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

2010/2013(INI) - 27/04/2010

The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Maria BADIA I CUTCHET (S&D, ES) on key competences for a changing world: implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme and welcomed the Commission Communication on the subject.

It notes that despite progress in recent years many European citizens are still not yet sufficiently skilled. Thus:

- 1 in 7 young people (18-24) leave school early (6 million drop-outs in EU 27);
- 1 in 4 15-year-olds have poor reading skills;
- around 77 million people (nearly one third of Europe's population aged 25-64) have no, or low, formal qualifications, that only one quarter have high-level qualifications and that too many European citizens lack ICT skills;
- the number of young people who are not fully literate at the age of 15 will rise (21.3% in 2000, 24.1% in 2006).

Members ask the Commission to continue the debate on 'New Skills for New Jobs', pointing out that, by 2020, 16 million more jobs will need high qualifications. They call for this debate to involve all interested parties, including teachers, students, competent professional organizations, relevant NGOs and trade unions, civil society stakeholders, particularly parents' and students' associations, and representatives of business.

Improve the quality of education: Members consider it vital to introduce policies seeking to improve the quality of education and training for all students with emphasis on language learning. They review the various stages of education and different kinds of training and recommend reforms.

Pre-primary education: Members draw attention to the importance of high-quality early childhood education for the early acquisition of key competences, and to the importance of education in one's mother tongue including in the case of traditional minorities. They also stress the importance of promoting a reading culture from pre-school onwards and actions to enhance children's creativity, as well as the need to introduce the learning of a second language at an early stage.

Primary and secondary education: the report underlines the need to continue to develop language acquisition also with reference to immigrant children. It supports greater participation by students in the management of the educational process, and the development of a confidence-based relationship between students and teachers, as well as the incorporation of new technologies into the syllabus and the promotion of physical activity in schools. Members call for a comprehensive strategy for key competence acquisition, ranging from reform of school curricula through to professional development of teachers, and for greater efforts in the fight against dyslexia.

Higher education: Members call for enhanced mobility between higher education institutions, the business world and vocational education and training to promote student-centred learning and the acquisition of competences such as entrepreneurship, intercultural understanding, critical thinking and creativity, which are increasingly needed on the labour market. To this end existing obstacles within the

EU should be urgently addressed, with a special focus on the obstacles related to financial and recognition barriers, so as to enhance mobility. The report stresses the need to (i) encourage research programmes; (ii) coordinate curricula with the demands of the labour market; (iii) modernise courses and, in general, accelerate the Bologna Process.

Furthermore, the committee feels that higher education institutions should become more open to all learners, in particular non-traditional learners, students with special needs and disadvantaged groups. It considers that specific policies should be implemented by Member States in order to ensure the fundamental right to education for everyone. Members note that women are still under-represented in the disciplines of mathematics, sciences and technology. They call on the Member States to allocate the necessary resources for the higher education sector, and encourage partnerships between higher education institutions, universities, research centres and the business world.

Vocational education and training: recalling their belief in the importance of training, Members call for new measures in the following areas: (i) promote study periods and traineeships for vocational training students in other EU countries; (ii) further modernise vocational training programmes by taking into account the key competences; (iii)adopt a model for the recognition of educational credits relating to citizenship skills for young people taking part in volunteer and community service work; (iv) improved transition between secondary vocational education and training and higher education.;

Lifelong learning: Members call for quick action to tackle the growing number of people with low levels of reading literacy. They call on Member States and the Commission to focus their attention on the illiterate, including adults. They support the objective of raising adult participation in lifelong learning from 12.5 % to 15 % by 2020, and call on universities to facilitate wider access to studying, diversify and broaden the student base and amend study programmes to make them attractive to adults returning to study. The Commission and Member States are asked to take even more decisive action to life-long learning institutions such as 'Second Chance Schools'. The committee notes that one of the main obstacles faced by adults wanting to participate in education and training is the lack of supporting facilities for their families. It encourages Member States to create supporting measures for childcare, or other dependants explore the opportunities of e-learning.

White jobs, green jobs and jobs for women: Members urge that attention be given not only to the so-called new 'green jobs' but also to 'white jobs'. They point out that by 2030 the proportion of those aged over 65 in relation to those aged 15-64 will increase from 26 % in 2008 to 38 % by 2030. There will be a need to update; update key skills particularly in the field of ICT. Members also note that the employment rate of women is particularly low (only 63% of women are in work compared to 76% of men) and that education and training policy needs to be targeted to close this gap in the labour market.

The report also draw attention to the need to do the following:

- facilitate the integration of people with disabilities, irrespective of their age, in education and training;
- foster the acquisition of democratic competences;
- encourage skills upgrading for people from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- establish digital and media literacy and to provide an introduction to new technologies;
- find new ways of organising learning in attractive school environments;
- using history and language as vehicles for the achievement of European social and cultural integration;
- underline the importance of art, culture and sport in education and training;
- ensure **sufficient investment in education** in order to guarantee accessibility to the labour market for all categories.