involvement of young students and workers from EaP countries in EU-based mobility projects, including volunteering activities;
15. Notes that the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme highlighted the positive impact of mobility on learners' confidence, independence, social integration and their subsequent integration into the labour market, and contributed to the creation of a sense of European identity; stresses the importance for more people-to-people contacts, mutual learning between recipients of Member States and its Eastern Partners, and increasing mutual cultural exchanges, achieved through a wider use of the Erasmus+ programme;
16. Notes that Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance must provide not only financial support but also a clear framework of social, employment and labour market integration policies to prepare partners for future membership of the European Union and support their accession process;
17. Insists that, in a context of globalised education, training and employment environments, it is essential that young people are able to make the best possible use of all learning opportunities across Europe; therefore welcomes the Commission's proposal that the budget for the successor programme of Erasmus+ for the 2021-2027 period – Erasmus –be doubled to EUR 30 billion and that there will be a stronger focus on the inclusion of persons with fewer opportunities;

18. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to increase their efforts to help low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills, for instance through targeted financial incentives and modular learning opportunities to encourage training participation;
19. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to provide assistance with the Twinning instrument projects by delivering public expertise both from public administration in EaP states, while implementing activities that include workshops, training sessions, expert missions, study visits, internships and counselling to prepare skilled workforce in various areas, particularly in digital, circular and green economies;
20. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to create targeted EaP programmes in specialised universities and an electronic educational platform for online training courses focused on European values and the rule of law, good governance, public administration and eradication of corruption in the EaP countries;
21. Supports strengthening academic and educational cooperation among the EU and EaP countries, including intra-EaP cooperation and establishment of regional programme supporting centres of academic and research excellence in the region;
22. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to analyse and share best practices on how to manage the movement of highly skilled and qualified workers between countries, thereby laying down the conditions for a well-balanced ‘brain flow’, and preventing the loss of young and educated workforce with detrimental effect for the economic growth and development of their countries of origin;
23. Encourages the Commission to work with the EU Member States and the EaP countries to meet the targets set under ET 2020, namely that at least 95 % of children should have access to early childhood education, that less than 10 % of children should leave education and training early, that the share of higher education graduates should be increased to at least 40 % of 30- to 34-year-olds, that at least 15 % of adults aged between 25 and 64 should be participating in lifelong learning at any given time, that at least 20 % of higher education graduates and 6 % of 18- to 34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad, and that at least 82 % of upper secondary or higher education graduates between the ages of 20 and 34 who left education one to three years ago should be in employment;
24. Notes with satisfaction that all EaP countries have managed to enrol children in schools and keep them in education, despite the economic challenges;
25. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to safeguard academic freedom as part of the implementation of the Bologna Process and in line with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights; reminds in this respect that higher education activities need a regulatory model for institutional autonomy;
26. Calls on the EU, its Members States and its Eastern Partners to enhance basic digital skills and competences from an early age, and to develop attractive higher education curricula that produce more digital specialists, while ensuring that special attention is paid to equal opportunities and gender balance in digital studies and careers;

27. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to pay special attention to the needs of disadvantaged, discriminated against and marginalised groups in education ensuring also that they are not doubly excluded in the online learning environment;
28. Underlines the necessity of ensuring the right to education in conflict situations and zones and emphasises in this regard the need to safeguarded schools as they should provide a safe space where children can be protected from threats and crises; notes that education is a critical step in breaking the cycle of crisis and reduces the likelihood of future conflicts;
29. Calls on the EU, its Members States and its Eastern Partners to reduce gender gaps and promote more gender-sensitive teaching in schools, in line with the new Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, in order to promote a gender equal workplace culture and help combat all forms of discrimination, including gender stereotyping;
30. Emphasises the importance of stronger cooperation at European level in learning from the COVID-19 crisis, during which technology has been used at an unprecedented scale in education, training and work, thus marking a defining moment, changing significantly the educational landscape; underlines that this crisis has made gaps in internet access and online opportunity starker, but is also an opportunity to make education and training systems fit for the digital age, in line with the 2021-2027 Digital Education Action Plan;
31. Stresses that any technology should be complementary to "traditional" and in person teaching, and points to the problems that many people, in particular children, have not been able to follow school online due to a lack of access to electricity, internet or a computer, as well as of necessary digital skills;
32. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to increase synergies and coordination between the relevant stakeholders – such as civil society actors, employer associations, trade unions, social partners, academic institutions, training centres and employment agencies – and to involve them in the design and implementation of their respective measures, so as to identify and close gaps between the needs of their labour markets, and the academic qualifications and vocational skills offered by their education and training systems;
33. Highlights the fact that the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), have an important role to play in the EaP countries by providing young people with the tools and knowledge to engage in civic activism and create a better future for themselves and their countries; calls for the Commission, the EEAS, the Member States and Eastern Partners to support the work of the EED and EIDHR, and make full use of the potential for cooperation and synergies with Eastern partners on the aspect of democratic education;
34. Underlines that close cooperation between education and training providers and the business sector is key to future-proofing our education and training systems; recalls that effective school-to-job transitions rely on a strong engagement between business and higher education institutions to adapt curricula, provide internships and mentorships while always preserving the autonomy of education and training

institutions; encourages the promotion of public-private partnerships to train young people and communicate employers' expectations about the skills of the future workforce;

35. Calls on the Commission to explore possible ways in which EU Member States and their Eastern Partners can integrate entrepreneurship into education from an early age and enhance support for young entrepreneurs;
36. Underlines that the modernisation of the EaP countries' education and training systems will bring tangible benefits to their citizens – in line with the underlying principles of the Eastern Partnership Policy – preventing the loss of intellectual capital, and fostering economic resilience;
37. Notes that a friendly business climate, with smart, transparent, clear and predictable regulations and minimum red tape, is indispensable for promoting entrepreneurship, start-ups and innovation, while fighting corruption and protecting competition can provide the much needed economic opportunities for young emerging entrepreneurs;
38. Calls on the Commission to play a more proactive role in identifying, sharing and scaling up good practices in the field of digital education, and fostering cooperation between all stakeholders at national, regional and local levels by creating a new European Digital Education Hub;
39. Underlines the need to launch a pilot project aimed at establishing the Eastern Partnership Open Science and Innovation Centre, a network of thematic centres of competence across the EaP States to provide R&I support and services;
40. Notes that, while the EU Member States retain primarily responsibility for their education and training systems, the EU itself already plays a key role by supporting and supplementing their endeavours, notably through the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop);
41. Calls on the Commission to monitor more closely the effects of EU funds on youth and to mainstream youth considerations into the EU budget and macroeconomic policy;
42. Encourages the Commission and all the countries participating in the European Higher Education Area to step up their efforts to achieve, by 2025, automatic and mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas as well as the outcomes of learning periods abroad, in line with the Council recommendation of 26 November 2018, thus building on progress already made in other fora, notably the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Recognition Convention; calls on all participating countries to bring down, across Europe, barriers to learning and promoting innovative and inclusive education and training for all, thus making the European Higher Education Area a reality;
43. Urges the EU, its Member States and Eastern Partners to respect the provisions of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Convention), with due consideration of the competent authority of a State Party to this Convention while recognising higher education diplomas within Erasmus+ and other educational programs, as well as in their bilateral

cooperation;

44. Calls on the EU to further expand its support for young people in the Eastern Neighbourhood, increasing funding from EUR 75 million for the 2014-2016 period to EUR 340 million for the 2017-2020 period, under the Education & Youth package, which is aimed at creating the necessary conditions for young people to study, train, work and engage in society; calls on the EU to further expand its support in this respect;
45. Welcomes the inauguration of the very first Eastern Partnership European School in September 2018 in Tbilisi; recalls that, as one of the EaP's '20 Deliverables for 2020', this flagship school provides students from all six EaP countries with an innovative programme that is recognised worldwide; calls on the EU to consider opening similar schools in other EaP countries;
46. Calls on the EU, its Member States and its Eastern Partners to step up their efforts in unlocking the full potential of effective synergies between education and economy by utilizing the guiding principles enshrined in the EaP declarations (COM(SWD(2020)56) namely Democracy, Good governance and Stability; to create initiatives on cultural and democratic education with a view to boosting mobility and people-to-people contacts; and achieving stronger societies through sustainable, social, and economic development;
47. Welcomes the novel 'European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience', as it contributes to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights and notably the first principle, which enshrines the right to qualitative and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning, and is also firmly anchored in the European Green Deal, the new EU Digital Strategy and the new EU Industrial and SME strategies, which will only succeed if workers have the relevant skills;
48. Notes that the new EU Circular Economy Action Plan and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 also point out the key role of skills in the transition to a green economy; welcomes the Commission's proposals for action to enhance the green transition in education;
49. Regrets that current long-term jobless rates and youth unemployment figures continue to be challenging in a number of EU Member States and EaP countries; stresses the importance of creating more quality jobs for young people; notes that this is particularly testing in the context of structural drivers of change such as technological innovations and globalisation, which pose both opportunities and challenges in the field of employment; underlines that the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, which is estimated to cause the EU's GDP to fall by over 7 % in 2020 and the unemployment rate to reach 9 %, will demand even stronger active labour market policies than under normal circumstances;
50. Notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digital transition and has given impetus to rethink the sustainability and efficiency of the education paradigm; notes that, while teleworking and distance learning have become a reality for tens of millions of people across Europe, the limitations of our digital preparedness have often been revealed, the digital skills gap has been accentuated and new inequalities have emerged, yet the pandemic helped to rethink our digital preparedness by pointing

out affairs that must be reinforced in the digital field;

51. Underlines that now, the EU laid the foundation for the transition to a new skills agenda, and yet has to deliver a clear framework for jobs to drive twin transition, to ensure recovery from the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, to strengthen sustainable competitiveness, to ensure decency, equal opportunities and to build up the EU's resilience;
52. Insists on strengthening economic and social development including through increased connectivity and regional development, agriculture and rural development and social and employment policies, by aiming to reinforce environmental protection, increase resilience to climate change, accelerate the shift towards a low-carbon economy and develop the digital economy and society;