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*Committee on Culture and Education*

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**2016/2307(INI)**

26.1.2017

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the European Semester for Economic Policy Coordination: employment and social aspects in Annual Growth Survey 2017  
(2016/2307(INI))

Rapporteur: Julie Ward

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## SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Considers it necessary to refocus the European Semester on the delivery of the Europe 2020 objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, paying more attention to the social, education and employment targets, as well as properly recognising the contribution of culture in achieving the so-called ‘Social Triple A’ for the development and wellbeing of individuals and societies;
2. Calls for renewed political impetus for an ambitious European anti-poverty strategy, and fresh commitment to meet the European 2020 anti-poverty targets; urges the Member States to outline detailed anti-poverty national strategy plans, and the Commission to emphasise poverty reduction within the European Semester;
3. Reiterates that macro-economic policies, and structural reforms that promote public sector cuts disproportionately impact the most vulnerable people, stifle economic growth, and exacerbate poverty and social exclusion; regrets in particular that policies pushed by the European Semester triggering heavy cuts in education and culture affect countries where education and lifelong learning are key to exiting the crisis; recalls that underfunding and cuts in public spending on education devalue education systems and, in combination with divestment, have an impact on the level of long-term unemployment; therefore calls on the Commission and Member States to consider the reorientation of their macroeconomic approach towards encouraging social investment in the public sector for sustainable and inclusive growth;
4. Calls on the Commission, in this perspective, to use the flexibility clause of the Stability and Growth Pact to allow Member States to enhance investment in cultural and youth policies, in education and training and in research and innovation;
5. Welcomes the Commission initiatives to launch consultation on the setting up of a European pillar of social rights; considers that this initiative should be able to stimulate the development of more flexible skills and competences, life-long learning actions and active support for quality employment;
6. Expresses concerns at the fact that most of the new jobs created are low-quality jobs, characterised by low salaries and precarious conditions, and are therefore unable to significantly stimulate consumption and internal demand;
7. Emphasises the huge innovation and employment potential of renewable energy sources, the search for greater resource efficiency and energy efficiencies; calls on the Commission to integrate a specific energy and environmental strategy into the European Semester also with a view to education and employment;
8. Highlights the potential of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) regarding youth employment; stresses that further promotion of, and investment in, the cultural and creative sector may contribute substantially to investment, growth, innovation and employment; calls on the Commission to therefore consider the special opportunities

offered by all cultural and creative sectors (CCS), comprising NGOs and small associations, in the framework of the Youth Employment Initiative for example;

9. Urges the Commission to provide tailor-made guidelines and support for each Member State to strengthen their efforts in implementing the country-specific recommendations on education and youth and improve the implementation of structural reforms of the education, training systems and youth policies, including through the exchange of best practices, mutual learning, technical assistance and financial support and by fostering better interaction between the EU and the Member States;
10. Welcomes the progress achieved in reaching higher education targets but raises its concerns that disadvantaged young people do not benefit equally from these results and that the social gap in education is growing; therefore calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote the right to high-quality inclusive education and training, invest in outreach and provide support to the most vulnerable learners and disadvantaged individuals including learners with disabilities, NEETs and youth and children with migrant backgrounds, and ensure their systematic inclusion in mainstream education; also calls for the new skills agenda to strengthen human capacity, support an inclusive labour market and tackle social inequalities, which are becoming steadily wider within the Union, focusing on transferable and transdisciplinary skills such as social, intercultural and creative skills, entrepreneurship, critical thinking and digital and media literacy, in view of the digital challenges and the appropriate preparation for a changing labour market;
11. Recalls the key role that non-formal and informal learning can play in developing and sustaining key skills for youth employability such as entrepreneurship, leadership, problem-solving, adaptability and capacity building, especially amongst marginalised groups;
12. Calls on the Member States to further pursue the development of validation mechanisms for non-formal and informal learning in order to meet the target set for 2017 and make lifelong learning a reality for a larger number of individuals, thereby contributing to tackling poverty, social exclusion and unemployment, as well as giving individuals opportunities for self-development;
13. Stresses that urgent actions are needed in order to overcome the existing disparity between the supply of and demand for skills; encourages Member States to improve the interaction between educational institutions, including vocational education and training, the research sector, businesses and relevant social partners in order to modernise education and training systems, address the existing skills mismatch and skills shortages, provide and promote flexible learning pathways and ensure better recognition of the acquired skills and qualifications with a particular focus on vocational education and training, apprenticeship systems, lifelong-learning and adult learning, in order to achieve a sustainable labour market and social inclusion and to prevent radicalisation;
14. Highlights that labour market policies generally, and skills matching in respect of VET policies specifically, must aim to create and promote high quality and secure jobs, in line with the ILO Decent Work agenda; notes that these policies must contribute to combating the phenomena of precarious employment, zero-hour contracts, and unpaid internships;

15. Acknowledges the value of new technologies and the importance of digital literacy for the individual's personal life and successful labour market integration, therefore suggests that Member States enhance their investment in better ICT infrastructure and connectivity in the educational institutions and develop effective strategies to harness the potential of ICTs in supporting adults' informal learning and improve their formal and non-formal education opportunities;
16. Welcomes the allocation in 2017 of an additional EUR 500 million on top of the draft budget for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and EUR 200 million to boost key initiatives for growth and job creation; recalls the need to make a better use of the available funds and initiatives related to education and training, culture, sport and youth and to enhance their investment in these sectors where necessary, especially with regard to thematic areas with direct relevance to the Europe 2020 strategy, such as early school leaving (ESL), higher education, youth employment, vocational education and training (VET), lifelong learning and mobility, in order to build resilience and reduce unemployment, especially amongst the young and most vulnerable groups, prevent radicalisation and ensure long term social inclusion;
17. Calls for programmes offering support and opportunities as part of an integrated European plan to invest in early childhood and combat child poverty, including the creation of a Child Guarantee aimed at fully implementing the Commission Recommendation: 'Investing in Children' that will ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty (including refugees) has access to free health care, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition; also calls for a proper and swift implementation of the Youth Guarantee, including through better monitoring and communication and a proper funding allocation, and by ensuring the added value and the quality of the training and jobs offered in the programmes developed under the Youth Employment Initiative, in line with the ILO Decent Work agenda;
18. Considers that migration could play an important role, including through education schemes, complemented with efficient public expenditure, with a view to making high-quality social and environmentally sustainable investments with a view to integrating workers into the labour market and reduce unemployment;
19. Emphasises that further action is needed, in consultation with social partners and in accordance with national practices, to make labour markets more inclusive overall;
20. Welcomes the contribution of Erasmus+ in fostering mobility and cultural exchanges across the EU and with third countries; calls for better promotion and use of the European tools for transparency, mobility and recognition of skills and qualifications with a view to facilitating mobility as regards learning and working; reaffirms the need to ensure mobility opportunities for vocational training, disadvantaged young people and people suffering from different forms of discrimination;
21. Highlights that social entrepreneurship is a growing field that can boost the economy while simultaneously alleviating deprivation, social exclusion and other societal problems; therefore considers that entrepreneurship education should include a social dimension, and address matters such as fair trade, social enterprises, and alternative business models, including co-operatives, in order to achieve a more social, inclusive and sustainable economy;

22. Recalls that the European Semester should be a more open, transparent and democratic process; calls on the Commission to introduce guidelines for stakeholder dialogue in order to improve the quality of civil society participation, using in this regard the additional tools offered by e-democracy.

## **RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION**

<b>Date adopted</b>	24.1.2017
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+ : 22 - : 4 0 : 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Silvia Costa, Mircea Diaconu, Angel Dzhambazki, Jill Evans, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Andrew Lewer, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Luigi Morgan, Momchil Nekov, John Procter, Michaela Šojsdrová, Yana Toom, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Łybacka
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Therese Comodini Cachia