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Key competences for a changing world: implementation of the education and training 2010 work programme

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European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2010 on key competences for a changing world: implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme (2010/2013(INI))

(2011/C 161 E/02)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 25 November 2009 entitled 'Key competences for a changing world' (COM(2009)0640),
- having regard to the eight key skills set out in Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 entitled 'Key Competences for lifelong learning – A European Reference Framework' ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the 10-year 'Education and Training 2010' work programme, and to the subsequent joint interim reports on progress towards its implementation,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on the new skills for new jobs ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the report by the Expert Group on new skills for new jobs entitled 'New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now',
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2008 on adult learning: it is never too late to learn ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 December 2008 on delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation – implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010 work programme' ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the Framework for European cooperation on in the youth field adopted in November 2009,
- having regard to the European Development Education Consensus, a strategy framework drawn up by representatives of the EU institutions, the Member States, civil society and other stakeholders in November 2007,
- having regard to the detailed assessment of national reports and performance against a set of indicators and benchmarks (SEC(2009)1598 and SEC(2009)1616),
- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU,
- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 290, 4.12.2007, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 41 E, 19.2.2009, p. 46.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2010, p. 33.

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- having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0141/2010),
- A. whereas quality education and training are a must in terms of personal fulfilment of the individual, equality, fighting social exclusion and poverty, active citizenship and social cohesion,
- B. whereas improving the quality of education and training for all students in order to attain better results and competences, initially through new and more incisive policies to increase educational supply, is a priority,
- C. whereas despite some improvement in education and training performance in the European Union the majority of the EU benchmarks set out for 2010 will not be reached, whereas in particular skills levels remain inadequate and whereas one third of the population of Europe have very low-level educational qualifications,
- D. whereas, ten years after the launching of the Bologna Process, the desired convergence between the Member States regarding higher education has not been achieved,
- E. whereas education and training policies should enable all citizens, irrespective of their age, gender, health, physical, mental and psychic conditions and their linguistic, ethnic, national, religious and socio-economic background, to acquire, update and develop their skills and competences throughout their lives,
- F. whereas education and training are key elements in the successful implementation of the Renewed Social Agenda for opportunities, access and solidarity; whereas the implementation of that agenda would help to create more and better jobs and give more European citizens the opportunity to achieve their potential,
- G. whereas a continuous effort is required to ensure that women have equal access to education at all levels and that educational choices are not predetermined by gender stereotypes,
- H. whereas the full implementation of key competences needs further policy action both at the European and national level,
- I. whereas the crucial challenge for education and training in Europe is the reform of education towards a learning-centred holistic education system which prepares young people for being happy, active global citizens who are ready to enter the labour Market,
- J. whereas the implementation and further development of lifelong learning strategies remain a critical challenge for many Member States; whereas stronger focus should be given to the whole life-cycle instead of focusing on specific sectors or groups,
- K. whereas the benefits of educational investment are seen only in the long-term perspective and it is important to ensure that they are not set aside in the policy agenda; whereas we should call for EU guidance on the quality of education and training systems, and avoid budgetary restraint, or at least the resources allocated should increase and not decline; whereas the EU therefore needs to equip itself with budgetary mechanisms not tied to annual programming in the field of education and training,
- L. whereas investment in education and training, retraining and the updating and adaptation of the knowledge and skills of all is an essential precondition for emerging from the crisis and rising to the long-term challenges of global economic competitiveness, employment, mobilisation and social inclusion,

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- M. whereas more than 80 % of primary school teachers and 97 % of pre-school teachers in the Union are women, while in secondary education the equivalent figure is only 60 %, and in higher education and research less than 40 %,
- N. whereas the challenges faced by teachers are increasing as educational environments become more complex and heterogeneous, such as changes in information and communication technologies (ICT), financial restrictions caused by economic crisis, changes to social and family structures, and multi-culturalism,
- O. whereas it will be important to implement the EU 2020 Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training, in order to address these crucial challenges,
- P. whereas digital competences will be of increasing importance in the evolving knowledge-based economy and labour market of the EU; whereas these competences offer opportunities for economic recovery, fostering entrepreneurship, and increased access to employment,
- Q. whereas sport is one of the most effective means of combating substance abuse (smoking, alcoholism and drug-taking), as school pupils and students in higher education are one of the social groups most at risk in this regard; whereas the participation of school pupils and students in sport depends primarily on the existence of appropriate background infrastructure,
1. Welcomes the above-mentioned Commission Communication 'Key competences for a changing world';
 2. Notes that despite progress in recent years many European citizens are still not yet sufficiently skilled; points out that one in seven young people (18-24) leave school early (6 million drop-outs in EU 27), that one in four 15-year-olds have poor reading skills, that around 77 million people (nearly one third of Europe's population aged 25-64) have no, or low, formal qualifications, that only one quarter have high-level qualifications and that too many European citizens lack ICT skills; stresses that very low skills levels are a persistent problem throughout the EU and is concerned at the rise in the number of young people who are not fully literate at the age of 15 (21.3 % in 2000, 24.1 % in 2006);
 3. Asks the Commission to continue the debate on 'New Skills for New Jobs'; points out that, by 2020, 16 million more jobs will need high qualifications and four million more jobs will need medium qualifications, while 12 million fewer jobs will require low qualifications; points out that by 2015 a large majority of jobs, across all sectors, will require ICT skills; calls for this debate to involve all interested parties, including teachers, students, competent professional organizations, relevant NGOs and trade unions, civil society stakeholders, particularly parents' and students' associations, and representatives of business;
 4. Considers it vital to introduce policies seeking to improve the quality of education and training for all students and stresses that, in order for European educational systems to meet the challenge of global competitiveness, it is necessary to increase the educational opportunities available, which must be of a higher level and broader scope in order to meet the pressing demands of professional sectors and the labour market;
 5. Considers language learning crucial for facilitating young people's access to the labour market and for promoting their mobility and equal opportunities;
 6. Calls on the Member States to implement further the European Qualifications Framework;
 7. Urges that attention be given not only to the so-called new 'green jobs' but also to 'white jobs'; points out that by 2030 the proportion of those aged over 65 in relation to those aged 15-64 will increase from 26 % in 2008 to 38 % by 2030; notes that there will therefore be an increasing need for shared policies on active ageing, with particular reference to measures to promote literacy and refresh and update key skills in the field of ICT in order to overcome the digital divide, which is a growing factor in the social exclusion of the elderly;

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8. Notes that the Commission Communication on EU 2020 underlines that the 'employment rate of women is particularly low' (only 63 % of women are in work compared to 76 % of men) and that 'policies to promote gender equality will be needed to increase labour force participation'; notes that consequently education and training policy needs to be targeted to close this gap in the labour market, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable growth and social cohesion; stresses the importance of a non-gender-based education from the youngest possible age;
9. Calls for special attention to the need to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities, irrespective of their age, in education and training, with particular reference to the genuine integration of disabled children from an early age into educational establishments; underlines the need for proper investments and for a long-term strategy to remove any threshold in this area;
10. Believes that all education should foster the acquisition of democratic competences by supporting student councils and allowing students to take co-responsibility for their education as enshrined in a Charter on Students Rights; in this regard, calls for a thorough debate in European society about the function and role of education and suggests that the European Citizens' Agora could be the space for such a debate;
11. Calls on the European Commission, Member States and employers, in close cooperation with education and training providers, to encourage skills upgrading for people from disadvantaged backgrounds;
12. Recognises that globalisation has profoundly changed Europe's societies and recommends the inclusion of Global/Development Education within all education to enable citizens to deal with the threats and opportunities of a changing world;
13. Considers it essential, at all levels in education and training, to establish digital and media literacy and to provide an introduction to new technologies and to teach everyone to apply expertise and critical discernment in equal measure when using modern forms of communication and media content; underlines the urgent need to improve the e-skills of all European citizens; points out that training and education in ICT, both at national and EU level, are a necessity, given the increasing importance of these skills in the evolving labour market;
14. Highlights the importance of sufficient and high-quality support for the development of teachers' competences and of introducing new ways of organising learning in attractive school environments;
15. Underlines the importance of art, culture and sport in education and training and the need to pay particular attention to these subjects in pre-primary, primary and secondary education and lifelong learning; considers that, as well as developing vocational and technical abilities, cultural and social education are an integral part of education and training policy because they help develop non-academic aptitudes, thus fostering individual fulfilment and the acquisition of basic skills;
16. Calls on the Member States to ensure there are sufficient funds for investment in sport for educational institutions and to increase the cooperation of the public and private spheres in this area;
17. Calls on the Member States to ensure sufficient investment in education in order to guarantee accessibility to the labour market for all categories;
18. Stresses the importance of using history and language as vehicles for the achievement of European social and cultural integration;

Pre-primary education

19. Draws attention to the importance of high-quality early childhood education for the early acquisition of key competences, including a child's ability to communicate both in his or her mother tongue and in the language of the host country concerned, and in particular for supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special (learning) needs in order to fight against future poverty and social exclusion;

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20. Draws attention to the importance of promoting a reading culture from pre-school onwards, and to the importance of access to reading material already at the pre-school age;
21. Draws attention to the importance of education in one's mother tongue including in the case of traditional minorities;
22. Stresses the importance of multilingualism for mobility; for this reason calls on the Member States to introduce the learning of a second language at an early stage;
23. Stresses that it is essential to put in place educational support measures for children of immigrants in order to facilitate their adjustment to the educational and social environment of the host country;
24. Underlines the need to encourage and support actions to enhance children's creativity from an early stage in life, thus better paving the way for a culture of innovation in Europe;
25. Draws attention to the Barcelona targets that aimed at providing childcare by 2010 for at least 90 % of children between three years old and the mandatory school age and for at least 33 % of children under three years of age and making childcare affordable for as many people as possible;

Primary and secondary education

26. Underlines the need to continue to develop and confirm language acquisition at primary and secondary school, also with reference to immigrant children, and the importance of being taught in their mother tongue in the case of traditional minorities;
27. Supports the idea of an educational approach that allows more regular consultation of, and greater participation by, students in the management of the educational process, active participation by students' parents in the educational community and the development of a confidence-based relationship between students and teachers, serving to stimulate the spirit of initiative and the acquisition of social and civic skills that are essential to active citizenship;
28. Stresses the importance of incorporating new technologies into the syllabus as a necessary learning tool in a modern educational system; supports the idea that children, at an early age under proper supervision, acquire skills enabling them to handle media content and in particular the internet with a sense of responsibility and critical discernment and considers it essential to make children aware of the issues of protection of privacy and personal data and compliance with the rules of copyright;
29. Considers that the progress made in adapting school curricula to key competences is a positive step, but that it is vital to make further efforts, notably through the recognition and certification of skills acquired in non-formal and informal education, and to support the acquisition of key competences for those at risk of educational under-achievement and social exclusion;
30. Calls for action to promote physical and sporting activity in schools and the creation of and participation in school championships, which will improve health, foster integration and help develop values that will contribute to the creation of positive patterns of behaviour;
31. Advocates education and training for children from migrant families, stressing the major contribution of education to the successful integration of migrants into European society;
32. Calls for a comprehensive strategy for key competence acquisition, ranging from reform of school curricula through to support for ongoing training and professional development of teachers, thus providing for a well-trained educational community; considers that incentives should be offered to teachers to enable them to improve their teaching and to focus on professional development;

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33. Calls on the Member States to introduce new subject combinations and materials in schools providing general education so as to enable young people with one of the most frequent learning disorders – dyslexia – to complete their studies successfully, notwithstanding their learning disability;

34. Stresses the importance of integrated education in order to prevent social prejudices and discrimination and thus contribute to European social solidarity;

Higher education

35. Calls for enhanced mobility between higher education institutions, the business world and vocational education and training (e.g. students, teachers, employees, trainers) to promote student-centred learning and the acquisition of competences such as entrepreneurship, intercultural understanding, critical thinking and creativity, which are increasingly needed on the labour market; considers that to this end existing obstacles within the EU should be urgently addressed, with a special focus on the obstacles related to financial and recognition barriers, so as to enhance the quality of mobility experiences for all students; supports higher education quality assurance as a means to reinforce mobility for academic and research purposes and as a precondition for equal job opportunities for EU citizens;

36. Stresses the importance of providing all young people with a solid grounding in the basic skills that are essential to promoting lifelong mobility and enabling them to deal with developments in the employment market and the emergence of new economic and social needs;

37. Calls for research programmes to be promoted in order to strengthen the 'knowledge triangle' that is crucial for boosting growth and employment in the European Union;

38. Calls on the Member States to modernise the agenda of higher education and, in particular, to coordinate curricula with the demands of the labour market;

39. Calls on higher education institutions to modernise their courses and, in general, to accelerate the Bologna Process;

40. Considers that higher education institutions should become more open to and prepared for all learners, in particular non-traditional learners, students with special needs and disadvantaged groups and that one of the most useful means to that end would be well-funded grant systems whereby young people from poor families could be encouraged to embark on a course of study; also considers that specific policies should be implemented by Member States in order to ensure the fundamental right to education for everyone, including young people with less financial opportunities and that a composite benchmark for equity in higher education should be explored in the future, as part of the Education and Training strategic framework;

41. Recalls in this context the Council Conclusions ⁽¹⁾ of May 2007 on the indicators developed for the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action in the areas of education and training of women, in particular higher education and research; regrets, however, that these indicators are not entirely taken into account in the monitoring of the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme; encourages in this respect their use as a tool for monitoring progress towards gender equality in education and training;

42. Notes that while progress has been made regarding women's access to higher education, women are still under-represented in the disciplines of mathematics, sciences and technology (only 32 % of graduates are female, and 68 % are male); points out that reducing gender imbalances in these fields would contribute to a decrease in the skills shortages experienced by the EU in those sectors;

43. Considers non-formal education as an educational field complementary to formal education and recommends that it should be treated as such in educational policy making under ET2020;

⁽¹⁾ Council Document 9152/2007.

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44. Calls for increased, more effective and wider-ranging investment in higher education;
45. Calls on the Member States to encourage partnerships (at international, national, regional and local level) between higher education institutions, universities, research centres and the business world and financial investment by the business world in higher education;
46. Calls on Member States to allocate the necessary resources for the higher education sector, so as to make it responsive to global challenges, as a major tool for economic and social recovery following the recent downturn;
47. Calls on the Member States to support by legislative, administrative and financial means education in their mother tongue for minorities;

Vocational education and training

48. Insists that high-quality vocational education and training are fundamental to the supply of new professionals and essential for the 'new skills for new jobs' action, giving particular attention to expanding work-based learning and apprenticeships, including for young graduates on the basis of agreements between universities and businesses; further considers it important to promote study periods and traineeships for vocational training students in other European Union countries, along the same lines as the Erasmus programme for university students; calls for more support and prestige to be attached to vocational training;
49. Stresses the need to further modernise vocational training programmes by taking into account the key competences, in order, on the one hand, to improve their quality and make them more attractive to young people while, on the other hand, making them more appropriate to the developing needs of the labour market; considers that vocational training programmes should improve the transversal key competences;
50. Stresses the need to adopt, on the basis of existing good practice, a model for the recognition of educational credits relating to citizenship skills for young people taking part in volunteer and community service work promoted by non-profit making associations or in the context of development cooperation;
51. Calls for improved transition between secondary vocational education and training and higher education, which ensures higher qualifications;
52. Stresses the lifelong learning dimension of the Recommendation on Key Competences and insists that to reach its full implementation more progress is needed in the fields of vocational education and training and in adult learning, including through the legal recognition of a universal right to lifelong education;
53. Stresses the importance of exchanges of information and of good and successful practice between Member States in the field of vocational education and training;

Lifelong learning

54. Calls for quick action to tackle the growing number of people with low levels of reading literacy, providing particular support for local authorities, since they are most easily accessible to the public; calls on the Member States and the Commission to focus their attention on the illiterate, whose numbers are still too high, and to take resolute action to tackle this problem – including where adults are concerned;
55. Is extremely concerned about the increasing numbers of unemployed young people, especially in the current economic crisis; urges Member States to ensure that labour markets are as flexible as possible to ensure that young people can easily find work and move between jobs;

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56. Stresses the need for improved inclusion of education providers in the development of overarching national qualifications frameworks, and for greater recognition of prior education, including that acquired on an informal or ad hoc basis;
57. Notes that the objectives set in respect of four of the five benchmarks adopted in 2003 will not be reached; calls upon the Commission, the Member States, the regional and local authorities and other actors to examine the causes and take appropriate action to reverse the situation;
58. Stresses the importance of an ongoing structured dialogue and consultation between those in their final stages of education and training, higher education institutions and business;
59. Supports the objective of raising adult participation in lifelong learning from 12.5 % to 15 % by 2020, and calls for appropriate action; to this end, calls on universities to facilitate wider access to studying, diversify and broaden the student base and amend study programmes to make them attractive to adults returning to study; calls on the Commission and Member States to take even more decisive action to support and disseminate life-long learning institutions such as 'Second Chance Schools'; calls for the gender perspective to be taken into account and promoted in the implementation of lifelong learning strategies; draws attention to the fact that universities of the third age play an essential role in life-long learning;
60. Notes that one of the main obstacles faced by adults wanting to participate in education and training is the lack of supporting facilities for their families; therefore encourages the Member States to create supporting measures, as a means of ensuring that all students and workers with family responsibilities (e.g. childcare, or other dependants) have the opportunity to update and/or increase their skills and competences, on the basis of good practice developed in this field under European Social Fund programming, involving service and reconciliation vouchers; considers that the opportunities of e-learning in particular should be explored as these allow for greater flexibility in combining education, work and care;
61. Encourages the European Institute for Gender Equality to take steps with a view to improving the collection and analysis of comparable data on gender equality in the field of education and training, and ensure that statistics on the relevant indicators relating to the Beijing Platform for Action are made readily available and are regularly updated;
62. Recommends to educational and training establishments that they seek to publicise more widely their programmes that are open to adults and to simplify the administrative procedures for gaining access to these programmes;
63. Calls upon the European Commission to take full account of the expertise of stakeholders and of their role in implementing the ET2020 strategy;
64. Calls upon the European Commission to include non-formal education, Vocational Education and Training and school students in the upcoming Mobility Benchmark for ET2020 and to take over the Bologna Process benchmark on mobility of students;

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65. 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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