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REPORT

on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in VET – a lifelong learning approach
(2015/2257(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Ernest Maragall

Rapporteur for the opinion (*):
Enrique Calvet Chambon, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

(*) Associated committee - Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure

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(*) Associated committee - Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in VET - a lifelong learning approach (2015/2257(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Article 14 thereof,
- having regard to the Copenhagen Declaration of 30 November 2002 on enhanced cooperation in European vocational education and training,
- having regard to the Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020')¹,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)²,
- 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 sport³,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01)⁴,
- having regard to Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass)⁵,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 entitled "'Youth on the Move" – promoting the learning mobility of young people'⁶,
- having regard to Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning⁷,

¹ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

² OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

³ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50.

⁴ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 390, 31.12.2004, p. 6.

⁶ OJ C 199, 7.7.2011, p. 1.

⁷ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

- having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2010 on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status¹,
 - having regard to the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF-LLL)²,
 - having regard to the different instruments for recognition of competences, such as the European Framework of Certifications (CEC), the European Credits Transfer System (ECTS), the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), and the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations project (ESCO),
 - 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 report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of 28 January 2014 on the implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on quality assurance supporting education and training,
 - having regard to the Declaration of the Ministers in charge of Vocational education and training of 22 June 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020,
 - having regard to the Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, adopted at the informal meeting of EU education ministers on 17 March 2015 in Paris (8496/15),
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8-0049/2016),
- A. whereas learning mobility and training mobility are important for personal development, young people’s social inclusion, multicultural dialogue, tolerance, the ability to work in an intercultural environment, and active citizenship, and have clearly proved their potential to contribute to high-quality education and employability;
- B. whereas learning mobility and training mobility should be further strengthened in the context of both current and successive EU programmes in the area of education and training, employment and cohesion policy;
- C. whereas in 2002 the EU ministers responsible for vocational education and training

¹ OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 29.

² OJ C 111, 6.5.2008, p. 1.

(VET) launched the ‘Copenhagen process’ with the aim of enhancing European cooperation in this field with the objective of improving the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET in Europe;

- D. whereas the Copenhagen process is based on mutually agreed priorities that are periodically revised, seeking amongst its goals, to facilitate mobility and promote the use of different vocational training opportunities within the lifelong learning context;
- E. whereas, according to Eurostat, unemployment in the EU remained as high as 10.2 % in 2014 despite there being a slow recovery; whereas across the EU youth unemployment currently stands at 22.1 %, while only 51 % of the 55-64 age group is in work and the gender gap in the employment rate for older workers stands at 13.6 percentage points;
- F. whereas non-formal and informal learning and vocational training have an important contribution to make in tackling current challenges in lifelong learning, such as early school leaving, unacceptable numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and skills shortages and mismatches;
- G. whereas the persistence of skills mismatches on the labour market is evidenced by the high job vacancy rate recorded in the Commission’s 2015 Autumn Economic Forecast;
- H. whereas language skills are lower in VET and need specific boosting;
- I. whereas it is necessary to reaffirm the political commitment to support EU action in the areas of lifelong learning and VET, notably through mobility activities that focus on developing transversal competences such as adaptability, curiosity, learning to learn, and interpersonal and civic skills;
- J. whereas recent socio-economic developments have accentuated the need to make lifelong learning and VET systems not only more efficient, but also more accessible and inclusive with respect to disadvantaged groups and people with special needs; whereas wider access to education should not be implemented at the expense of the quality of education;
- K. whereas continuous financial support for mobility measures and activities related to lifelong learning and VET knowledge is crucial, especially in the current period of economic crisis;
- L. whereas the regional and local level is crucial for supporting initiatives exploring new paths for mobility in order to ensure the effectiveness, transparency and quality of funds and programmes devoted to VET; whereas mobility in VET of young people and apprentices promoted at regional and local level should be coordinated in a broad process of democratic and participatory governance aimed at addressing the most relevant socio-economic and environmental issues, involving micro, small and medium enterprises, start-ups, local communities and social partners;
- M. whereas entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce and industry and the equivalent professional bodies for craft trades and farmers, as well as trade unions and other relevant social partners, should be actively involved in the design, organisation, delivery and financing of VET, including mobility; whereas with regard to the design of VET, a

social dimension should be addressed to include areas such as fair trade, social entrepreneurship, and alternative business models such as cooperatives, and should be organised with relevant partners in those fields;

- N. whereas while youth mobility must be encouraged so as to enhance employability, it must not become the only envisaged solution for youth unemployment;

Taking stock of results and identifying key challenges

1. Believes that education is a fundamental human right and a public good that should be equally accessible to all; calls on the EU and the Member States to address all socio-economic limitations that prevent equal access for all to VET opportunities, including mobility; acknowledges that the role and results of existing programmes and initiatives for mobility in VET should be enhanced in terms of accessibility, openness and inclusiveness, in order to promote a personalised approach to education, reduce school dropout rates, and guarantee equal access to Erasmus+ mobility actions for disadvantaged groups and those with special needs; stresses, therefore, the need for flexible, diversified and customised range of mobility options for training, also maintaining a gender perspective, for people from immigrant backgrounds or economically disadvantaged families, learners from remote regions, people with disabilities and those with other specific needs;
2. Affirms the need, when dealing with the issue of mobility and education, to maintain a gender perspective and to take into account the needs of people suffering from multiple forms of discrimination, including people with disabilities, people identifying as LGBTI and those from marginalised communities; encourages, in this perspective, further measures to facilitate access for people from disadvantaged groups or with special needs to Erasmus+ mobility actions;
3. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and key stakeholders to increase the visibility of VET programmes in order to remove cultural barriers and combat the phenomena of lack of motivation, lack of proactive predisposition and lack of language skills, particularly in those areas most affected by youth unemployment; believes that it must be ensured that these programmes are accessible to all citizens without discrimination; calls for the targeting of groups at risk of unemployment, such as people with disabilities; calls for access to VET and qualifications to be made easier by promoting adaptability in apprenticeship pathways and adjustability of arrangements, as well as training opportunities for groups with insufficient basic skills and employees with low or intermediate-level qualifications; recalls that the gender balance in access to such experiences has to be taken into account, in the context of the efficient promotion of VET mobility programmes among women; considers, in this regard, that ambitious targets should be set and progress monitored;
4. Highlights the gender gap in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, skills and employment across the EU, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully commit to Erasmus+ and to use this mechanism as a key opportunity for developing STEM education in order to enhance women's ability to embark on a career in the STEM field and thus reduce the existing skills gap in this area;

5. Highlights the importance of a common European education area grounded in a strong mobility component – including not only higher education but also VET - that will contribute to the creation and development of a stronger European identity and enhanced citizenship;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make every effort with a view to attaining the objectives of the European Strategy for Education and Training 2020; believes that mobility must take account of the continuous vocational education and training (CVET) aspect, as it is key to the improvement and updating of skills and expertise; stresses that lifelong learning and VET are key to achieving better employment prospects for the long-term unemployed;
7. Believes that the above cooperation should result in a review of requirements with the aim of ensuring their relevance as regards duration, content, competences and learning outcomes, while combining mobility for both training centres and the workplace and also giving priority to longer-term experience periods (e.g. for six months) over their shorter-term equivalents;
8. Notes that the European resources allocated to Erasmus+ and VET programmes are not proportional to the numbers or needs of the potential beneficiaries of the mobility offered by these schemes, and accordingly calls on the Member States to promote bilateral agreements to supplement the activities of Erasmus+ and the European VET programmes, thus increasing the mobility of young Europeans;
9. Acknowledges the important role and results of existing programmes and initiatives for mobility, such as Key Action 1 in Erasmus+, Europass, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF); calls on the Commission to create a ‘European student e-card’ which would grant the status of EU student in a mobility context and offer access to services;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, as well as on EU agencies such as CEDEFOP, to take action to improve the VET mobility programmes so that they deliver added value for all participants as regards qualifications, recognition and content, and to ensure that quality standards are introduced for apprenticeships;
11. Points out that the mobility initiatives contribute to improving not only learners’ civic values and sense of belonging to Europe, but also their academic skills and job prospects, and more specifically those skills linked to problem-solving capacity, planning and structuring, capacity to act and adapt in the face of new situations, entrepreneurship, leadership and decision-making, social responsibility skills, knowledge of foreign languages, communication skills and teamwork skills. as well as those personal skills that impact on employability such as confidence, motivation, curiosity, critical and creative thinking, initiative and assertiveness;
12. Insists on the need to facilitate the implementation of mobility in Erasmus+, by taking action to raise the success rate of applications, simplifying the design and use of electronic tools for mobility management, raising awareness of the value of mobility programmes in all general and vocational education establishments in the Union, and providing better-targeted information and training to beneficiaries and intermediaries of

the programmes and actions, including school and college staff; stresses the importance, in this regard, of the contribution made by EuropeanSchoolNet; asks the Commission to reduce the present excessive and over-complex administrative burdens, both for applicants and for the sending and hosting companies and institutions involved in Erasmus+ projects, facilitating and simplifying the processes for application, registration and reporting, and the projects themselves; points out in addition that excessive red tape in the schools and colleges concerned acts as a barrier to the simple implementation of the programme;

13. Asks the Commission to put in place schemes aimed at reducing linguistic and cultural barriers to the organisation of mobility programmes; considers that such schemes should be able to assess implementation progress; stresses that action schemes should, in particular, support the learning of basic elements of the language of the host country; encourages Member States and regional and local authorities to examine the specific learning needs of VET teachers and trainers, encouraging and supporting the exchange of best practices, and to provide them with more professional development opportunities; highlights the importance of designing a basic training model that can provide information on the key features of the business and working culture of the destination country, as well as promoting and providing specific programmes for the training of teaching staff in the context of mobility management by the training centres;
14. Points out that occupations linked to VET have the necessary flexibility to be carried out anywhere, and that, therefore, mobility in the VET context is a key tool in the fight against unemployment, as it enhances employability, helps reduce the skills gap and facilitates job matching, especially for young people, providing skills and a unique experience of the kind needed for competitiveness in today's labour markets in the EU; considers that Erasmus+ helps develop specific professional skills and transversal and transferable competences such as entrepreneurship, as well as broadening opportunities for the involvement of the production sector, thus constituting an effective tool for the job market;
15. Stresses the significance and importance of recognisability concerning brand names and logos connected with Erasmus+ and its subprogrammes; considers that these brand names should be used in particular for the purpose of Erasmus+ publications and brochures;
16. Expresses concern that Erasmus+ is viewed by young people primarily as a programme for students in higher education; recommends, therefore, that greater importance be attached to raising the profile at European, national and regional level of the different areas and the subprogrammes relating to each area, including school-level education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), international higher education (Erasmus Mundus), vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci), and adult education (Grundtvig), as well as youth (Youth in Action) and sport;
17. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and public employment bodies to publicise and raise awareness of the Erasmus+ programme and other tools aimed at promoting mobility in the area of VET, in particular among SMEs; believes that maximising the effectiveness of these tools will allow more people to benefit from these opportunities, so that the goal of mobility may be achieved;

18. Stresses the urgent need for industry and services in both private and public sectors, including the production sector (notably SMEs and micro-enterprises), to be consulted and/or involved in the design, framing, implementation and support of quality VET mobility programmes; considers that the programme selection should take account of job opportunities with host businesses and organisations; believes that a flexible and constructive partnership based on dialogue, cooperation and best practice involving all stakeholders will ensure the success and the added value of VET; takes the view that the exchange of knowledge and best practices between training centres and firms is also needed; calls on the Commission to keep track of demand and supply on the labour market within the EU, as well as of geographic and occupational mobility, in order to match the needs of the labour market; considers that this would reduce the gap between, on the one hand, the training on offer and what actually awaits young people in the business environment, and, on the other, market needs in added value sectors (e.g. the digital and green economies, energy, defence, the care sector and housing rehabilitation);
19. Underlines the key aspects that need to be taken into account when planning mobility actions and assessing their implementation, namely: learners' economic capacity to engage in mobility; recognition of studies, competences and qualifications, and training content between countries, whether via credits or certificates; level of language knowledge; organisation of curricula or studies; the practical value of students' credits and examinations once they have returned to their university of origin; legal aspects; information or motivation to complete studies; guidance and counselling activities throughout the mobility period; and students' personal situation; calls, therefore, on the Commission to improve indicators and assessment criteria so as to enable the monitoring on a more regular basis of the effectiveness of EU programmes and make it possible to carry out any necessary improvements;
20. Points out that, at present, only 1 % of young people in work-related training schemes, including apprentices, are involved in mobility schemes during their training; points to the vital need to create the conditions for greater apprentice mobility within the EU, so as to give apprentices the same opportunities as higher education students; encourages, therefore, the definition by the EU of a statute of the 'European Apprentice'; calls on the EU and the Member States to ensure that both apprenticeships and traineeships remain formative opportunities that are not used as a source of precarious labour, do not substitute full-time professional positions, and guarantee dignified working conditions and students' rights, including financial and remuneration-related rights; encourages the Commission, in addition, to analyse the implications of the above-mentioned statute, monitor the implementation of related measures, to prompt all related stakeholders, including those of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, to follow its recommendations with a view to improving the conditions, quality and availability of apprenticeships in the EU, and to consider this issue as a strategic priority;
21. Calls on the Commission to present, and on the Member States to endorse, a proposal for an EU apprenticeship scheme that would guarantee a set of rights for apprentices and VET learners; highlights the positive role that 'seniors' can play in the education and training of youth with a view to maximising intergenerational exchange through traineeships and mentoring, as well as facilitating experience-based learning in cross-generational teams; encourages the Commission and the Member States to adopt

concrete measures to ensure that apprenticeships and traineeships under Erasmus+ are not misused by being turned into an instrument for lowering the cost of labour;

22. Values positively the launch of pilot projects, as well as the recently approved ‘European framework for mobility of apprentices’, as a basis for improvements to the Erasmus+ programme aimed at enabling more and better VET mobility of long-term duration; urges the creation of a framework for long-term initiatives as opposed to solely project-focused actions, in order to establish a permanent and sustainable system that is fully operational, is predictable, and encourages the free movement of skills across Europe;
23. Notes that early school leaving is one of the most distinct problems faced by mobility target groups, and that better vocational options lead to fewer dropouts from education and training; stresses, therefore, how important the results of educational systems may be in reducing early school leaving and in better equipping students with transversal skills which will eventually help them match their qualifications with the demands of the labour market;
24. Stresses the need to help young people in vocational training overcome their difficulties by means of certain complementary and accompanying measures, such as reinforcing the group nature of the mobility schemes, better mentoring and accompaniment by the home and host institutions before and during their mobility, improving access to high-quality information on VET opportunities, offering specialised guidance and counselling activities and tools, and financing linguistic support for all participants without language restrictions;
25. Points out that a number of factors that impact the expectations of young people being trained in VET systems can be identified, in particular socio-economic factors, family typology and a lack of guidance (and tutorial) tools once compulsory secondary education has been completed or during vocational training courses;
26. Emphasises the key role of learning and training mobility in tackling social and cultural challenges, with a view to maximising young people’s opportunities to develop their own scheme of action in society; recalls that the EU has focused its efforts, notably through the Europe 2020 strategy, on increasing the competitiveness of its economy, generating employment and, ultimately, strengthening its capacity to compete globally in the third decade of the century; emphasises, in this context, the important role of research, innovation, the digital society and energy sustainability, as instruments to provide higher added value;
27. Stresses the role of the EU and the Member States in developing and encouraging a high-quality and well-organised VET system by implementing a holistic approach that balances theoretical education focused on the profession concerned, practical training and general, formal, informal and non-formal education; calls on the Member States to introduce a ‘dual education’ approach into their upper secondary school systems, or to strengthen existing systems through traineeships and work placements, thus facilitating VET students’ sustainable integration into the labour market and increasing their participation in transnational mobility programmes; recalls that in general, improving the quality of VET in cooperation with social partners and public employment services, is a means to address social inclusion, increase participation in higher education,

promote student success and ease integration into the labour market, which should facilitate mobility in the lifelong learning process;

28. Calls for the issues surrounding the European Voluntary Service (EVS), with regard to insurance for participants, approval, database management and support for volunteers, to be addressed in a targeted manner, so as to prevent a decrease in participation;
29. Deplores the fact that non-formal learning has lost visibility and budget share in the current Erasmus+ programme; highlights the importance of non-formal learning at European level, especially through youth work and senior volunteering; calls for non-formal and informal learning to be given a clear and visible place in the Erasmus+ programme; believes, in addition, that the possibility should exist of submitting applications in respect of large-scale adult education projects that would be governed by the same principles as sector skill alliances or knowledge alliances;
30. Supports the development of modern technologies and infrastructures in strengthening and modernising national vocational education systems so as to improve access to and quality of mobility; considers that, in order to tackle skills mismatches, greater emphasis should be placed on innovation and the development of new academic and professional skills, digital learning and teaching platforms, life technologies, innovative technologies for the enhancement of cultural heritage, and information and communication technologies; strongly believes that the EU and the Member States should deliver an effective strategy aimed at matching current and future circular economy job opportunities with VET systems;
31. Notes that in the transition to a more digitised economy a redefinition of jobs and skills is taking place; calls, in consequence, on the Member States and the Commission to work in conjunction with the private sector in order to develop skilling strategies and VET programmes for the reskilling of workers;

Access: improving mobility options for young people in vocational training

32. Encourages the creation of a framework along the lines of the previous Leonardo da Vinci programme, to be referred to in the dedicated Erasmus+ calls, that identifies as clearly and precisely as possible the mobility options for young people in VET, especially through cross-platform campaigns launched by public authorities, with the coordinated participation of all stakeholders who play an active role in or have an influence on VET;
33. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to provide sufficient financial resources to support mobility programmes, taking into account potential financial barriers; advocates examining the issue of broadened visibility concerning how companies complement the allocated allowance or the possibility of providing other types of aid; considers that complementarity between the European Social Fund (ESF) and Erasmus+ should be ensured and monitored with a view to successful outcomes;
34. Calls for improved synergies between EU policies and instruments impacting on mobility and education, and in particular for complementary measures between the ESF and Erasmus+, as well as for greater coordination of all actions at all levels (national, regional and local planning);

35. Reiterates the need for measures to ensure coordination, complementarity and consistency between Structural Funds including the ESF and programmes such as Erasmus+ at national, regional and local level;
36. Underlines the need to compensate for the obstacles that derive from the lower socio-economic status of VET students, through measures such as a possible increase in the amounts of individual grants from the Commission, or an increase in the contributions made by Member States and regional and local administrations, intermediate institutions or NGOs, whether funded from their own budgets or via partnership schemes involving businesses, foundations and organisations collaborating in the system of qualification and vocational training in their region or territory;

From mobility to employability: validation and recognition of learning outcomes, skills and competences

37. Underlines that acquiring new, diverse and creative ideas abroad may motivate and boost entrepreneurship and creativity; stresses that the opportunities offered by learning and training mobility, such as building international networks, may also have positive effects on employability, transnational cooperation and Europe's competitiveness;
38. Considers that current and future measures to tackle skills mismatches should both facilitate the involvement of employers, businesses and local communities, and be better connected with forecasts concerning labour market developments and future skill needs;
39. Highlights that there is a positive association between learning mobility and future mobility and earnings, since EU and international mobility programmes enhance participants' employability abroad, as the Commission's Joint Research Centre found in 2013; stresses that apprenticeships and traineeships abroad improve participants' language skills (as occurs in 79 % of cases, according to Eurobarometer in 2013)¹;
40. Underlines the importance of mobility retraining programmes, for unemployed people of all ages and for people threatened by restructuring measures;
41. Draws attention to the diversity and uneven development of validation and recognition systems between Member States, despite growing convergence in the last decade; stresses the need to improve compatibility between different vocational education and training systems and facilitate the validation and recognition of skills and competences acquired in companies or training centres in different Member States, as also to increase the attractiveness of the Erasmus+ programme; calls on Member States to improve the implementation of the EQF² and remove barriers; encourages the definition of a European standard that is acceptable and implementable at all levels (national, regional and local);
42. Encourages further measures to promote the recognition and validation of learning outcomes, including those developed through non-formal and informal learning, particularly through better use of existing tools such as Europass and ECVET;

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_378_en.pdf

² See: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, OJ C 111, 6.5.2008, p. 1–7

43. Recalls that important improvements have been made thanks to the EQF, as regards the recognition of diplomas, credits, skills certificates, competency accreditations and acquired expertise in the context of VET; calls for the establishment of specific targets, among them the implementation of a fully operational system of credit transfers and recognition, to be based on ECVET; encourages the development of joint VET qualifications that can ensure the international recognition of qualifications;
44. Advocates drawing up a Green Paper on vocational education, training and mobility and the recognition of skills and competences in Europe, to be drafted in close cooperation with all key stakeholders; recalls that the current recommendations concerning VET need to be fully implemented; points out that the non-recognition of competences has a negative impact on the Europe 2020 employment rates target, and hinders free movement as enshrined in the Treaties;
45. Favours greater mobility in employment, education, apprenticeships and traineeships in the context of national European Youth Guarantee Schemes, in order to improve the skills of young people and reduce the geographical skills mismatch in the EU;
46. Stresses the importance of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative in supporting apprenticeships, traineeships, VET, job placements and further education leading to a qualification; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to these programmes for the whole programming period 2014-2020;
47. Urges the translation into all official languages of the Union of the EU Skills Panorama website, in order to make it a source of information accessible for all on skills needed throughout Europe;
48. Notes the progress that have been achieved towards ensuring higher VET quality in numerous Member States, supported by the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) framework; and encourages those Member States that are currently in the process of developing a national quality assurance approach in line with EQAVET; stresses that Member States should make more effort to ensure that quality assurance arrangements take greater account of learning outcomes and that they value and support non-formal learning and work-based learning in either formal or non-formal settings, as appropriate to the national context;
49. Underlines that apprenticeship programs should be conducted under the guidance of a competent supervisor;

Towards more efficient, accessible and inclusive mobility programmes

50. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, also in collaboration with CEDEFOP, to define and strengthen the role of the intermediary institutions, both territorial and sectoral, involved in the preparation, management and follow-up of mobility, while demanding that they practise the highest standards of transparency, and to assist in the setting-up of such institutions at national, regional and local level;
51. Stresses the need for such intermediary institutions to have adequate budgetary and human resources to enable mobility organisation and management structures to

- guarantee the involvement of the network of vocational training schools, and to have the power and capacity to establish operational alliances and agreements with potential partners, both at home and in the Member States participating in mobility programmes;
52. Stresses the need for legal protection of minors abroad;
 53. Emphasises that mobility actions and/or services adapted to the needs of trainers, tutors and entrepreneurs should be encouraged and highlighted within ERASMUS+;
 54. Points out that coherent, complementary and well-coordinated co-funding schemes at European, national, regional and local level are necessary in order to enable training centres to cover the total range of costs and plan and implement permanent actions;
 55. Welcomes the fact that Erasmus+ has significantly expanded the number of beneficiaries of VET programmes among those young persons who do not go to university or college;
 56. Supports all necessary accompanying measures, first of all to assist and encourage apprentices wishing to take part in mobility programmes, and later to help them better communicate their acquired skills through mobility and develop their self-assertiveness in order to make their know-how and the richness of their experience visible and worthwhile;
 57. Considers that the learning outcomes of apprenticeship should be designed and discussed with the apprentice in line with ECVET principles before the apprentice embarks on training, and that the outcomes should be listed in the Certificate Supplement after completion of the training;
 58. Emphasises the importance of quality teacher training and of monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance in this field, as well as the need to encourage inclusiveness and tolerance in mobility programmes;
 59. Emphasises the need for quality placements that can enable students to acquire desirable professional skills, in addition to highlighting the need, at all levels, for good communication vis-à-vis entrepreneurs in order to bring them on board with a view to further recognition of the experience acquired by young people taking advantage of mobility schemes;
 60. Supports all measures in line with the Erasmus+ objectives taken by entrepreneurs, NGOs or civil society to develop mobility schemes for young employees or apprentices, either by branch of activity or in interaction with bodies representing the industries, such as chambers of commerce and industry, in addition to European networks such as Eurochambres and the relevant trade unions; calls for the recognition of the role of Skilled Craft Chambers and their training centres in supporting mobility and very small companies; believes that all measures taken to improve VET schemes should also focus on domains promoting zero carbon energy and sustainable mobility;
 61. Recommends that all key stakeholders work on joint strategies aimed at enhancing either the return home of vocational education trainees and apprentices or their mobility to other parts of Europe, while respecting their preferences, the aim being to channel the

knowledge and experience acquired ‘abroad’ for the reduction of imbalances and enhancement of cohesion in their own ‘skill-deprived’ areas of origin or elsewhere in Europe;

62. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish and effectively implement a European network of workshops and incubators , as being crucial for encouraging knowledge alliances among schools, universities and businesses and promoting access to training, experience, refresher courses for teachers and lecturers, apprenticeships and start-ups;
63. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support and strengthen the European Network of Science Centres (ECSITE), which brings together science centres as places providing access to scientific culture;
64. Calls for the setting-up of a one-stop-shop mechanism for pooling data and communication tools in order to provide a convenient and efficient service for those seeking information and support regarding the various mobility programmes existing at EU, national, regional and local level;
65. Calls on the Commission to provide up-to-date statistics and to carry out assessments and/or studies regarding Erasmus+ and other VET mobility programmes, where feasible, in order to measure their impact in matching work experience with jobs with regard to the hiring rate, and also to examine why some Member States are generating more applications for VET work and learning experiences abroad and draw up a plan for their greater involvement; believes that the resulting statistics and assessments should be included and taken into account in the mid-term review of Erasmus+;
66. Welcomes the conclusions agreed by the ministers responsible for vocational education and training in Riga on 22 June 2015, proposing a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020, and calls for their timely and thorough implementation;
67. Stresses the importance of promoting the gains derived from mobility in terms of employability and acquired skills, in order to demonstrate its genuine utility and to reduce the perception that time is wasted on training which a priori depends on purely national competences;
68. Encourages improving the promotion and visibility for young people and enterprises of such platforms as Drop'pin@EURES, the aim of which is to facilitate the mobility of young people in terms of apprenticeships, internships, training programs, and e-learning language courses;
69. Encourages Member States to promote the full range of opportunities offered by the new Erasmus+ programme, which provides young people not only with opportunities to study abroad, but also with opportunities for apprenticeships and work placements;
70. Encourages the introduction of a minimum level of allowances, adjusted in accordance with variations in living conditions, prices and costs between Member States; supports the notion that Member States should introduce measures to enable necessary and beneficial support where relevant, e.g. for accommodation and transport, paying special

attention to the needs of minors, as well as preparing students before their international experience, for example through career guidance, language teaching and cross-cultural communication;

71. Calls for a review/revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF), to be based on criteria including the prior assessment of the effectiveness of measures to combat unemployment, with funding for the less effective provisions being cut; considers that such an approach is particularly important in times of crisis, such as the present moment, which are marked by unacceptable imbalances;

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72. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The introduction of Erasmus+ in the place of the various preceding programmes has marked a major step forward for mobility as a concept across the European higher education area.

It must, however, be acknowledged that mobility is less prevalent in vocational educational training (VET). The previous programme, Leonardo, successfully completed a first phase of establishing a programme of simultaneous work and study exchanges for participants in countries other than their countries of residence.

Combining the programmes into Erasmus+, on one hand, and the after-effects of the economic crisis observed since 2008, on the other, have revealed a structural deficit within vocational training mobility programmes.

It is clear that differences in academic outlook and curricula, the organisation and management of educational establishments and relationships between the education system and business give rise to greater complexity, costs and operational difficulties to mobility programmes between countries and European regions.

Specifically, severe difficulties have been encountered in the recognition and accreditation of study and working practices between certain countries. The gradual process of adopting and implementing the Europass and ECVET programmes, which are, however, very well designed, has been held up by a considerable, and not always acceptable level of resistance.

The economic and social realities in the various Member States are further evidence of the urgent need to breathe new life into this form of vocational education across Europe. Data showing a radical imbalance in unemployment rates between some European regions also call for an adequate, multidimensional response.

There are regions with real rates approaching zero, while others display abnormally high unemployment of over 40% among their young people, who have, moreover, often failed to complete secondary school or vocational training.

This unacceptable disparity is chiefly attributable to differing performance of their respective economies and the characteristics of each country's production model, but it also highlights how absurd it is for Member States, even those within the eurozone, to suffer from difficulties that would appear at first glance to be contradictory and conflicting.

In some cases there have been clearly not enough skilled young people to meet the needs of a given productive economy, while in others society has been seriously damaged by an inability to provide job opportunities for thousands of recent young people who have recently left their country's education system, with or without qualifications.

It thus makes sense for a genuine, and ambitious mobility programme catering for both of these needs to be an integral part of any overall strategy for economic recovery and reducing rates of youth unemployment that are completely unacceptable for each country and Europe as a whole.

There is thus an increasingly pressing need for some of the Erasmus+ programme's current lines of work to be more ambitious in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Similarly, the recognition, accreditation and quality control processes that are to serve as a common framework for all Member States need to be completed as soon as possible. This

common environment is indispensable for formulating and implementing mobility programmes that education systems can provide and the productive sector of the economy must, in its own interest, accommodate.

But while this European framework is under construction, what we can do now is implement policies aiming to overcome some of the difficulties that existing assessments have identified and, in some respects, quantified.

Firstly all new strategies to be identified and implemented must have two essential features:

- their implementation must be fully shared between each country's educational systems and productive sectors;
- they must offer maximum flexibility so as to adapt to very different realities, while featuring certain common elements to facilitate coordination and work efficiently in the service of mobility, which must be seen as a useful tool in ensuring employability and social integration.

Secondly, strategies must also consider the highly specific characteristics that define the target group and that pose the greatest complexity or are objectively the hardest to overcome.

Indeed, due consideration of socioeconomic factors, types of family and degree of predisposition or otherwise to completing stages of education leads us to conclude that, for certain students cannot make the same natural, seamless progression towards European mobility as in undertaking university studies.

In vocational training, meanwhile, the benefits seen as natural for European mobility in higher education are not yet afforded due importance: financial assistance to overcome prior limitations, mutual recognition of studies, qualifications and experience, sufficient command of second and third languages, organisation of curricula and respective studies, legal aspects of recruitment procedures.

It is therefore necessary to stress the undisputable benefits mobility offers in terms of employability.

These include the acquisition of values associated with European citizenship and a sense of belonging to Europe, and, especially, those directly relevant to stable and quality employment: problem-solving ability, event organisation and planning, performing in new or unforeseen situations, decision-making, etc. as well as more individual skills such as entrepreneurship, innovative curiosity or personal assertiveness.

Lastly, a review of the various issues requiring urgent action shows the obvious damage caused by the persistence of early school leaving, or early abandonment of vocational training, in several countries.

Here again, European mobility offers a wide range of possible responses progressively aiming to dissuade students from taking this personal decision that is giving rise to a major accumulated social and productive deficit.

If we also consider the 2020 strategy's targets concerning job creation and global competitiveness, there is ample justification for us to outline objectives, lines of action for the European Union and each country, specific action for the Commission to take and changes or improvements that can be made to the Erasmus+ programme.

1. Expanding and improving mobility options for students in vocational training. Beginning with the establishment of a common framework setting out simply and

clearly the possibilities open to them: the courses available, location, professional sector, the range of professional activity, companies, duration, the final qualification they are working towards, etc.

2. Agreeing to take joint, complementary measures to be shared between the European Social Fund and Erasmus+ with a view to coordinating and strengthening the programmes, avoiding overlaps or duplication in the use of EU funds and ensuring the appropriate allocation of responsibilities at national, regional and local levels.
3. Paving the way for the increased funding that will be needed to overcome the complexities and specific difficulties facing those involved in these EU programmes, with due consideration for the necessary degree of involvement and effort of each stakeholder: educational administration bodies, businesses, management bodies and intermediaries, families and students, foundations and social organisations, etc.
4. Establishing programmes for removing obstacles and creating the appropriate environment for successful mobility initiatives: reducing language barriers, familiarity with different cultural realities and productive socio-economic backgrounds, etc.
5. Agreeing a timetable and specific targets for the Europass, ECVET and EQAVET programmes to lay the foundations for a European area of reliability and mutual trust between stakeholders, an essential element in achieving the ambitious targets of the programmes.
6. Identifying with sufficient clarity intermediaries to assume new operational roles and responsibilities in ensuring mobility, a key task that is currently only partially completed. The relative weakness of vocational training as a whole is all the more evident in this area when compared with the undisputed strength of the network of European universities, which ensures that bilateral relationships yield optimal results.

Establishing joint regional agencies or consortia in partnership between educational establishments and business thus appears the best operational solution.
7. Ensuring that mobility paves the way for employability. The first battleground concerns the recognition of not only studies but also of acquired skills and accredited professional experience, including that obtained in other countries through mobility programmes.
8. Adapting educational systems to successfully address skills mismatches.
9. Paying particular attention to the training and mobility of teachers involved in the process of vocational training, by means of specially designed exchange programmes for them, with or without the obligation to accompany and train groups or students.
10. Building sector- or region-specific business clusters to be directly involved in running mobility programmes as recipients of trainees and as providers of professional experience tailored to meet the desired educational objective.

These 10-point guidelines for policy action are intended for all vocational training stakeholders and require the explicit leadership of the European Commission and specialised agencies in the sector, particularly CEDEFOP, which must be given a key role and well-defined, well-respected responsibilities.

13.1.2016

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (*)

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in VET - a lifelong learning approach
(2015/2257(INI))

Rapporteur (*): Enrique Calvet Chambon

(*) Associated committee – Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure

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 into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas, according to Eurostat, unemployment remained as high as 10.2 % in 2014 despite there being a slow recovery; whereas across the EU, youth unemployment currently stands at 22.1 %, with only 51% of the 55-64 age group being in work, while the gender gap in the employment rate for older workers stands at 13.6 percentage points;
- B. whereas skills mismatches on the labour market persist, as shown by the high job vacancy rate in the Commission's 2015 Autumn Economic Forecast;
 1. Points out that Erasmus and other education and training mobility programmes have contributed to European integration, strengthened the idea of citizenship, facilitated students' personal development and critical thinking and enhanced the learning of new languages; stresses that these programmes have had an indirect impact on employment, and believes that Erasmus+ should not diminish those achievements but, rather, amplify them, in particular by preparing young people for employment;
 2. Emphasises that the number of study periods completed abroad through the Erasmus scheme has been steadily increasing since 2008, despite the economic, financial and social crisis; draws attention to the fact that, at the same time, the number of work placements abroad has increased exponentially; concludes that work placements are obviously regarded by young people as an excellent opportunity to enhance their employability;

recommends that the Commission and national agencies, organisers and institutions take note of this development¹;

3. Points out that occupations linked to vocational education and training (VET) have the necessary flexibility to be carried out anywhere, and that, therefore, mobility in the context of VET is one of the important tools in the fight against unemployment, as it enhances employability, reduces the skills gap and facilitates job matching, especially for young people, providing skills and a unique experience of the kind needed to be competitive in today's labour markets within the EU; considers that Erasmus+ leads to the development of specific professional skills and transversal and transferable competences such as entrepreneurship, as well as broadening opportunities for the involvement of the production sector, thus constituting an effective tool for the job market; encourages Member States to promote the full range of opportunities offered by the new Erasmus+ programme, which provides young people not only with opportunities to study abroad, but also with opportunities for apprenticeships and work placements;
4. Urges that dual work/study courses be promoted and valued, and that vocational training for jobseekers and those in work be enhanced, with a particular focus on underqualified groups;
5. Considers that mobility programmes should primarily serve as a tool to enrich one's curriculum when specific educational opportunities are lacking in the home institution or country; believes, therefore, that the added value of such an experience should be an important factor in selecting a host institution, and that participants in mobility programmes should be advised and steered by the sending institution regarding their choice of educational opportunities/professional experience; considers that verification of the suitability of mobility programmes is also required on an ex post basis;
6. Calls for better promotion of the mobility programmes for advanced levels of higher education, in order to meet the objectives for internationalisation of European universities and research centres;
7. Expresses concern that Erasmus+ is viewed by young people primarily as a programme for students in higher education; recommends, therefore, that greater importance be attached to raising the profile at European, national and regional level of the different areas and the sub-programmes relating to each area, including school-level education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), international higher education (Erasmus Mundus), vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig), as well as youth (Youth in Action) and sport;
8. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and key stakeholders to increase the visibility of VET programmes in order to remove cultural barriers and combat the lack of motivation, lack of proactive predisposition and lack of language skills, particularly in those areas most affected by youth unemployment; believes it must be ensured that these programmes are accessible to all citizens without discrimination; calls for the targeting of

¹ See: 'Student and staff mobility in times of crisis', DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), December 2014, funded by the Commission.

groups at risk of unemployment, such as people with disabilities; calls for access to VET and qualifications to be made easier by promoting adaptability in apprenticeship pathways and adjustability of arrangements, as well as training opportunities for groups with insufficient basic skills and employees with low or intermediate-level qualifications; recalls that the gender balance in access to such experiences has to be taken into account, in the context of the efficient promotion of VET mobility programmes among women; considers, in this regard, that ambitious targets should be set and progress monitored;

9. Highlights the gender gap in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, skills and employment across the EU, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully commit to Erasmus+ and to use this mechanism as a key opportunity for developing STEM in order to enhance women's ability to embark on a career in the STEM field and thus reduce the existing skills gap in this area;
10. Recalls that people with disabilities have special requirements, and thus need appropriate support in order to access Erasmus+ scholarship programmes; calls, therefore, on the Commission to introduce further measures aimed at ensuring barrier-free and non-discriminatory access for people with disabilities to all scholarship programmes in the framework of Erasmus+;
11. Calls on the Member States to provide appropriate training and ensure the ongoing professional development of teachers and education leaders in VET, in order to help them use the most appropriate hands-on and real-life experience teaching methods;
12. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to provide sufficient financial resources to support mobility programmes, taking into account potential financial barriers; believes that a broadened visibility about how companies complement the allocated allowance or the possibility of providing other types of aid should be examined; considers that complementarity between the European Social Fund and Erasmus+ should be ensured and monitored with a view to successful outcomes; encourages the introduction of a minimum level of allowances, adjusted in accordance with variations in living conditions, prices and costs between Member States; supports the notion that Member States should introduce measures to enable necessary and beneficial support where relevant, e.g. for accommodation and transport, paying special attention to the needs of minors, as well as preparing students before their international experience, for example through career guidance, language teaching and cross-cultural communication;
13. Points out the multiple disadvantages still being suffered by those who use their right to mobility as regards social security or recognition of competences, and stresses that mobility in the framework of Erasmus+ must aim at overcoming this;
14. Calls for the issues surrounding the European Voluntary Service (EVS), with regard to insurance for participants, approval, database management and support for volunteers, to be addressed in a targeted manner, so as to prevent a decrease in participation;
15. Notes that there is still a lack of information on the arrangements for recognition, meaning that they are remote from the user and are difficult to use or understand;
16. Highlights the importance of a common European education area grounded in a strong mobility component – including not only higher education but also VET - that will

contribute to the creation and development of a stronger European identity and enhanced citizenship;

17. Recalls that important improvements have been made thanks to the European Qualifications Framework, as regards the recognition of diplomas, credits, skills certificates, competency accreditations and acquired expertise in the context of VET; calls for the establishment of specific targets, among them the implementation of a fully operational system of credit transfers and recognition, to be based on the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET); encourages the development of joint VET qualifications that can ensure the international recognition of qualifications;
18. Advocates drawing up a Green Paper on vocational education, training and mobility and the recognition of skills and competences in Europe, to be drafted in close cooperation with all key stakeholders; recalls that the current recommendations concerning VET need to be fully implemented; points out that the non-recognition of competences has a negative impact on the Europe 2020 employment rates target, and hinders free movement as enshrined in the Treaties;
19. Underlines the key importance of recognition across Member States of learners' achievements and acquired skills and competences; believes that the EU mobility programmes have a direct impact on beneficiaries' non-formal and informal learning, ultimately improving their employability and ability to adapt to the job market; calls on the Commission and the Member States to intensify their efforts to ensure the recognition of informal and non-formal learning by means of skills validation procedures;
20. Deplores the fact that non-formal learning has lost visibility and budget share in the current Erasmus+ programme; highlights the importance of non-formal learning at a European level, especially through youth work and senior volunteering; calls for non-formal and informal learning to be given a clear and visible place in the Erasmus+ programme; believes, in addition, that the possibility should exist of submitting applications in respect of large-scale adult education projects that would be governed by the same principles as sector skill alliances or knowledge alliances;
21. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make every effort with a view to attaining the objectives of the European Strategy for Education and Training 2020; believes that mobility must take account of the continuous vocational education and training (CVET) aspect, as it is key to the improvement and updating of skills and expertise; stresses that lifelong learning and vocational education and training are key to achieving better employment prospects for the long-term unemployed;
22. Calls on the Member States to improve the implementation of the VET mobility programmes and remove the remaining barriers, and, working alongside the Commission and the national and European executive agencies, as well as key stakeholders, to continue their cooperation aimed at improving the VET mobility programmes; believes that this cooperation should result in a review of requirements with the aim of ensuring their relevance as regards duration, content, competences and learning outcomes, while combining mobility for both training centres and the workplace and also giving priority to longer-term experience periods (e.g. for six months) over their shorter-term equivalents;
23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve both the quality and supply

of apprenticeships so that every student enrolled in VET is guaranteed an apprenticeship place, thus ensuring quality VET that actually improves labour market outcomes and provides young people with skills and competences for life;

24. Calls on the Commission to present, and on the Member States to endorse, a proposal for an EU apprenticeship scheme that would guarantee a set of rights for apprentices and VET learners; highlights the positive role that ‘seniors’ can play in the education and training of youth with a view to maximising intergenerational exchange through traineeships and mentoring, as well as facilitating experience-based learning in cross-generational teams; encourages the Commission and the Member States to adopt concrete measures to ensure that apprenticeships and traineeships under Erasmus+ are not misused by being turned into an instrument for lowering the cost of labour;
25. Recommends that all key stakeholders work on joint strategies aimed at enhancing the return or the mobility of vocational education trainees and apprentices to other parts of Europe, while respecting their preferences, the aim being to channel the knowledge and experience acquired ‘abroad’ for the improvement of imbalances and enhancement of cohesion in their own ‘skill-deprived’ areas of origin or elsewhere in Europe;
26. Stresses the urgent need for industry and services in both private and public sectors, including the production sector (notably SMEs and micro-enterprises), to be consulted and/or involved in the design, framing, implementation and support of quality VET mobility programmes; considers that the programme selection should take account of job opportunities with host businesses and organisations; believes that a flexible and constructive partnership based on dialogue, cooperation and best practice between all stakeholders will ensure the success and the added value of VET; takes the view that the exchange of knowledge and best practices between training centres and firms is also needed; calls on the Commission to keep track of demand and supply on the labour market within the EU, as well as of geographic and occupational mobility, in order to match the needs of the labour market; considers that this would reduce the gap between, on the one hand, the training on offer and what actually awaits young people in the business environment, and, on the other, market needs in added value sectors (e.g. the digital and green economies, energy, defence, the care sector and housing rehabilitation);
27. Notes that in the current economic climate, characterised as it is by a high rate of youth unemployment and by a disparity between demand and supply with regard to skills, mobility programmes in the fields of education and vocational training must be more closely tailored to the specific requirements of the job market;
28. Notes that in the transition to a more digitised economy a redefinition of jobs and skills is taking place; calls, in consequence, on the Member States and the Commission to work in conjunction with the private sector in order to develop skilling strategies and VET programmes for the reskilling of workers;
29. Stresses the positive results produced by the previous Erasmus programme for young entrepreneurs, as well as the role of VET in promoting an entrepreneurial spirit among young Europeans; hopes, therefore, that the EU initiatives in support of youth entrepreneurship and the creation of innovative start-ups will be strengthened ;
30. Supports the Commission’s Erasmus programme for young entrepreneurs, which gives

entrepreneurs of the future the chance to learn alongside experienced entrepreneurs running small businesses in participating countries; stresses the ‘win-win’ nature of such exchanges, which enable new entrepreneurs to acquire the essential skills for successful business management at the same time as giving experienced entrepreneurs the benefit of a new perspective on their business and enabling them to expand their professional networks and penetrate new markets;

31. Welcomes the tools developed by the Commission, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Europass, Eures, and the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe platform (Ploteus), which offer information on VET and mobility, but regrets the fact that these tools are not sufficiently known or used; calls on the Commission, the Member States and public employment bodies to publicise and raise awareness of the Erasmus+ programme and other tools aimed at promoting mobility in the area of VET, in particular among SMEs; believes that maximising the effectiveness of these tools will allow more people to benefit from these opportunities, so that the goal of mobility may be achieved; considers that consultation and/or involvement of the production sector in designing and updating these tools would create added value and would facilitate response to the demands of the labour market; notes that increased efforts on the part of the Commission are needed with a view to cutting red tape, for both applicants and host companies and institutions, and insists that greater transparency, simplicity and clarity in the implementation of the programmes will help solve past problems related to payments; calls on the bodies responsible to investigate and address any shortcomings in this respect, where appropriate and as quickly as possible;
32. Welcomes the improved arrangements for access to programme-related documents in all official EU languages; notes that the quality of translation should be improved in order to avoid ambiguity and misconceptions for the participants;
33. Considers that mobility in VET encourages occupational and not just academic mobility; calls on the Commission to promote this occupational mobility through mechanisms for occupational adjustment and language support, so as to ensure that experiences in other countries are successful and well-run; emphasises the fact that good foreign language skills are essential in working life, and welcomes the fact that the foreign language skills of participants in Erasmus+ projects will be enhanced by means of standardised online language tests and language courses (e.g. via the OLS Portal);
34. Stresses the fact that there are 12 cross-border EURES partnerships, which assist more than 1 000 000¹ workers in border regions who live in their native countries and working in another country, and that these partnerships help those workers deal with the administrative, legal and organisational issues that affect searching for work and cross-border hiring; stresses the importance of these partnerships for encouraging mobility in cross-border regions; encourages Member States to support these partnerships and to promote them more, especially among young people;
35. Values positively the launch of pilot projects, as well as the recently approved ‘European framework for mobility of apprentices’, as a basis for improvements to the Erasmus+ programme aimed at enabling more and better VET mobility of long-term duration; urges the creation of a framework for long-term initiatives as opposed to solely project-focused

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/eures-in-cross-border-regions#/list>

actions, in order to establish a permanent and sustainable system that is fully operational, is predictable, and encourages the free movement of skills across Europe;

36. Notes that the ‘European framework for the mobility of apprentices’ could act as a specific ‘highway’ for alleviating youth unemployment by facilitating a smooth transition from education and training to the labour market and; calls for the creation of improved opportunities for VET students to do work placements in neighbouring countries, e.g. by funding the travel costs of students who continue to reside in their home country;
37. Stresses the importance of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative in supporting apprenticeships, traineeships, VET, job placements and further education leading to a qualification; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to these programmes for the whole programming period 2014-2020;
38. Notes that the European resources allocated to Erasmus+ and VET programmes are not proportional to the numbers or needs of the potential beneficiaries of the mobility offered by these schemes, and accordingly calls on the Member States to promote bilateral agreements to supplement the activities of Erasmus+ and the European VET programmes, thus increasing the mobility of young Europeans;
39. Calls for a review/revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF), to be based on criteria including the prior assessment of the effectiveness of measures to combat unemployment, with funding for the less effective provisions being cut; considers that such an approach is particularly important in times of crisis, such as the present moment, which are marked by unacceptable imbalances;
40. Calls on the Commission to provide up-to-date statistics and to carry out assessments and/or studies regarding Erasmus+ and other VET mobility programmes, where feasible, in order to measure their impact in matching work experience with jobs with regard to the hiring rate, and also to examine why some Member States are generating more applications for VET work and learning experiences abroad, and to draw up a plan for their greater involvement; believes that the resulting statistics and assessments should be included and taken into account when drawing up the mid-term review of Erasmus+.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	11.1.2016
Result of final vote	+: 47 -: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Laura Agea, Guillaume Balas, Tiziana Beghin, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Enrique Calvet Chambon, David Casa, Ole Christensen, Jane Collins, Lampros Fountoulis, Elena Gentile, Arne Gericke, Marian Harkin, Agnes Jongerius, Rina Ronja Kari, Ádám Kósa, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Kostadinka Kuneva, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Jeroen Lenaers, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Thomas Mann, Anthea McIntyre, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Emilian Pavel, Georgi Pirinski, Sofia Ribeiro, Maria João Rodrigues, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Jutta Steinruck, Yana Toom, Ulrike Trebesius, Ulla Tørnæs, Marita Ulvskog, Tatjana Ždanoka, Jana Žitňanská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Maria Arena, Georges Bach, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Krzysztof Hetman, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Csaba Sógor, Neoklis Sylikiotis, Flavio Zanonato, Gabriele Zimmer
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Angelika Mlinar

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	17.2.2016
Result of final vote	+: 25 -: 1 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Nikolaos Chountis, Silvia Costa, Angel Dzhambazki, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Rikke Karlsson, Andrew Lewer, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Stefano Maullu, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Łybacka
Substitutes present for the final vote	Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Ernest Maragall, Marlene Mizzi, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Paul Nuttall, Hannu Takkula