

Better schools: an agenda for European cooperation

2008/2329(INI) - 02/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the subject of entitled “Better Schools: an agenda for European cooperation”, following the Commission’s communication on the subject.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled by the EPP-ED, PES, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL groups, under Article 45, paragraph 2 of Parliament’s Rules of Procedure, as a proposed resolution to replace the resolution proposed in the own-initiative report tabled by the Committee on Culture and Education.

The Parliament fully supports the proposals made in the Commission’s Communication of 4 July 2008 (see summary of the non-legislative initial document) and in the parallel Communication of 16 December 2008 ([COM\(2006\)0865](#)) on “An updated strategic framework for European cooperation on education and training”. Overall, it considers that school education should be a key priority for the next cycle of the Lisbon strategy.

In this context, Parliament makes the following recommendations:

Improving competences of every student: Parliament calls on the Member States to do their utmost to provide every young person with **basic skills that are fundamental** for further learning. It is concerned about the current trend of decreasing level of students' literacy and numeracy skills and calls for strategies to be put in place to reduce the number of early school leavers and to reduce gender imbalances in basic skills. The plenary notes that young people show a concerning lack of ability to concentrate and therefore calls on the Commission to conduct a study to investigate the main reasons for this lack of concentration among pupils. Parliament stresses the need to identify students at risk as soon as possible and to provide them with additional support, as well as to support them during the transition from one school level to the next and provide personalised learning approaches for those in need.

Parliament calls on the Member States to:

- ensure that their educational policies achieve a balance between equality and quality, with the stress on social facilitation measures for pupils and students from disadvantaged backgrounds and on adapting the learning process to their individual needs;
- enhance the access of disadvantaged groups to vocational training and university studies by drawing up and advertising appropriate scholarship schemes.

It also calls for the **modernisation and improvement of school curricula** so that they reflect today's social, economic, cultural and technical realities and are closely linked to industry, business and the labour market. The plenary considers it important for young people to be prepared during their time at school, college and university **for flexibility in the labour market** in view of its mutability, where employers’ requirements can change rapidly. However, the reform of the educational system should be fundamentally geared to the full and multi-faceted development of the individual, cultivating respect for human rights and social justice, lifelong learning, the protection of the environment and personal and collective wellbeing. On the whole, the Parliament believes that schools should strive not only to improve employability, but also to give all young people the opportunity to develop their full potential, in line with their personal aptitudes. It also considers that all children should, from the earliest age, be given the opportunity to acquire musical, artistic, manual, physical, social and civic competences and strongly believe that musical, artistic and physical education should be compulsory parts of the school curriculum.

Reiterating its view that children should learn foreign languages from an early age, Parliament welcomes the proposal of a new benchmark, according to which **at least 80% of pupils in lower secondary education be taught at least two foreign languages**. Member States are also called upon to instruct pupils in the use and applications of new communications and digital technology.

High-quality schools and teachers: Parliament calls for a **European charter on pupils' rights** as a first and important step to guaranteeing the right of every child to quality education. Member States and the competent regional governments are also called upon to invest in high-quality pre-primary education.

In parallel, the Parliament considers that public education should remain primarily a state-financed domain which contributes to social equity and inclusion. However, the plenary also considers that public educational institutions in a more disadvantaged financial situation, particularly those located in **poorer regions** of the EU, should be granted **additional support**.

According to Parliament, a good quality learning environment, providing modern infrastructure, materials and technology is a pre-requisite for achieving high quality education in schools. The quality of education further requires curricula of a demanding and rigorous nature and assessment of pupils on a regular basis.

Parliament also calls on Member States to give schools the **necessary autonomy** to find solutions to the specific challenges they face in their local context (as well as the appropriate flexibility in curricula, teaching methods and assessment systems).

It also believes that it is necessary to provide high-quality initial teacher education based on both theory and practice, while stressing the importance of respect for the teacher's authority in the classroom. The quality of teaching depends on the skills of the teachers and on the mobility of teaching staff (via programmes such as Comenius, in particular) and school partnership projects. Parliament also recommends creating school/community partnerships in order to combat the problem of violence in schools.

At the same time, Parliament recommends **involving parents in school life**. It believes that all schools should foster the acquisition of democratic competences by supporting student councils and allowing students to take co-responsibility for the school in partnership with parents, teachers and school councils.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the Member States and the Commission to cooperate closely **to promote implementation of the European schooling system** in the Member States' respective education systems and to envisage including the European Schools in the work of the Eurydice network. In the meantime, it calls on the Commission to report regularly to Parliament on the progress made following the two aforementioned communications.