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REPORT

on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach
(2020/2243(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach
(2020/2243(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

– having regard to Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union and the Protocol (No 2) on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,

– having regard to Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

– having regard to the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights,

– having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular UN Sustainable Development Goal 4,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (COM(2020)0625),


– having regard to the Commission communication of 1 July 2020 on a European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (COM(2020)0274),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 22 May 2018 entitled ‘Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies’ (COM(2018)0268),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 14 November 2017 entitled ‘Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture’ (COM(2017)0673),

– having regard to the Council resolution of 26 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)\(^1\),

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 17 May 2021 on equity and inclusion in education and training in order to promote educational success for all\(^2\) and on the European Universities initiative – Bridging higher education, research, innovation and society: Paving the way for a new dimension in European higher education\(^3\),

\(^1\) OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1.
\(^2\) OJ C 221, 10.6.2021, p. 3.
\(^3\) OJ C 221, 10.6.2021, p. 14.
– having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)⁴,

– having regard to the Council recommendations of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching⁵ and on key competences for lifelong learning⁶, of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad⁷, of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems⁸ and on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages⁹, and of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning¹⁰,

– having regard to the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education,


– having regard to the study published by the Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies of its Directorate-General for Internal Policies in February 2021 entitled ‘Making the European Education Area a reality: state of affairs, challenges and prospects’,

– having regard to the study published by the Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies of its Directorate-General for Internal Policies in May 2018 entitled ‘European Identity’,

– having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on shaping digital education policy¹¹,

– having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2018 on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU policy design¹²,

– having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU¹³,

– having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of the European Union.

19 March 2021 on achieving the European Education Area by 2025\textsuperscript{14},

– having regard to Rule 57 of its Rules of Procedure,
– having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
– having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A9-0291/2021),

A. whereas everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training;

B. whereas the European integration process, the EU single market and other EU policies have contributed – albeit in a fragmented manner – to the natural development of a European educational space, which is historically underpinned by the traditions of European humanism and fundamental rights and values;

C. whereas the ultimate goal is to establish a bottom-up European Education Area (EEA) with common European policy objectives that guarantee quality, inclusive and accessible education, reinforce the exchange of good practices and ensure an effective framework for European mobility, requiring the removal of existing obstacles, the use of European tools, and the support of policy developments at national and European levels to make education systems fit to address the climate crisis and enable a successful green and digital transformation;

D. whereas education needs to be conceptualised broadly as ‘lifelong learning’, ranging from pre-primary to tertiary education, including vocational education and training (VET) as well as non-formal and informal education, and aimed at the acquisition of transversal skills to enable everyone to develop their potential personally and professionally, to participate fully in society and to successfully manage the transition into the labour market;

E. whereas the challenges the EU and its Member States are faced with today, including a lack of competitiveness, climate change, the digital transformation of society, various forms of extremism and populism, disinformation, the undermining of evidence-based education and the exacerbation of existing inequalities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, may necessitate appropriate and concerted European action;

F. whereas the entire education sector has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, with the existing differences in educational infrastructure, expertise and access to resources within and across Member States and between different levels and types of education having become even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily as a result of increased inequality, including lack of access to IT infrastructure for people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, which has had negative repercussions on access to education;

G. whereas in-person education remains essential in both the intellectual and personal development of the student;

\textsuperscript{14} OJ C 175, 7.5.2021, p. 6.
H. whereas Parliament has called on the Member States to prioritise investments in education and training, for instance by allocating at least 10% of their national recovery and resilience budgets to corresponding policies, and has requested a considerably higher budget for the Erasmus+ programme, considering education spending an investment in our common future\(^{15}\) rather than an expense, in order to deliver a more sustainable, digital and socially cohesive society; whereas Parliament has called for investment in education and training to be a substantial part of the Commission’s NextGenerationEU instrument;

I. whereas quality investment in education has a high return, although increased spending alone does not necessarily deliver the desired results; whereas the private average global rate of return for education remains high and stable over the decades\(^{16}\);

J. whereas there is a need for better recognition of the teaching profession, which is going through a crisis, for motivated and competent teachers and trainers, and for more continuous training; whereas there is considerable variation between Member States in teachers’ initial education and induction, working conditions, remuneration, appraisal, careers, and continuing professional development; whereas in 2018, only 40.9% of teachers in the EU went abroad at least once for professional purposes as a student, teacher or both\(^{17}\);

K. whereas progress has been made in building a European Higher Education Area as a result of the long-term efforts of the Bologna Process and using it as a reference to learn from experiences with its implementation; whereas there is a need to promote the European Universities, as they contribute to European excellence and the EU’s geopolitical role;

L. whereas there is a lack of recognition of VET as a path of choice and excellence on an equal footing with other educational pathways; whereas many obstacles remain to the mobility of learners, including the long-term mobility of apprentices, notwithstanding the progress made under the Copenhagen process;

M. whereas Member States have not fully achieved the objectives and benchmarks of the Education and Training 2020 framework, in particular the aims of enhancing equitable and quality education, reducing the rate of early leavers from education and training, and bringing the share of 15-year-olds who are under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science below 15%;

N. whereas high-quality data collection and statistics on education and training are two of the prerequisites to better understand the relevant challenges across the EU and the differences within it and to help to address those differences;O. whereas digital education and adequate digital skills should be seen as part of future-oriented education, and not as a subset of or alternative to existing learning and teaching methods, while highlighting the importance of in-person learning; whereas well over a third of Europeans (42%) lack even basic digital skills, with significant disparities within and

\(^{15}\) European Parliament resolution of 25 March 2021 on shaping digital education policy.


\(^{17}\) Eurydice report of 24 March 2021 on teachers in Europe: careers, development and well-being.
between the Member States; whereas the Skills Agenda aims to ensure that 70% of 16 to 74-year-olds have basic digital skills by 2025, an average increase of two percentage points per year compared to an increase of 0.75 percentage points per year between 2015 and 2019;

P. whereas the EEA provides an important opportunity for more international cooperation;

**The need for a European Education Area (EEA)**

1. Emphasises the importance of quality, affordable and inclusive education that is accessible for everyone throughout life and that the EEA initiative should provide more and better opportunities for learners in the EU to study, train, pursue research and work wherever they are, increase learning mobility, facilitate a sustained and meaningful dialogue with the relevant actors, and cultivate an environment where skills, qualifications, diplomas and degrees are recognised and valued throughout Europe;

2. Underscores that the rate of return to education remains very high and hence more education and training generally correlates strongly to societal and economic growth, greater equality and better living standards for everyone and more professional and personal opportunities on an individual level; highlights, therefore, the inestimable significance of education, training and learning, which should be accessible to all, as the most vitally important aspects for driving societal progress and sustainable economic growth; believes that the EEA can and must play an unparalleled role in improving access to and the quality of education throughout the EU;

3. Stresses the role of the EEA in allowing for a greater and better flow of learners, teachers and knowledge, fostering a sense of European belonging and civic awareness, guaranteeing rights and values, and providing fair and equal opportunities; emphasises the potential of Europe to become a real educational power by drawing on the richness of our diversity and exchanging good practices to address existing and future challenges;

4. Considers that education and culture are key to achieving personal and social advancement and well-being, fostering European citizenship, improving social cohesion, driving job creation and European economic and social prosperity fairly and sustainably, and ensuring that the EU is a globally competitive and resilient player characterised by more entrepreneurship to lead the green and digital transitions;

5. Calls for the numerous opportunities for ‘European added value’ afforded through education to be seized, especially through mobility and the sharing of best practices, with the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes playing a particularly important role;

6. Calls for a clearer and stronger geopolitical dimension of the EEA in order to enable the EU to make strategic use of its educational power with its closest neighbours and partners;

**Bridging institutional and stakeholder approaches**

7. Takes note of the variety of visions and approaches on the EEA, which express a
common wish to provide fresh impetus to the European project; regards education as a cornerstone for the achievement of the European project, with the EU’s role being focused, inter alia, on supporting and coordinating Member States in sharing good practices, encouraging common standards and bridging existing gaps, while educational content and teaching methods remain a national competence; underlines the need for more collaboration on education across Europe and beyond in order to develop common approaches and solutions to common challenges;

8. Appreciates the Commission’s efforts to foster an EEA, while noting the need for a more holistic approach which requires meaningful cooperation and coordination between all actors and a diverse range of stakeholders, including the education and training community, parents’ associations, social partners, trade unions, youth organisations, youth workers and civil society; calls for more openness towards novel ideas to ensure that the EEA continues to evolve and serves as a stimulus for more and stronger partnerships, including between the public and private sectors, and synergies between stakeholders;

9. Welcomes the Council’s response to the Commission’s proposals, in particular its focus on the importance of VET and lifelong learning opportunities, which need to be affordable and accessible to everyone, notably in the EU’s outermost regions;

10. Welcomes the Commission’s commitment to achieving the EEA by 2025; cautions that the Commission’s proposals are still mainly a strategic outline rather than a concrete policy roadmap; suggests, therefore, the establishment of clear mid- and long-term priorities with achievable targets and deadlines for the actions that should be adopted, including clearly defined interim deliverables that will constitute the different building blocks of a genuine EEA without unnecessary delays, while taking account of the Member States’ fiscal capacities;

11. Emphasises the urgent need to develop a common implementation strategy and roadmap that includes the EU institutions, the Member States and all the relevant stakeholders, including local and regional authorities and civil society, and defines their respective responsibilities and opportunities; insists that the EEA should be clear and accessible and reflect all levels of governance;

**Turning vision into reality: common strategic priorities and EU-level targets**

12. Stresses the potential of using European policy coordination tools to achieve the common objectives of the EEA, including the open method of coordination and the European Semester; recalls the role of the European Semester for the successful implementation of EU policies in the field of education, while acknowledging that it was originally conceived as a tool for the coordination of economic policies across the EU in order to ensure that governments observe fiscal responsibility;

13. Calls for all EU institutions and Member States to agree on the same vision, priorities, targets and benchmarks regarding the EEA, while acknowledging existing diversities in Europe;

14. Underlines the importance of establishing academic freedom and pedagogical autonomy as core principles of the EEA;
15. Calls for the use of synergies between the EEA, the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area, as well as between the various EU programmes; calls for the further strengthening of Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Creative Europe, the European Solidarity Corps, Digital Europe, and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme in order to benefit all teachers, educational workers, education providers, youth workers and all learners;

16. Highlights that inclusion should be a central dimension of the EEA and a prerequisite for achieving quality education for all; underlines that no one should be left behind, that every learner has a talent, and that individual differences should be appreciated and valued; underlines that progress on common targets can only be achieved through a more comprehensive approach;

17. Stresses the importance of placing the learner at the centre of the learning process; underlines the need to ensure that a tailored approach is taken towards vulnerable groups, including people with any kind of disabilities or learning differences, such as those on the autism spectrum or those with high potential, and to foster a whole-school approach to the EEA; invites the Commission to consult all the relevant stakeholders such as student associations, pedagogical support experts, caregivers for learners with special needs, and others, especially when it comes to developing the European Universities and Centres of Vocational Excellence;

18. Warmly welcomes the objectives of the EU’s new strategic framework for lifelong learning and training, which was the subject of the Council resolution of 19 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education, as well as the five strategic priorities identified therein, notably the specific proposals to make lifelong apprenticeships and mobility a reality for all;

19. Stresses the importance of improving working conditions and the need for teachers and educators to be adequately remunerated for their work; urges the Member States, in cooperation with the Commission, to invest in the initial education of teachers and trainers, notably by including a European dimension and transnational mobility in their curricula, to cultivate competences and motivation in the education profession, to enhance the recognition of the value that educators bring to society, and to bolster pedagogical autonomy; points to the importance of professionalising early childhood education and care staff in order to properly recognise and value their work, which is indispensable for the education of children;

20. Urges the Member States to foster media and information literacy, critical thinking and a culture of tolerance at all stages of the learning process as a priority and a critical tool for empowering responsible European citizens with the skillsets they need to counter the increasing wave of disinformation and face up to the challenges of the 21st century;

21. Calls for a common framework on the development of digital competences; stresses the need for a common system of recognition, validation and certification of digital skills, qualifications and credentials, to reduce gaps in digital competences across Europe, and for all learners, especially children, to have access to basic digital equipment;

22. Underlines the need to ensure the digitalisation of universities in the EU and reiterates the call for the creation of a European online university platform; calls for the EU to
recognise connectivity and digital infrastructure as a right derived from the fundamental right to education;

23. Welcomes the recent changes in the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe and invites the European Education and Culture Executive Agency to assess how to further increase the visibility, continue the development and strengthen the impact of the adult learning community;

24. Supports the use of quantitative indicators and benchmarks, giving due consideration to the differences between and within the Member States, in order to allow for the continuous comparison and monitoring of Member States’ progress towards common objectives and incentivise further policy actions, while reiterating the need for supplementary qualitative indicators and benchmarks and cautioning against overambitious medium-term targets;

25. Highlights the need to improve the quality and increase the frequency of the necessary data collection activities, and to ensure the active monitoring of relevant indicators and benchmarks such as the target set by the European Skills Agenda to achieve 50 % of the adult population participating in learning activities; urges the Commission and the Member States to achieve ambitious targets, such as on the proportion of low achievers and early school leavers, by reducing the first benchmark from 15 % to 10 % and the second from 10 % to 5 %;

26. Calls for closer collaboration between the EU and other organisations and institutions such as UNESCO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and for the active use of and support for existing and future educational research and studies to assist Member States in identifying effective policy reforms; urges the Commission and the Member States to develop common and participatory educational research with a well-defined mandate and budget within the remit of EU competences;

27. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to provide the requisite funding for the establishment, implementation and development of the EEA and the establishment of a dedicated financial instrument in the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework with a view to developing the EEA further and facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications; reiterates its call to allocate at least 10 % of the funding under the Recovery and Resilience Facility to education, including digital education, and calls for the Member States to substantially increase public spending in education to above the EU average (4.7 % of GDP in 2019);

28. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to put in place disaster mitigation strategies for the education sector, in partnership and consultation with all stakeholders, and insists on the importance of concerted European action at times of crisis, such as the COVID 19 pandemic;

**Sector-specific measures and considerations**

29. Underlines the importance of learning foreign languages, and of English in particular; underscores the need for Member States to take action to support the development of linguistic competences at all levels, especially in primary and secondary education, to embrace the Council of Europe’s goal of ‘plurilingualism’ and to achieve the
benchmark of all pupils having a sufficient knowledge of at least two other official languages of the EU and its Member States at the end of lower secondary education at the latest;

30. Calls on the Commission to develop tools to allow Member States to implement the Council recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages, and to monitor progress accordingly; calls on the Member States to collect comparable data on language learning; calls on the Commission to provide financial support for schools teaching European language skills, especially the native languages of EU citizens living in other EU countries;

31. Stresses the need for research and innovation to be promoted in education; underlines the importance of an EEA in promoting the understanding, study and research of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics so as to raise awareness of the associated opportunities and challenges in educational settings, including by means of specific undergraduate study programmes across all Member States; is concerned that the EU as a whole does not have a sufficient supply of specialised AI undergraduate programmes;

32. Welcomes the initiative of the European Centres of Vocational Excellence, which provides a structure for the sector at European level; calls for the creation of a European vocational and training area as an integral part of the EEA; asks the Commission and the Member States to work towards the creation of a European apprentices statute; highlights the need for some Member States to address the lack of attractiveness and prestige of VET and dual education systems; stresses that VET systems need to become even more learner-centred and adapted to the changing world of work; reiterates the importance of VET recognition and calls on the Member States to implement the corresponding Council recommendation and the European Skills Agenda properly and in full; underlines the importance of creating flexible and modular pathways to learning to enable learners to combine and build on different learning experiences and opportunities;

33. Stresses the importance of Commission and Member State action in higher education, such as reinforcing the Bologna Process, strengthening the international dimension of the EEA and furthering the European Student Card, including through embracing the synergies offered by existing EU programmes;

34. Urges that the EEA should be a milestone in the recognition of diplomas and qualifications across the EU and calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate the expansion of automatic mutual recognition of learning outcomes and study periods abroad, including in VET and through European micro-credentials;

35. Highlights the prominent role of non-formal and informal learning as well as volunteering and stresses the need to recognise their results; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote soft skills across the EU;

36. Encourages the Member States to implement the 2018 Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning in order to advance progress in all eight key areas such as opportunities for young learners to undertake at least one practical entrepreneurial experience during their education and, in so doing, to improve the
recognition of competences gained through non-formal and informal learning so as to increase the flexibility of learning pathways for learners of all ages; calls for the creation of a European framework on civic and social competences that values, promotes and recognise the benefits of practices such as mentoring and the supervision of youth activities;

37. Underlines that following the COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning has become a part of reality for many learners; stresses that in primary and secondary education, remote learning must remain a last resort and be complementary to face-to-face learning, which is key for teaching valuable social skills; underlines that a modern, blended learning approach aimed at school-age students needs to take place predominantly in the classroom and under the guidance of the teacher, who may for pedagogical reasons choose to mix different tools, be they digital (including online) or non-digital, as part of learning tasks18;

38. Calls on the Member States to promote education related to climate change and the ecological transition and to raise awareness of the European Green Deal;

39. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to close the gender gap in education, including in education and careers in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM), to fight gender stereotypes and discrimination, and to eradicate bullying, cyber-bullying and other forms of harassment, discrimination and violent misconduct so as to improve cultural, ethnic and gender diversity through the creation and exchange of good practices across Europe;

40. Welcomes the commitment of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council to launch an online platform aimed at facilitating data sharing among the Member States concerning the challenges linked to unemployment faced by young people as a result of the pandemic;

41. Reiterates the significance of massive open online courses (MOOCs) as a necessary element to promote upskilling and reskilling of the workforce in an interactive and accessible manner; believes that the EEA should promote uptake and development of MOOCs and reflect such objectives in the European approach to micro-credentials;

42. Notes that there is currently no single, agreed definition covering the term ‘micro-credentials’; considers, therefore, that uniform EU-wide standards need to be defined in order to effectively promote their mutual recognition among the Member States and ensure that employers trust their value;

**Governance framework**

43. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish a concrete European Education Area Strategic Framework 2030 (EEASF 2030) by the end of 2022, including a comprehensive steering, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ and the first principle of the

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18 See the Commission proposal of 5 August 2021 for a Council recommendation on blended learning for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education (COM(2021)0455).
European Pillar of Social Rights; welcomes the proposal for a steering committee for the EEA, laying the groundwork for a structured and systematic governance framework; emphasises the role of the Conference on the Future of Europe to discuss the way forward on the challenges facing European education and on policy development;

44. Urges the Commission and the Member States to commit to the type of participation required from Member States and other levels of government, including local and regional authorities, as well as the EU institutions, and to devise effective multi-level governance arrangements that respect the principle of subsidiarity, while aiming to generate European added value;

45. Seeks clarity on the level of involvement expected from stakeholders, education sectors that have been hitherto underrepresented, and the relevant civil society actors; stresses that the governance framework should involve all relevant stakeholders working in all areas of learning, including youth workers and youth organisations as well as parents’ associations;

46. Calls on the Commission to establish an EEA platform as an interactive public gateway to support Member States and stakeholders in exchanging information and promoting cooperation and the exchange of good practices; believes that such a platform should be adequately funded and available in all official languages of the EU;

47. Emphasises that European censuses, data collection and research on territorial needs and educational practices across the EU are a key priority for the Member States and their education systems;

Towards a greater European dimension in education

48. Underlines the need for a European dimension in education by incorporating a greater and distinct European perspective in educational curricula and teacher training programmes, encompassing all teachers, trainers and learners from both formal and non-formal organisations and the VET sector, and including support from Jean Monnet actions and teacher academies; proposes that these teacher academies be called ‘Comenius Teacher Academies’; supports the creation of a common framework for the shaping and development of teacher qualifications across the Member States;

49. Emphasises the need to provide learners with comprehensive knowledge about European history and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and to foster a critical European memory and historical consciousness based on the fundamental values on which the EU is built; calls on the Commission, the Member States and the Council of Europe to cooperate on European history and cultural heritage education across the EU, and highlights the need for targeted funding and initiatives to increase research on European history, as well as the promotion of public history, taking into account the complex nature of the history of our continent;

50. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to create a common framework on learning about the EU throughout all appropriate levels and areas of education; stresses the need to familiarise learners with the European integration process, the institutions and policies of the EU, the rights stemming from EU citizenship, and how to actively participate in the EU’s democratic processes;
51. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop a comprehensive European strategy and a common framework on citizenship education with a European dimension, including learning about European values – such as human dignity, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and equality – to encourage the exchange of good practices and the development of common pedagogical material and approaches; asks the Commission, in this respect, to explore the establishment of a citizenship education task force to coordinate this task and improve access to European citizenship education in order to foster a European civic culture and a sense of European belonging, complementing local, regional, national and global dimensions;

52. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

General reasoning

The report on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach is the European Parliament’s answer to the Commission communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 and to the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030).

The European Education Area (EEA) has been emerging naturally for centuries, based on ancient Greek philosophy, as well as Jewish and Christian spiritual sources and principles. Universities and schools, allowing for collaboration between educators from different parts of Europe, have contributed greatly to its development. Therefore, it is quite logical that relevant European programmes are named after personalities who have been the driving forces behind European education and integration, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, Jan Amos Comenius and Jean Monnet. Universities in Europe have gradually become bastions of knowledge and research. From the beginning, their development has relied on academic freedom and international exchange, although this aspect was not always acknowledged. While tertiary education has had this international dimension from the outset, primary and secondary education have traditionally been embedded in specific national and regional contexts. This is reflected in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which calls for cooperation, the recognition of diplomas and periods of study abroad, while aiming at the university level (Art. 165, 2).

The EU Treaties leave decision-making competences in education at Member State level. The role of the European Union is a coordinating and supporting one, a legal basis which this report fully respects. At the same time, it underlines the great potential of an EEA, as is evidenced by the outcomes of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area, which allow for the permeability of study programmes for students within the EU and beyond, as well as the gradual recognition of both partial results (credits) and final diplomas. The great potential of an EEA is evident when looking at the results of school partnerships, their joint projects, traineeships and exchanges of pupils and teachers under the Erasmus+ programme. Thousands of schools and hundreds of thousands of pupils and teachers have improved their educational programmes, language skills, and teaching methods. They have gained new practical, educational and professional experience and created new friendships, while gaining familiarity with new cultural and linguistic environments.

This report aims to contribute to the realisation of the full potential of an EEA. In general, the legitimacy of the European project will be strengthened if the EU’s efforts towards building an EEA are more effective in the future. In other words, the prevention of further alienation of European citizens from the EU lies precisely in education, in learning about our common roots and values and in considering them in a factually sound way, as well as in the ability to communicate openly and respectfully, and in acting for the benefit of future generations.

Education is also a key tool for building an economically prosperous and socially cohesive society. While this applies to the Member States, it also applies to the sustainability of European integration. This report identifies education as a response to the challenges that the Member States and the Union as a whole are facing. The European Parliament considers investment in education an important aspect of the economic recovery measures and building resilience after
the COVID-19 pandemic (Recovery and Resilience Facility), as well as part of measures to combat climate change, rising extremism and populism.

The report perceives the EEA, improvement in its organization, focus on permeability and accessibility within the European programmes, as a new opportunity for the personal development of every single European citizen, but also as a tool to increase the prosperity of each region and strengthen the competitiveness of the EU as a whole.

**Rationale for specific sections**

**References – Legal Base**

Union action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, in particular through teaching of languages of the Member States, mobility of students and teachers, recognition of diplomas and periods of study, promotion of cooperation between schools, exchange of experience and people/principles, and supporting distance learning (TFEU, Art.165, 2). The Union aims to support Member States, particularly in their efforts to develop vocational education and training. The Union can achieve its objectives in the field of education by means of ordinary legislative instruments and incentives, but it cannot commit the Member States to specific changes in their laws. The Council may also make recommendations to this effect on a proposal from the Commission. The Union shall conduct its activities in these areas of cooperation through the open method of coordination (based on the use of the methods of coordinating policy in the arena of economic and monetary union).

**References – Source documents**

From the perspective of a global player, the EU should aim to meet the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The reference to the source documents contains only a limited number of fundamental communications from the Commission and the Council, and European Parliament resolutions, in particular those directly related to building the EEA. The Council’s recommendations (ET 2020) are a key starting point. The objectives and indicators presented by the Council in 2009 are still relevant, as they have not yet been fully achieved. They also serve as a basis for the latest follow-up Council Resolution (2021/C 66/01) and for setting indicators/benchmarks in the Commission Communication (COM(2020)625). Since 2009, more than 40 documents have been adopted at EU level that are directly or indirectly linked with the EEA. An important background document for this report is the study by the EP Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies “Making the European Education Area a Reality: State of Affairs, Challenges and Prospects”.

The European Parliament has repeatedly addressed the topic of an EEA and the importance of education in general, including by calling for financial support at EU level. In the context of the MFF 2021-2027, the European Parliament proposed tripling the Erasmus+ budget. In the end, it managed to secure a virtual doubling of the Erasmus+ budget, which might bring Erasmus+ closer to the ideal of becoming a means of mobility for all learners and teachers. The European Parliament raised the issue of funding education again in the context of the resolution

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19 See [https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda](https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda)
on digital education\textsuperscript{22}, where it called on the Member States to allocate 10% of the RRF to education.\textsuperscript{23}

**The reasoning for a European Education Area**

The rapporteur considers the opening of new concrete educational and employment opportunities for every European citizen to be the main reason for building the EEA. The EEA’s role is to promote European integration, ensure economic and social prosperity, and boost the EU’s international competitiveness and its leadership in the green and digital transformations. The EEA is a unique opportunity to gain European added value through mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

**Bridging institutional and stakeholder approaches**

When examining the various approaches of the Council, the Commission and stakeholders, in spite of the obvious differences, a clear consensus can be discerned with regard to the need for an EEA and fostering the European project.

Regarding the Commission’s Communication on building the EEA by 2025, the rapporteur appreciates the Commission’s efforts to consolidate the EEA’s intentions, but expects a more holistic approach, based on coordination and cooperation between partners. She calls for clear priorities and realistic deadlines for concrete actions. The rapporteur also comments on the Council resolution, where she particularly welcomes the emphasis on vocational education and training. The European Parliament does not propose its own vision for the EEA, but instead calls for the emergence of a common approach, a common implementation strategy and a roadmap involving all EU institutions, the Member States and all relevant stakeholders.\textsuperscript{24}

**Turning vision into reality: common strategic priorities and EU-level targets**

The rapporteur wants to convey a clear message about the need to move from ideas about the EEA to implementing concrete steps, so that EU citizens can grasp this vision and see it delivered. Therefore, she also calls on the EU institutions and the Member States to agree on a common vision, priorities and benchmarks. The rapporteur considers inclusion, quality education and talent development of all children to be the main dimensions of the EEA. She wants to clearly emphasise that no talent should be left behind.

The rapporteur expects the relevant actors to monitor progress regarding the common objectives by means of targeted indicators and benchmarks, including qualitative targets, with a view to facilitate comparisons. She calls for reinforcing synergies and strengthening the Erasmus+ programme in order to also make it accessible to all those preparing themselves for the teaching profession and to pupils in vocational education and training.


\textsuperscript{24} To compare the positions of the Commission and the Council, please refer to http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690865/IPOL_BRI(2021)690865_EN.pdf
Specific goals of the EEA, which are to be set out in a realistic manner, should focus on strengthening accountability and European citizenship. Therefore, the rapporteur considers it necessary to establish and make use of specific tools for media education, the promotion of critical thinking, and for the creation of a European framework for digital competences and learning about the EU.

Teachers are the ultimate factor for success. That is why the rapporteur, in agreement with the Commission and the Council, sees a priority in increasing teachers’ professional competences, motivation and social appreciation.

**Sector-specific measures**

Promoting foreign language skills is an essential element in all Member States, in particular when it comes to achieving pupils’ comparable level in English at the end of lower secondary education (age of 14/15).

The tertiary sector also needs support: by reinforcing the Bologna Process, strengthening international cooperation and integration, furthering the European Student Card, and recognising learning outcomes. The latter also applies to vocational education and training.

**Governance framework**

The rapporteur strongly advocates the idea of establishing a transparent framework for policy making at EU level in education, while respecting the legal basis and the principle of subsidiarity. She calls on the Commission and the Member States to submit a European Education Area Strategic Framework 2030 (EEASF 2030) by the end of 2022, outlining the governance, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Member States should agree on the level of their participation, as well as on the participation and representation of regions and municipalities, so that the principle of subsidiarity is fully respected and at the same time, European added value can be exploited.

The rapporteur supports the implementation of the Commission’s plan to build the EEA Platform, as a part of this new process of designing and promoting European education policy, and expects stakeholders and partners to be fully involved.

**Towards a greater European dimension in education**

This report aims to strengthen a sense of European belonging and to build European citizenship, not as an ideology, but as a conviction based on objective information, knowledge and experience. Against this backdrop, the inclusion of a European dimension in school curricula, as well as in teacher training, is proposed.

The key role that teachers play has been confirmed by the educational experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is vital that teachers are well acquainted with Europe’s history and present in order to communicate this knowledge to their pupils. They should be able to use opportunities provided by the Jean Monnet actions within Erasmus+ to acquire and complete their teaching competencies in this area.
The report supports the initiative of the Commission to set up the Teacher Academies and suggests that an adequate name for them would be the “Comenius Teacher Academies”. As a great European philosopher, educator and theologian, Comenius exerted great influence on pedagogical theory and practical educational work for centuries.
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:

– having regard to Articles 9, 151, 156, 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
– having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Articles 14 and 15 thereof,
– having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular its principles 1, 4, 5 and 11,
– having regard to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Paid Educational Leave Convention of 1974,
– having regard to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,
– having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),
– having regard to UN Sustainable Development Goal 4,
– having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD),
– having regard to the Horizon Europe 2021-2027 funding programme,
– having regard to the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025,
– having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on achieving
the European Education Area by 2025 (COM(2020)0625) and to the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2020)0212),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 1 July 2020 entitled ‘European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience’ (COM(2020)0274) and to the accompanying Commission staff working documents (SWD(2020)0121) and (SWD(2020)0122),

– having regard to the NextGenerationEU temporary recovery instrument,

– having regard to Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 entitled ‘Digital Education Plan 2021-2027. Resetting education and training for the digital age’ (COM(2020)0624) and to the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2020)0209),

– having regard to Council recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 10 March 2020 entitled ‘A New Industrial Strategy for Europe’ (COM(2020)0102),

– having regard to Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC,

– having regard to Eurofound research on the impact of digitalisation on skills use and skills development,

– having regard to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) study entitled ‘Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways’, volumes 1 and 2 (of 17 February 2020 and 20 July 2020),

– having regard to Cedefop’s report of 18 December 2018 entitled ‘Skills forecast: trends and challenges to 2030’,

A. whereas everyone of any age group and socio-economic background has the right to quality, inclusive, accessible and affordable education, training, upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning in a barrier-free environment, as stated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, among other legislation, in order to acquire and maintain skills and competencies; whereas this enables people to develop their personal and professional goals, while fully participating in society and successfully transitioning into the labour market; highlights the important role of families in

education;

B. whereas prior to the pandemic, the problem of academic failure among young people who abandon their studies and those who fall behind or have problems completing them in time, affected one young person in five, casting the Union education system in a worrying light, in that academic failure makes it difficult to find a good job and can lead, in a significant number of cases, to poverty and social marginalisation and exclusion;

C. whereas the European Education Area (EEA) is a driving force for a socially just society, economy and prosperity and has contributed to fostering common European values; whereas a qualified mobile workforce is key for a globally sustainable economy that provides stable, quality jobs and improves the well-being of society; whereas education, training and lifelong learning is not only an individual responsibility, but also a social responsibility; whereas people with few skills and qualifications, persons with disabilities and people from disadvantaged backgrounds are at greater risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion; whereas strengthened cooperation between universities and other educational institutions as well as the recognition of qualifications, learning and training periods, including those gained through informal learning and volunteering, is a crucial prerequisite for the free movement of learners, educators, volunteers and the workforce within the Union;

D. whereas the results of dual VET across Member States has been uneven, and many national systems in the Union lack the institutional capacity to provide training in this type of skill;

E. whereas investing in lifelong learning education, training and the effective use of skills, including soft skills, is crucial for growth, innovation, social cohesion and the economic and social prosperity of the Union, particularly in the light of the green and digital transitions, demographic change, globalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic, which are changing the nature of work, the content of jobs and the skills and qualifications required; whereas the development of specific targets and benchmarks and a system for monitoring their implementation is crucial for making the EEA a reality by 2025; whereas training and education should primarily aim to achieve the development of learners and value the integral growth of every person, with special attention paid to all characteristics of the individual and without restricting the objectives of education solely to employability;

F. whereas in addition to crucial basic skills, it is also important to focus on multilingualism, digital skills and cross-cutting skills such as critical and innovative thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity, intercultural competencies, teamwork and media literacy; whereas all non-formal and informal skills are key for active participation and inclusion in the labour market and society as a whole; whereas, besides a strong focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects in upskilling and reskilling programmes, similar attention should be paid to humanities and social sciences, since they, among other subjects, can contribute to the social dimension of the

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green and digital twin transition and lead to a human-centred approach to the digital and scientific areas;

G. whereas the European Pillar of Social Rights action plan sets out as a target that at least 60 % of all adults should participate in training every year; whereas in 2020 only 49.1 % of teachers in the Union received formal education or vocational training in information and communications technology; whereas progress over the past decade in adult learning participation has been slow and very uneven across Member States and whereas the target for 2020 has not been reached; whereas the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies shows a constant high share of adults and teenagers with insufficient basic skills; whereas the Commission has set a target for at least four in five VET graduates to be employed and three in five to be benefiting from on-the-job training by 2025;

H. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that there are profound differences in access to digital education among learners, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, with one fifth of children in the Union lacking two out of five important resources for online learning; whereas the pandemic is likely to have had a severe impact on the labour market, has disclosed a wide gap between the digital skills of people and labour market demands, and has exacerbated existing divides and inequalities in access to education and skills; whereas these phenomena have a significant impact on citizens’ employment prospects, earnings and inclusion in society; whereas people entering the workforce during the pandemic, who are mainly young people, have had difficulties securing their first jobs; whereas education and training, upskilling and reskilling are essential for leveraging opportunities and addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis; whereas the pandemic represents an opportunity to develop intersectional policies aimed at building more resilient and inclusive educational systems that better prepare learners and the workforce for the labour market and the multiple global challenges of today;

I. whereas in 2018, Member States invested an average of 4.6 % of total GDP in education;

J. whereas the main beneficiaries of the NextGenerationEU programme should, as its name implies, be young people, who should be offered the broadest possible range of educational, training and employment opportunities, in keeping with a long-term vision.
for the EU’s recovery based on the involvement of and active contributions from the young generations;

K. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures have restricted spaces in which children can interact and develop their social skills in school, peer and extended family networks;

1. Welcomes the Commission communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025’, which encompasses six dimensions – quality, inclusion and gender equality, the green and digital transitions, teachers and trainers, higher education and the geopolitical dimension – and a set of targets with the aim of improving outcomes and ensuring resilient and future-looking education systems; calls on the Member States to set priorities to achieve a functioning and effective EEA by 2025; recalls that key areas in which the Union can support and complement the efforts of the Member States need to be clearly identified and complemented with the targets developed in cooperation with the Member States, academic institutions and other relevant stakeholders, in line with Article 165 of the TFEU and the principle of subsidiarity; insists that education and training be considered as a common investment for not only the recovery, resilience and competitiveness of the Union, but also for ensuring its social cohesion and allowing for personal development throughout life; recalls that the creation of the EEA by 2025 is a way to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for economic growth and job creation as well as improved social cohesion;

2. Points out that during the COVID-19 crisis, the importance of having a very high internet capacity and connectivity for all became apparent, especially in the educational sector; underlines that all connectivity and equipment gaps should be tackled as soon as possible, with a special focus on vulnerable groups; notes the efforts of the Commission and the Member States to ensure pedagogical continuity during the COVID-19 crisis; stresses that the digitalisation of education must only be complementary to face-to-face learning, not forgetting that face-to-face learning must remain the key as it also teaches valuable social skills; underlines that following the COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning could become part of a modern blended learning approach; recalls, in this regard, the need to invest in innovative ways of teaching enabled by digital development; regrets that the COVID-19 crisis has increased and is likely to continue increasing youth unemployment in the Union;

3. Emphasises the need for close cooperation, a structured dialogue and exchanges of best practices on common challenges and opportunities between all relevant stakeholders involved in the areas of education and training, upskilling and reskilling at local, regional, national and Union level; calls for an effective and well-established governance system for the implementation of the EEA, building on the Union strategic framework for cooperation in education and training (ET 2020); highlights that the successful transition towards the EEA requires cooperation between teachers, trainers, learners, parents and other relevant associations and organisations, academia, civil society organisations and social partners; emphasises the need for increased cooperation and research on education which stimulates social cohesion, economic growth and innovation;

4. Calls on the Commission to assess the impact of the EEA on the basis of qualitative,
and not merely quantitative, indicators;

5. Stresses the importance of reducing the percentage of 15-year-olds underachieving in reading, mathematics and science by 2025, this being a key objective not achieved by the ET 2020, but which remains essential to enable the young people concerned to go on to obtain professional qualifications and skills;

6. Highlights the importance of ensuring learner-centred, integrated, inclusive, accessible, affordable and quality education, and promoting lifelong learning, including VET, and non-formal and informal competencies, as well as providing flexible pathways to learning for learners of all ages across the Union, in order to ensure equal opportunities in the labour market; recalls that inclusive education needs to be accessible for all, with no discrimination based on gender, racial, ethnic or social origin, language, religion or belief, disabilities, age or sexual orientation; recalls, in this regard, the need to ensure equal access to employee training; welcomes the exchange of best practices and development of a Union approach to micro-credentials and individual learning accounts with a view to ensuring upskilling and reskilling and qualifications for all;

7. Considers that boosting existing education and training programmes along the lines of the Erasmus+ programme, which promotes learning mobility throughout Europe and beyond, is key to making the idea of an EEA a reality; welcomes the launch of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme, its increased budget and the new measures aimed at making access to the programme fairer and more inclusive, reducing inequalities, boosting professional training and reducing territorial disparities by simplifying administrative procedures; calls on the Commission to support all Member States so that the goals set by the Erasmus+ programme can be implemented without unnecessary administrative barriers; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote and facilitate increased mobility for teachers and learners of all ages; welcomes the new professional mobility action, Erasmus Pro, which gives learners and apprentices the opportunity to spend 3 to 12 months abroad to develop their professional and linguistic competencies;

8. Insists on the valorisation and full recognition of vocational education and training as a path of excellence in line with the Council recommendation on vocational education and training; insists that vocational education and training be fully integrated in the EEA and recognised in the labour market; calls on the Member States and stakeholders to ensure that all VET graduates have access to the labour market and long-term professional opportunities; highlights the need to ensure effective social dialogue on VET and adult learning to consolidate efficient governance in the sector at all levels; highlights the need for some Member States to address the lack of attractiveness and prestige deficit of VET and dual education systems; considers education and training, including VET and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), in future-oriented sectors, skills and competencies to be essential; highlights the importance of improving and encouraging TVET paths; welcomes, in this context, the centres of vocational excellence initiative and the development of a Union approach to micro-credentials, modularisation and individual learning accounts; encourages the Commission and the Member States to work towards longer periods of mobility in vocational education and training, with a genuine Union apprenticeship statute, in partnership with the private sector; encourages the Commission to work with the
Member States on an action plan to remove the remaining obstacles to Union mobility, such as overcoming administrative burdens and promoting language learning; recalls, in this context, the responsibility of the private sector regarding investment in VET and personalised lifelong learning; calls for the facilitation of public-private partnerships in VET, formal and informal training, and the upskilling and reskilling of the Union workforce, also to strengthen the efficiency of educational systems and to match labour market needs, without undermining the independence of educational institutions; urges the Member States to foster the employability of VET graduates in the private sector through education and training incentive measures; calls for the EEA, the European skills agenda, the Council recommendation on VET and interlinked policy initiatives to complement and mutually reinforce each other;

9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the Pact for Skills, which requires collective action by Member States, companies, social partners and other stakeholders; reiterates the need for adequate funding and investment geared to achieving the goals of the EEA; calls on the Commission, in this respect, to ensure funding via NextGenerationEU and urges the Member States to devote sufficient resources under flagship initiative seven in their national recovery and resilience plans for reskilling and upskilling to education, training and research; encourages the Member States to significantly increase public spending on education; calls on the Commission to encourage the Member States to put forward long-term strategic plans encompassing visions for the education system that are resilient to future challenges and potential crises and flexible also in terms of the fast technological changes in the digital age;

10. Calls on the Commission to encourage the Member States to thoroughly evaluate their learning curricula so they are up-to-date, future-proof and able to prepare learners to match their skills with the demands of the labour market, reflecting the plurality of societies and at the same time providing space in which learners, mainly those with disabilities or special needs or those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can shape their learning processes to meet their individual needs;

11. Notes that the new initiatives that will see the light as a result of the communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 should build upon systems and tools already developed such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, the European Qualifications Framework, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and the qualifications framework adopted for the European Higher Education Area;

12. Highlights the role of the EEA in fostering the sense of being part of European savoir faire; underlines that basic, soft and cross-cutting skills, upskilling and reskilling and lifelong, individualised learning in the context of the green and digital transitions, demographic change, globalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic are vital for sustainable growth, productivity, adaptation to the transformations of the labour market, investment and innovation, and are therefore key factors for the competitiveness of businesses, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); recalls, in this respect, that education policies are intrinsically linked to other Union policies and that synergies need to be ensured with, inter alia, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the related action plan, the new industrial strategy for Europe, the new skills agenda for Europe and the European digital strategy;
13. Highlights the experience, knowledge and skills obtained through informal and non-formal ways of learning, for example by volunteering or providing informal help or care; notes that the formal recognition of these skills could help open up more opportunities in the labour market; insists that there are short- and long-term benefits of the practice of mentoring in educational systems, businesses and our society as a whole; encourages the Member States to incentivise associations and companies using mentoring programmes with thorough policies and resources; encourages the Commission to promote mentoring and to work with Member States on the development of mentoring certification and labelling;

14. Highlights the importance of supporting and preparing teachers and trainers to be able to provide quality education; underlines the importance of ensuring that teachers and educators receive appropriate, flexible, high-quality training with a special focus on digital literacy and digital skills; recalls the necessity to provide opportunities for the continuous professional development of teachers, provide mobility opportunities for them and increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession; stresses, in this regard, the importance of teacher academies, also for the VET sector, as well as of providing financial support for training courses designed for teachers and educators; highlights the need to prepare more teachers for highly demanded subject areas like STEM or for teaching learners with special needs; highlights the need for teachers to support and be supported by parents given their complementary roles in the education of children; recalls that training courses should also take into account the multicultural and multilingual environments in which teachers and educators work;

15. Welcomes the recent changes in the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe and invites the European Education and Culture Executive Agency to assess how to further increase the visibility, continue the development and strengthen the impact of the adult learning community;

16. Calls on the Member States to develop quality dual education systems and vocational systems based on flexible curricula, strong career guidance and connections to labour market needs;

17. Calls for the establishment of paid educational leave policies in line with the ILO Paid Educational Leave Convention to allow workers to attend training programmes during working hours at no personal cost in order to promote lifelong learning; calls on the Member States to ensure access to training for unemployed workers;

18. Highlights that according to the OECD’s Education at a Glance 2020 publication, people working in the teaching profession are paid 11% less on average than people working in other professions that require a degree; recalls the need to strengthen collective bargaining to ensure decent salaries and pensions and fair working conditions;

19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate and promote transparent mobility for all, including persons with disabilities, special needs and persons from disadvantaged backgrounds, through the full implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive37 and the further development of the European Student Card,

and to improve the use and visibility of tools such as the EURES (EUropean Employment Services) job mobility portal, the Europass online platform, which will be interoperable with the databases of job offers available on EURES, the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification system, Erasmus+, with a special focus on VET learners and staff, the EU Skills Profile Tool for ThirdCountry Nationals and the European Network of Information Centres and National Academic Recognition Information Centres networks; stresses the need to promote centres of vocational excellence and to enhance their relevance to skills development;

20. Highlights, in this context, the need to improve the recognition of knowledge, skills and non-formal and informal competencies gained during qualification, volunteering, learning and training periods abroad; stresses the need to improve the recognition of the skills of third-country nationals in order to facilitate their access to education and employment in the Union, through the simplification and acceleration of recognition and validation processes; underlines that specific attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups; is of the opinion that the mutual recognition of training, volunteering programmes, learning outcomes, qualifications and diplomas at all education levels, and progress in the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, will help to overcome skills shortages and skills mismatches and enable adults to obtain full qualifications; calls for difficulties arising from the absence of automatic validation for annual learning outcomes to be reduced; emphasises that in addition to the European graduate tracking initiative, it is necessary to monitor and gather information on emerging skills trends and developments; encourages the Member States to put into effect the 2018 Council recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning to promote progress in all eight key areas such as opportunities for young learners to have at least one practical entrepreneurial experience during their education;

21. Recalls the need for further public investment in education to ensure fair and well- resourced education systems based on public service values and democratic governance; calls on the Member States to ensure that the upcoming recovery plans are committed to that objective and that the Just Transition Fund and European Social Fund Plus support integrated plans at local level to help upskilling and reskilling, especially for the most vulnerable groups – including people at risk of becoming unemployed – to ensure every person in vulnerable sectors can requalify and develop new skills to remain active in the labour market and benefit from the green and digital transitions;

22. Welcomes the opportunities created by digitalisation to improve inclusiveness in the labour market; decries the persistence of the digital divide in the Union and highlights, in this regard, the need to provide access to high-speed internet, high-quality software and digital equipment as a necessary precondition for the development of digital skills, as well as competencies in STEM; emphasises the importance of acquiring social skills, language skills and cross-cutting soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity, entrepreneurship, intercultural skills, teamwork and media literacy for everyone; underlines that special attention must be paid to the inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in this context, in particular persons with disabilities, also through the facilitation of individual learning paths; recalls that education systems should not only embrace knowledge and skills, but should also enhance the well-being and physical
health of learners;

23. Stresses the need for enhanced language teaching and learning; recalls that language learning is an important factor that shapes a person’s professional development and is also essential for the successful social inclusion of migrants and their access to education and the labour market;

24. Calls on the Member States to ensure decent remuneration for trainees and apprentices, especially for those engaging in work-based learning; calls on social partners to conclude specific collective agreements in this regard;

25. Regrets the persistent gender employment and pay gap as well as the consequent gender pension gap; highlights, in this regard, the need to tackle gender stereotypes and to increase and support women’s representation in education, training and employment in STEM subjects and occupations as well as in other fields of knowledge and employment; stresses that it is essential to create a positive and inclusive learning and work environment and to counter unconscious bias and gender stereotypes with respect to subject and career choices; recalls the responsibility of public and private stakeholders in this regard; notes that the future EEA framework should have an intersectional perspective, with the aim of preventing any kind of discrimination, including multiple discrimination;

26. Warmly welcomes the objectives of the EU’s new strategic framework for lifelong learning and training, which was the subject of a Council resolution of 19 February 2021; welcomes the five strategic priorities identified in the resolution, which includes in particular specific proposals to make lifelong apprenticeships and mobility a reality for all;

27. Welcomes the commitment of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council to launch an online platform aimed at facilitating data sharing among the Member States concerning the challenges linked to unemployment faced by young people as a result of the pandemic;

28. Stresses the need to include in the EEA a section devoted to the personal development and social integration of children with special needs in centres staffed by specially trained teachers and suitably equipped to achieve the best results in this respect.

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## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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### FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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**Key to symbols:**
- + : in favour
- - : against
- 0 : abstention
# INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

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<th>11.10.2021</th>
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| Result of final vote | +: 24  
-: 0  
0: 4 |
| Members present for the final vote | Asim Ademov, Ilana Cicurel, Gilbert Collard, Gianantonio Da Re, Laurence Farreng, Tomasz Frankowski, Chiara Gemma, Alexis Georgoulis, Irena Joveva, Petra Kammerevert, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Predrag Fred Matić, Victor Negrescu, Niklas Nienås, Peter Pollák, Marcos Ros Sempere, Domène Ruiz Devesa, Monica Semedo, Andrey Slabakov, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Michaela Šojdrová, Sabine Verheyen, Maria Walsh, Theodoros Zagorakis, Milan Zver |
| Substitutes present for the final vote | Pernando Barrena Arza, Marcel Kolaja, Diana Riba i Giner |
## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

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<td>Chiara Gemma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verts/ALE</td>
<td>Marcel Kolaja, Niklas Nienaß, Diana Riba i Giner</td>
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<td>ID</td>
<td>Gilbert Collard, Gianantonio Da Re</td>
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</tbody>
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Key to symbols:
+ : in favour
- : against
0 : abstention