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DRAFT REPORT

on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU
policy design
(2018/2090(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Yana Toom

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU policy design (2018/2090(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Article 14 thereof,
- having regard to Article 2 of the Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, concerning the right to education,
- 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/EC¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU²,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on a new skills agenda for Europe³,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on skills policies for fighting youth unemployment⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 April 2014 on new technologies and open educational resources⁵,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning⁶,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 22 May 2018 on moving towards a vision of a European education area,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning,

¹ OJ L 112, 2.5.2018, p. 42.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0247.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0360.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0008.

⁵ OJ C 443, 22.12.2017, p. 31.

⁶ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

- having regard to the Council conclusions of 30 May 2016 on Developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 19 December 2016 on upskilling pathways: new opportunities for adults¹,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 27 May 2015 on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on effective teacher education,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 28 November 2011 on a renewed European agenda for adult learning,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 17 January 2018 on the Digital Education Action Plan,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 30 May 2017 on school development and excellent teaching for a great start in life,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 10 June 2016 on a new Skills Agenda for Europe,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 7 December 2016 on improving and modernising education,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 30 November 2017 on Modernising school and higher education²,
- having regard to the report of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training of 9 March 2018 entitled ‘Skill needs anticipation: systems and approaches. Analysis of stakeholder survey on skill needs assessment and anticipation’,
- having regard to the Commission’s 2017 policy report entitled ‘DigComp 2.1: The digital competence framework for citizens: With eight proficiency levels and examples of use’,
- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion

¹ OJ C 484, 24.12.2016, p. 1.

² OJ C 164, 8.5.2018, p. 24.

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A8-0000/2018),

- A. whereas, with technology developing at an accelerating rate, the digital society and economy are now a fact of life, meaning that digital skills are essential;
- B. whereas the innovative capacity of technology is conditioned by the level of digital skills of the population;
- C. whereas a basic knowledge of digital technologies is vital for completing essential administrative and everyday tasks;
- D. whereas it is estimated that approximately half of the current jobs worldwide – and 30 % in the European Union – will disappear over the next 25 years¹, with new professions requiring advanced digital skills emerging;
- E. whereas the technological transformation across industries means that digital tools are frequently used even in traditionally non-technical professions, with nine out of 10 jobs in the future estimated to require digital skills;
- F. whereas currently 44 % of the EU population aged between 16 and 74 lack basic digital skills, with substantial disparities across the Member States, a situation that risks creating a new social divide;
- G. whereas the importance of digital skills, the current skills gap and disparities in digital skills across the Member States demand a joined-up policy response;
- H. whereas it is essential that educational institutions prepare pupils and students for rapid economic and social changes brought about by rapid technological development;
- I. whereas a new and innovative approach should place technology at the heart of education;
- J. whereas technologies should be better used to support new pedagogies that focus on learners as active participants with tools for inquiry-based learning and collaborative workspaces;
- K. whereas basic education in cyber hygiene, cyber safety and media literacy is necessary from an early age to help children become critical consumers, make informed decisions and be aware of risks associated with the Internet;
- L. whereas digital learning can be a more captivating, less passive, and more personalised way of teaching than lecture-style teaching methods, providing platforms for collaboration and knowledge creation;
- M. whereas, to better deliver on the promise of technology, Member States need convincing strategies to build teachers' capacity and policymakers need to become better at building support for this agenda;
- N. whereas adults who are out of work or in jobs that do not require digital skills tend to

¹ http://eskills-scale.eu/fileadmin/eskills_scale/all_final_deliverables/scale_digitalisation_report.pdf

fall quickly behind their more digitally proficient peers, thus hampering their job prospects and exacerbating social and economic disparities;

- O. whereas lifelong learning opportunities tend to be far more available to already highly-skilled workers¹;
 - P. whereas ongoing monitoring and assessment of digital skills proficiency both in organisations and among individuals is a prerequisite for effective policy delivery;
1. Underlines that digital skills acquisition requires a ‘cradle to grave’ approach anchored in lifelong learning across formal and non-formal education settings, with a policy response and targeted interventions appropriate to the needs of different age groups and learners;
 2. Stresses, therefore, that a transformation of the educational and training systems at all levels is necessary to meet the demands of the society and labour market of the future;
 3. Regrets that, despite the potential of digitalisation for fostering and enhancing learning, the impact of digital technologies on education itself has been limited; expresses, in particular, its concern that investments in ICT in schools and training centres have not yet resulted in the hoped-for transformation of educational practices;
 4. Stresses that a lack of connectivity in schools across Member States comes at the cost of the digital skills education of students; calls on the Member States to connect all remaining schools and to make use of existing EU programmes for this purpose;
 5. Points out that education and training institutions require assistance from the Union and Member States, as well as from stakeholders and industry, to make the difficult transition to a more digitalised learning environment;
 6. Stresses that teachers and trainers should be at the core of the digital transformation and therefore require adequate preparation and training themselves; insists that this training requires time and should not come as an extra task on top of their daily activities; highlights that, even more than the teaching of other basic skills, such as numeracy and literacy, digital skills teaching requires teachers to update their knowledge and skills on a continuous basis; argues, therefore, that teachers need proper and ongoing support;
 7. Encourages the Member States to promote and finance regional and local initiatives that support the transformation of teaching practices to enhance innovation;
 8. Calls on the Member States to make good use of Union financial support to make access to digital learning content, tools and solutions a reality for all;
 9. Points out that, in line with the lifelong learning approach required for digital skills, governments, in cooperation with stakeholders such as companies and civil society organisations, and through both formal and non-formal settings, should ensure that nobody is left behind and that all can find a place in the new order;

¹ Joint Employment Report 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1519897788119&uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0674>

10. Calls for a shift towards more on-the-job learning and insists on the need to have the right education and training frameworks in place, and to ensure that vocational education systems are properly resourced; believes that opportunities for re-skilling and upskilling are essential, with relevant digital skills components mainstreamed in workplace training programmes;
11. Encourages Member States to take steps, in collaboration with businesses, education and training centres and civil society stakeholders to identify existing skills gaps, expand digital literacy, enhance media literacy and establish a high level of digital connectivity and inclusion;
12. Recalls that proper assessment and monitoring of digital skills is essential to achieve progress; welcomes the development of EU-level tools for organisations (e.g. the Digital Competences Framework) and for individuals (e.g. SELFIE); insists, however, that effective digital skills assessment methods must be dynamic and constantly updated and must also achieve much broader up-take across the Union at national, regional and local levels;
13. Welcomes the Union's increased policy focus on digital skills and education, as evidenced notably by the Digital Education Action Plan of January 2018, which builds on a number of successful small-scale policy initiatives, like EU Code Week and the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition;
14. Notes, however, that these initiatives often emanate from different Directorates-General within the Commission, frustrating a coordinated approach on digital skills policy;
15. Supports the increased funding available for digital skills across the next generation of Multiannual Financial Framework programmes; insists on the need to deliver synergies across programmes to maximise the effectiveness of funding for digital skills development and deliver lasting results;
16. Regrets that no over-arching digital skills strategy has been developed at EU level, while the implications of the digital transformation for the EU's internal market are clear; believes that disparities among Member States illustrate the need for such a strategy;
17. Calls for the introduction of the PISA ICT module across Member States to ensure that they are aiming for the same level of digital skills and to pinpoint any problems quickly; encourages Member States to share lessons and best practices;
18. Believes that the Digital Education Action Plan should be viewed as the first step towards a fully-fledged EU strategy on digital education and skills, which can provide both a more coordinated policy framework and simultaneously be adaptable to changing realities; calls, therefore, on the Commission to critically evaluate the 11 actions under the Plan to prepare for the 2020 mid-term review; recalls that a proper review should imply a willingness to focus only on the best-performing actions, to jettison those that are not delivering and to develop new actions as required; stresses that enhancing digital skills in the harder-to-reach adult population is currently a glaring gap in the Plan;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Technology is evolving at a faster rate than ever before and is transforming many aspects of our lives. This also holds true for the labour market: the introduction of different technologies is changing the majority of professions across all industries.

These implications require a proper response from our educational systems if we are to educate the citizens, employees, employers and entrepreneurs of the future.

In everyday life, basic administrative practices and social interaction often presuppose basic levels of digital competence. In the workplace, automation, robotisation and digitalisation will have an impact on existing jobs. Some of them might disappear, while new jobs will be created. What is certain is that most professions and most everyday tasks will change as technologies are rolled out in society and within the workplace.

With all these rapid technological changes, education systems are struggling to adapt, not only in terms of how to use the technologies, but also in terms of teaching the skills and training the teachers and trainers we need to do that.

The Rapporteur is therefore of the opinion that these developments give us the opportunity to rethink education in the digital era.

The Rapporteur stresses in particular that:

I. The acquisition of digital skills goes hand in hand with a lifelong learning approach.

Not only is it necessary to transform educational and training systems at all levels to meet the demands, but it is also necessary to provide opportunities to upskill and reskill across all age groups.

II. Schools are the starting point for digital skills education and teachers should be at the core of the transformation.

There is a large disparity across Member States when it comes to the level of digital skills. Education of digital skills starts at school and, unfortunately, not all schools are even connected, despite calls and possibilities for funding at EU level. The Rapporteur stresses that the lack of connectivity results in a lack of digital skills education.

III. The digital transformation does not only require education in digital skills. Rather, its implications also have the potential to transform teaching methods.

Unfortunately, this potential is not being fully tapped into as teachers need to be educated themselves. The Rapporteur insists that, in order for this transformation to be successful, teachers need to be properly assisted and trained. As teachers are already under considerable work pressure, this should not come as an extra task that will increase the pressure even more.

IV. A strategy at European Union level is required.

Many initiatives exist at EU level, such as the recent Digital Education Action Plan and several promising, but small-scale initiatives (e.g. EU Code Week, Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, media literacy initiatives). However, many of the initiatives come from different

Directorates-General of the European Commission. The approach could be more effective if there were more coordination and cooperation across the different departments. The Action Plan should be viewed as the first step towards a more over-arching strategy.

V. A harmonised method for the assessment of digital skills should be developed.

Currently there are tools to assess the level digital skills, such as the Digital Competences Framework. Yet, such tools operate on a self-assessment basis. The Rapporteur calls for a PISA module to be developed in order to be able to test the actual level of digital skills. This would provide an insight into educational methods across Member States, and globally, and create opportunities for the exchange of best practice.

The digital transformation offers many opportunities for education and the economy. However, it needs a proper policy response. Without such a response, there is a risk that a new social divide will emerge.