

Thursday 14 September 2017

P8_TA(2017)0360

A new skills agenda for Europe**European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2017 on a new skills agenda for Europe (2017/2002(INI))**

(2018/C 337/20)

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 Articles 14 and 15 thereof,
- having regard to UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the EU in 2010,
- 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 its resolution of 6 July 2010 on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on effective teacher education,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on quality assurance supporting education and training,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 28 November 2011 on a renewed European agenda for adult learning ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 June 2011 on early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 15 November 2007 on the new skills for new jobs ⁽⁹⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 29.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 484, 24.12.2016, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 67, 20.2.2016, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 191, 1.7.2011, p. 1.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 1.

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 290, 4.12.2007, p. 1.

Thursday 14 September 2017

- having regard to the Council conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 17 February 2013 on investing in education and training — a response to ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’ and the ‘2013 Annual Growth Survey’ ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning ⁽³⁾ (EQF-LLL),
- having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2016 on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the references made to digital skills in the Commission communication of 19 April 2016 entitled ‘Digitising European Industry — Reaping the full benefits of a Digital Single Market’ (COM(2016)0180),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 November 2012 entitled ‘Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’ (COM(2012)0669),
- having regard to its resolution of 12 April 2016 on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in VET — a lifelong learning approach ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on skills policies for fighting youth unemployment ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2015 on the Green Employment Initiative: Tapping into the job creation potential of the green economy ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 September 2015 on creating a competitive EU labour market for the 21st century: matching skills and qualifications with demand and job opportunities, as a way to recover from the crisis ⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020 ⁽¹⁰⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence,
- having regard to the draft Council conclusions of 20 February 2017 on Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market ⁽¹¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values ⁽¹²⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Social Europe guide of March 2013 on ‘Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship’ ⁽¹³⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 36.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 64, 5.3.2013, p. 5.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 111, 6.5.2008, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0338.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0107.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0008.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 48.

⁽⁸⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0292.

⁽⁹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0321.

⁽¹⁰⁾ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/119628.pdf

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6268-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

⁽¹²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0005.

⁽¹³⁾ Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (ISBN: 978-92-79-26866-3); <http://www.euricse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/social-economy-guide.pdf>.

Thursday 14 September 2017

- having regard to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Decent Work Agenda,
 - having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2015 on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to European Economic and Social Committee Opinion SOC/546 of 22 February 2017,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the joint deliberations of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Culture and Education under Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (A8-0276/2017),
- A. whereas the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union enshrines the right to access to vocational training and life-long learning;
- B. whereas skills have a strategic importance for employability, growth, innovation and social cohesion, and whereas the level of complexity of jobs is increasing across all sectors and occupations and there is inflation in relative skills demand, even for low-skilled jobs;
- C. whereas the skills and know-how of our societies are the sole basis for prosperity and for safeguarding our social achievements;
- D. whereas a low-skilled population faces an increased risk of unemployment and social exclusion;
- E. whereas, countries with the highest share of adults displaying low levels of proficiency in basic skills and digital skills have lower levels of labour productivity and ultimately lower prospects for growth and competitiveness;
- F. whereas the European Parliament shares and supports the Commission's efforts to invest in human capital as a key resource for the EU's competitiveness, and whereas the quality of teachers is a prerequisite for the quality of education;
- G. whereas many low-skilled jobs now require greater literacy, numeracy and other basic skills and even low-skilled jobs within the service sector increasingly include more demanding non-routine tasks ⁽²⁾;
- H. whereas, according to the latest Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), about 70 million European adults lack basic skills such as reading, writing and numeracy, which represents an obstacle to those people finding a decent job and living standard;
- I. whereas by 2025, 49 % of all job openings (including both new and replacement jobs) in the EU will require high-level qualifications, 40 % — medium-level qualifications, while only 11 % — low-level or no qualifications ⁽³⁾;
- J. whereas expanding access to lifelong learning can open up new possibilities for active inclusion and enhanced social participation, especially for the low skilled, the unemployed, people with special needs, older persons and migrants;
- K. whereas Member States need to find ways to protect or promote longer term investment in education, research, innovation, energy and climate action and invest in the modernisation of education and training systems, including lifelong learning;

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0411.

⁽²⁾ European Commission (2016), Analytical underpinning for a New Skills Agenda for Europe (SWD(2016)0195).

⁽³⁾ Cedefop, forthcoming in EC, 2016.

Thursday 14 September 2017

- L. whereas the EU is a platform best positioned to share best practices and support mutual learning among Member States;
- M. whereas Articles 165 and 166 TFEU make the Member States responsible for general education, including higher education and vocational training;
- N. whereas cooperation in the area of education at EU level is voluntary, which marks a fundamental difference between education and employment, a policy area which is on a much more firmly Community footing;
- O. whereas, skills and competences go hand in hand and therefore the link between them should be further strengthened in the New Skills Agenda;
- P. whereas, the development of future-oriented sectors has a determinant role in the types of skills needed;
- Q. whereas a European skills and jobs survey has revealed that about 45 % of the EU's adult workers believe that their skills can either be better developed or utilised at work;
- R. whereas, according to the ILO, between 25 and 45 percent of the European workforce are either under- or over-qualified for the jobs they do; whereas this situation is largely due to the fast pace of change in the structure of Member State economies;
- S. whereas skills mismatches is a worrying phenomenon affecting individuals and businesses, creating skill gaps and skill shortages and is one of the causes of unemployment ⁽¹⁾; whereas 26 % of EU adult employees lack the skills they need for their job;
- T. whereas, more than 30 % of highly qualified young people are in jobs that do not match their skills and aspirations, while 40 % of European employers say they are unable to find people with the skills they require in order to grow and innovate;
- U. whereas, currently, almost 23 % of the population aged 20-64 have a low level of education (pre-primary, primary or lower secondary education); whereas low-qualified individuals have fewer employment opportunities and are also more vulnerable to being in insecure jobs and are twice as likely as highly qualified people to experience long-term unemployment ⁽²⁾;
- V. whereas low-qualified individuals not only have diminished employment opportunities, but are also more vulnerable to long-term unemployment and have more difficulties in obtaining access to services and participating fully in society;
- W. whereas, individuals often possess skills which are not identified, exploited or properly rewarded; whereas skills acquired outside formal settings, through work experience, volunteering, civic engagement or other relevant experience are not necessarily recorded in a qualification or documented and are therefore being undervalued;
- X. whereas cultural and creative industries (CCIs) contribute to social well-being, innovation, employment and stimulate the EU's economic development while employing more than 12 million people in the EU, which is 7,5 % of all persons employed in the total economy and contribute to the economy with 5,3 % of the total EU Gross Value Added and a further 4 % of nominal EU Gross Domestic Product generated by the high-end industries ⁽³⁾;
- Y. whereas equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the EU enshrined in the Treaties and is one of the objectives and responsibilities of the Union; whereas mainstreaming the principle of equality between women and men in all its activities, such as access to education and training, is a specific mission of the Union;

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/assisting-eu-countries-skills-matching>

⁽²⁾ See SWD(2016)0195.

⁽³⁾ Boosting the competitiveness of cultural and creative industries for growth and jobs, 2015.

Thursday 14 September 2017

- Z. whereas, at EU level, NEETs (not in employment, education or training) are considered to be one of the most vulnerable groups in the context of youth unemployment; whereas women are 1,4 ⁽¹⁾ times more likely to become NEETs than men on average, further highlighting issues of gender discrimination and equality from a young age;
- AA. whereas social and emotional skills together with cognitive skills are important for individual well-being and success;
- AB. whereas access to high-quality formal, informal and non-formal education, as well as learning and training opportunities, must be a right for everyone at every stage of life so that they can acquire transversal skills such as numeracy, digital and media literacy, critical thinking, social skills, foreign language proficiency and relevant life skills; whereas, in this respect, it is necessary to allow workers time off for personal and training development in the context of life-long learning;
- AC. whereas it is essential that skills aim not only to increase employability but also to bolster the capacity for civic participation and the esteem for democratic values and tolerance, not least as a tool for preventing radicalisation and intolerance of every kind;
- AD. whereas in a fast changing, more globalised and digitised world, transversal and transferable skills such as social skills, intercultural skills, digital skills, problem solving, entrepreneurship and creative thinking are key;
- AE. whereas digital transformation is still ongoing and societal and labour market needs are constantly evolving;
- AF. whereas digital empowerment and self-confidence are an essential prerequisite for building strong societies and helping unity and integration within the EU;
- AG. whereas, nowadays, our education and training systems are facing a significant digital transformation, which is impacting teaching and learning processes; whereas effective digital skills provision is essential to ensure the workforce is prepared for the current and future technological changes;
- AH. whereas, despite a recent increase in the number of people participating in digital education or training in the EU, there is still much to be done to align the European economy to the new digital era and close the gap between the number of job seekers and the number of unfilled jobs;
- AI. whereas there is a need to incorporate new digital transformations into education systems in order to continue to help people become critical, confident and independent; whereas however this must be done symbiotically with the subjects that are already being taught;
- AJ. whereas a future-proofed skills agenda should be included in a broader reflection on occupational literacy in the context of the growing digitisation and robotisation of European societies;
- AK. whereas transversal competences such as civic and social competences as well as citizenship education should be emphasised alongside language, digital and entrepreneurial skills;
- AL. whereas entrepreneurship skills need to be understood in a broader context, as possessing a sense of initiative in terms of participation in social actions and as possessing an entrepreneurial mind-set, and whereas these should therefore be further emphasised in the New Skills Agenda as life skills which benefit individuals in their personal and professional life, while also benefiting communities;

⁽¹⁾ Society at a Glance 2016 — OECD Social Indicators.

Thursday 14 September 2017

- AM. whereas in order to ensure smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and jobs for young people, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) proficiency must be fostered in the EU;
- AN. whereas the demand for STEM professionals and associate professionals is expected to grow by around 8 % between now and 2025, much higher than the average 3 % growth forecast for all occupations; whereas employment in STEM-related sectors is also expected to rise by around 6,5 % between now and 2025 ⁽¹⁾;
- AO. whereas the poor image and fading attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET) together with low-quality VET in some Member States discourages students from taking up careers in promising fields and sectors with labour force shortages;
- AP. whereas, when dealing with the issue of skills, in particular skills mismatches and job opportunities, the specific challenges faced by rural areas must be taken into account;
- AQ. whereas the green sector was one of the main net creators of jobs in Europe during the recession and should be further promoted in the New Skills Agenda;
- AR. whereas an ageing population in Europe increases demand for healthcare professionals, social care and medical services;
- AS. whereas families play a key role in helping children to learn basic skills;

Developing skills for life and skills for jobs

1. Welcomes the Commission communication entitled 'A New Skills Agenda for Europe — Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness' adopted in June 2016;
2. Acknowledges that education and training are Member State competences and that the EU can only support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States;
3. Considers that the EU needs a paradigm shift in the goals and functioning of the education sector; agrees with the focus on upgrading European education and training systems in line with the fast changing economic, technological and societal environment, ensuring access to quality education at all stages;
4. Notes that, while skills needs are dynamic, the main focus of the skills package is the immediate needs of the labour market; highlights in this respect the importance of working in close collaboration with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in order to anticipate skills needs and to develop a pan-European skills needs forecasting tool and lifelong learning, with a view to adapting to new situations in the labour market and to enhancing the adaptability of individual, active citizenship and social inclusion;
5. Calls on the Member States to focus not only on employability skills, literacy, numeracy, digital and media literacy, but also on skills that are more broadly relevant to society such as transferable, transversal and soft skills (leadership, social and intercultural skills, management, entrepreneurial and financial education, volunteering, foreign languages proficiency, negotiation) in their education and training programmes and curricula, and to prioritise the further development of those capabilities in VET programmes also, together with the enhancement of European craftsmanship;
6. Calls for everyone to have the right to have real access to skills, at every stage of life, in order for them to acquire fundamental skills for the 21st century;
7. Recognises the value of the internationalisation of education and the increasing number of students and staff members who participate in mobility programmes; underlines, in this respect, the value of Erasmus+;

⁽¹⁾ Cedefop, Rising STEMs Database, March 2014.

Thursday 14 September 2017

8. Notes furthermore that various studies show that mobility equips people with specific professional skills as well as transversal and transferable sets of skills, like critical thinking and entrepreneurship, and provides them with better career opportunities; recognises that the current EU budget dedicated to learning mobility might not be sufficient to achieve the goal of 6 % of learning mobility by 2020;
9. Encourages the Member States to further develop the possibility for inter-sectorial mobility among schools as a whole; emphasises that VET learning mobility needs increased support and promotion and that special attention should be devoted to cross-border regions in the context of mobility;
10. Points out that education and training should contribute to the personal development and growth of young people in order to make them proactive and responsible citizens, ready to live and work in a technologically advanced and globalised economy, and should provide them with the key set of competences for lifelong learning, defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship and employment;
11. Stresses that quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) are crucial prerequisites for the development of skills;
12. While noting that the responsibility for providing education and care lies with the Member States, calls on them to enhance quality and broaden access to ECEC and to address the lack of sufficient infrastructure offering quality and accessible childcare for all income levels as well as to consider granting free access for families living in poverty and social exclusion;
13. Underlines that creativity and innovation are becoming driving factors in the EU's economy and should be mainstreamed in the national and European policy strategies;
14. Welcomes the objective of the New Skills Agenda to make VET a first choice for learners, responsive to labour market demand and related to future work requirements through the participation of employers in the design and delivery of the courses;
15. Encourages Member States to go beyond promoting the 'right occupational skills' and to also focus on those aspects of education that are more work-based and more practical, and that foster an entrepreneurial mind-set, innovativeness and creativity, support people to think critically, understand the concept of sustainability, while esteeming fundamental rights and values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, tolerance, respect, and to fully participate in the democratic process and social life as open-minded citizens;
16. Is however of the opinion that there is a need to adopt a holistic approach to education and skills development, which puts the learner at the centre of the process as well as to ensure sufficient investment in lifelong learning policies; believes furthermore that education and training must be accessible and affordable for all and more efforts are needed to include the most vulnerable groups;
17. Calls on the Member States to ensure that civil society, experts, and families, who have experience of reality on the ground, are involved more actively in the debate on the necessary life skills;
18. Encourages Member States to also focus on tackling gender stereotypes as women represent 60 % of recent graduates; highlights that their employment rate however remains below that of men and that they are under-represented in many sectors;
19. Encourages the Member States to better match the skills with the jobs in the labour market and in particular to put in place quality apprenticeships which help people to be flexible in their education paths and later in the labour market;
20. Recognises the value of dual education ⁽¹⁾ systems, but points out that a system used in one Member State cannot be blindly copied by another Member State; calls for exchanges of best practice models involving the social partners;

⁽¹⁾ A dual education system combines apprenticeships in a company with vocational education at a vocational school in one course.

Thursday 14 September 2017

21. Recalls, in this respect, the need for enhanced cooperation among the Member States to learn from best practices which lead to lower unemployment rates, such as apprenticeships and lifelong learning;
22. Points to the role of Cedefop, one of whose main tasks is to bring together political leaders, social partners, researchers, and practitioners for the purpose of exchanging ideas and experience, including via the development of sector-specific platforms;
23. Underlines that culture, creativity and arts significantly contribute to personal development, employment and growth across the EU, carrying innovation, stimulating cohesion, strengthening intercultural relations, mutual understanding and preserving European identity, culture and values; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen their support for CCIIs in order to unleash and fully explore their potential;
24. Underlines that the current arrivals of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to the EU require the establishment of a more sustained approach directed towards third-country nationals including the assessment of their skills, competences and knowledge, which need to be made visible, as well as the establishment of a mechanism for skills recognition and validation;
25. Recalls that newcomers bring new skills and knowledge with them, and calls for the development of tools providing multilingual information about the existing opportunities for formal and informal learning, professional training, traineeships and voluntary work; believes it important to foster intercultural dialogue in order to make it easier for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to enter the labour market and become integrated into society;
26. Welcomes the Commission proposals concerning the Skills Profile Tool for third-country nationals and hopes for rapid progress in this endeavour; recommends that the New Skills Agenda for Europe, in its approach to migrants' skills, be consistent with the Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals; stresses that a more comprehensive approach to the up-skilling of migrants should be taken, including through social entrepreneurship, civic education and informal learning, and that focus should not be limited to transparency, comparability and the early profiling of migrants' skills and qualifications;
27. Believes that coordinated action is required in order to counter 'brain drain' by identifying appropriate means of making use of the skills available, with a view to guarding against the loss of human capital by Member States;
28. Recalls that investing in the capacity of education today will determine the quality of jobs now and in the future, the qualifications of workers, social well-being and democratic participation in society;
29. Calls on the Member States to address the issue of population ageing by encouraging the development of skills related to health, well-being and sickness prevention;

The role of education in tackling unemployment, social exclusion and poverty

30. Considers that the EU's competitiveness, economic growth and social cohesion largely depend on education and training systems that prevent people from falling behind;
31. Insists that education and training are not only key factors in enhancing employability, but also in fostering personal development, social inclusion and cohesion, active citizenship and therefore believes that equal access to quality education and adequate investment in skills and competences are crucial to tackling the high unemployment rate and social exclusion, especially among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (NEETs, the long-term unemployed, the low skilled, refugees, and people with disabilities); recalls that a genuine forecasting of future skills needs is paramount in this respect;
32. Regrets with concern that investment in education is still lagging behind and that successive cuts in education budgets most affect those students and adults coming from a disadvantaged socio-economic background;

Thursday 14 September 2017

33. Is deeply concerned about the fact that between 2010 and 2014 investment in education and training fell by 2,5 % in the EU as a whole ⁽¹⁾; stresses that in order for education to fulfil its role in tackling unemployment, social exclusion and poverty, properly resourced public education systems are essential;

34. Stresses, as stated by the OECD ⁽²⁾, that more educated people contribute to more democratic societies and sustainable economies, and are less dependent on public aid and less vulnerable to economic downturns; points out therefore that investment in quality education and innovation are not only key to combating unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, but also for the EU to compete successfully in the global markets; calls on the Commission and the Member States to restore public investment to, at least, pre-crisis levels, in early, primary and secondary education for all, and in particular for children from disadvantaged backgrounds;

35. Points out that access to learning and training opportunities must be a right for everyone, at every stage of life, to acquire transversal skills such as, numeracy, digital and media literacy, critical thinking, social skills and relevant life skills; is of the opinion that the New Skills Agenda is a step in the right direction encouraging shared commitment towards a common vision about the critical importance of lifelong learning policies;

36. Stresses the role of external associations and NGOs in providing children with other skills and social competences, such as in the arts and manual activities, in helping their integration, better understanding of their environment, solidarity in learning and living, and improving the learning competences of whole classes;

37. Recalls that people with disabilities have special requirements, and thus need appropriate support in order to acquire skills; calls on the Commission and the Member States when implementing the New Skills Agenda to adopt an inclusive approach in designing their education and training policies, including by means of teaching support personnel as well as making information on skills, training and financing options available and accessible to as many groups of people as possible, taking into account the wide variety of disabilities; maintains that, with a view to supporting their participation in the labour market, entrepreneurship is a feasible option for many people with disabilities; points to, in this regard, the importance of improving the digital skills of people with disabilities as well as the crucial role played by accessible technology;

38. Notes that while there is increased recognition of the potential of quality early education and care in reducing early school leaving and in laying a solid foundation for further learning, the New Skills Agenda lacks a forward-looking vision for the earlier phases of education; calls on the Member States, therefore, to both invest in high-quality ECEC in order to enhance quality and to broaden access to it, and to also adopt measures aimed at reducing early school leaving;

39. Calls on the Member States to endorse in particular the 2014 quality framework on ECEC ⁽³⁾ and insists that relevant programmes must be available to give all young people who have dropped out of primary or secondary school a second chance; considers the completion of secondary education desirable;

40. Points out that education should not only provide skills and competences relevant to job market needs, but should also contribute to the personal development and growth of young people in order to make them proactive and responsible citizens;

41. Calls on the Member States to channel investments into inclusive education which responds to societal challenges and ensures equal access and opportunities for all, including for young people from different socio-economic backgrounds as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;

42. Calls on the Member States to expand second chance education and training opportunities to better integrate groups at risk in the labour market;

⁽¹⁾ Education and Training Monitor 2016.

⁽²⁾ <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf>

⁽³⁾ Eurofound (2015), Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services — A systematic review.

Thursday 14 September 2017

43. Welcomes the Commission proposals for actions on skills development to reduce disparity in education and disadvantages throughout the lifetime of a person, thereby enabling European citizens to fight effectively against unemployment and ensure competitiveness and innovation in Europe, but draws attention to a number of administrative obstacles which are slowing progress in attaining those objectives in relation to the mobility of professionals, recognition of qualifications and the teaching of professional qualifications;

44. Calls, to that end, for Member States to ensure that the Internal Market Information System (IMI) functions properly, facilitates better exchanges of data and enhances better administrative cooperation without creating unnecessary administrative burdens, to introduce simpler and faster procedures for the recognition of professional qualifications and continuous professional development requirements of qualified professionals planning to work in another Member State, and to prevent discrimination of all kinds;

45. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, in particular, to facilitate access to skills development for vulnerable citizens by assessing the need to establish specific tools, such as local EU information centres and specific indicators within the Key Competences Framework to take account of the needs of disadvantaged groups;

Boosting lifelong learning opportunities

46. Underlines the importance of lifelong learning for the self-development of workers, including staying up to date with ever-changing working conditions ⁽¹⁾ and of creating opportunities for all in order to foster a culture of learning at all ages in Europe; encourages the Commission and the Member States to promote and invest in lifelong learning in particular in countries with a participation rate below the 15 % benchmark;

47. Notes with concern the unacceptable situation of 70 million Europeans lacking basic skills; welcomes therefore the establishment of the initiative 'Upskilling Pathways' and insists on its swift implementation and monitoring; calls furthermore on the Commission and the Member States to encourage a continuous approach to up-skilling, re-training and lifelong learning, by introducing diverse schemes for enlarged access and motivation, tailored to the individual needs of each Member State, for both unemployed individuals and those who are employed;

48. Considers that the initiative 'Upskilling Pathways' should involve the individualised assessment of learning needs, a quality learning offer and systematic validation of the skills and competences acquired, enabling their easy recognition on the labour market; points to the need to ensure widespread access to broadband in order to enable digital literacy; finds regrettable that the European Parliament was not involved in the shaping of the initiative;

49. Stresses that sectoral and specific skills development must be a shared responsibility between education providers, employers and trade unions and therefore Member States should ensure a close dialogue with social partners; insists that all relevant actors in the labour market should be involved in the training process, design and delivery in order to equip people with the necessary skills throughout their careers, and in order for businesses to be competitive while also boosting personal development, quality employment, career perspectives and development;

50. Underlines that there is a need to develop complex education and training systems to provide learners with different types of skills: basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills); advanced generic skills (such as problem solving and learning); professional, technical, occupation-specific or sector-specific skills; and socio-emotional skills;

51. Underlines that understanding the specific needs of low-skilled individuals and providing them with tailor-made training is an essential step in designing more effective training programmes; recalls that responsiveness and adaptability in light of experience acquired and changing circumstances are crucial elements of an effective education process;

⁽¹⁾ See texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0338.

Thursday 14 September 2017

52. Insists that the outreach and guidance to people in disadvantaged situations, including those with disabilities, the long-term unemployed and under-represented groups, that may not be aware of the benefits of raising their skills levels or of opportunities for re-skilling or up-skilling, is of key importance to the success of such an initiative;

53. Calls on the Commission and the Member States for targeted action in terms of re-skilling and validating the skills of parents returning to work following a period taking care of family dependants;

54. Calls for the active involvement of and dialogue with all relevant stakeholders not only at national and European level, but also at the local and regional level in order to meet the real labour market situations and needs;

55. Recalls the need to include lifelong learning in the broader context of occupational literacy;

1. *Strengthening connections between education and employment*

56. Recalls that closing the skills gap and mismatches in the labour market and promoting opportunities for social mobility, including for vocational training and apprenticeships, is essential to promote sustainable growth, social cohesion, jobs creation, innovation and entrepreneurship, in particular for SMEs and crafts; encourages the Member States, therefore, to promote professional learning in accordance with economic demands;

57. Stresses the need to strive for a more flexible, individual and personalised ⁽¹⁾ approach to career development and lifelong education and training across one's personal career and development path, and recognises the role that both public and private stakeholders can play in providing this, while recognising that guidance and counselling which address individual needs and preferences and focus on the evaluation and expansion of individual skills must be a core element of education and skills policies from an early stage;

58. Calls on the Member States together with the social partners to develop and put in place policies that provide for educational and training leave, as well as in-work training; calls on them to make learning inside and outside work, including paid training leave, accessible to all workers and in particular to those in disadvantaged situations, and with an emphasis on women employees;

59. Underlines that any skills policy should take into consideration not only ongoing transformations in the labour market but also ensure that the policy is universal enough in scope to develop the ability of workers to learn and to facilitate their adaptation to challenges in the future;

60. Stresses that skills development must be a shared responsibility between education providers and employers; insists that the industry/employers should be involved in providing and training people with the necessary skills in order for businesses to be competitive and at the same time boost people's self-confidence;

61. Reiterates that to enhance employability, innovation and active citizenship, including eco-citizenship, basic skills must go hand in hand with other key competences and attitudes: creativity, nature-awareness, a sense of initiative, foreign language competences, critical thinking, including through e-literacy and media literacy, and skills reflecting growing sectors;

62. Emphasises the huge innovation and employment potential of renewable energy sources and the search for greater resource and energy efficiency; calls on the Commission and the Member States, in view of the education and employment opportunities, to take energy and environmental issues into account when implementing the New Skills Agenda;

63. Stresses the need to implement tailor-made support for on-the-job learners, apprentices and employees to ensure the inclusion of all individuals in the labour market;

⁽¹⁾ The shift to learning outcomes — Policies and Practices in Europe — Cedefop.

Thursday 14 September 2017

64. Recognises the importance of fostering work-based learning apprenticeships and internships as one of the tools for further facilitating the integration of individuals into the labour market, i.e. by establishing bridges/competence exchanges between generations;

65. Notes that apprenticeships, traineeships and specific skills training are considered to be the most effective types of training in terms of preventing young people from returning to NEET status; notes that it has been highlighted that having a dual system of vocational and academic education and training reduces the NEET group by enabling more young people to be retained in education/training and by helping to make them more employable and more likely to progress more smoothly into employment/a career; stresses that macro-economic analysis reports that a combination of a dual education and training system and active labour market policies get the best results;

66. Calls on the Member States to provide support for work-based, inter-company training and skill development for SMEs;

67. Asks for concrete measures to be put in place in order to facilitate the transition of young people from education to work by ensuring quality and paid internships and apprenticeships providing them with practical on-the-spot training, as well as cross-border exchange programmes such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, giving young people the possibility of putting their knowledge and talents into practice and having an adequate set of social and economic rights and access to adequate employment and social protection, as defined by national legislation and practice, equal to adult workers; calls on the Member States to provide special support to SMEs so that they too are able to take on interns and work-study (alternance) trainees;

68. Calls on the Member States to ensure a quality framework that does not allow internships and apprenticeships to be used as a cheap or free labour; points out that an understanding of core health and safety standards and rights in the workplace is also important in developing quality employment and preventing exploitation; calls, to this end, on the Member States to establish national legal quality frameworks on internships and apprenticeships, ensuring in particular employment protection and adequate social security coverage;

69. Calls on the Commission to present a Quality Framework for Apprenticeships and on the Member States to endorse it ⁽¹⁾;

70. Believes that, in order to anticipate future skills needs, civil society, especially youth and community organisations, social partners, education and training providers as well as special support services must be actively involved at all levels, in particular in designing, implementing and evaluating vocational qualification programmes, which provide a real and effective transition from formal education to work-based learning and quality employment;

71. Stresses the need to ensure that qualifications are meaningful to employers by involving labour market actors in their design;

The key role of non-formal and informal learning

72. Insists on the importance of validating non-formal and informal learning to reach out and empower learners; recognises that this is particularly evident in the case of those in vulnerable or disadvantaged situations, such as low-skilled workers or refugees who are in need of priority access to validation arrangements;

73. Regrets that employers and formal education providers do not sufficiently recognise the value and relevance of skills, competences and knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning; stresses, in this regard, the need to work on overcoming the lack of awareness on validation among all relevant stakeholders;

74. Recognises that the lack of comparability and coherence between the validation approaches of EU countries, especially for VET, represents an additional barrier; acknowledges, furthermore, that the provision of real access, recognition and financial support remains a real challenge especially for disadvantaged groups, such as low-skilled individuals who are in need of priority access to validation;

⁽¹⁾ To be built on the Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training on 'A Shared Vision for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning' adopted on 2 December 2016.

Thursday 14 September 2017

75. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to raise awareness of validation possibilities; welcomes, in this regard, the progress made in the last few years in the context of the implementation of the Council recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning by 2018; is, however, of the opinion that further efforts are needed in establishing relevant legal frameworks and creating comprehensive validation strategies in order to enable validation;

76. Recalls that many existing European transparency tools such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) have been developed in isolation; emphasises that, in order to allow individuals to better measure their progress and opportunities, and capitalise on the learning outcomes gained in different contexts, they need to be better coordinated and supported by quality assurance systems and embedded in a framework of national qualifications in order to build trust across sectors and actors, including employers;

77. Insists on the need to refocus on the role of non-formal education, which is key for the empowerment of people and especially for the more vulnerable and disadvantaged people, including people with special needs and disabled people, those who are low skilled and who have limited opportunities to access formal education; believes that non-formal education providers and NGOs are in a good position to reach out to the disadvantaged groups who are out of the formal education system and should be better supported in their role, in order to ensure that those most in need benefit from the New Skills Agenda;

78. Recognises the importance of volunteering as one of the tools for acquiring knowledge, experience and skills for enhancing employability and gaining professional qualifications;

79. Stresses that non-formal learning, including through volunteering, has a crucial role to play in stimulating the development of transferable knowledge, intercultural competences and life skills such as team work, creativity and a sense of initiative while reinforcing self-esteem and motivation to learn;

80. Further emphasises the importance of informal educational programmes, arts and sports activities and intercultural dialogue, with a view to actively involving citizens in societal and democratic processes and making them less vulnerable to propaganda leading to radicalisation; stresses that informal and non-formal learning play a key role in efforts to include those who have the greatest difficulty in finding work and are therefore vulnerable; calls, in this respect, on the Member States for the full and timely implementation of the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning;

81. Underlines the value of transversal skills acquired through sports as part of non-formal and informal learning, and further stresses the link between sports employability, education and training;

82. Underlines that informal and non-formal settings also provide opportunities for active promotion of the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination, for learning about citizenship, sustainability and human rights, including women's and children's rights;

83. Calls on the Member States to introduce procedures for the recognition of informal and non-formal education, drawing on the best practices of Member States who have already introduced tools of that kind, to ensure that the upskilling pathways are a success ⁽¹⁾; notes, in this regard, the importance of policy response aimed at groups furthest from the labour market;

84. Highlights that informal and non-formal settings, widely used in the context of community education and work with groups under-represented in mainstream academic and adult education provision, play a key role for the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable people; affirms, in this context, the need to take into account the perspective and needs of women and girls, people with disabilities, LGBTI people, migrants and refugees and people from ethnic minorities;

85. Stresses the importance of career guidance in supporting low-skilled individuals; notes in this regard the importance of the capacity and quality of the Member States' public and private employment services;

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016.

Thursday 14 September 2017

86. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider introducing common tools for the assessment of skills as part of the Europass scheme;

87. Calls on the Member States to further develop their validation systems and increase awareness of available validation services; encourages them to build more accessible, attractive and open pathways to further education, e.g. by continuing VET;

Fostering digital, STEM and entrepreneurial skills

88. Draws attention to the fact that in today's society, ensuring basic digital skills is an essential prerequisite for personal and professional fulfilment, but is of the opinion that further efforts are needed in equipping people with more specific digital competences in order to be able to use digital technologies in an innovative and creative way;

89. Points to the need to identify the skills required for new-technology jobs and to promote the acquisition of the digital skills sought by mid-cap, micro, small and medium-sized businesses; draws attention in particular to the fact that, in the digital era, the acquisition of skills takes place in a context of swift change that can destabilise jobs markets and to the consequent need for lifelong learning to help people adjust to change;

90. Believes that greater importance should be given to STEM education with a view to improving digital learning and teaching; highlights the close link between creativity and innovation, and therefore calls for the inclusion of the arts and creative learning in the STEM learning agenda, as well as considers that girls and young women should be encouraged from an early age to study STEM subjects;

91. Insists on the need to incorporate new technologies in the teaching and learning process as well as to facilitate education through hands-on and real-life experiences, taking into account age-appropriate ICT and media curricula, that respect child development and wellbeing, and that provides early guidance in the responsible use of technology and fosters critical thinking in order to equip people with the right set of skills, competences and knowledge, and to ensure the development of the full range of digital skills that individuals and companies need in an increasingly digital economy; recalls the need to encourage girls and young women to pursue ICT studies;

92. Stresses, furthermore, the need for a more collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach for the development and implementation of digital skills strategies;

93. Encourages the Commission, to that end, to increase the funding under the European Framework Programmes, as well as the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), fostering inclusive, innovative and reflective European societies, to get all citizens, in particular those with precarious socio-economic backgrounds or living in remote areas, persons with disabilities, the elderly and the unemployed, to fully participate in society and the labour market;

94. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to urge Member States to draw up comprehensive national strategies for digital skills with special attention being paid to closing the digital divide, in particular for older persons; points out however that in order for these strategies to be effective, there is a need to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for educational staff, strong pedagogical leadership and innovation at all levels of education, tailored to each level, that is based on a clear vision for an age- and development-appropriate media pedagogy, as well as initial and continuous teacher training and upskilling and an exchange of best practices;

95. Underlines that media literacy allows citizens to have a critical understanding of different forms of media, thereby increasing and enhancing the resources and opportunities offered by 'digital literacy';

96. Calls on the Member States to reinforce their efforts to improve media literacy in school curricula and institutions of cultural education, and to develop initiatives at national, regional or local level covering all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education and training;

Thursday 14 September 2017

97. Reiterates that the set of digital skills must include digital and media literacy, as well as critical and creative thinking, in order for learners to become not only users of technologies but active creators, innovators and responsible citizens in a digitised world;

98. Calls on the Member States to make available opportunities for ICT training and the development of digital skills and media literacy at all levels of education; underlines, in this regard, the importance of open educational resources (OER) which ensure access to education for all;

99. Stresses the need to include elements of entrepreneurial learning, including social entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and across various subjects, since fostering entrepreneurial spirit among the young at an early stage will increase employability, support the fight against youth unemployment, as well as encourage creativity, critical thinking and leadership skills useful for setting up social projects and contributing to local communities; further emphasises the importance of learning from experience and the concept of 'positive failures' in this context;

100. Considers that entrepreneurship education should include a social dimension since it boosts the economy while simultaneously alleviating deprivation, social exclusion and other societal problems, and address such subjects as fair trade, social enterprise, and alternative business models, such as co-operatives, in order to strive towards a more social, inclusive and sustainable economy;

101. Recalls that the creative industries are among the most entrepreneurial and fast growing sectors, and creative education develops transferable skills such as creative thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and resourcefulness; acknowledges that arts and media sectors are of particular appeal to young people;

102. Points out that entrepreneurship requires the development of transversal skills such as creativity, critical thinking, teamwork and a sense of initiative, which contribute to young people's personal and professional development and facilitate their transition into the job market; believes there is a need, therefore, to facilitate and encourage participation by entrepreneurs in the educational process;

103. Urges active dialogue, data-sharing and cooperation between the academic community, other educational and training institutions or actors, social partners and the world of work, aimed at developing educational programmes which equip young people with the requisite skills and competences and knowledge;

Modernising VET and focus on the value of work-based learning

104. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the social partners to develop and put in place policies that provide for educational and training leave, as well as in-work vocational training and life-long learning, including in Member States other than their own; calls on them to make learning inside and outside work, including paid study opportunities, accessible to all workers and in particular to those in disadvantaged situations, and with an emphasis on women employees in sectors where women are structurally under-represented ⁽¹⁾;

105. Reiterates the importance of vocational education and training (VET), as a relevant type of education not only for enhancing employability and clearing the pathway to professional qualifications, but also leading to equal opportunities for all citizens, including from socially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;

106. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure adequate investment in VET, to guarantee that it is more relevant to learners, employers and society in a holistic and participatory educational approach, and to tailor it to labour market needs by making it an integral part of the education system via a participatory, integrated and coordinated approach, and to guarantee high qualification standards and quality assurance in this regard; underlines the need for closer collaboration between VET and higher education providers in order to ensure the successful transition of VET graduates to higher education;

107. Regards efforts to ease the transition between academic and vocational education as essential;

⁽¹⁾ See texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0338.

Thursday 14 September 2017

108. Underlines the need to strengthen the vocational and career guidance practices both in the education system and the adult education towards skills and competences needed within countries perspective branches and sectors with high added value and investment potential;

109. Welcomes the initiatives taken by the Commission to promote VET education; recognises that VET mobility has not yet reached its potential; considers that additional funding to VET institutions could contribute to enhancing VET mobility as well as increasing the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of VET education;

110. Highlights the need to investigate the possibility for inter-sectorial mobility not only in the VET teacher profession but also among schools as a whole;

111. Maintains that the main responsibility for the quality of VET education lies at the Member State and regional level; calls for the Commission to promote VET and to facilitate the exchange of best practices;

112. Calls on the Member States to rebrand VET, with adequate investment and qualified staff, reinforcing the link to the labour market, employers and creating the awareness of VET as a valuable education and career path;

113. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase the attractiveness and status of VET and VET mobility as an important choice in one's personal career path, by making sure that young people and their families have access to information and guidance on VET options, that sufficient investments are made in increasing the quality and relevance of VET education, that it is accessible and affordable for all, and that more bridges are made between academic education and VET as well as promoting gender balance and non-discrimination in VET programmes;

114. Calls for specific targets such as the implementation of a fully operational credit transfer system and recognition by using ECVET;

115. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, with a view to reducing the number of people dropping out of education or training and the number of NEETs, to develop and compare the best experiences of the partnerships between education and vocational training; recommends doing this by means of cooperation between secondary schools and undertakings, including by means of apprenticeships, in order to create second-chance opportunities, achieve greater integration between systems and tailor skills better to actual needs;

116. Encourages the Member States to establish quality dual-education and vocational training systems in coordination with local and regional economic actors, following an exchange of best practices and in line with the specific nature of each educational system, with a view to overcoming the existing and future skills mismatches;

117. Calls on the Member States to improve data collection mapping of the career trajectories of VET learners in order to better address their employment prospects, assess the quality of VET education and inform students' career choices;

118. Recalls that more support for learners' and teachers' mobility is needed; calls, therefore, on the Member States to include mobility support in their national programmes in order to assist a large share of young people in benefiting from an experience abroad;

Teachers and trainers

119. Believes teachers and trainers play a key role in learners' performance; emphasises therefore the need to invest and support the initial and continuous professional development of teachers of all educational sectors as well as the need to ensure quality employment and to establish lifelong career guidance services, which must be an ongoing priority throughout the EU;

120. Stresses that improving the status of and upskilling all teachers, trainers, mentors and educators in order to expand their skills would be a prerequisite for the delivery of the New Skills Agenda and that further efforts have to be made to attract young people to work in the education system and to motivate teachers to stay in the profession, including by improving retention policies; notes that this requires consideration for and the valorisation of teachers, attractive remuneration and working conditions, better access to further training during working time especially in digital didactics, as well as measures to protect against and prevent violence and harassment in educational institutions; calls on the Member

Thursday 14 September 2017

States to encourage more gender equality in the teaching profession; underlines that enhancing innovative teaching and learning practices and facilitating mobility and exchange of best practices could be one step towards this goal;

121. Recalls that in some Member States teachers' education has been significantly affected by the economic and financial crises; underlines the importance of investing in teachers, trainers and educators and equipping them with new skills and teaching techniques in line with technological and societal developments;

122. Calls on the Member States to invest strongly into teachers' lifelong learning, including practical experience abroad, and to ensure their continuous professional development as well as to help them to develop new skills such as ICT skills, entrepreneurial skills and inclusive education know-how; emphasises, in this respect, that adequate paid training days should be provided for the upskilling of all educational staff;

123. Stresses the need to develop VET teachers' competences to deliver entrepreneurial skills to students in close cooperation with the SMEs; stresses in this regard the promotion of flexible recruitment practices (e.g. teachers with industry experience);

124. Recommends the Member States to provide incentives to recruit candidates for the teaching profession with high-level competencies and to reward effective teachers;

The implementation of the New Skills Agenda: challenges and recommendations

125. Calls on the Commission to work closely with Cedefop in order to better estimate and anticipate future skill needs and adapt them better to the jobs available on the labour market;

126. Stresses the need for the New Skills Agenda to be further elaborated, implemented and monitored in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including social partners, civil society organisations and non-formal education providers, employment services and local authorities; calls on the Commission to foster the promotion of broader partnerships with these stakeholders;

127. Calls on the Commission and on the Member States during the implementation of the initiative to place great emphasis on the coordination of various organisations directly or indirectly involved in skills development, such as ministries, local authorities, public employment and other agencies, education and training institutions, and non-governmental organisations;

128. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to make VET more visible and to enhance its quality and attractiveness; calls on the Commission to encourage Member States to set further targets to encourage work-based learning in VET programmes;

129. Calls for stronger collaboration between VET and higher education providers to bridge the existing gap to ensure the successful transition of VET graduates to higher education; recommends, in this regard, learning from the best practices in various Member States which have efficient dual education systems;

130. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to adopt a coordinated and integrated approach to social, education and employment policies in order to allow the constant development and adjustment of VET and enable people having completed this path to make the transition to higher levels of education and training;

131. Highlights the need to improve the understanding and comparability of different qualifications across Member States; welcomes the proposed revision and further development of EQF and calls for a strengthened cooperation between Member States and all stakeholders; calls for greater consistency between EU qualification instruments — namely the EQF, ECVET and EQAVET;

132. Calls on the Member States to continue to focus on offering opportunities to their citizens, of all ages, to develop their digital skills and competences while fostering the digital transformation of the economy and society and re-shaping the way people learn, work and do business as well as the wider societal implications of these changes; calls on the Member States, in this regard, to take note of the Commission's intention to focus on the positive aspects of this transformation via the EU e-skills strategy; calls for further involvement of civil society and social partners in the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition;

Thursday 14 September 2017

133. Agrees with the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills provided by the Commission in the framework of the pilot programme for six sectors and encourages its continuation;

134. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to focus on digital skills, in particular the digital transformation of the economy and re-shaping the way people work and do business, and takes note of the Commission's intention to focus on the positive aspects of this transformation via the EU e-skills strategy;

135. Calls on the Member States to include early entrepreneurship education ⁽¹⁾, including social entrepreneurship, as part of the curriculum in order to develop an individual entrepreneurial mind-set in their citizens as a key competence which supports personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability;

136. Encourages the Commission to develop equivalent competence frameworks for other key competences such as the competence of financial literacy in the same way as for digital and entrepreneurial skills;

137. Is of the opinion that, in order for the proposed 'Upskilling Pathways' initiative to make a tangible difference, it is important to take account of the experience of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee; believes, in particular, that it should aspire to ensure faster implementation, have an integrated approach with accompanying social services, and foster better cooperation with social partners, such as trade unions and employers' association, and other stakeholders;

138. Believes that equipping people with a minimum set of skills is important, but not enough as it is crucial to ensure that every individual is encouraged to acquire advanced skills and competences in order to better adapt to the future, especially in the case of vulnerable groups who are at risk of precarious employment;

139. Regrets the lack of dedicated funding for the implementation of the proposals, which may prove a significant obstacle to taking actions that make a real difference at national level, but is of the opinion that Member States should be encouraged to take full advantage of the existing sources of funding that are available to support the implementation of the Agenda, especially the European Social Fund; highlights that the proposed sources of funding — namely the ESF and Erasmus+ — are already being committed at national level; calls therefore on the Commission to encourage Member States to invest more in, as well as encourage, efficient spending on skills as important human capital investments which bring not only social but economic returns;

140. Calls on the Commission and Member States to make funding available in order to bridge the existing technological and digital gap between educational and training institutions which are well equipped and those which are not and to support teachers' and trainers' up-skilling in technology in order to keep pace with today's increasingly digital world, as part of the national strategies for digital skills;

141. Strongly recommends addressing the digital divide, and giving equal opportunities for all to access digital technologies, as well as the competences, attitudes and motivation needed for digital participation;

142. Asks the Commission and the Member States to work, as well, on issues such as underachievement of pupils in some fields of study, the low participation rates in adult learning, early school leaving, social inclusion, civic engagement, gender gaps and employability rates of graduates;

143. Calls on the Member States to foster cooperation and reinforce synergies between formal, non-formal and informal education providers, regions and local authorities, employers and civil society, in consultation with the social partners, with a view to reaching a wider group of low-skilled workers in order to better take into account their specific needs;

144. Calls for enabling a greater flexibility in learning, in relation to location, delivery and learning methods that would serve to attract and meet the needs of a diverse range of learners, enhancing therefore the learning opportunities for all people;

145. Welcomes the proposed revision of the key competences framework which offers a valuable reference and provides common understanding for the development of transversal skills, and calls for its impact to be reinforced on a national level, including in curricula and teacher training; calls on the Commission to ensure that the key competences framework is coupled with the 2012 Council Recommendation on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning;

⁽¹⁾ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016. Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe. Eurydice Report.

Thursday 14 September 2017

146. Welcomes the planned revision of the European Qualifications Framework, which should help improve the readability of existing skills and qualifications in the various countries of the EU; stresses that such a tool is essential for the development of professional mobility, particularly in border areas, and stresses the need to ensure greater visibility of skills, competences and knowledge, acquired through non-formal and informal learning;

147. Calls on the Member States to have a broad approach in implementing the upskilling pathways, providing diverse opportunities that take into account concrete needs at local, regional and sectorial level (for example intercultural, civic, ecological, linguistic, health, family skills), and should go beyond basic skills provision;

148. Calls on the Commission to support Member States' efforts through mutual learning activities and the exchange of good policy practices;

149. Welcomes and encourages the revision of the Europass Framework, particularly the move from using Europass as a document-based facility to a service-based platform, and the effort to make more visible the different type of learning and skills, in particular those acquired outside the formal education;

150. Believes that the revision should ensure that disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities, low-skilled people, senior citizens or the long-term unemployed could benefit from the tools and considers it crucial to ensure its accessibility to persons with disabilities;

151. Believes that gender disparities in relation to skills development should be better reflected in the New Skills Agenda;

152. Welcomes the initiative to introduce a system of graduate tracking in order to provide a more evidence-based and relevant approach to designing curricula and learning offers; calls for a similar system for large-scale tracking of VET graduates;

153. Calls for continuous and increased support for Erasmus+ mobility programme offering and promoting inclusive learning and training opportunities for young people, educators, volunteers, apprentices, interns and young workers;

154. Calls on the Commission to analyse the national qualification schemes and suggests adjusting them to match the changing needs of the new emerging professions; underlines the need for Member States to support the teaching profession by facilitating access to information on state-of-the-art technologies and recalls, to that end, the eTwinning platform developed by the Commission;

155. Calls on the Commission to announce a European Year of Adult Learning, which will help to raise awareness of the value of adult education and 'active ageing' across Europe, and to allow enough time for its preparation at EU and national level;

156. Calls on the Commission to organise an annual 'European Skills Forum' to enable relevant authorities, education institutions, practitioners, students, employers and employees to exchange best practice on skills forecasting, development and validation;

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157. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
