



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

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**2012/2045(INI)**

6.7.2012

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on Education, Training and Europe 2020  
(2012/2045(INI))

Rapporteur: Olle Ludvigsson

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## 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 in its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses the importance of investing in education and training to meet the Europe 2020 targets and to strengthen European competitiveness, and urges Member States to improve access to lifelong learning (LLL) for all despite budgetary consolidation processes; points out that investment in human capital and prevention of early school-leaving should not be regarded as a cost, but instead constitutes a prerequisite for achieving the Europe 2020 targets and should therefore not be evaluated purely in terms of competitiveness; points out that education is a fundamental human right which should be guaranteed for all, with special attention being paid to the younger generation and members of vulnerable groups, including people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs);
2. Points out that countercyclical investments in high-quality education and training policies can play a key role in overcoming the economic crisis by increasing Europe's competitiveness, helping the workforce adapt to the changing labour market, strengthening social cohesion and helping to ensure that people are qualified for a wider range of jobs that can provide them with quality and sustainable employment;
3. Recalls that higher levels of skills and knowledge are necessary to reduce unemployment, to fight against poverty and social exclusion, to improve the integration of learners into social, civic and professional life, to facilitate voluntary geographical mobility, to promote educational and professional mobility and to provide European companies, in particular SMEs, with an adequately educated and trained workforce; believes that in order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to adjust training to labour market demands and to assist the transition between education, professional training and employment as well as to strengthen cooperation between schools, higher education establishments and the business sector;
4. Notes that participation by pupils and students in the corresponding mobility programmes enables them to acquire the skills they need to enhance their professional mobility and employability;
5. Acknowledges a failure to develop potential and take advantage of opportunities in the field of adult education and training in line with growing requirements at individual and community level and in terms of economic competitiveness and modern production methods;
6. Underlines the need for effective and constructive educational and vocational guidance that is accessible for all to help learners, trainees and workers identify the education and training path that best suits their inclinations and interests; stresses that one of the main causes of structural unemployment is the mismatch between education, training and jobs; regards it as a priority to anticipate skills that will be needed in an effort to ensure that the training available corresponds to the realities of the labour market; recognises that the anticipation of labour market trends can be very useful for all those involved in order to

better target their actions and make informed choices; underlines the need to improve and modernise vocational training programmes in order to ensure that skills match the new and increasing demands of companies in sectors likely to ensure quality and sustainable jobs, such as the sectors linked to a sustainable and inclusive economy, environmental transition and information and communication technologies; recalls at the same time that society needs to sustain traditional crafts;

7. Recalls that creativity is an essential element of the new knowledge-based economy; stresses that the creative sector makes a significant and increasing contribution to the economy, amounting to 4.5 % of EU GDP and 8.5 million jobs;
8. Considers that there has never been a greater need for supply and demand on the labour market to balance each other precisely, so that the creation of 'lost generations' can be avoided;
9. Considers this synergy between the supply of labour and the ability of the labour market to absorb it to be essential;
10. Stresses the essential role played by public employment services in carrying out policies to support and advise jobseekers, in particular as regards assistance in seeking employment or training; emphasises that a larger number of these jobseekers must receive adequate training which facilitates their return to the labour market, and therefore urges Member States to make the necessary resources available;
11. Stresses the decisive importance of facilitating access for persons with disabilities to lifelong learning through not only the formulation and implementation of targeted programmes but also disability mainstreaming in all programmes intended for the general public; in this connection, particular attention must be paid to the relationship between disability and lifelong learning so as to prevent social exclusion and genuinely strengthen the position of those with disabilities on the labour market, given that, according to all relevant studies, the educational level of those with disabilities is below average, while at the same time their degree of participation in the programmes in question is extremely low;
12. Regrets the reduced funding for education and the lack of training placements with remuneration offered by enterprises owing to the crisis; emphasises the importance of training placements, especially for young people; regrets the unacceptable increase in the number of unpaid traineeships and encourages the Commission to define minimum standards that encourage the provision and completion of high-quality traineeships by adopting a proposal on the European Quality Framework for Traineeships as soon as possible; stresses that Member States must invest in appropriate educational and training reforms so as to deal more effectively with the economic crisis and achieve the Europe 2020 strategy objectives;
13. Urges Member States to implement the 'Youth Guarantee' by taking specific, practical measures at national level, accompanied by adequate financial support, to guarantee that young people have decent work or can pursue studies or engage in further training in the four months after they leave school;

14. Recalls that employers have a key responsibility in making LLL a reality for all with due regard for gender equality; encourages employers to facilitate continuous training throughout workers' careers by improving the visibility of rights to training, by ensuring that training is available to all workers, and by giving workers proper credit for in-service training, thus making further specialisation possible and creating opportunities for career advancement;
15. Urges Member States to set themselves ambitious targets and apply innovative policies in tackling early school-leaving; calls for diversified and flexible learning pathways with strong links between initial and further vocational training, so as to improve significantly the quality and results of the courses offered and accommodate the needs of different learners and the introduction of dual systems combining studying and practical learning with better opportunities for vocational education and training;
16. Calls for greater efforts to establish and implement a European system for the certification and recognition of qualifications, formal and non-formal learning, including voluntary service, so as to strengthen the vital links between non-formal learning and formal education, as well as to improve national and cross-border educational and labour market mobility;
17. Welcomes greater cooperation between education and training providers on the one hand and the business and research sectors and civil society on the other as a means of reducing unemployment;
18. Recommends the implementation of joint education and training initiatives in line with the particular nature of each target group and the needs of the geographical area or occupational sector concerned;
19. Asks the Commission to encourage constructive collaboration between the Member States and exchanges of experience, expertise and good practice;
20. Notes the great disparities between national education and training systems and, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, recommends that the progress report be accompanied by a handbook for each individual Member State containing recommendations as to how existing policies might be improved and the national education systems developed;
21. Calls for the external dimension of EU policies to be enhanced through an intensified policy dialogue and cooperation on education and training between the Union and its international partners and neighbouring countries to reflect the increasing economic, social and political interdependencies and to contribute to the implementation of the external dimension of Europe 2020, to support stability, prosperity, and better employment opportunities for our partner countries' citizens while developing better instruments for managing and facilitating skilled migration to Europe to balance skill shortages and gaps that are the result of demographic developments in Europe;
22. Recalls that, as players on the global education market, national vocational education and training (VET) systems need to be connected to the wider world in order to remain up to date and competitive and that they have to be more capable of attracting learners from other European and third countries, providing them with education and training as well as

making it easier to recognise their skills; highlights that demographic change and international migration make these issues even more relevant;

23. Stresses that, although a European area of education and training is emerging, the objective of removing obstacles to mobility has not been achieved yet and the mobility of learners in VET remains low; underlines that increasing the transnational mobility of VET learners and teachers substantially and recognising the knowledge, skills and competences they have acquired abroad will be an important challenge for the future and that better and targeted information provision and guidance are also needed to attract more foreign learners to our VET systems;
24. Stresses the need to increase the involvement and participation of all stakeholders, in particular the social partners, in the development and implementation of education and training programmes, including drawing up content.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	5.7.2012
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 39 -: 3 0: 2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Edit Bauer, Heinz K. Becker, Phil Bennion, Pervenche Berès, Mara Bizzotto, Philippe Boulland, David Casa, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Minodora Cliveti, Marije Cornelissen, Emer Costello, Andrea Cozzolino, Frédéric Daerden, Karima Delli, Sari Essayah, Richard Falbr, Marian Harkin, Nadja Hirsch, Stephen Hughes, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Martin Kastler, Adám Kósa, Jean Lambert, Patrick Le Hyaric, Veronica Lope Fontagné, Olle Ludvigsson, Thomas Mann, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Csaba Öry, Siiri Oviir, Konstantinos Poupakis, Sylvana Rapti, Licia Ronzulli, Elisabeth Schroedter, Nicole Sinclair, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Jutta Steinruck, Andrea Zanoni
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Kinga Göncz, Sidonia Elżbieta Jędrzejewska, Jan Kozłowski, Anthea McIntyre