



2020/2760(RSP)

28.8.2020

DRAFT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B9-0000/2020

pursuant to Rule 136(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on the future of European education in the context of Covid-19
(2020/2760(RSP))

Sabine Verheyen
on behalf of the Committee on Culture and Education

European Parliament resolution on the future of European education in the context of Covid-19 (2020/2760(RSP))

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 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 Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights¹,
 - 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 1 July 2020 entitled ‘European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience’ (COM/2020/274),
 - 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’ (COM(2018)22),
 - 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 14 November 2017 entitled ‘Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture’ (COM(2017)673),
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2018 on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU policy design³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU⁴,
 - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Culture and Education,
- A. whereas, in accordance with the European Pillar of Social Rights, access to quality and inclusive education and lifelong learning is a basic human right and essential for skills acquisition and maintenance, full and active participation in society and effective access to an evolving labour market;
- B. whereas, according to UNESCO, nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries - 94% of the global learner population - were affected by the closure of education and

¹ OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10–15.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0054.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0485.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0247.

training institutions at the height of the COVID-19 crisis; whereas over 60% of learners around the world are still impacted;

- C. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has caused perhaps the most severe disruption to the world's education and training systems in history, threatening a loss of learning for an entire generation of students; whereas that same generation faces entering a labour market heavily impacted by the COVID-19-fuelled economic crisis;
- D. whereas the sudden shift to mass online and distance learning precipitated by the crisis has exposed enormous gaps in digital education policy design and delivery within the European Union and across Member States; whereas the crisis has similarly demonstrated a lack of cooperation and coordination among the Member States on education and training policies;
- E. whereas the overnight digital transition came in a context where 43 per cent of Europeans lack basic digital skills⁵; whereas there is a direct correlation between where people live, their socioeconomic status, their income, their level of education and their employment on the one hand and their degree of digital proficiency on the other;
- F. whereas the Commission aims to establish the European Education Area by 2025;
- G. whereas, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, education policy is the exclusive competence of the Member States, with the Union playing a supporting and coordinating role;
 - 1. Salutes the creativity and resourcefulness shown by education and training institutions and their staff and by students and parents in adapting to online and distance learning; underlines, however, that the rushed digital transition in education and training has revealed glaring gaps with respect to access to digital infrastructure and devices, the quality of online teaching and the skills of teachers and trainers;
 - 2. Notes with alarm that these gaps have exacerbated existing inequalities - both among and within the Member States - and had a disproportionate impact on those already suffering social or other disadvantages and those with learning difficulties; welcomes, therefore, the efforts made by the Member States to ensure that in-person learning can resume in a COVID-19-secure environment;
 - 3. Stresses that social and educational inequalities often take root in early childhood and tend to widen through adulthood since lower educational attainment typically leads to worse employment prospects, which in turn tend to lessen access to in-work training and development opportunities;
 - 4. Is concerned by the levels of digital illiteracy brought to the fore by the crisis, with many people struggling with basic online data protection, cybersecurity and information literacy; emphasises the importance of teaching basic digital skills through a genuine lifelong-learning approach;
 - 5. Considers that the primary lesson to be learnt from the crisis is that inclusion and equal opportunities must be placed at the heart of the Union's future education and training policies;
 - 6. Underlines that the crisis has shown the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to education policy, including teachers and trainers, learners, parents, businesses and community organisations in both design and delivery; recalls that learning takes place

⁵ Digital Economy and Society Index 2019.

across formal, non-formal and informal settings and that policy-making must be geared towards this multi-setting approach;

7. Is convinced that the crisis offers an opportunity for deep reflection on the future orientation of education and training policy, of curricula and of learning methods; encourages the Member States to embrace innovation and build new and emerging technologies into their education and training systems in a smart, learner-centred way;
8. Considers that better cooperation and coordination among the Member States and a more ambitious Union education and training policy would have improved the effectiveness of the response to the COVID-19 crisis;
9. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to propose a bold policy framework for future European education policy, transforming the European Education Area from a loose vision of principles into a concrete work programme with a set of measurable objectives, including, as a first priority, making the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications, diplomas and learning periods a reality in the Union by 2025 at the latest; urges the Commission to take a similarly bold approach to the upgraded Digital Education Action Plan, shifting from a collection of disparate actions to a fully-fledged digital skills and education strategy;
10. Insists that future European education policy must be built around a joined-up policy framework that ensures that relevant policy initiatives - like the European Skills Agenda, the European Education Area, the Digital Education Action Plan, the Youth Guarantee and the Child Guarantee - are complementary and support clear overall policy aims;
11. Notes that progress towards a European Higher Education Area is considerably more advanced than in other education sectors; urges the Commission, therefore, to focus greater efforts on other education sectors, in particular school education, adult education and vocational education and training;
12. Recalls that the Erasmus+ programme is the primary funding instrument to support the construction of the European Education Area; underlines the value of tools developed with Erasmus+ support to produce and share teaching resources, for example through e-twinning, and to develop teacher training modules, for example through the School Education Gateway; believes that such tools, if scaled up and better funded, can make a real difference to online teaching and learning;
13. Stresses, furthermore, the potential contribution of the Vocational Centres of Excellence, DiscoverEU and European Universities initiatives to the European Education Area; deplures, however, that the Commission's revised multiannual financial framework (MFF) proposal of May 2020 - lowered even further by the European Council in July 2020 - starves the Erasmus+ programme of the necessary funding to deliver these flagship initiatives without impacting on core parts of the programme, particularly the expansion of learning mobility opportunities and making the programme more inclusive;
14. Recalls that well-functioning education and training systems require high levels of public investment; insists, therefore, that ambitious policies without the corresponding funding in place lack credibility; deeply regrets that specifically those programmes that support education and training policies - notably Erasmus+, Horizon Europe and the European Social Fund Plus - have been subject to budgetary cuts in the political agreement on the next MFF reached at the July European Council; reiterates its call for the Erasmus+ budget to be tripled compared to the 2014-2020 MFF;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the

governments and parliaments of the Member States.