



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Plenary sitting

A7-0314/2013

1.10.2013

REPORT

on Rethinking Education
(2013/2041(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Katarína Neveďalová

CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	18
OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS	22
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE.....	27

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Rethinking Education (2013/2041(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 20 November 2012 entitled ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’ (COM(2012)0669),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 28 November 2012 entitled ‘Annual Growth Survey 2013’ (COM(2012)0750),
- having regard to Council conclusions of 15 February 2013 on investing in education and training – a response to ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’ and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 23 November 2011 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing ‘ERASMUS For All’ – The Union programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport (COM(2011)0788),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 10 September 2012 on a Draft 2012 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018) (COM(2012)0495), and the corresponding Commission staff working document (SWD(2012)0256),
- having regard to Council conclusions of 26 November 2012 on education and training in Europe 2020 – the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth and jobs¹,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 20 December 2011 entitled ‘Education and Training in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe’ (COM(2011)0902),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 3 March 2010 on ‘Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training²,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 28 November 2011 on a renewed European

¹ OJ C 70, 8.2.2012, p. 9.

² OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 2.

agenda for adult learning (2011/C 372/01)¹,

- having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)²,
 - having regard to the Council recommendation of 5 September 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (COM(2012)0485)³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 1 December 2011 on tackling early school leaving⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2011 on early years learning in the European Union⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2011 on ‘Youth on the move – a framework for improving Europe’s education and training systems’⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 May 2010 on key competences for a changing world: implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme⁷,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 December 2008 on delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation – implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme⁸,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 12 April 2013 on Rethinking Education⁹,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A7-0314/2013),
- A. whereas one of the Europe 2020 headline targets is to reduce the share of early school-leavers to less than 10 % and to increase the share of the younger generation with a third-level education degree or proper professional training to at least 40 %;
- B. whereas the Education and Training Strategic Framework 2020 (ET 2020) includes benchmarks for at least 95 % of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education participating in early childhood education; for the share of 15 year olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science being less than 15 %; for an average of at least 15 % of adults (aged between 25 and 64 years) participating in lifelong learning;

¹ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 1.

² OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

³ OJ C 398, 20.12.2012, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 77 E, 16.3.2012, p. 27.

⁵ OJ C 377 E, 7.12.2012, p. 89.

⁶ OJ C 377 E, 7.12.2012, p. 77.

⁷ OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 8.

⁸ OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2010, p. 33.

⁹ OJ C 139, 17.5.2013, p. 51.

- C. whereas one of the EU's main priorities is to promote mobility, and whereas a target of ensuring that 20 % of EU graduates have spent part of their time at university abroad has been set for 2020; whereas student, teacher and worker mobility plays a key role in European integration;
- D. whereas youth mobility programmes for the 2014-2020 period should provide genuine opportunities to gain knowledge and new skills, thereby helping to increase youth employment rates;
- E. whereas in its Annual Growth Survey 2013, the Commission calls for promoting growth and competitiveness and tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis through sound investment in education and training;
- F. whereas in March 2013, the unemployment rate among young people up to the age of 25 in the EU was 23.5 %, while at the same time more than two million vacancies could not be filled; whereas in several Member States, the number of unemployed and the duration of unemployment is increasing, and matching on the labour market is becoming less efficient;
- G. whereas the persisting economic crisis and austerity measures aimed at fiscal consolidation in several Member States place the lives of EU citizens under heavy pressure due to unemployment, social exclusion and poverty; whereas the impact of the crisis, particularly on young people, is leading in extreme cases to instances of malnutrition or mental health problems; whereas especially in those Member States with more fragile economies, budget cuts in education have made access more difficult and undermined teaching standards;
- H. whereas the crisis and austerity policies are having a direct adverse impact on young peoples' prospects for gaining access to and remaining in education and employment; whereas education spending is an investment in the future and should therefore be shielded from austerity measures;
- I. whereas young people face increasing difficulties in their transition from education to work, and the lack of formal interaction between education institutions and the labour market increases the risk of high unemployment; whereas high-quality vocational training is dependent on close cooperation between the public and private sectors, with a high degree of involvement by social partners;
- J. whereas accessible, flexible and high-quality education and training have a crucial impact on the personal development and fulfilment of young learners, also promoting their active citizenship and wellbeing, and enhancing their ability to adjust and contribute to society and the world of work; whereas economic and social problems are increasing euroscepticism among citizens;
- K. whereas school bullying undermines young people's well-being and leads to under-achievement and early school leaving;
- L. whereas open educational resources (OER) improve the quality, accessibility and equity of education and facilitate an interactive, creative, flexible and personalised learning

process through the use of ICT and new technologies; whereas open education enhances sustained employability by supporting lifelong learning;

- M. whereas, despite high overall levels of youth unemployment, certain sectors such as information and communications technology (ICT) and health care have increasing difficulty in filling vacancies with qualified personnel; whereas an increasing gap between the qualifications of graduates and the skills requirements of the labour market can be observed in some Member States;
- N. whereas labour market needs are changing fast; whereas it is necessary to aspire to a quality education and individual development, and to examine closely future trends in labour market needs in order to adapt and modernise educational and training curricula so as to meet the need to provide a core of basic knowledge and lifelong learning strategies, and to offer the right skills for the right jobs, such as the use of new technologies and social networks, without detracting from the academic goal of passing on knowledge; whereas, as education models change, the teaching profession needs to adapt accordingly, in terms of skills and qualifications, and status and careers, for example;
- O. whereas skills, technology and jobs are changing rapidly and everyone will be obliged to adapt several times to new technologies throughout the course of their working lives, and must therefore have a core of basic knowledge that is sufficiently robust to enable them to do so;
- P. whereas the stimulation of economic growth, productivity and comprehensiveness at national level has proven to have an immense impact on the jobs market, with an increase in the number and quality of jobs being created, along with better integration of young people into the labour market;

General observations

1. Welcomes the Commission communication, in particular its strong focus on combating youth unemployment through investing in skills, calling for the modernisation of higher education systems, as well as promoting world-class vocational education and training (VET), flexible learning pathways, including through the promotion of OER, work-based learning and the involvement of social partners in their design; welcomes, furthermore, actions to address the shortages of well-qualified teachers and trainers, such as more effective teacher recruitment and retention, and professional support;
2. Considers the role of education to be much broader than just fulfilling the economic targets of European and national strategies; reaffirms, in this connection, the primary mission of education as being the preparation of individuals for life as well as for being active citizens in increasingly complex societies;
3. Notes that as a result of the economic and financial crisis, many families can no longer afford to pay for higher education, a fact which has led to an increase in drop-out rates at this level; considers that Member States should uphold the right of all persons, whatever their economic circumstances, to free and universal education of high quality;
4. Recalls that increased language competences contribute to fostering mobility and

improving employability, people's understanding of other cultures and intercultural relations; fully supports the Commission's proposal for a new EU benchmark on language competences, according to which at least 50 % of 15 year olds should have knowledge of a first foreign language and at least 75 % should study a second foreign language by 2020;

5. Acknowledges that poor language skills constitute a major obstacle to the free movement of workers and to the international competitiveness of enterprises in the Union, particularly in areas where European citizens live close to the border of a neighbouring country with a different language; recalls that language learning is deemed to be much more effective at an early age;
6. Insists that student mobility be guaranteed, with a view to broadening students' knowledge of languages and communications skills, which are prerequisites for their adaptation to the common labour market in the EU;
7. Calls for a holistic approach to education and training which addresses both academic and vocational aspects and recalls that the broader mission of education should be recognised with regard to personal growth and development; urges further support of the acquisition and recognition of competences based on non-formal and informal learning, and highlights the role of such learning as part of an overall lifelong learning strategy aimed at a socially inclusive knowledge society with strong individuals and active citizens; points out that the realisation of such a strategy will hinge on the degree of independence which our young people can achieve;
8. Calls on the Member States to perform consistent benchmarking with relevant European best-practice models in the field of education and employment;
9. Recalls the headline targets and goals to which the EU has committed itself under the Europe 2020 Strategy, namely the realisation of smart, inclusive and green growth, the creation of a strong and innovative European Union, and the promotion of social inclusion and a higher level of solidarity, while also preparing citizens for a successful and fulfilling life; draws attention to the headline target of spending 3 % of GDP on research and innovation;
10. Calls on the Member States to make public expenditure and investments in education, training, research and innovation a priority; recalls that budget cuts in these fields will have a negative impact on education, and that investment in these areas is essential for the economic recovery and global competitiveness of the Union and for progress to be made in achieving the Europe 2020 objectives;
11. Strongly supports the observation of national situations and the launch of a debate at Union level with relevant stakeholders on investment efficiency and benefits in education and training; underlines that education guarantees sustainable development, which should remain a priority regardless of the current crisis;
12. Urges Member States to adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion or belief, and age in the area of education; urges the Council to adopt promptly the horizontal anti-discrimination directive which is key to guaranteeing genuine equality and combating bias and

discrimination, including at school;

13. Invites the Member States to ensure equality of access to education and to bring forward measures which are in tune with learners' needs, in particular those of members of vulnerable groups, such as people who are not in education, employment or training;
14. Calls for the creation of specific measures to establish a better link between education and training and the working environment, in order to enhance competitiveness and anticipate the future needs of the labour market; stresses the importance of regional policies which foster the establishment of regional innovation incubators bringing creative firms, universities, investors and cultural bodies together in promoting education and training;
15. Recommends that education and science be included as priority areas in the Member States' strategy papers for the 2014-2020 programming period, with a view to the provision of resources for developing those areas, the introduction of new educational technologies, including the training of teaching staff and the raising of teaching standards;
16. Calls on Member States to pursue a closer link between the key strategic policy challenges identified throughout the European Semester and Open Methods of Cooperation (OMC) activities aimed at supporting Member States to ensure high quality and accessible education and training also in times of fiscal constraints;

Youth – investment for future

17. Recalls that young people have great potential and a crucial role to play in achieving the Europe 2020 targets for education and employment; reminds the Member States of the close link between early school leaving, lack of employment-related skills and youth unemployment; also recalls that early childhood education and care and the significant role played by parents lay the foundation for future learning and the development of young people, but that such education should be provided exclusively in a playful manner and not using school methods or pressure in the form of attainment targets;
18. Emphasises that young people are also the most vulnerable segment of society; stresses the importance of recognising young people as a priority group in the Union's social vision and stresses the importance of enhancing youth mobility; calls on Member States, in addition, to promote anti-bullying policies to reduce early school leaving and to ensure genuine access to education for all;
19. Calls for the recognition and involvement of youth and civil society organisations in the design and implementation of lifelong-learning strategies; highlights the role of youth and civil society organisations as complementary educational providers for non-formal and informal learning and volunteering opportunities, benefiting learners and young people in the development both of transversal skills and individual personal competences, such as creative and critical thinking, sense of initiative, information processing and problem solving, team work and communication, as well as self-confidence, leadership and entrepreneurship;
20. Calls for the recognition of qualifications gained by young people during their studies at non-home universities, particularly those qualifications gained in the context of the

Erasmus programme;

21. Calls for learners and the organisations to which they are attached to be involved in decision-making processes concerning education, and highlights the fact that learning should be based on a structured dialogue with learners, with respect to the tailoring of curricula and methods fostering a lifelong learning approach;
22. Urges the Member States to promote the attractiveness and improve the labour market relevance of VET, make it an integral part of the education system and ensure its quality; calls for a stronger focus on the acquisition of basic skills through formal and informal training from an early age, but also among adults, and on transversal skills, in particular through the introduction of entrepreneurial and ICT training, in cooperation with the business sector, and by bolstering creativity to help young people enter the labour market and enhance their employability, as well as develop opportunities to set up their own businesses; stresses the need for Member States to provide support mechanisms for failed start-ups and to eliminate red tape;
23. Acknowledges the importance of developing and implementing entrepreneurship-based education systems across Europe; underlines that students' access to entrepreneurship education varies and is often determined at institution level; calls, therefore, on Member States and local and regional authorities, in cooperation with education institutions, to include elements of entrepreneurship education in the curriculum content in basic education, vocational training and higher education; considers that special focus should be placed on overcoming the disparities and substantial differences in the development of entrepreneurship education, as evidenced by the 2008 survey on entrepreneurship in higher education and confirmed at the 2011 Budapest high level symposium;
24. Highlights the fact that better knowledge and skills are essential; stresses the need to enhance the attractiveness and value of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects in education as well as the areas with predictable job shortages and which will require an increasing number of qualified workers in the coming years and are likely to ensure quality and sustainable jobs (for example, green economy, business services, ICT, healthcare and education); acknowledging that STEM subjects are of extreme importance to help more young people finding jobs in times of crisis, also calls for the right balance between the acquirement of theoretical knowledge and practical skills during studies, without neglecting the study of social sciences;
25. Calls on the Member States also to provide more efficient education with a focus on transversal skills, language skills and entrepreneurial skills, in order to achieve a greater level of EU-wide employability; calls on the Member States to educate their citizens about EU citizenship rights, civic duties and commitments and how they can benefit from their right to free movement in the EU; stresses that, with a view to developing active citizenship and social integration, sufficient attention must also be devoted to the human sciences throughout schooling;
26. Stresses the need for curricula to be multidisciplinary and designed to provide open-ended, transferable skills, and for people to be able to switch from one area of studies to another; recalls that special emphasis should be placed on the teaching of subjects and content in which a shortfall has been highlighted in national and international

statistics for individual Member States;

27. Stresses the need to focus on the link between education, young people's expectations and labour market needs, so as to ensure an easier and high-quality transition from education into the labour market, which is also aimed at ensuring the autonomy of young people;
28. Highlights the importance of supporting young people, especially those not in education, employment or training (NEETs), by promoting high-quality traineeships and apprenticeships, second-chance education programmes, well-established dual learning and work-based learning, as well as specific measures to foster their access to higher education and their active integration into education and work; considers these to be valuable steps in the transition from education to professional life as well as in lowering rates of youth unemployment;
29. Calls on the Member States to take measures to increase the participation of employees and unemployed persons in vocational re-orientation and retraining programmes, in order to reduce the risks of unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, for that section of the workforce whose professional activities are less and less in demand;
30. Calls on Member States to encourage employers to offer more quality apprenticeship placements, to develop clear quality criteria aimed at preventing abuses and to ease the administrative procedures for enterprises offering work or training opportunities for young people in order to improve their career pathways;
31. Reminds the Member States of the role of the EU programmes in promoting education, mobility, language skills, active citizenship, European values, cultural awareness and other valuable skills, all of which contribute to better employability and the strengthening of young people's intercultural understanding; stresses the need for their further support in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2014–2020, focusing on learning mobility, cooperation and policy reform;
32. Draws attention to the added value of experience abroad in helping early school-leavers and young people without educational qualifications to find jobs; considers that the Erasmus+ programme is an excellent framework through which to enable people in this category, too, to receive part of their vocational training abroad;
33. Welcomes the renewed focus on achieving the automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees and its objective of placing all students on an equal footing, irrespective of the place of award of their qualification; calls on Member States, in this connection, to increase their efforts on academic degree recognition;
34. Emphasises how difficult it can be to enter the labour market upon completing one's studies, when a long period of unemployment and forced inactivity can ensue, in particular at times of economic crisis, as is the case at present; calls on the Member States to establish the necessary support policies to address these problems;
35. Urges the Member States to invest in early labour-market activation mechanisms and employment schemes, to offer work experience and to promote employment

opportunities, to establish better guidance and tailored career service centres and to provide training or refresher courses for young people who lose their jobs or who have completed formal education, in order to enable them to become independent, to live an autonomous life and to secure professional development;

36. Calls on the Member States to implement swiftly the European Youth Guarantee, work-based learning, apprenticeships and dual learning models which are easily accessible and career-oriented, to offer appropriate working conditions which have a strong learning component and are associated with a qualification process, and to work with regions in ensuring that the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) will be truly complementary and additional to existing regional and national actions to combat youth unemployment; recalls that these types of temporary employment should act as stepping stones towards permanent work; calls also for the use of cohesion-policy financing instruments as a support measure;
37. Stresses that the Youth Guarantee Scheme cannot replace structural efforts and reforms which must make the education systems and labour markets in some Member States fit for the challenges of the future;
38. Urges the Member States to halt the decline in spending on support for youth employment and education; stresses that funds and instruments from the guarantee system should be used preferentially to this end; considers that the Member States should also use cohesion policy resources as a support measure, and that such resources should specifically target projects that support youth employment and education;
39. Calls for an integrated approach which harnesses the financing possibilities offered by the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund and national sources of financing for the achievement of smart growth; stresses the role of the ESF in supporting investment in education and training, skills and lifelong learning; urges, therefore, for the safeguard of the minimum overall share for the ESF as 25 % of the budget allocated to cohesion policy; considers it important also for Member States to raise their education institutions' awareness regarding other EU funding opportunities for educational purposes;
40. Stresses the need to raise teacher awareness regarding key competences, such as techniques for learning to learn, social and civic skills, initiative, cultural awareness and self-expression; draws attention, therefore, to the importance of investing in lifelong learning schemes for teachers;
41. Recalls that it is at the sub-national level that the most accurate and timely information on regional labour markets can be sourced and where local and regional authorities can play a significant role in identifying skills mismatches, providing appropriate retraining and vocational training programmes, and incentivising investment in response to local demand;
42. Emphasises that in many remote and disadvantaged micro-regions, students have a severe problem in physically accessing schools, which contributes to a significant increase in school dropout rates; calls on the Member States, given the severe economic distress afflicting the majority of European citizens, to take concrete steps to overcome barriers of this kind;

43. Welcomes the creation of the new European Alliance for Apprenticeships; calls on the Member States to include vocational practices in their reforms and actions as part of the plans for delivering on the Youth Guarantee, and to mobilise European and national financing to this end;

Strong focus on partnerships

44. Highlights the fact that strong partnerships draw on synergies between financial and human resources and contribute to sharing the cost of lifelong learning, which is particularly important in times of austerity and which will help to halt the decline in public investment in youth employment and education; recalls that partnerships also have a positive impact on education and training by contributing to improve their quality and accessibility, while at the same time maintaining the integrity and independence of education institutions;

45. Calls for the enhancement of social and civil dialogue on education and training both at national and Union level, and for the strengthening of the role of social partners in policy making;

46. Considers the encouragement of public-private partnerships to be an important step towards ensuring shared responsibility for education and career development, with the aim being to help graduates to adapt more swiftly to the requirements of industry and the market, and to ensure that additional resources are available for updating the educational process in response to technological change;

47. Notes that the Commission Communication of 20 November 2012 entitled ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’ does not specify any concrete implementation measures for cooperation between the educational sector and different social and business partners; calls on the Commission to seek support and initiatives actively, as well as other forms of cooperation with the private sector for the improvement of education in order to better prepare students for the transition from education to the job market;

48. Calls upon the Member States to improve cooperation and partnerships between businesses and the education sector at all levels, including social partners and employers, and students and youth organisations, in particular with regard to the planning of curricula, the provision of guidance and the provision of education, training and specialisation, with a range of curricula which better meet the demands of the labour market and contribute to finding a sustainable solution to the problem of skills mismatches; calls also for the enhancement of social and civil dialogue both at national and Union level, and for the strengthening of the role of social partners in policy making;

49. Welcomes the knowledge alliances and sector-skills alliances included in the Commission proposal on the new multiannual programme in the field of education, training, youth, and sport; considers these alliances to be innovative and sustainable ways of increasing human capital;

50. Highlights the shared responsibility of different actors in the field of lifelong learning, such as education institutions, public authorities and enterprises, as well as individuals

responsible for their own lives;

51. Calls on the Commission and Member States to reflect carefully on the concept of cost sharing as a way of funding education; warns that cost-sharing mechanisms cannot be pursued at the expense of the individual; equity and universal access must be given priority in any reform of education and training systems;
52. Calls for further cooperation between education institutions and providers, the business sector, social partners, civil organisations, and local, regional and national authorities, as well as employment services in order to exchange best practices, to promote partnerships and to work towards providing quality placements, internships and apprenticeships as an effective means of addressing vacancies and the sustainable integration of people in a period of transition from education to work; stresses the need to ensure the compatibility of these practices with the measures and initiatives taken at EU level; calls also for greater use to be made of the various EU programmes and funds available, in particular regional funding;
53. Considers it vital to recognise the importance of combining public and private investment in education and training; underlines, at the same time, the need to safeguard against possible undesirable side-effects such as hindering access of socio-economically disadvantaged groups to education and training;

Lifelong learning perspective

54. Notes the demographic changes within the Union, such as an ageing population, low birth rates, as well as brain drain and the flight of human capital; notes, consequently, the need to acquire new skills and competences throughout life in order to be able to deal with the challenges presented by the world economy and respond to new labour market requirements;
55. Notes the importance of recognising education as a human right to which everyone must have access, aimed at personal and societal development and at acquiring skills for life; urges Member States to improve open access to all educational and scientific materials, with the aim of lowering costs for education and research, particularly in the light of recent budget cuts in these areas throughout the Union;
56. Encourages the Member States to promote cooperation and synergies in the field of lifelong learning, in particular to widen access to learning and design, and to adapt and modernise the curricula of education institutions – for example by using the rapidly developing potential of digital learning and OER – in order to fulfil young people’s aspirations and to address the new challenges of the contemporary world;
57. Welcomes the ‘Opening Up Education’ initiative announced by the Commission, which is aimed at improving the efficiency, accessibility and equity of education, training and learning systems by strengthening the integration of ICT and new technologies in education and training; calls on all Member States to encourage initiatives to open up education;
58. Notes with concern the wide divergence in available ICT resources and knowledge in

schools and higher education institutions between and within the Member States; stresses that the uptake of ICT infrastructure and knowledge should be mainstreamed in all education and training sectors in order to equip students for the digital age as best as possible;

59. Recalls the importance of high-quality teacher and trainer education which needs to be complemented by mobility and the professional training of educational staff throughout the duration of their career; highlights the fact that the selection and training, including in-service training, of teachers are essential in order to guarantee the overall quality of the educational system;
60. Stresses the need for innovative teaching methods and content which instruct learners about approaches to education ('learning how to learn'), also taking into consideration learners from vulnerable social groups or those with special educational needs; notes, in particular, the rapid changes in ICT, digital media and entrepreneurship education; highlights the important role of other educators (for example, youth workers, adult educators, career advisors and parents) and their valuable cooperation in response to the changing nature of education;
61. Urges the Member States to invest in lifelong learning for teachers, so as to assist in their professional and personal development, and also to promote the status of teachers' and improve their working conditions; stresses, furthermore, the possible advantages of gaining teaching experience in another European country;
62. Calls for teachers to be valued and given proper recognition in order to improve the quality of teaching provided to pupils;
63. Emphasises the importance of introducing uniform and objective criteria for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of teachers' work and their influence on students' academic results and personal development;
64. Highlights the importance of individualised learning pathways in order to help people to update and upgrade their productive, social and economic skills throughout their lives; considers individual coaching, tutoring and mentoring to be a means of transmitting knowledge and expertise to mentees, as well as identifying their personal strengths and required competences, with regard to a specific profession;
65. Considers the need to widen access to learning as a key priority for the Union, with a clear focus on those who do not have a sufficient level of basic skills; encourages the Member States to introduce specific measures in the form of financial support to people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, in order to ensure for everybody the opportunity of reaching the highest possible level of education and also to ensure that learners' needs and welfare are met;
66. Calls on the Member States to ensure that the education system addresses the needs of all prospective students throughout the period of their studies, in order to further and safeguard an inclusive and integrated education and training system and to offer supportive, tailor-made arrangements and individualised pathways, especially to members of vulnerable social groups who are at risk of non-participation or exclusion, such as the

Roma and other minorities, migrants, and those with mental and/or physical disabilities and special educational needs;

67. Stresses the need to mainstream gender equality, particularly in fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) (STEM), where women are highly underrepresented, in order to overcome occupational segregation and wage discrimination, and to eliminate discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation in education, and calls for policies to attract and ensure the social inclusion of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including older people, in learning; encourages the Member States, in this connection, to introduce specific measures in the form of practical assistance, financial support or further training;
68. Calls on the Member States to provide a wide range of support structures, such as scholarships, grants, student loans on favourable terms, tutoring, mentoring and networking assistance to disadvantaged students throughout their studies, in order to prevent them dropping out at the secondary or tertiary stage, and at tertiary level help them gain access to the Erasmus programme, in which current participation rates for students coming from low-income families are lower than average, as well as promoting their access to quality internships in business, public administration and the media, in order to enable them to acquire appropriate work experience and a support network for their future job success, as well as to integrate their specific views into the institutional culture;
69. Insists that a targeted approach be adopted in the vocational training of children with special educational needs and of children and adults with disabilities, with a view to broadening access to education, supporting their families and enabling them to fulfil their potential;
70. Considers that all Member States should make a major effort to reduce dropout rates, thereby meeting the EU 2020 headline targets which are aimed at a figure below 10 %, by launching high-quality early childhood education, development and care programmes which are appropriate to the age group, cover the entire period of early childhood from birth to the age of six, and to which equal access is guaranteed for all children;
71. Recalls that the provision of a wide range of extracurricular activities and the engagement of parents in the educational process are vital in order to tackle inequalities arising from early childhood disadvantage, to avoid educating disadvantaged students in special segregated schools, and to stop the reproduction of poverty and social exclusion across generations, which may be monitored with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as established local NGOs;
72. Shares the Commission's concerns about the alarmingly low participation levels in adult learning in most Member States, with the average rate of uptake for the EU standing at 8.9 %; stresses, therefore, the need to focus on low-skilled adults and on the role played by adult education and training in reaching out to these groups, as well as focusing on intergenerational learning; recalls the opportunities that digital learning and OER can bring with respect to access to education and training; recalls the importance of promoting digital literacy and access to and use of ICT to all age groups of the population;

73. Calls on the Member States, for the purposes of social solidarity and addressing demographic challenges, to promote voluntary activities for all age groups, and urges them to promote training courses needed by the care and support sectors;
74. Underlines the possibilities offered by massive open online courses (MOOCs) in terms of accessibility to high-quality education for everyone, allowing more flexible and creative ways of learning, promoting equality for all learners, and also in terms of cutting education costs incurred by learners as well as those incurred by universities;
75. Recognises the fact that overcoming the prejudices which prevent students from taking educational paths which are not necessarily perceived as leading to highly recognised careers and positions in society is crucial in combating unemployment and increases the attractiveness of vocational training and informal education; highlights, moreover, that in times of high youth unemployment, students should be actively informed of the realistic employment perspectives based on their education choices; urges the Member States, in this connection, to promote programmes providing vocational guidance and support for learners in choosing a career;
76. Considers the implementation of vocational guidance and careers development systems to be an important step in steering young people along the right educational and career path, and that this will increase their motivation to study and acquire vocational training;
77. Strongly supports the creation of a European area of skills and qualifications in order to achieve transparency and recognition of qualifications acquired in VET or higher education; proposes, where appropriate, to extend recognition also to qualifications gained outside of the formal education and training system, which can be seen as a tool for empowerment, democratic participation, social inclusion and as a pathway to involve or bring people back into the labour market;
78. Stresses the importance of the timely implementation and reporting on the implementation of initiatives aimed at improving the cross-border recognition of qualifications within the Union, in particular the European Qualifications Framework, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECEVET);
79. Calls on the Member States to develop a comparative framework concerning university degrees and providing a reference point on the education and skills obtained under educational systems;
80. Urges the Member States to monitor and evaluate regularly – with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, whether their education system and programmes have managed to reach out to the members of vulnerable social groups, whether they have managed to safeguard equal access to inclusive and quality education at all levels, and whether the skills provided by their education and training have indeed enhanced the employability of students, social integration and active citizenship; calls also on the Member States to act, as soon as possible, on the education-related recommendations in the European Semester and on other Commission recommendations;
81. Calls on the Commission to monitor whether the Member States have taken the necessary

steps to reform their education systems in order to achieve the above-mentioned goals;

* * *

82 Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Background

On the 20th of November 2012, the Commission presented its Communication entitled ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’. The document proposes concrete actions at the Union level and recommends initiatives at the national level in the following three main areas:

1. delivering the right skills for employment;
2. new ways of teaching and learning;
3. new approaches to funding and partnerships.

The Communication proposes to build the right skills for employment, improve basic literacy and numeracy as well as to strengthen transversal and entrepreneurial skills. It also emphasizes the need to develop partnerships in order to create the right skills strategies, and encourages debates on the funding of education.

The efficiency of teaching and learning can be enhanced through better recognition of skills and qualifications in Europe. This would foster mobility and help in reducing unemployment. The use of open educational resources and new technologies should be promoted to widen the access to learning materials and to increase the participation of students. Teachers need to have access to appropriate training to update their own skills.

The topics of the Communication are further developed in six other staff working documents. The Communication is also accompanied by the 2012 Education and Training Monitor, which gives substantial information related to the subject matter.

Rapporteur’s observations

In the current situation of economic turmoil both in Europe and worldwide, one of the biggest challenges is unemployment and people’s ability to ensure their livelihood. Combating unemployment has to be our primary objective, and this is where education and training have a crucial role to play. In the long term, education and skills development are keys to innovation and economic growth. However, high quality education that provides useful skills for the labour market needs has to go hand in hand with the development of personal competences and societal attitudes.

For the moment, educational institutions are struggling: almost every OECD country substantially increased spending on education between 1980 and 2005, yet only a few achieved significant improvements in performance. Systemic changes are needed to improve the quality of our educational institutions without imposing new burdens. Non-formal and informal learning and work in youth organisations should be better recognised and go alongside with the formal education. University-business partnerships and work-based

learning as well as better developed lifelong learning strategies can bring new incentives to boost the educational and training reform.

The Rapporteur highlights the urgent need to identify right skills for today's world – not only for students and young people entering the labour market but also for other people who need requalification in order to improve their personal situation, as regards employment, social inclusion, family life, active citizenship or self-recognition, for example. New competences and transversal skills acquired should lead to securing not only financial but also social and personal needs of the people.

Unemployment among young people up to the age of 25 in the EU reached 23,5 % in March 2013. At the same time, there were more than 2 million vacancies that cannot be filled. The Rapporteur highlights that this problem is a clear result of the current situation where the needs of contemporary labour market are often in a mismatch with the opportunities provided by the education institutions. Some vacancies require skills that an insufficient number of young people have today. In addition, there is an urgent demand for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) educated people.

When addressing the issue of skills mismatches it is important to focus on the critical clash between students' perceptions of dream jobs and labour market needs for skilled and well-educated employees. Another problem lies in stereotypical perceptions of female and male educational pathways. However, bringing forward the added value of vocational education and training and shifting away from purely formal education will help to change these perceptions. Moreover, greater gender diversity at workplace and in team work in general has proven to lead to better performance and results.

The Rapporteur would like refer to the statistics provided by EU Skills Panorama¹ to highlight the following trends in Europe:

1. Increased numbers of high skilled jobs (such as legal advisors, senior officials and managers);
2. Falling share of skilled manual jobs (such as craft workers)
3. One out of three employees is either over or under qualified (which reflects the widespread skill mismatch);
4. Private sector recruitment responds faster and stronger to the business cycle as compared with the public sector;
5. Top bottleneck occupations can be found, for example, in the field of health (in particular medical doctors, pharmacologists and nurses), in the field of ICT (in particular IT consultants and software programmers), in the field of engineering (in particular specialised engineers) and in the field of finances (business professionals, e.g. accountants).

Non-formal and informal learning, work of youth organisations, good quality internships, apprenticeships and volunteering should be recognised as tools that create the first links between student lives and labour market and spread innovative spirit among young people. Furthermore, the work experience gained during studies helps young people to acquire the

¹ www.euskillspanorama.ec.europa.eu

necessary skills needed in the transition to employment. Individual personal competences such as critical thinking, team working, problem solving, communication, self-confidence, taking initiative and leadership are also necessary in order to be better prepared not only for professional but also for private life.

The Rapporteur would also like to urge the Member States to give funding for promoting work-based learning and dual learning models which are highly valuable in the transition from school to work. In addition, it is important to invest in both quality and standard, which need to be further developed.

Language skills are crucial as they foster mobility of workers and students, improving their employability and providing them with self-confidence at their workplace. Adequate language skills enable European citizens to fully seize professional opportunities abroad. The adoption of benchmarks is a necessary step towards better language skills in Europe. It will work as an incentive to improve learning outcomes of students and help towards accomplishing the Barcelona objective of ‘mother tongue + two foreign languages’.

The Rapporteur would like to focus on the following main objectives:

- Addressing the issue of youth unemployment – the above mentioned 23,5 % of European young people;
- Updating education systems that are obsolete and creating a mismatch between opportunities provided by the education institutions and current labour market, and designing new systems to prevent the same situation from happening in the future, by using new teaching methods, involving social, regional and business partners in educational process, and lifelong learning pathways;
- Broadening the mission of education and training policies so that they have a specific role in promoting active citizenship, personal development and well-being, and enhancing structured social dialogue.

There are more and more young people outside education, employment or training (NEETs). The Union cannot afford any lost generation in future. The Rapporteur agrees with the Communication that the key tool to prevent this from happening is effective, accessible and quality education that matches with labour market needs. However, the Rapporteur wants to stress the fact that it is not only labour market needs that counts; also social inclusion and active citizenship must be addressed.

The Rapporteur urges the need to focus also on adult learning and lifelong learning programmes which help adults in acquiring requalification in order to apply for other positions during their working life. Moreover, education and training should be more accessible to vulnerable groups such as socially disadvantaged people, disabled people, minorities, older citizens and women, and should lead to enhancing their chances to live valuable lives.

The Rapporteur highlights that re-evaluating educational systems in Europe requires close

cooperation: there is a need to enhance social dialogue between educational institutions and business sector, social partners, social services (labour offices), regional authorities or NGOs to exchange good practices and to promote partnerships as a means of transition from the world of education to the world of business or employment.

When modernising education and training policies, it is also important to increase civil society involvement and corporate social responsibility among the business community. In addition, business partners can play an important role when the students are acquiring new skills; they can be seen as examples or role models, and professionals can for example be involved in class-room activities.

The Rapporteur stresses that the main idea behind the report is not only to identify the main skills and challenges for learners and people entering the labour market but also to find solutions for how to maintain the precondition of their individual and economic independence. Every human being has the right to access education. If we want to make this a reality, we need to invest in quality education in a long-lasting and sustainable way. In addition, we need to use all complementary tools to increase opportunities for personal well-being and development, and this must be fully recognised both at the Union and the national level.

27.6.2013

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on Rethinking Education
(2013/2041(INI))

Rapporteur: Kinga Göncz

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. In order to achieve the goals and headline targets to which the EU has committed itself to in the Europe 2020 strategy, - namely to realise smart, inclusive and green growth, to create a strong and innovative European Union, and to promote social inclusion and a higher level of solidarity while also preparing citizens for a successful and fulfilling life - calls on the Member States to increase their level of investment in quality education and training, and thus in human capital, preparing students to face ever-changing labour market needs and promoting their social and professional integration;
2. Stresses that better knowledge and skills are essential; calls on the Member States, therefore, to provide more efficient education with a focus on active citizenship, developing creativity, providing transversal skills (helping students to solve problems, to be flexible and to be able to adapt to unpredictable situations and work in teams and intercultural settings), practical entrepreneurial and STEM-related (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills - also for women from an early age in order to overcome occupation segregation and wage discrimination, high digital literacy, and efficient skills in languages from an early age, to be accessible to all; also, in order to achieve a more successful EU-wide employability, calls on the Member States to educate their citizens about EU citizenship rights, civic duties and commitments and how they can benefit from their right to free movement in the EU;
3. Calls on the Member States to ensure that the education system addresses the needs of all potential students throughout the period of their studies, from entry to graduation, in order to further and safeguard an inclusive and integrated education and training system with a lifelong learning approach, placing special emphasis on providing equal access and

offering supportive and tailor-made arrangements and individualised pathways regarding the different needs of students, especially of members of vulnerable social groups at risk of non-participation or exclusion such as the Roma and other minorities, migrants, and those with mental and/or physical disabilities and special educational needs;

4. Emphasises that in many remote and disadvantaged micro-regions, students have a severe problem in physically accessing schools, which contributes to a soaring school dropout rate; calls on the Member States, therefore, given the severe economic distress afflicting the majority of European citizens, to take concrete steps to overcome barriers of this kind;
5. Considers that all Member States should make a major effort to reduce dropout rates, thereby meeting the EU2020 headline targets aiming at a figure below 10 %, by launching high-quality early childhood education, development and care programmes which are appropriate to the age group, cover the entire period of early childhood from birth to the age of 6, and to which equal access is guaranteed for all children; further recalls that, by providing a wide range of extracurricular activities and engaging parents in the educational process, all these measures are vital in order to tackle inequalities arising from early childhood disadvantage, avoid educating disadvantaged students in special segregated schools, and stop the reproduction of poverty and social exclusion across generations, which may be monitored with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as established local NGOs;
6. Takes the view that all pupils must be given help with the task of developing individual learning plans; urges the Member States, therefore, to promote programmes providing vocational guidance and support for pupils and students in choosing a career;
7. Calls on the Member States to provide a wide range of support structures, such as scholarships, grants, student loans on favourable terms, tutoring, mentoring and networking assistance to disadvantaged students throughout their studies, in order to prevent them dropping out at the secondary or tertiary stage, and at tertiary level help them access the Erasmus programme, in which current participation rates for students coming from low-income families are lower than average, as well as promoting their access to quality internships in business, public administration and the media in order to enable them to have appropriate work experience and a support network for their future job success, and also to integrate their specific views into the institutional culture;
8. Shares the Commission's concerns about the alarmingly low participation levels in adult learning in most Member States, the average rate for the EU being 8.9 %; recommends expanding accessible, high quality adult learning programmes, particularly in the workplace;
9. Urges the Member States to properly target and fundamentally improve the transitions between the different educational and training pathways and assist the transition between education/professional training and employment, concerning which Member States have been called on to remove existing barriers in the context of the EU Semester process;
10. Calls on the Member States, in the light of the urgent social problems facing the EU and

with the crisis hitting young people particularly hard¹, to promote exchanges of best practices in order to reduce the youth unemployment rate and address the needs of those in transition, especially in relation to social security, to provide Youth Guarantee, quality and paid traineeships (not substituting permanent jobs), work-based learning, apprenticeships and dual learning models which are easily accessible and career-oriented, offer appropriate working conditions, have a strong learning component and are associated with a qualification process, and which are critical in the transition from education to employment; also recommends that Member States not having a dual learning system should introduce one;

11. Urges the Member States to further support the acquisition and recognition of competences based on non-formal and informal learning, for which they also award credits; calls on the Commission to provide an accessible and high-quality European validation system for such competences;
12. Calls on the Member States, in order to find a sustainable solution to the problem of mismatches between acquired skills and labour market demand, and thereby to prevent unemployment, to promote continuous dialogue and cooperation and partnerships between educational institutions, enterprises, social partners and employers', students' and young people's organisations regarding the most important areas, such as setting up education and training policies, the planning of curricula, the provision of guidance, and the provision of education, training and specialisation that are practically relevant;
13. Moreover, urges the Member States to solve skills shortages especially in sectors with growth potential, such as the green economy, ICT, health and care, and business services, which will require an increasing number of qualified workers in the coming years and which are likely to ensure quality and sustainable jobs;
14. Calls on the Member States, for the purpose of social solidarity and addressing demographic challenges, to promote voluntary activities for all age groups, and urges them to promote training courses needed by the care and support sectors;
15. Calls on the Member States to take measures to increase the participation of employees and unemployed persons in vocational reorientation and retraining programmes in order to reduce the risks of unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, for that section of the workforce whose professional activities are less and less in demand;
16. Stresses the importance of high-level teacher training and the need to prepare teachers to focus on skills and competences, provide tailor-made and innovative teaching methods to learners of vulnerable social groups and pupils with special educational needs, get acquainted with different cultures and adapt lessons to the different communication and learning styles familiar to the students, and place the emphasis on learning outcomes rather than educational formalities, with the aim of ensuring young people's successful integration into society and the labour market; moreover, urges the Member States to invest in lifelong learning for teachers, so as to aid their professional and personal development, and also to promote teachers' financial status and improve their working

¹ The youth unemployment rate in the EU stood at 23.6% in January 2013, and 8 million people in the 18-25 age group are not in employment, education or training.

conditions;

17. Urges the Member States to regularly monitor and evaluate, with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, whether their education system and programmes have managed to reach out to the members of vulnerable social groups, whether they have managed to safeguard equal access to inclusive and quality education at all levels, and whether the skills provided by their education and training have indeed enhanced students' employability, social integration and active citizenship; also calls on the Member States to act on the education-related recommendations in the European Semester and other Commission recommendations as soon as possible;
18. Stresses the role of the European Social Fund (ESF) in supporting investment in education and training, skills and lifelong learning; therefore, strongly calls for safeguarding the minimum overall share for the ESF as 25 % of the budget allocated to cohesion policy; also considers it important for Member States to raise their educational institutions' awareness regarding other EU funding opportunities for educational purposes;
19. Calls on the Commission to monitor whether the Member States have taken the necessary steps to reform their education systems in order to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	20.6.2013
Result of final vote	+: 38 -: 2 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, Edit Bauer, Heinz K. Becker, Jean-Luc Bennahmias, Phil Bennion, Philippe Boulland, Milan Cabrnoch, David Casa, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Marije Cornelissen, Emer Costello, Frédéric Daerden, Karima Delli, Sari Essayah, Richard Falbr, Thomas Händel, Marian Harkin, Nadja Hirsch, Stephen Hughes, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Martin Kastler, Jean Lambert, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Olle Ludvigsson, Thomas Mann, Csaba Óry, Sylvana Rapti, Licia Ronzulli, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Jutta Steinruck, Traian Ungureanu, Inês Cristina Zuber
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Georges Bach, Jürgen Creutzmann, Kinga Göncz, Jelko Kacin, Jan Kozłowski, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Evelyn Regner, Birgit Sippel

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	17.9.2013
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 5 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Zoltán Bagó, Malika Benarab-Attou, Piotr Borys, Jean-Marie Cavada, Silvia Costa, Santiago Fisas Aixela, Mary Honeyball, Petra Kammerevert, Emma McClarkin, Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Martina Michels, Marek Henryk Migalski, Katarína Neveďalová, Doris Pack, Chrysoula Paliadelis, Monika Panayotova, Gianni Pittella, Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, Marietje Schaake, Marco Scurria, Hannu Takkula, László Tőkés, Helga Trüpel, Gianni Vattimo, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Sabine Verheyen
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Ivo Belet, Hans-Peter Martin, Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Preslav Borissov