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DRAFT REPORT

on new technologies and open educational resources
(2013/2182(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on new technologies and open educational resources
(2013/2182(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Article 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

– having regard to the Commission Communication of 25 September 2013 entitled 'Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources' (COM(2013)0654) and the accompanying staff working document on analysis and mapping of innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources in Europe (SWD(2013)0341),

– having regard to the Commission Communication of 11 July 2013 entitled 'European higher education in the world' (COM(2013)0499),

– having regard to the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning[1],

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 14 February 2011 on the role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy[2],

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training[3],

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the internationalisation of higher education[4],

– having regard to its resolution of 19 November 2013 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'ERASMUS FOR ALL' The Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport[5],

– having regard to its resolution of 22 October 2013 on rethinking education[6],

– having regard to its resolution of 12 September 2013 on the digital agenda for growth, mobility and employment: time to move up a gear[7],

– having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2012 on education, training and Europe

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[1] OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.
[2] OJ C 70, 4.3.2011, p. 1.
[3] OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 2.
[4] OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 12.
[5] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0460.
[6] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0433.
[7] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0377.

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2020[1],

– having regard to its resolution of 20 April 2012 on modernising Europe's higher education systems[2],

– having regard to its resolution of 26 October 2011 on the agenda for new skills and jobs[3],

– having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2011 on Youth on the Move – a framework for improving Europe's education and training systems[4],

– having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0000/2014),

A. whereas education and training systems need to be geared towards an increasing need for the continuous updating of knowledge and skills;

B. whereas the Europe 2020 strategy aims to boost competitiveness and growth in the EU through a highly skilled workforce;

C. whereas high unemployment levels coincide with a significant number of vacancies that cannot be filled, pointing to a skills gap; whereas by 2020, 90 % of jobs will require digital skills, and whereas by 2015 there will be up to 900 000 unfilled ICT-related vacancies in the EU;

E. whereas 18-28 % of students in the EU have few possibilities to access and use the internet either at school or at home; whereas only 30 % of students in the EU can be considered as digitally competent;

F. whereas open educational resources (OER) can play a crucial role in facilitating lifelong learning for all learners;

Opportunities and challenges

1. Welcomes the Commission Communication which sets out a Union agenda in the field of OER, and which focuses on the potential of these resources to widen access to and equity in education;

2. Emphasises that OER create opportunities for education and training institutions, teachers, students and pupils to teach and learn in innovative ways; calls on educational institutions to create an organisational environment in which such innovation is welcomed;

3. Notes that quality assurance plays a crucial role in increasing the trust in and use of OER; encourages research on methods of quality assessment, such as peer and user reviews in communities of practice;

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[1] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0323.
[2] OJ C 258 E, 7.9.2013, p. 55.
[3] OJ C 131 E, 8.5.2013, p. 87.
[4] OJ C 377 E, 7.12.2012, p. 77.

4. Acknowledges the fact that OER are generally produced in a limited number of languages and mainly by higher education institutions; encourages education and training institutions at all levels across the Member States to produce OER in their own languages in order to exploit the full potential of digital technology and multilingualism;

5. Points out that ICT and OER are currently mainly used in higher education; encourages their use in primary and secondary education;

6. Stresses the need to facilitate the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through OER, and calls on the Member States to incorporate appropriate measures in their national qualification frameworks for the validation of such learning;

7. Highlights that availability of and access to free online teaching material is crucial; calls on the Commission to monitor and analyse the copyright and licensing issues surrounding the use of OER;

8. Calls on the Member States to ensure coordinated and progressive education on internet safety in schools; recommends that complementary strategies be developed targeting parents, thereby strengthening the role of parental mediation; insists that the protection of the individual integrity and personal data of teachers and learners using OER must be assured;

Skills for teachers and learners

9. Stresses that teachers at all levels of education have a key role in facilitating access to, and use of, online learning materials and in making digital skills a reality for all learners;

10. Urges the Member States to support teachers in their professional development by offering modern curricula in their initial education, and by providing in-service training geared to help them acquire a high level of digital competence;

11. Points out that basic literacy and numeracy skills are a prerequisite for developing digital skills and using OER effectively;

12. Highlights that ICT and OER can enrich the teaching and learning of foreign languages at all levels of education and training;

13. Reiterates that continuous updating of knowledge and skills is essential for successful labour market integration, and notes that OER can contribute to facilitate learning alongside a job; encourages a more gender-balanced use of ICT with a view to future employment possibilities for women;

14. Recognises the importance of traditional ways of teaching and learning, and calls on the Commission to support further research into the question of whether and how OER and massive open online courses (MOOCs) can enhance individuals' learning outcomes compared to traditional methods;

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Widening the reach

15. Stresses the importance of access to education and training for all learners, including those with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from geographically remote regions;

16. Acknowledges that new technologies and OER (particularly MOOCs) have made it possible for education and training institutions to reach thousands of learners in the Union, including in its outermost regions, and around the world; recognises that education and knowledge now travels easily across borders, which increases the potential for international cooperation;

17. Notes that the European Union risks falling behind other regions of the world, such as the United States or Asia, where heavy investments are made in new technologies and OER;

18. Encourages strengthened cooperation between European education and training institutions, and with international organisations and stakeholders, to facilitate a better understanding of new teaching and learning methods and the impact of ICT on education; encourages the development of common platforms for such cooperation;

19. Points out that digital technologies are not fully exploited in education and training across the Union; fears that this situation may lead to a further fragmentation of approaches and markets;

The contribution of EU programmes

20. Welcomes the launch of the Open Education Europa portal, providing a single gateway to European OER;

21. Notes that an appropriate digital infrastructure is a prerequisite for reaching the highest possible number of learners with OER;

22. Points out that local and regional authorities have a key role to play in developing infrastructures and disseminating and implementing the relevant European initiatives on national, regional and local level;

23. Calls on the Member States to use the available funding through the European Structural and Investment Funds for improving the digital infrastructure, taking into account the needs of educational institutions, in particular in rural and remote regions;

24. Calls on the Commission to encourage the exchange of good practices between Member States and between educational institutions, drawing on existing projects and experiences;

25. Welcomes the Commission initiative to develop indicators to closely monitor the integration of ICT in teaching and training institutions, and to support Union-wide quantitative surveys;

26. Appreciates that all educational materials drawn up with support from Erasmus+ will be available to the public under open licenses; encourages similar practices for other Union programmes;

27. Highlights that Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 can play an important role to generate OER through communities of practice, such as that of school teachers using the eTwinning platform; encourages an extension of the use of these platforms for other educational sectors;

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28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

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EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

On 25 September 2013, the Commission presented its communication entitled 'Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources'. The document identifies challenges in three fields:
- (1) Innovation in education and training institutions;
- (2) Use of Open Educational Resources (OER);
- (3) Availability of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures and equipment.

The Commission's suggestions for the Member States and education & training institutions include:
- (1) Increasing recognition of skills acquired online and supporting teachers' acquisition of digital competences;
- (2) Promoting open access to publicly-funded educational materials;
- (3) Improving broadband connectivity and ICT equipment at the classroom level.

The rapporteur believes that, in light of the current economic crisis, and against the backdrop of high youth unemployment, one increasingly important challenge facing the Member States is to provide young people with a quality education.

The uneven availability of digital infrastructure across the Union poses a second challenge. The rapporteur believes that the resolution to this problem lies in the use of EU programmes, and in cooperation between Member States and regions.

Moreover, the rapporteur fears that the Union could fall further behind the United States and Asia in the digital competence of its workforce. European education and training systems are still unable to integrate ICT in their mainstream practices. There is a major difference between the day-to-day use of digital technologies and their use in education and training institutions. Cooperation between European education and training institutions should be encouraged to facilitate the development of OER.

Ground-breaking shifts are happening in the field of education and training. We are witnessing a massive growth in educational courses and other resources available via the internet, either free as OER or as paid-for resources: knowledge is increasingly available for everyone, and often for free.

Furthermore, our lives are becoming increasingly digital. This presents both opportunities and challenges for the education sector: the benefits of new technologies must be reaped without neglecting the value of traditional methods.

Making more use of digital technologies is creating opportunities for education and training institutions, teachers, students and pupils to teach and learn in innovative ways. Educational institutions will have the chance to choose individual resources and modify them according to their specific needs, thereby creating a greater diversity of learning environments. OER can

help to enhance collaborative approaches and personalise the learning process.

While a 'digital native' generation is fast emerging, today's educators must be properly trained to embed ICT in their pedagogical practices. For this reason, the rapporteur believes that the European Union should support teachers' education and professional development on ICT and promote the use of OER.

Many institutions use OER materials. While open licences allow the free exchange of digital educational resources, there are still some challenges to be faced related to the copyright of teaching and learning materials. It is important to properly monitor and analyse these issues.

In the field of education and training, it is essential to continue to improve existing and promote innovative methods of teaching and learning. OER can make a strong contribution towards reaching the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy and making lifelong learning a reality.

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