Resolution on the future of European education in the context of Covid-19

2020/2760(RSP) - 22/10/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 593 votes to 58, with 36 abstentions, a resolution on the future of European education in the context of COVID-19.

According to statistics, nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries (94 % of the global learner population) were affected by the closure of education and training institutions at the height of the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has caused perhaps the most severe disruption to the world's education and training systems in history, threatening a loss of learning for an entire generation of students, and may erase decades of progress.

Reinforcing existing inequalities

Parliament saluted the creativity and resourcefulness shown by education and training institutions, in particular their teaching and educational staff, and by students and parents in adapting to online and distance learning. However, it noted with alarm that the digital education gaps have exacerbated existing inequalities - both among and within the Member States - and have had a disproportionate impact on those already suffering social, economic or other disadvantages, those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those from other vulnerable or minority groups.

Digital divide

The resolution stressed that the sudden digital transition in education and training has also revealed a digital divide with respect to access to digital infrastructure and devices, the quality of online teaching and the skills of students, teachers and trainers. Even where learners had access to digital education, they still often had to learn without teacher, peer or home support and sometimes in an unstable home environment.

Parliament highlighted that the primary lesson to be learnt from the crisis is that inclusion and equal opportunities, both in terms of access and quality, must be placed at the heart of the Union's future education and training policies. Furthermore, according to Parliament, the digital divide must be closed as an immediate priority.

Future education policy

Parliament encouraged the Member States to embrace digitalisation and innovation and build new and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, adaptive learning solutions and gamification, into their education and training systems in a smart, learner-centred way. The use of digital technologies should be built into education from an early age with proper adult and professional supervision.

According to Parliament, there is no replacement for direct interaction between teachers and learners and that only in-person learning can effectively ensure the acquisition of interpersonal and social skills.

Hybrid education

Parliament stressed that a shift to a more hybrid model of education combining in-person classroom learning with e-learning solutions is inevitable. However, in-person learning must remain at the heart of education and training.

Increased cooperation

The resolution considered that better cooperation and coordination among the Member States and a more ambitious Union education and training policy would have improved the effectiveness of the response to the COVID-19 crisis. The EU is urged to play a more active coordinating role.

The Commission is called on to propose a bold policy framework for the future European education policy, transforming the European Education Area from a loose vision based on broad principles into a concrete work programme with a set of measurable objectives, including making the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications, diplomas and learning periods abroad a reality in the Union by 2025 at the latest.

Budget cuts

Regretting the proposed budget cuts to flagship education programmes in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) 201-2027, Parliament reiterated its call for the Erasmus+ budget to be tripled compared with the budget in the 2014-2020 MFF.