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Agenda for new skills and jobs

P7_TA(2011)0466

European Parliament resolution of 26 October 2011 on the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs (2011/2067(INI))

(2013/C 131 E/10)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission of 23 November 2010 on an Agenda for new skills and jobs: a European contribution towards full employment (COM(2010)0682),
- having regard to its position of 8 September 2010 on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States: Part II of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Council Decision 2010/707/EU of 21 October 2010 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2010 on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2010 on atypical contracts, secured professional paths, and new forms of social dialogue ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 September 2010 on developing the job potential of a new sustainable economy ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 6 December 2010 on ‘Employment policies for a competitive, low-carbon, resource-efficient and green economy’,
- having regard to the study of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) ‘Skills for Green Jobs’, 2010,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2011 on promoting workers’ mobility within the European Union ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020, which was adopted on the 7 December 2010 ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to the Medium-Term Forecast up to 2020: Skills Supply and Demand in Europe, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2010 ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to the CEDEFOP study of May 2009 entitled ‘Skills for Europe’s future: anticipating occupational skill needs’,
- having regard to the framework agreement of 25 March 2010 on inclusive labour markets signed by ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME and CEEP,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 308 E, 20.10.2011, p. 116.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 308, 24.11.2010, p. 46.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0262.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0263.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 308 E, 20.10.2011, p. 6.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0455.

⁽⁷⁾ Commission Press Release IP/10/1673.

⁽⁸⁾ CEDEFOP publications, ISBN 978-92-896-0536-6.

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- having regard to the communication from the Commission of 3 March 2010 on Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (COM(2010)2020),
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission of 12 January 2011 on the Annual Growth Survey: advancing the EU's comprehensive response to the crisis (COM(2011)0011), and the Draft Joint Employment Report annexed thereto,
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission of 23 February 2011 on the Review of the 'Small Business Act' for Europe (COM(2011)0078),
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission of 9 November 2010 on the conclusions of the fifth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: the future of cohesion policy (COM(2010)0642),
 - having regard the Commission staff working document on 'Progress Towards the Common European Objectives in the Education and Training' (SEC(2011)0526),
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its entry into force in the Union on 21.01.2011, according to the Council Decision 2010/48/EC of 26 November 2009 concerning the conclusion, by the European Community, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the report by the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) indicating that, with unemployment in Europe on the increase, it is becoming harder for people with disabilities to obtain and remain in work, and to the fact that in many countries the level of unemployment among people with disabilities is higher than that among non-disabled people,
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission of 21 September 2010 on Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 (COM(2010)0491),
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 7 March 2011 on the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020,
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission of 3 October 2008 on a Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (COM(2008)0639) and its resolution thereon of 6 May 2009 ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Regional Development, the Committee on Culture and Education and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0320/2011),
- A. whereas the global economic crisis has raised the unemployment rate in the European Union to a current 9,5 %, which represents 22,828 million people in total, of whom 19,4 % are long-term unemployed, according to recent EUROSTAT figures; whereas youth unemployment stands at 20,4 %, reaching as much as 40 % in some Member States,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 23, 27.1.2010, p. 35.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 212 E, 5.8.2010, p. 23.

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- B. whereas SMEs, which are a driving force for economic growth, job creation and the achievement of the 2020 goals, have shed more than 3.5 million jobs as a result of the economic crisis,
- C. whereas as a consequence of the economic crisis of 2008, primary and manufacturing sectors lost more jobs than expected and are still projected to lose around 2.5 million jobs by 2020,
- D. whereas the economic recession of 2008 affected both skill demand and supply in the employment sector, thus increasing dramatically the uncertainty about job prospects and fostering the need for people to be better informed about employment prospects of the labour market,
- E. whereas austerity measures being pursued in a number of Member States have coincided with, and are partly responsible for, very significant increases in unemployment,
- F. whereas policy-makers need to protect citizens against the risk of unemployment, by ensuring that the workforce has the suitable skills to maximise its employability,
- G. whereas advances in new technologies and changes in the structure of the European economies have made it indispensable for individuals to update and ameliorate their skills during their working life,
- H. whereas the promotion of a social, resource-efficient, ecological and competitive economy is one of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy,
- I. whereas the service sector, such as sales, security, cleaning, catering, caring and personal services, is still expected to provide substantial job growth between now and 2020 and could be the fastest growing area,
- J. whereas the agrifood sector is regaining global importance requiring different and higher level skills but strongly reducing low skilled jobs,
- K. whereas achieving sustainable growth and the transition to low carbon economy, environment protection and development of new green technologies will require availability of appropriate skills,
- L. whereas technological change and new patterns of work organisation in sectors naturally influence the employment patterns in terms of skills needs in occupations and qualification levels,
- M. whereas economies increasingly demand creative, interactive, communication and problem-solving skills in the workplace while low-skilled jobs or workers performing routine functions are at major risk of loss of employment,
- N. whereas workers with a low level of education and skills, in addition to those from other vulnerable groups, are at greater risk of loss of employment, precarious conditions and poverty unless they are provided with appropriate training and retraining possibilities that enable them to keep pace with labour market requirements,

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- O. whereas the long-term effectiveness of training and higher education depends on various things, such as availability of quality education and training provision, equal opportunities and barrier-free access for all, availability of care services, sustained public investment, the state and efficient management of public finances, and better articulation of individual and labour market needs,
- P. whereas the EU has undertaken to improve education levels, to reduce the school drop-out rate to less than 10 % by 2020 and to increase the rate of completion of tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40 %,
- Q. whereas the number of jobs demanding high-level technical and scientific qualifications is expected to rise, and around half of all jobs in 2020 will be for workers with medium-level qualifications, while 35 % of jobs will require high-level qualifications, as compared to 29 % today, and whereas additional qualifications for a sustainable economy will be required across all occupations and in all skill segments,
- R. whereas migration, within, as well as into and out of, the EU, and demographic change will in many ways influence the future size and composition of the working population in Member States and have important implications for skill demand and supply, especially in those Member States in which the population is rapidly declining or which are subject to large-scale brain drain,
- S. whereas the competences and skills of migrant workers are often neither properly recognised nor made the best use of, and whereas migrant workers often face difficulties in accessing the labour market, education and training, also because of the lack of knowledge of their labour and social rights and their lack of involvement in workers' associations; whereas integration policies which favour access to education, training and employment for the immigrant population can therefore make an important contribution to meeting future labour market needs,
- T. whereas, even though microcredit is a vital tool for female entrepreneurship and the creation of family businesses, women remain underrepresented in business in the European Union, representing an average of 30 % of all entrepreneurs,
- U. whereas over 60 % of students graduating from universities are women, whereas not enough women and girls go into science, leading to severe gender segregation by sector, and whereas the gender gap between women and men's employment in the IT sector has tended to widen rather than narrow over time,
- V. whereas women are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market and are disproportionately represented in part-time work and in new, often precarious, forms of working arrangements, facing obstacles in seeking access to full social rights, social protection and benefits,
- W. whereas sustainable economic growth has the potential to increase the number of decent jobs and to contribute to recovery of economies across the EU,
- X. whereas the EU still invests less than its world economic partners and competitors, in research, innovation and education, which are cornerstones for growth and improvement of living standards; whereas major investments are needed in the know-how economy, in technical training and in upgrading vocational training,

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- Y. whereas targeted and adapted up-skilling is essential to help people acquire new skills so that they can profit from the transition towards a more sustainable economy; whereas there are convincing economic arguments for up-skilling, labour market integration and social inclusion; whereas reducing investment in up-skilling will create a negative long-term impact,

Challenges facing employment policies

1. Recalls that, within the Europe 2020 strategy, Member States agreed on an employment target of 75 % for men and women in the 20-64 years age group by 2020, a goal closely connected with economic growth and sustainability of social security and public finances in Europe; recalls that the employment rate for women currently stands at 58,2 %; underlines that a drastic reduction of youth unemployment, increased women's participation in the labour market and effective implementation of the inclusion priority of the strategy are among the vital preconditions for reaching the employment target; stresses that most National Reform Programmes fall short of meeting both the employment and the poverty target, and calls on all stakeholders to intensify their efforts to make the Europe 2020 strategy a success;
2. Reiterates that the five Union headline targets are promoting employment, improving the conditions for innovation, research and development, meeting climate change and energy objectives, improving education levels and promoting social inclusion;
3. Recalls the existence of major obstacles to substantially raising employment in the EU, combating structural unemployment and creating new jobs and thus boosting productivity and fostering greater competitiveness; believes that the challenges to be tackled as a matter of priority, in addition to ensuring better-functioning labour markets, include the mismatch and insufficient skill levels of many workers today, as well as the low rankings in education levels in some European countries, compared to international rates; considers that an integrated approach to developing the necessary skills base will be vital in making the most of the potential of a new sustainable economy, and calls on the Commission, in its planned communication on jobs in the new sustainable economy, to follow up on Parliament's requests in this respect;
4. Points out that the employment rate and economic performance are mutually reinforcing in generating particularly high levels of economic growth and quality employment; strongly recommends, however, that the Member States follow the Europe 2020 integrated set of guidelines for employment policies and broad economic policy guidelines, while making sure that the policies put in place respond to national, regional and local circumstances and particular conditions in individual Member States;
5. Stresses that Member States are still in charge of key elements of social policy such as taxes, social welfare programmes, some labour regulation, healthcare and education; considers it essential that social policies respond to national, regional and local circumstances and particularly conditions in individual Member States;
6. Calls for better coordination of economic policies among Member States in order to foster sustainable growth and job creation and to facilitate effective competition, taking into account the regional inequalities across Europe regarding employment and unemployment rates; urges Member States to respect the rules on budgetary discipline in order to diminish the risk of falling into excessive deficit and calls for effective budgetary surveillance, while allowing for public investment in line with the EU's growth and employment objectives; emphasises, however, the importance of the social impact assessment as required by the Treaty and urges the Commission and the Member States to assess the social costs of spending cuts, in particular of those for education and active labour market policies which could jeopardise progress in addressing the shortage of skilled workers in Europe and maintaining economic performance;

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7. Supports the Commission's flagship initiative within the Europe 2020 strategy as a framework to promote competitiveness and employment and to make the change towards a sustainable, smarter and more inclusive economy; highlights the importance of the regional dimension in implementing the agenda; calls on the Commission to deliver on the employment and skills priority actions under the flagship initiative, giving appropriate importance to promoting both labour supply and demand in the context of a knowledge-based, sustainable and inclusive economy;
8. Considers that the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs should be seen in conjunction with the EU's Research Framework Programme, and that synergies between the two could create growth and jobs;
9. Stresses that recent economic and labour market developments combined with future challenges, such as demographic change and transition to a sustainable economy, call for better employment, education and work organisation strategies in order to improve the competitiveness of the EU and the working and living conditions and to create new jobs, and therefore to promote 'smart growth' combining full employment and welfare, as well as sustainable production and lifestyles; underlines in that connection the importance of universal access to lifelong learning, qualifications and skills for all age groups; stresses the economic arguments for up-skilling, labour market integration, social inclusion, effective combating of discrimination and better utilisation of the assets of all workers; recalls that work-life balance, education and improvement of human capital also have non-economic benefits for the individual;
10. Stresses that national flexicurity arrangements must be reviewed in the light of the new socio-economic contexts, maintained, where appropriate, strengthened and adapted to the specific needs of each individual Member State, in order to ensure a flexible, inclusive and active labour market, efficient training accessible to all, and adequate social security systems; calls on the Member States to accompany their labour market reforms with strengthening poverty-proof social and unemployment protection and improving the quality of public employment services; stresses that flexicurity should not be perceived as a one-size-fits-all solution;
11. Stresses the importance of informal and skills learning through strengthening of intergenerational cooperation, when young people can acquire new skills through teaching by experienced older workers;
12. Regrets that for many workers the reconciliation of work and family life remains a difficult task; calls on the Member States to give all parents, especially women, single-parent families, disadvantaged or disabled people opportunities for integration not only into working life but also into lifelong learning processes; stresses, as a prerequisite, that organisation of work and training possibilities should be made compatible with parental responsibilities, that childcare structures should be made more effective and accessible and that appropriate support should be provided for parents; calls, furthermore, on Member States to put in place policies and programmes to support family carers;
13. Considers it advisable to promote an environment conducive to teleworking wherever such arrangements can foster an appropriate work-life balance;

Responses

Ensuring the availability of a skilled labour force

14. Welcomes the establishment of the European Employment Observatory and the Commission's initiatives to produce an EU Skills Panorama and to reform the European Employment Service's EURES network in order to improve transparency and access for jobseekers and to promote job mobility in the EU; stresses the key role of EURES in advising mobile workers and jobseekers as regards their rights and therefore in delivering on a genuine internal market, and welcomes the launch of the pilot project "Your first EURES Job" aimed at young jobseekers in the EU-27; highlights, furthermore, the role of EURES in cross-border regions and considers that its cross-border partnerships need to be provided with the necessary resources to be able to answer to the challenges of the European labour market;

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15. Stresses the importance of increasing participation in life-long learning, in particular in vocational education and training with a view to ensuring employability, and upgrading the skills of the workforce and to strengthening competitiveness; points out that the proportion of people in further education should also be increased so that people with higher qualifications can find and perform suitable jobs into old age; considers in this context that incentives should be provided for both employees and employers, with particular focus on SMEs; considers also that more comprehensive lifelong learning strategies need to be put in place and that vocational education and training systems need to be tuned to the rapidly changing needs of the labour market, technological development and new approaches to the organisation of work;

16. Regrets the fact that at a time of crisis Member States have reduced their education and training budgets, and urges the Commission and the Member States to invest more in education and training systems;

17. Calls for better monitoring in each professional sector and, according to qualification level, of the upcoming skill demand in Europe and for an immediate transposition of the findings into education, lifelong learning and other relevant policies of the Member States; emphasises the importance of boosting the attractiveness of jobs and careers to young workers and that young people in particular must be kept informed at all times about labour market trends so that they can concentrate on developing skills which are actually needed; considers that a 'knowledge alliance' that brings together businesses, social partners and education institutions would be a useful instrument in addressing innovation and skills gaps, contributing significantly to promoting the interests of the economy and society as a whole, especially considering the critical challenge of attaining full employment, poverty eradication, social inclusion and sustained economic growth in the global economy;

18. Stresses the importance of early identification of skill needs, suggesting at least a 10-year time horizon, and calls on the Member States and, where warranted, the regions to set up employment monitoring centres focusing on future needs; stresses furthermore the importance of developing more reliable systems for the anticipation of future skill needs and skill shortages in the EU and Member States, as well as the importance of continued investment in skills upgrading and better matching of qualifications to jobs; reiterates the need to ensure that the public have access to qualitative information and calls for exchange of experience and best practice in that regard; to accomplish this, emphasises the need for stronger, more effective cooperation between education and training providers, including universities and research centres on the one hand, and public employment services, the social partners and enterprises and employers on the other hand;

19. Emphasises the need to raise the profile and attractiveness of professions and jobs for which there is a workforce deficit on the labour market;

20. Calls on the Commission to give more visibility and financial support to the Leonardo da Vinci programme, which enables people to acquire new skills, knowledge and qualifications, and which makes vocational education more attractive to everyone; points out, furthermore, that on-the-job training is particularly important, and calls for support for national schemes that promote these kinds of career development opportunities;

21. Notes that the Erasmus sub-programme has an implementation rate of close to 100 %; recalls the well-documented evidence that Erasmus considerably facilitates study abroad and provides students with a wider range of skills, and that this, in turn, significantly improves subsequent employment prospects for those students participating in Erasmus and thereby contributes substantially to Europe's competitiveness;

22. Emphasises the importance of a high-quality State education system which guarantees everyone free, equal access;

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23. Believes that is vital to create an environment for close cooperation between research institutes and industry and to encourage and support industrial companies in investing in research and development; recalls that higher education institutes and training bodies play a key role in the regional economies of Member States and that they are unique places where innovation, education and research come together and can lead to job creation, development of entrepreneurial and other skills and to more employment opportunities; recognises the role of the University-Business Dialogue initiative in this context; calls on local and regional authorities to promote the European Eco-Management & Audit Scheme (EMAS) and to encourage all economic sectors to strive to achieve EMAS registration;
24. Calls on the Commission to promote further the establishment of European Sector Councils for Employment and Skills within the context of the "Agenda for New Skills and Jobs", which should be upheld as a platform for collection and exchange of information held by Member States and regions in order to help coordinate the efforts of all parties concerned, as well as as a tool to support social dialogue activities;
25. Considers it essential to substantially boost investment in education, research and innovation, and accordingly takes the view that, in order to encourage Member States to move in this direction, special consideration should be given to public spending on education, research and innovation when Member States' medium-term budget objectives are assessed;
26. Notes that instruments such as surveys of the job profiles and occupations required in different sectors – conducted on the basis of social partnership – must therefore receive adequate support;
27. Calls on the European Social Dialogue Committees to assist in better matching existing training to present and future demand through a road map setting out clear objectives and indicators for monitoring progress;
28. Stresses the need to involve employers in the management of education institutions and in the development of courses, teaching methods, apprenticeships, assessment and qualification; underlines the importance of incentives for employers who offer training for low-skilled or unskilled people and, consequently, of opportunities to acquire practical experience directly in the workplace;
29. Regrets that the number of early school-leavers still remains too high in the EU; points out that a reduction of only 1 % in the number of early school-leavers could bring some 500 000 potential workers onto the labour market; calls therefore on the Member States to implement more effective policies, based on high-quality, modern education and vocational training, to prevent early school leaving and remove barriers to remaining in education, to offer learning and training alternatives and retraining possibilities to students with learning difficulties or disabilities and to develop effective links between initial training and the world of business; underlines the importance of early education for developing not only the future functional skills of people, but also their capacity to learn, to specialise and to develop further, and calls for the development of a coherent, holistic, long term approach to early childhood education and care as proposed in the relevant Commission Communication;
30. Finds it regrettable that many people with disabilities who are capable of working are not integrated into the labour market, and calls on the Member States to implement policies that offer alternatives with regard to education, training and employment for people with disabilities;
31. Calls on the Member States to support publicly funded and properly regulated institutions of initial education, covering pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, vocational training and tertiary education, with well qualified and well trained teaching and support staff on good pay and conditions;
32. Emphasises the importance of public education systems accessible to all and in line with the promotion of equal opportunities for all;

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33. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to promote European centres of excellence within new academic specialisations for tomorrow's jobs and to improve the mobility of young people in this area; underlines the importance of creating the conditions necessary for the growth of clusters of innovative enterprises which can act as a decisive spur to local economic development and can create new jobs in regions; considers that, as the pace of economic restructuring increases, a skilled workforce, managerial expertise, innovation, science, technology and green jobs are all prerequisites for sustainable growth;
34. Encourages Member States to integrate ICT competences, digital literacy, entrepreneurship and transversal key competences such as communication in foreign languages and competences for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, creativity, cultural awareness and intercultural understanding, as well as key competences relating to environment, climate change and sustainable development, into all levels of educational systems; stresses in this regard the importance of promoting and recognising both 'hard' and 'soft' skills to improve people's employment opportunities; points to the usefulness of the ability to communicate in foreign languages, and supports language learning and the development of language teaching;
35. Underlines the need for education aimed at innovation; stresses that non-schematic and abstract thinking should be promoted, as well as the technical education needed to match the needs of the future;
36. Stresses that efforts should be made to ensure that all children develop fundamental IT skills at an early age, that IT should therefore be included in primary school education and that all Europeans should have cheap and easy access to the internet;
37. Given that it is estimated that in 2015 there will be a shortfall of IT professionals extending to between 384 000 and 700 000 jobs, while the estimated deficit for the health sector is of some one million professionals and that for researchers another one million, calls on the Commission and the Member States to take measures to ensure the necessary level of skilled human resources in these fields;
38. Notes that the internationalisation of education is of social, cultural and economic significance, and consequently urges the Commission to facilitate international mobility among researchers, students, scientists and lecturers, both within and outside the EU;
39. Expresses concern that highly qualified individuals are accepting employment beneath their abilities or unskilled jobs, leading to 'brain waste' in the EU;
40. Urges the Member States to develop training programmes for teachers that will provide them with a basis on which they can better adapt to changes on the labour market and develop the corresponding skills at all levels of education;
41. Encourages Member States to promote workplace-based training, including a dual system of education/training, in order to introduce young people to the labour market from the earliest stage, and to promote a quality framework for internships and apprenticeships leading as much as possible to stable employment; furthermore, calls on relevant stakeholders to ensure that traineeships and apprenticeships are carried out under the supervision of professional tutors, that they lead to the acquisition of real skills and experience corresponding to labour market needs and to the provision of new jobs; invites the Member States to lay down minimum standards for traineeships as regards pay and social rights, and calls for the introduction of a European quality framework for traineeships, setting up decent working conditions and rules to prevent trainees from being used to replace regular employment;

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42. Calls on the Commission and Member States to reinforce an evidence-based policy exchange on the transition from education and training to work and on learning mobility, which contribute to the development of the skills and the employability of young people;

43. Urges the Commission, in the forthcoming legislative initiative on professional qualifications, to strengthen the mutual recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications and to move towards a mechanism for enhanced mutual recognition of competences and skills, including skills acquired through informal and non-formal training, as well as to extend the mechanisms for recognition to workers from third countries; considers that this mechanism should build on appropriate European frameworks, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET);

44. Calls on national statistics services to develop adequate indicators for measuring skills and the quality of the various levels of their education system;

45. Takes the view that the External Action Services (EAS), particularly the EU delegations in third countries, could play an important role by providing information on the skills required in Europe and the jobs available, as well as assisting in the procedures necessary for coming to Europe;

46. Notes that as a result of demographic change there is a significant number of older potential volunteers, which is a huge untapped resource in our communities; calls on the Commission to promote opportunities for older volunteers, and to develop a Seniors Action Programme for the increasing number of very experienced senior citizens who are willing to volunteer, which might run in parallel with, and complement, the Youth in Action Programme, and furthermore to promote specific programmes for inter-generational volunteering and for mentoring;

47. Believes that, in the context of the strategy for prolonging active life, not enough is being done to help older people acquire IT skills, and urges the Commission and the Member States to develop broad-based educational programmes for this group;

48. Emphasises the need to maintain the craft tradition and its associated skills and to establish strategies for craft retail entrepreneurs, in order to maintain the cultural identity of the craft sector; draws attention, in that connection, to the importance of supporting work-linked professional training and the mobility of young craftsmen and women; notes that the promotion of traineeships as a means of integrating young people into this sector may be an active policy worth encouraging and calls on the Member States to take the appropriate steps in that regard; stresses the importance of the humanities as a field for investigating the past and better preserving cultural identities;

Promoting demand for labour and job creation

49. Draws attention to the fact that small and medium-sized enterprises play their part in the European economic fabric owing both to their number and to their strategic role in combating unemployment; recalls that SMEs provide 85 % of jobs in the EU and are responsible for 58 % of all the added value created in the Union; urges all relevant stakeholders to remove all measures likely to hinder business creation and its free movement; calls on the Member States and the Commission to facilitate the establishment and stimulate the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, paying special attention to women's entrepreneurship, to provide them with a favourable regulatory and fiscal environment, to facilitate market access, to list the barriers to recruitment, to reduce the level of bureaucracy to a minimum and to improve their access to finance;

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50. Considers that a more targeted use of innovation and a more competitive industrial base are necessary in order to boost employment; considers it necessary to promote youth employment, R&D-based business models and specific incentives for the recruitment of a wider range of job-seekers;

51. Welcomes the Commission proposal to introduce in future a simplified procedure for issuing employees of a firm who are third-country nationals with a temporary residence permit valid throughout the EU;

52. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to invest more in job creation and to promote entrepreneurship, business start-ups and self-employment in order to create employment opportunities and to reduce social exclusion; is of the opinion that a proper environment and incentives for business development as well as support for the introduction of new technologies are important but not enough for the development of European economies; stresses, therefore, that more focus should be placed on promoting entrepreneurial mindsets and skills at different education levels, coaching for new entrepreneurs and effective skill development for SME staff; underlines the role of the European Institute of Technology and the EIB, in particular of programmes such as JASMINE and JEREMIE, in fostering business creation and development and in providing support for SMEs' needs;

53. Calls on the Commission to observe the Think Small First principle and take the needs of SMEs into account when drawing up employment legislation;

54. Stresses the importance of a free and intelligently regulated internet for new entrepreneurs and job creators; considers that internet users' confidence in the system and their trust that its integrity will not be compromised is crucial for new internet business models;

55. Points out that the European Union does not have enough R&D intensive innovative firms and that the serious lack of skills in innovation and digital literacy means that SMEs cannot adopt innovative smart business models and new technologies;

56. Urges the Commission and Member States to continue to cooperate with a view to creating an integrated and competitive risk capital market, which is vital for the creation and growth of innovative SMEs;

57. Considers that a barrier-free and competitive single market must be completed in order to facilitate free movement of workers; considers furthermore that the completion of the single market should go hand in hand with labour legislation that creates a level playing field, strong coordination of social security and the ability of workers to preserve, maintain or transfer their acquired rights, in particular portability of pensions, across borders; in this regard, calls on the Commission and Member States to work closely with the social partners to eliminate obstacles to students' and workers' mobility and to encourage sharing of best practice and experience in this area in order to assess how the internal market is developing in terms of social security for wage-earners and in the light of the pay and working conditions in the host country; emphasises in that connection that wage dumping should be prevented;

58. Strongly condemns undeclared work, which endangers both society and workers; calls on the Member States to carry out regular and more numerous checks, to impose appropriate penalties, and to initiate information campaigns in order to raise awareness of the rights of workers and the long-term disadvantages for those employed in the black economy; invites, furthermore, the Member States to combine preventive measures and sanctions with incentives aimed at avoiding resorting to undeclared work and at transforming undeclared work into regular employment;

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59. Considers that the health-care sector has a critical role to play in achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy; furthermore considers that, because of demographic change, the health and social care sector represents a source of employment, whose significance will grow, and a key contributor to social inclusion; calls for the development of a care economy to meet real needs and to ensure high quality accessible care services for all, good working and pay conditions to avoid resorting to undeclared work; calls on the Commission to support the ILO convention supplemented by a recommendation on domestic workers in order to improve the working conditions for workers in this sector; calls on the Commission to initiate a study on care assistants employed in clients' homes, in addition to other appropriate and sustainable solutions which support independent living, in order to establish whether EU legislation provides sufficient social protection for this category of workers which are often women;

60. Stresses the potential of social, health, care and education services to create new employment and demands a strong and sustainable investment in these key services and infrastructures as well as decent working conditions to support quality service provision; looks forward to the Commission's action plan to address the gap in the supply of health workers;

61. Calls on the Commission, Member States, social partners and other stakeholders to ensure efficient, simplified and synergetic use of EU funds, such as ESF, ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, and facilities such as the Microfinance Facility, for job creation, including in the social economy; highlights the advantages of gearing structural fund investment towards education and training in technologically high value-added sectors and towards sectors that are particularly important for encouraging the transition to more sustainable growth models; calls for particular consideration to be given to those Member States with high unemployment and an average monthly income that is below the poverty threshold;

62. Stresses the importance of synergies between the various European funds and underlines the importance of a decentralised approach when using these funds in order to respond to labour market requirements; believes that there is also a need to give individuals and enterprises suitable incentives to invest in training; in this regard, highlights the contribution of cohesion policy to the resource-efficient Europe flagship initiative and calls for its potential for sustainable growth to be considered;

63. Agrees with enhancing the impact of the cohesion policy instruments, including the ESF, by focusing on concentrating financial resources on a smaller number of priorities, strengthening conditionality for institutional reforms, reinforcing the partnership principle, emphasising clear and measurable targets and establishing development and partnership investment contracts between the Commission and the Member States;

64. Calls on the Commission to review the existing framework of EU direct enterprise support schemes and to study the possibility of allocating the lion's share of the support to job creation in enterprises, developing workers' skills and implementing further training programmes;

Improving the functioning of the labour market

65. Notes that flexicurity policies are put at the centre of the New Skills and Jobs Agenda, and shares the Commission's assessment that the crisis has put national flexicurity arrangements to a serious test, including where external flexibility measures have been introduced in the labour markets without corresponding strengthening of social security systems; stresses, however, the need to pursue labour market reforms without undermining successful policies and consensus and trust between national governments and the social partners; emphasises that flexicurity measures must be tailored to social circumstances and the specific structure of national labour markets and be consistent with the interests of employers and workers;

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66. Stresses, however, that flexicurity alone cannot remedy the crisis and calls on the Commission, the Member States and the social partners to pursue the necessary labour market reforms, paying special attention to labour market integration of workers from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; recommends in this context that a bottom-up approach be taken in order to facilitate dialogue and involvement of all levels of political and social governance;

67. Believes that, under the new momentum of social and economic changes, the four pillars of flexicurity – flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, active labour market policies, lifelong learning, and modern social security systems – and the balance between them should be reviewed and reinforced in order to respond to the needs of workers and companies in modern labour markets, to create decent jobs and to ensure employability of workers, adequate social protection and the respect of the principle of "equal pay for equal work" in conjunction with gender equality; considers the strengthening of labour market institutions essential throughout this process in order to ensure that workers benefit from transitions between jobs, occupations, sectors and employment statuses; considers furthermore that the social partners should play a role in that review, as part of social dialogue;

68. Calls on the Commission, pursuant to Article 152 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, to step up promotion of the role of management and labour in each industrial sector across Europe, while respecting their autonomy;

69. Supports, pursuant to Article 155 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), dialogue between management and labour and encourages them to enter into contractual relations, including agreements; recommends that in implementing agreements concluded at European level, management and labour in each industrial sector use the procedure laid down in Article 155(2) TFEU for matters covered by Article 153 TFEU;

70. Urges the Member States to develop teleworking, i.e. all forms of distance working and all kinds of work organisation and/or execution which exist outside the classic time-space format, by means of telecommunications and the Internet, in the form of a service provision or an employment relationship;

Promoting inclusive labour markets

71. Underlines that, in order to emerge stronger from the economic crisis, to become more competitive and convergent, with higher levels of growth and employment, and to secure our welfare systems in the long term, Europe needs to make better use of its labour force potential in all age groups, to improve both functioning of its labour markets and social inclusion and social protection, as well as to boost the qualifications and skills of the labour force;

72. Emphasises in this context that reducing labour market segmentation has to be achieved by providing adequate security for workers and improving labour market inclusion in order to increase the opportunities for all workers under different forms of contracts, in particular those in the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, to enter and make progress in the labour market;

73. Stresses the importance of mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the Agenda, as well as in all aspects of the Europe 2020 strategy; calls upon the Commission to take appropriate measure to promote development of and access to universally designed goods and services as enshrined in Article 29 of the UN CRPD, including exchange of best practices;

74. Stresses that pay rises do not keep pace with productivity gains in many Member States, and is extremely concerned at the growing number of 'working poor', who, although earning a wage, remain below the poverty line, and believes that resolute action should be taken to remedy this situation;

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75. Emphasises the importance of tackling youth unemployment as a matter of priority; calls on the Commission and Member States to continue their efforts to foster youth integration in the labour market, including the provision of incentives for young people and employers and the development of traineeships and apprenticeships; underlines in this context the crucial importance of facilitating the transition from school to work, personalised guidance and monitoring, as well as of providing opportunities to acquire real skills and to upgrade them in line with labour market requirements; emphasises that this initiative must be closely coordinated with the 'Youth on the Move' initiative;

76. Emphasises the importance of creating appropriate conditions to ensure that older workers can stay longer in the labour market and of mainstreaming intergenerational solidarity and cooperation within the employment context and the implementation of initiatives promoting longer working lives such as job sharing, skills and career re-appraisal, employee volunteering and phased retirement, including among those who are freelancers;

77. In view of the ageing of Europe's population, calls on Member States to create a set of instruments to facilitate labour market access for older people, and calls both for promotion of, and wide support for, guidance and activation of older people in the light of the innovation partnership Active and Healthy Ageing as well as for incentives for employers, given that business is less interested in older workers; stresses the importance of such persons' receiving further training and gaining new qualifications that will enable them to re-enter the labour market; in this context, stresses the importance of making use of the knowledge and experience of older people, e.g. through coaching projects;

78. In the light of rising unemployment, calls on the Member States to modernise and strengthen the public employment services in order to play a greater role as lifelong service providers to both workers and employers; believes that public employment services can offer facilities for evaluating skills, establishing profiles and providing individual career guidance and consultation services, in close cooperation with local employers, as well as provide information on entrepreneurship opportunities and a range of training and re-training programmes;

79. Urges the Commission and Member States to officially recognise the contribution made by the social economy, which is responsible for 10 % of jobs in the EU and plays a key role in the EU's economic, social and territorial cohesion; considers it necessary to step up its development in order to contribute to socially inclusive wealth creation and to help to develop inclusive labour markets, to retain jobs in sectors and businesses in crisis and/or threatened by closure, to increase job stability levels, to keep skills alive and to develop routes into work for groups that are especially disadvantaged;

80. Emphasises that better and stronger policies promoting gender equality and the reconciliation of work, family and private life should contribute to increased participation of the active population of women and men in the labour market; stresses the importance of empowering women to enter, re-enter and advance in the labour market, in particular those who face difficulties with returning to work after maternity or parental leave;

81. Takes the view that efforts must be made to promote technical and engineering studies such as MINT (mathematics, informatics, natural sciences, technology) among girls and to combat gender stereotypes and professional segregation of women in education and labour market; calls on the Member States to take targeted measures to increase the number of women in senior management and other leading positions;

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82. Considers that EU anti-discrimination legislation has considerably raised the level of protection across the EU; believes, however, that more needs to be done to tackle discrimination, including multiple discrimination, of different groups in employment, training and occupation with a view to putting into effect the principle of equal treatment; believes that greater involvement of women in the labour market should also be fostered by means of targeted welfare policies focusing on childcare and family support, by implementing gender mainstreaming programmes, as well as by measures promoting recruitment of women and men to non-traditional jobs on a voluntary basis, with special attention being paid to traditionally male-dominated sectors;

83. Points to the economic arguments for anti-discrimination besides the human rights dimension; calls on Member States to take the necessary steps to swiftly conclude agreement and adopt the proposal for a Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation; calls on the Commission to continue supporting overcoming technical difficulties within the Council in order to reach such agreement as a strong EU anti-discrimination policy will underpin the 2020 strategy;

84. Maintains that, if the qualifications and skills of female workers are to be preserved in a changing economic space and those who so wish are to be helped to return to work, it is essential that workers on parental leave should also be included in the training activities organised by their employer;

85. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support measures for reconciliation of professional and family life, and to invest in women's labour market participation through promotion of diversity management, professional encouragement of women and promotion of the creation of new posts with more flexible forms of working conditions;

86. Stresses that new jobs should be accompanied by new forms of working arrangements that will enable workers with dependent children to work alternative hours, reduce their working time or opt for teleworking;

87. Notes that opportunities to raise the rate of women's employment are offered not only by the 'white-job' sector but also by the home defence sector, the logistics sector (including transport), the business services sector – insurance and consulting, for example – and the ecological sector and sustainable jobs;

88. Urges the Commission and Member States to support and develop specific programmes geared to recruiting women to technical professions through subsidies for young female academics, in line with best practice in certain Member States such as the 'Excellentia' programme in Austria, which has made it possible to double the number of female S&T university professors and has contributed to the establishment of high-quality research centres led by women;

89. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage the private and public sector to take all possible and necessary action to eliminate the gender pay gap and the major inequalities in terms of access, pay, career development, participation and governance, with the aim of improving women's participation in the labour market; stresses, in this connection, the importance of transparency in the form of better statistics, and of a usable definition of 'work of equal value'; welcomes the Commission's announcements on reviewing the pension system for those with gaps in pension-saving contributions due to periods of unemployment, sickness or caring duties, which concern mainly women;

Improving job quality and working conditions

90. Considers that pursuing the objective of full employment has to be complemented by strengthened efforts to improve the job quality, working and living conditions of all employees, including health and safety at work and gender equality;

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91. Considers that job quality has to be promoted as a multidimensional concept, covering both employment relations and work itself; calls on the Commission to step up efforts to review the EU definition and common indicators of job quality, to make them more operational for the evaluation and benchmarking of Member States' policies; considers that social dialogue plays an important role in promoting decent work, quality employment and adequate social protection and thus calls on the key stakeholders in the field of industrial relations at EU level to work towards developing a common European approach in this area and to take an active part in the review of the definition and indicators of job quality;

92. Considers that workplace accessibility, especially in relation to the built environment and information technologies, is an essential working condition and one that is crucial to the vocational integration of people with disabilities;

93. Welcomes the Commission proposal of reviewing health and safety legislation and warns that insecure working environment, constant changes from one job to the next, and increasing stress have negative effects on workers physical and mental health; asks the Commission to address the problem of lack of recognition of job related hazards and illnesses;

94. Emphasises the importance of integrating stakeholders' efforts to improve job quality and the use of appropriate policy instruments, including legislation, policy coordination, exchange of good practice and autonomous agreements of the social partners;

95. Is of the opinion that the high number and increasing proportion of occupational illnesses, in particular the spread of musculo-skeletal disorders, has a significant impact on the quality of workplaces, so that greater effort must be made to reduce these if the ageing society is to be sustainable;

96. Considers that workers rights, dialogue between the social partners - workers and employers – and adequate social protection preventing in-work poverty should be at the core of employment quality and thus also of the job quality concept;

97. Encourages the Commission to complete its pre-legislative activities and put forward the legislative proposals announced in the Agenda, fully respecting the outcome of its economic and social impact assessment and the autonomy of the social partners; welcomes the Commission's plans to review the effectiveness of the legislation concerning job quality and working conditions, taking due account of developments;

98. Underlines that the goals set in the field of employment and the strategies to achieve them should be monitored and coordinated with those in other important areas, such as the public finance sector and the relevant innovation policies;

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99. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States.
