

Put digital skills at the heart of education and training policies

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- Retraining and learning new skills should be a key part of national recovery plans
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In a resolution adopted today on the European Skills Agenda, MEPs call for significant investments to close the digital skills gap.

With a view to the green and digital transition, MEPs emphasise the importance of training and learning new skills for workers in industries and sectors that are undergoing fundamental changes. They also point out that mismatches and skills shortages present considerable challenges to the EU's labour market and education systems, with 42 % of EU citizens lacking basic digital skills. The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the importance of digital skills, and offers a unique opportunity to accelerate the digital and technological revolution in lifelong learning, MEPs say.

They underline that significant investments are needed to close the digital skills gap and therefore call on member states to invest more in development and education and to prioritise retraining and learning new skills in their recovery and resilience plans. A much bigger part of the new EU long-term budget and Next Generation EU must be spent on actions in the European Skills Agenda, they add.

Preventing young people from dropping out

MEPs are concerned about the high number of young people who are not in any form of education, employment or training (NEET). They recommend strengthening early warning systems to identify young people at risk of becoming NEETs. They also stress the need for preventive actions, such as skills assessments and career guidance, which focus on helping early school leavers into employment or education before they become unemployed.

Keeping graduates in the EU

To increase competitiveness in the EU, MEPs finally urge the Commission and member states to do more and better to retain foreign students after they have graduated from EU universities. They stress that granting graduates access to intra-EU mobility and a jobseeker's visa could increase the EU's attractiveness as a whole. For this purpose, they call on EU governments to finally unblock the Blue Card proposal.

The text was adopted with 606 votes in favour, 12 against and 72 abstentions.

Background

The [European Skills Agenda](#), published by the European Commission in 2020, contains 12 actions that need to be implemented over the coming five years in fields such as lifelong learning and vocational training. The agenda complies with the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which establishes that 'everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market'.

Further information

[Committee on Employment and Social Affairs](#)

[The adopted text will be available here \(11.02.2021\)](#)

[Video recording of the debate \(08.02.2021\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[European Skills Agenda](#)

[EP briefing: Skills and jobs for future labour markets](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material](#)

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