

New technologies and open educational resources

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The Committee on Culture and Education adopted an own-initiative report by Cătălin Sorin IVAN (S&D, RO) on new technologies and open educational resources.

Open educational resources (OERs) can play a **crucial role in facilitating lifelong learning** for all learners and in improving the quality of content and the distribution of both formal and informal education providers.

On the other hand, a digitally inadequate education system can hamper the development of learners' knowledge and skills. It is expected that by 2020, **90 % of jobs** will require digital skills, and by 2015 there will be up to **900 000 unfilled information and communication technologies (ICT)-related vacancies** in the EU.

On 25 September 2013, the Commission presented its [communication](#) entitled 'Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources'. This communication sets out a Union agenda in the field of OERs, and focuses on the potential of these resources to widen access to and equity in education and further diversify it, and acknowledges the relevance of OERs in an increasingly digital society.

Members welcomed this communication believing that the **emergence of a European framework** for the development of OERs may allow for improvement in the Member States' education systems.

Members called on **educational institutions** to further assess the potential benefits of OERs in the respective educational systems and in view of possibly creating an organisational environment in which such innovation is welcomed, internalised, applied and promoted. They called, in this connection, on the **Member States and regions**, as part of smart specialisation strategies, to establish innovation and start-up centres of excellence which make full use of the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT).

Skills for teachers and learners: Members underlined the fact that digital skills and knowledge are vital for citizens in an information-driven society that aims to become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. They called on the Member States to:

- **support teachers in their professional development** by offering them modern curricula in their initial education, and by providing them with in-service training geared to equip them with the necessary competences for the use of digitally supported teaching methods;
- **improve and deepen digital skills** also by including coding and programming in their respective curricula, in order to foster economic competitiveness and equip students with the right skills for the job market of the future.

The report stressed the need to:

- urgently put in place, for all learners, the fastest and best possible **technical equipment**, as well as vital access to broadband internet;
- develop the needs of adult learners so as put in place OERs geared towards ensuring greater lifelong learning opportunities for low-skilled European citizens.

The Commission is called upon further assess the impact of digital and/or online learning materials on the learning performance of learners according to their age and school level.

Widening the reach of OERs: Members stressed the importance of access to education and training and IT equipment for all learners in all age groups, as well as for those with disabilities, those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, young people currently not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those coming from geographically remote regions.

The report noted that the EU risks falling behind other regions of the world, such as the United States or Asia, where heavy investments are made in research and development, new technologies and OERs. It insisted that the Union must build on its strength in **cultural and linguistic diversity** and adapt investments in e-learning material, including OERs, and in new technologies to best support its population.

Members encouraged **strengthened cooperation** between European education and training institutions, and with international organisations and stakeholders, to facilitate a better understanding of new teaching and learning methods and the impact of ICT on education. The development of **common platforms** for such cooperation is encouraged.

The contribution of EU programmes: Members called on the Member States and the local and regional authorities to use the funding available through the European Structural and Investment Funds to overcome the territorial digital divide by improving infrastructure and networks and promoting training in ICT and the effective use thereof, taking into account the needs of educational institutions, in particular in rural and remote regions.

According to Members, the smart and comprehensive use of EU funding requires **synergy between the different programmes and instruments**, including Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and the structural and investment funds.

The Commission is called upon to:

- organise an annual European regional planning conference to ensure that all citizens have access to ICT services wherever they may be in the EU;
- encourage the exchange of good practices between Member States and between educational institutions, drawing on existing projects and experiences.