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49. Notes the need to promote initial and ongoing training options for women which are targeted and in line with the objective of developing the scientific and technical competencies required to find work and pursue a career;

50. Notes that, although there are increasing numbers of women using computers and surfing the internet in an elementary way, the digital divide in terms of skills remains very wide, restricting women's access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), thus hampering their ability to seek and find skilled work and, consequently, intensifying inequalities within households, communities, labour markets and the wider economy; calls, therefore, for efforts to promote women's access to the use of new technologies by giving them priority access to free training courses; invites the Member States and the regions to set up free computer training courses through projects financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), providing women with the chance to acquire new technical skills in the fields of technology and computer science and leading to greater opportunities for female employment in the service sector; calls on governments to implement policies (such as promotion campaigns and specific scholarships) aimed at increasing the level of enrolment of female students in information and communications technology courses;

51. Calls for a strong social dialogue and the involvement of employers' and workers' representatives in setting EU priorities for the service sector with regard to the protection of social and employment rights, unemployment benefits and representative rights;

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

Education, training and Europe 2020

P7_TA(2012)0323

European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2012 on Education, Training and Europe 2020 (2012/2045(INI))

(2013/C 353 E/07)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular its Article 14,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 23 November 2011 entitled 'Annual Growth Survey 2012' (COM(2011)0815),
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 20 December 2011 entitled 'Education and Training in smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe' (COM(2011)0902),
- having regard to Commission Communication of 3 March 2010 on 'Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training ⁽¹⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 2.

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- having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 entitled 'Youth on the Move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 1 December 2011 on tackling early school leaving ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2011 on early years learning in the European Union ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 May 2010 on key competences for a changing world: implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme ⁽⁵⁾,
 - 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' ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A7-0247/2012),
- A. whereas, despite some improvement in education and training, for the majority of the EU population lifelong learning (LLL) is still not a reality, and certain indicators are, in fact, worrying; whereas, in addition to general education and vocational training, the importance of formal and non-formal adult education should also be highlighted;
- B. whereas LLL strategies are far from being properly implemented in many Member States, although they are a key part of the EU 2020 strategy;
- C. whereas education and training policies need to provide LLL opportunities for all, irrespective of their age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, linguistic and socio-economic background;
- D. whereas limited and poorly tailored learning opportunities still persist for people of different groups; and whereas both indigenous populations and linguistic and cultural minorities should be able to learn in their own language;
- E. whereas economic growth must be based, as a matter of priority, on education, knowledge, innovation and appropriate social policies to make the EU emerge out of the current crises, and it is important to implement the policies in this sphere within the EU 2020 strategy framework properly and in full in order to get through this crucial period;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 199, 7.7.2011, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0531.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0231.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 8.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2010, p. 33.

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- F. whereas the Member States have a public responsibility to draft education and training policies, and whereas these spheres require adequate public funding in order to guarantee equal access to education without social, economic, cultural, racial or political discrimination;
- G. whereas the austerity measures, and the consequent budget cuts to education and training systems throughout the EU, endanger one of the key drivers of cohesion and growth and undermine the objective to establish a knowledge-based economy in Europe;
- H. whereas the Member States must continue to work together and exchange best practices in order to drive forward their national education and training systems;
- I. whereas insufficient language knowledge continues to be an enormous obstacle to mobility for the purposes of education and training;
- J. whereas a successful education and training strategy should also aim at equipping learners with skills and competences necessary for personal development and active citizenship;
- K. whereas LLL should genuinely mean lifelong within the actual demographic context, and whereas we should continue to take better account of the potential of knowledge accrued by older people;
- L. whereas skills in new technologies significantly facilitate the objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP);
- M. whereas LLL is a continuing process of learning and should last during a person's entire life, from quality early-childhood education to post-working age;
- N. whereas providing all children with quality early-childhood facilities and education is an investment in the future and provides a great benefit both for the individual and for society;
- O. whereas early school leaving (ESL) has serious consequences for the individual and for the EU's social and economic development;
- P. whereas further innovation in the field of student grants at the pre-university stage of education should be considered;
- Q. whereas the accessibility of education and training is a crucial challenge also to further contribute to social inclusion, cohesion and fight against poverty;
- R. whereas European, national, regional and local authorities must cooperate in order to address successfully the challenges that Europe is currently facing;
- 1. Notes the above-mentioned Commission Communication on 'Education and Training in smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe';

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2. Recalls that, prior to the current crisis, the performance of Member States in terms of participation of all age groups in education, training and LLL varied widely and the overall EU average was falling behind international averages;
3. Points out that some Member States have pursued budget cuts in education and training in light of the current economic situation, but believes that those investments with the greatest strategic value should be safeguarded and even increased; emphasises that the Union's multiannual financial framework anticipates that education and related sectors will obtain the biggest percentage increase under the EU's long-term budget;
4. Points out the need to approve the budget increase dedicated to education and related sectors under the multiannual financial framework; calls on Member States to adopt their national LLL strategies, with suitable amounts of financial resources as the best possible tool available for reaching the objectives outlined in the ET 2020 strategy;
5. Highlights that the economic costs of the consequences of educational underperformance, including school dropout and social inequalities within education and training systems and their impact on the development of the Member States, are significantly higher than the costs of the financial crisis, and the Member States are already paying the price year after year;
6. Asks the Member States to prioritise expenditures in education, training, youth, lifelong learning, research, innovation and linguistic and cultural diversity, which are investments for future growth and economic balance, while at the same time ensuring the added value of such investment; reiterates, in this regard, the request to target a total investment of at least 2 % of GDP in higher education, as recommended by the Commission in the Annual Growth and Employment Survey, being the minimum required for knowledge-based economies;
7. Recalls that in order to be competitive in the future with the new global powers the Member States are required to achieve the basic Europe 2020 objectives which, in the field of education, can be expressed as reaching 3 % in investments for research, increasing to 40 % the number of young people with a university education, and reducing early school leaving to below 10 %;
8. Recalls the importance of research in the framework of an ambitious strategy for education and training; asks, therefore, the Commission and the Member States to reinforce their actions aiming to increase the number of young people moving into this field;
9. Recalls that a special focus should be given to young people, bearing in mind that the EU unemployment rate has increased to over 20 %, with peaks in excess of 50 % in some Member States or some regions, and that young people, particularly the least qualified young people, are particularly hard hit in the current crisis; highlights, in particular, the detrimental effects of austerity programmes on youth unemployment in certain EU States, especially those in southern Europe, leading, for example, to a significant brain drain to other countries, including countries outside the EU; recalls also that one out of seven of today's pupils (14,4 %) leaves the education system with no more than a lower secondary education and does not participate in any further education or training;
10. Notes the existence of dual vocational training systems in some Member States that ensure a link between theory and practice and allow a better entry into the world of work than purely school-based forms of training;

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11. Proposes that the Member States deduct investments in education and training from the national deficit calculation of the fiscal compact as they are considered to be key drivers for a sound recovery in line with the EU 2020 objectives;

12. Calls on the EU institutions to make further efforts to elaborate clearer and more targeted youth policies at EU level which are tailored to meet society's new challenges; the current generation of young people feels that it will not be able to attain the same level of prosperity as the previous one did;

13. In particular, asks the Member States to implement measures targeted at young people likely to leave school early or who are not in education, training or employment, in order to offer them quality learning, and provide them with training and youth guarantee schemes, so that they can gain the skills and experience they need to enter employment, and in order to facilitate the re-entry of some of them into the educational system; calls, at the same time, for special attention to vocational education and training in tertiary education, taking into account the diversity of national education systems; calls on the Member States to step up their efforts to ensure that young people can gain real work experience and quickly enter the job market; stresses that traineeships must be relevant for the studies and form part of the curriculum;

14. Points out that the employability of young people is particularly at risk during a period of crisis; stresses the importance of monitoring how quickly young graduates obtain employment appropriate to their education and knowledge after they complete their education, and of making an assessment, on the basis of this information, of the quality of education and training systems and of the need and possibility to make adjustments;

15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to work consistently on the introduction, implementation and further development of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, Europass and the European Qualifications Framework;

16. Stresses that young people have a key role to play in achieving the EU headline targets for 2020 as regards employment, research and innovation, climate and energy, education and the fight against poverty;

17. Stresses the importance of informal and non-formal education for the development of values, aptitudes and skills, particularly for young people, as well as for learning about citizenship and democratic involvement; calls on the Commission to provide support, including financial support, for informal and non-formal education within the framework of the new programmes for education and youth, as well as for citizenship;

18. Calls on universities to widen access to learning, and to modernise their curricula to address the new challenges, in order to upgrade the skills of the European population, without calling into question their academic remit in terms of passing on knowledge, and bearing in mind that demographic change is an undeniable reality in Europe; highlights, in this context, the importance of supporting and recognising non-formal education and informal learning;

19. Encourages dialogue between private stakeholders, particularly SMEs and local and regional authorities, civil society stakeholders and higher-education institutes/universities in order to promote the acquisition by students of knowledge and skills to facilitate their entry into the labour market; reminds employers of the importance of initiation into work, as this promotes the adjustment of young people to working life;

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20. Recalls that creativity is an essential element of the new knowledge-based economy; stresses that the creative sector makes a significant and increasing contribution to the economy, amounting to 4,5 % of EU GDP and 8,5 million jobs;
21. Considers the synergy between the supply of labour and the ability of the labour market to absorb it to be essential;
22. Stresses the essential role played by public employment services in carrying out policies to support and advise jobseekers, in particular as regards assistance in seeking employment or training; emphasises that an increasing number of these jobseekers must receive adequate training that facilitates their return to the labour market, and therefore urges the Member States to make the necessary resources available;
23. Stresses the decisive importance of facilitating access for persons with disabilities to LLL, not only through the formulation and implementation of targeted programmes but also through disability mainstreaming in all programmes intended for the general public; particular attention must be paid, in this connection, to the relationship between disability and LLL so as to prevent social exclusion and genuinely strengthen the position of those with disabilities on the labour market, given that, according to all relevant studies, the educational level of those with disabilities is below average while their degree of participation in the programmes in question is extremely low;
24. Recalls that employers have a key responsibility in making LLL a reality for all, with due regard for gender equality; encourages employers to facilitate continuous training throughout workers' careers by giving more visibility to the right to training, by ensuring that training is available to all workers and by giving workers proper credit for in-service training, thus making further specialisation possible and creating opportunities for career advancement;
25. Calls for greater efforts to establish and implement a European system for the certification and recognition of qualifications, formal and non-formal learning, including voluntary service, so as to strengthen the vital links between non-formal learning and formal education, as well as to improve national and cross-border educational and labour market mobility;
26. Notes the great disparities between national education and training systems and, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, recommends that the progress report be accompanied by a handbook for each individual Member State containing recommendations as to how existing policies might be improved and the national education systems developed;
27. Calls for the external dimension of EU policies to be enhanced through an intensified policy dialogue and through cooperation on education and training between the Union and its international partners and neighbouring countries, aiming to (a) reflect the increasing economic, social and political interdependencies, (b) contribute to the implementation of the external dimension of Europe 2020, and (c) support stability, prosperity and better employment opportunities for our partner countries' citizens, all the while developing better instruments for managing and facilitating skilled migration to Europe, thereby balancing skill shortages and gaps that are the result of demographic developments in Europe;
28. Recalls that, as players on the global education market, national vocational education and training (VET) systems need to be connected to the wider world in order to remain up to date and competitive, and need to be more capable of attracting learners from other European and third countries, providing them with education and training as well as making it easier to recognise their skills; highlights that demographic change and international migration make these issues even more relevant;

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29. Stresses that, although a European area of education and training is emerging, the objective of removing obstacles to mobility has not been achieved yet, and the mobility of learners in VET remains low; underlines that increasing the transnational mobility of VET learners and teachers substantially, and recognising the knowledge, skills and competences they have acquired abroad, will be important challenges for the future, and that better and targeted provision of information and guidance is also needed to attract more foreign learners to our VET systems;

30. Regrets that the Commission Communication on 'Education and Training in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe' does not give adequate coverage to the issue of early school development, particularly its linguistic dimension, despite the fact that it comprises a basic objective of the 'Europe 2020' strategy; believes that this stage in education should be seen as the most crucial for the individual's future educational attainment and personal and social development; believes that children will benefit from early education that is aimed at enhancing motoric and social skills as well as promoting balanced emotional growth while at the same time stimulating intellectual curiosity;

31. Calls on the Commission to encourage and help the Member States put in place measures to assist children in genuine educational pathways, from a very early age;

32. Strongly believes that investing in early childhood education and care (ECEC), appropriately tailored to the sensitivity period and maturity level of each target group, brings greater returns than investing in any other stage of education; points out that investing in the early years of education has been proven to reduce later costs; believes also that the success of education at all levels depends on well-trained teachers, and on their continually advancing professional training, and sufficient investment is therefore needed in teacher training;

33. Stresses the need for professional child care to address the social development of children, particularly children in families experiencing social difficulties;

34. Highlights the need for everyone to acquire excellent language skills from a very early age, covering not only the official languages of the EU but also regional and minority languages, as this will enable people to be more mobile, giving them greater access to the labour market and significantly increased opportunities for study, while serving to promote intercultural exchanges and greater European cohesion;

35. Emphasises that it is necessary to encourage mobility for language learning in order to achieve the objective that all citizens of the European Union should know at least two languages besides their mother tongue;

36. Notes the need to begin language acquisition before school, and welcomes initiatives that enable pupils to learn their native language in written and spoken form as an elective subject in school, thereby acquiring additional skills;

37. Believes that it is vital to promote mobility through ambitious community programmes for education and culture, in particular through exchanges of teachers, students and pupils, and especially in the language field, in order to promote an active citizenship and European values as well as language skills and other valuable skills and competences;

38. Encourages the Commission to support the development of innovative solutions in the field of education and training that easily could be adapted with regard to languages and in technical terms, and that would create mobility in sectors less affected by the phenomenon of multilingualism;

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39. Recognises the important contribution of the EU Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012, and recalls that it is important for the EU that its citizens be given the opportunity to engage in learning, in all its forms, late in life, and to involve older learners in dialogue with professionals who work in the services that provide and support learning;
40. Recalls that the Grundtvig programme aims to help develop the adult education sector as well as to enable more people to participate in learning experiences; point out that it focuses on the teaching and study needs of learners taking adult education and 'alternative' education courses, as well as on the organisations delivering these services; asks Member States to improve the quality of education offered by – and to foster co-operation between – adult education organisations;
41. Stresses the need to promote existing European tools, particularly the Structural Funds for training;
42. Stresses that adult learning extends beyond employment-related activities to include the advancement of personal, civic and social skills through formal education and training systems throughout life, as highlighted by the LLP programme;
43. Recognises the positive impact on society in general of the activities of older people, promoted by their participation in education and training activities, which are carried out for personal fulfilment or social contact;
44. Highlights the need for LLL statistics that cover the age group of 65 +; points out that with the retirement age in many of the EU countries rising, and with people working later in their lives, it is necessary to take into account the changes in the population that fall outside this age bracket;
45. Recognises the role that sport plays in education and training, and therefore invites the Member States to increase investments in sports, and to promote sports activities in schools, in order to encourage integration and contribute to the development of positive values among young Europeans;
46. Stresses that training players at local level is fundamental for the sustainable development and societal role of sport, and expresses its support for sports governing bodies that encourage clubs to invest in the education and training of young local players through measures establishing a minimum number of locally trained players in a club squad, and encourages them to go further still;
47. Encourages the Member States to consider the possibility of introducing a wider system of small grants, with a minimum of red tape, for pre-university students facing financial difficulties, so as to encourage them to stay in education, and thereby contribute to the elimination of social inequality and ensure greater learning opportunities for all;
48. Believes that more should be done to address the disparity between men and women graduating with degrees in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), as exemplified by the fact that only 20 % of engineering graduates are female;
49. 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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