Resolution on the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience

2020/2767(RSP) - 17/12/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 616 votes to 22, with 58 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs on the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience.

Modernising and upgrading VET

Members point out that vocational education and training (VET) accounts for around half of upper secondary education graduates in the EU and believe that it could prove crucial in addressing skills gaps in the EU labour market and the challenges of ecological and digital transitions, demographic change and other major macro-economic trends.

The resolution stressed the urgent need to significantly modernise and develop VET policies to make them more inclusive, accessible and attractive to support fair employment. The Commission and the Member States are invited to ensure that vocational education and training on the one hand and formal education on the other are complementary and given equal priority.

The lockdown measures put in place to halt the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have put a strain on European VET systems and placed learners in precarious situations. Fearing a drastic fall in the number of apprenticeship places next autumn, Members considered it essential to provide the necessary financial resources, technical assistance and guidance to ensure access to digital devices and e-learning solutions for VET providers, teachers, trainers and students.

Support for the objectives of the Council Recommendation

Parliament welcomed the quantitative objectives in the proposal for a Council Recommendation that: (i) by 2025 the proportion of graduates in employment should reach at least 82%; (ii) 60 % of recent graduates from VET should benefit from exposure to work-based learning during their VET; (iii) 8 % of learners in VET should benefit from a learning mobility abroad. It asked the Commission to report every five years to the Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Recommendation.

Parliament called on the Commission to:

- extend mobility programmes for apprentices, such as Erasmus Pro, by strengthening synergies between the European Social Fund plus (ESF+) and Erasmus+ programmes and ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated for the programming period 2021-2027;

- introduce in the Social Scoreboard, in line with the objectives and implementation of the European pillar of social rights, an indicator for skills gaps, which VET policy makers at national level could use to identify where to focus their efforts, as well as to strengthen coordination at EU level;

- explore the idea of an EU employment web portal, which would be specifically dedicated to traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities in the EU and would bring together all existing similar EU initiatives in a more visible, comprehensive and user-friendly fashion.

Member States, for their part, should:

- set a more ambitious target for learning mobility abroad for VET students and put in place incentives to help SMEs to encourage VET learners to participate in European mobility;

- develop, with the involvement of the social partners, inclusive and high quality VET systems and adult learning policies to improve the skills and competences of low-skilled adults, both employed and unemployed;

- ensuring adequate funding for VET policies, both at national and European level;

- pay particular attention to the in-service training and professional development of VET teachers and trainers as a driving force for quality and innovation in education;

- promote the dual VET model, which could make it easier for young people to access the labour market, especially compared to general education;

- take greater advantage of the development of the green jobs sector and create high-skilled apprenticeships to provide young people with specialised knowledge and training;

- deploy, together with the social partners and training providers, skills development and anticipation strategies to improve generic, sectoral and occupation-specific skills.

Parliament supported the proposal to promote Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoE) to bring together a wide range of VET and local partners. It stressed the importance of reaching out to people living in rural and remote areas and of ensuring that VET is accessible and targeted at people working in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and other sectors in these areas.