



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Committee on Culture and Education

2014/2245(INI)

26.3.2015

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Regional Development

on investment for jobs and growth: promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Union
(2014/2245(INI))

Rapporteur: Silvia Costa

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Recalls that in order to contribute efficiently to combating the high levels of youth unemployment, EU cohesion policy needs to be fully in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, and in particular the headline targets for education of reducing school drop-out rates to below 10 % and increasing the share of young people with a third-level degree, diploma or equivalent vocational training qualification to at least 40 %, and with the benchmark for an average of at least 15 % of adults to participate in lifelong learning and no less than 95 % of children to take part in early childhood education, thereby recognising the validation of skills and acquired experience;
2. Points out that, in order to achieve the Europe 2020 strategy targets and particularly those for education and the reduction of school drop-out rates, there is a need to improve access to education infrastructure and the quality of socio-cultural services in the EU's regions, in particular those affected by economic stagnation; recalls the importance of education in bringing about greater social and regional cohesion and enhancing democratic consciousness and participation among young people;
3. Highlights the fact that 12 % of the population aged 18-24 are early school leavers; calls on the EU to identify the main factors leading to early school leaving and monitor the characteristics of the phenomenon at national, regional and local level as the foundation for targeted and effective evidence-based policies; considers that policies to reduce early school leaving must address a range of factors, including educational and social challenges that might possibly be leading to such a phenomenon;
4. Points out that without effective cooperation between educational institutions and labour market players it will be impossible to remedy the high level of unemployment among young graduates in the EU; stresses in particular that through teaching of the knowledge and skills needed on the labour market, the youth employment rate has been raised and social differences narrowed;
5. Regrets the fact that insufficient funding is allocated to education at present and highlights the need for greater investment in modernising educational systems in the fields of vocational training and formal and informal education; recalls that this applies also to renovating school buildings and providing new technology for education and research (access to research databases, IT training, e-learning);
6. Underlines the importance of strengthening links between education, research and business at regional, local, national and supranational level; calls on the Member States to act on education-related country-specific recommendations (CSRs) in the European Semester and other Commission recommendations as soon as possible;
7. Highlights the importance of both lifelong learning and, in order to attract and keep qualified teaching staff, better training and working conditions for researchers and

professors as key factors for economic growth; points out how important it is that young people acquire digital skills, and that teachers are trained accordingly, since such skills are becoming increasingly important on the European labour market;

8. Stresses that labour market needs are changing rapidly, and that young people face increasing difficulties in their transition from education to work and therefore are usually more vulnerable to unemployment; reiterates the importance of investing in human capital and people, and in particular in Europe's young people in order to enhance their employability and pathway of professional qualifications; calls for the improvement of the existing EU Skills Panorama which identifies the jobs and skills needed, and for the education and training systems of Member States to be remodelled accordingly so that people will be provided with the right skills for the right job;
9. Stresses the need to promote partnerships between the educational world and employment policies by involving all stakeholders, including social partners, decision makers, training providers and employers;
10. Welcomes the Youth Employment Initiative introduced to enhance the Youth Guarantee Scheme, in particular in regions with a youth unemployment rate of over 25 %, and points out that this is an efficient means of reducing youth unemployment and will serve as a fundamental structural reform in the mid- and longer term; calls on Member States to establish strong cooperation with stakeholders, in particular employers and SMEs, and to make full use of the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative and other structural funds when implementing the scheme and creating an infrastructure therefor;
11. Calls on the Commission to help ensure the Youth Guarantee Scheme is implemented efficiently by exchange of examples of good practice; points out that the budgeted funds for the Youth Guarantee Scheme within the Youth Employment Initiative expire on 31 December 2015; calls on the Commission to take the necessary action to ensure that the programme can continue;
12. Emphasises the need for the development of entrepreneurial skills within the framework of the Youth Guarantee Schemes; considers, nevertheless, that early intervention and activation and, in many cases, reforms are needed, such as improving vocational education and training systems, and that the exchange of best practices related to the dual education system could contribute to structural changes in the labour market and lead to higher levels of employment;
13. Welcomes the new European Fund for Strategic Investments; hopes that education and training are considered to be strategic investments and are therefore part of one of the priority actions;
14. Urges the Commission to recognise the full potential of culture in contributing to sustainable economic development and the competitiveness of regions and in improving social cohesion; stresses, in particular, the role of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and the digitisation of cultural heritage as strategic drivers for economic recovery and growth in the EU and for regional development, since they currently generate, directly or indirectly, more than 7 million jobs;

15. Emphasises the importance of the cultural sector in combating youth unemployment, since it is very attractive to young people and offers them more job opportunities; recalls also the role played by culture in generating more and better employment through education, skills development, training and informal learning; seeks to direct cohesion policy instruments towards improving and increasing the number of jobs in the cultural and creative sectors;
16. Calls on the Commission to evaluate the scope for using EU Regional Development and Social Fund monies to promote cultural activities in the Member States, and in particular to promote the creative sector; asks the Commission to submit a report on the findings of the evaluation to Parliament, at the latest together with the Creative Europe programme mid-term report, i.e. by 31 December 2017;
17. Recalls that culture and tangible and intangible cultural heritage are key elements for sustainable urban and rural regeneration and the attractiveness of cities and regions, and for economic development through cultural tourism and creative SMEs; calls for the establishment of regional cultural hubs in which towns, cities and regions can work together to promote and preserve their cultural heritage and turn it into an economic asset;
18. Calls on the Commission to commit itself to taking all necessary steps to ensure effective protection for the tangible and intangible goods that make up Europe's cultural heritage and are of fundamental importance for boosting cultural and socioeconomic development that draws on and promotes common European identity and the cultural distinctiveness of European countries, regions and cities; calls on the EU's cities and regions to use the cohesion policy instruments for this purpose;
19. Takes the view that the EUR 5 million (or EUR 10 million of the total cost where sites on the UNESCO list are involved) ceiling adopted by the Commission on the basis of total project costs is overly rigid and will result in less support for cultural heritage, not least because it makes no provision for the deduction of documentation and management costs and of non-reducible expenditure (e.g. VAT), and that it reduces the scope for public and private partnerships and for investment in culture, which is of vital importance to social and economic development in the EU;
20. Stresses that there is no legal basis for this approach in EU law, and calls on the Commission, in this connection, to review the decision and to clarify, in the thematic guides, the interpretation of Article 3(e) of Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 (ERDF) with regard to investment in the development of endogenous potential through fixed investment in equipment and small-scale infrastructure for culture and sustainable tourism;
21. Calls on the Member States to allocate a larger share of their budgets and of regional development funding to culture and cultural heritage with a view to making regions attractive, promoting their effective and comprehensive development and tapping their potential;
22. Highlights the importance of simplification, and recommends that the Commission and the Member States continue their efforts to simplify implementation of the cohesion policy, in order to improve targeting of policy outcomes and cut red tape at all levels; stresses the importance of platforms for sharing best practice in the various areas of implementation.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	24.3.2015
Result of final vote	+: 23 -: 3 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Silvia Costa, Mircea Diaconu, Damian Drăghici, Angel Dzhambazki, Jill Evans, Emmanouil Glezos, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Andrew Lewer, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Fernando Maura Barandiarán, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Lybacka
Substitutes present for the final vote	Sylvie Guillaume, György Hölvényi, Dietmar Köster, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Ernest Maragall, Emma McClarkin, Martina Michels