The European Education Area: a shared holistic approach

2020/2243(INI) - 18/10/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Culture and Education adopted an own-initiative report by Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ (EPP, CZ) on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach.

The need for a European Education Area (EEA)

The right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning is proclaimed in the European Pillar of Social Rights as its first principle. Moreover, Members considered that education and culture are key to achieving personal and social advancement and well-being, fostering European citizenship and driving job creation and ensuring that the EU is a globally competitive and resilient player. They stressed that the EEA is a unique opportunity to gain European added value through mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps with which further synergies are requested.

Bridging institutional and stakeholder approaches

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to establish a concrete European Education Area Strategic Framework 2030 (EEASF 2030) by the end of 2022 and to commit to the type of participation required from Member States and other levels of government, including local and regional authorities, as well as the EU institutions, and to devise effective multi-level governance arrangements that respect the principle of subsidiarity, while aiming to generate European added value.

Taking note of the different approaches on the EEA, which express a common wish to provide fresh impetus to the **European project**, Members underlined the need for more collaboration on education across Europe and beyond in order to develop common approaches and solutions to common challenges. The Commission's efforts to foster an EEA is appreciated, however, Members called for a more **holistic approach** which requires meaningful cooperation and coordination between all actors. They warned that Commission's proposals are still mainly a strategic outline rather than a concrete policy roadmap. In this regard, Members suggested the establishment of clear mid- and long-term priorities with **achievable targets and deadlines** for the actions that should be adopted.

Moreover, Members emphasised the urgent need to develop a **common implementation strategy and roadmap** that includes the EU institutions, Member States and all the relevant stakeholders, including local and regional authorities and civil society, and defines their respective responsibilities and opportunities.

Common strategic priorities and EU-level targets

All EU institutions and Member States are called on to agree on the same vision, priorities, targets and benchmarks regarding the EEA. Members, on the other hand, underlined the importance of establishing **academic freedom and pedagogical autonomy** as core principles of the EEA. They stressed the importance of improving working conditions and the need for **teachers and educators to be adequately remunerated** for their work. Stressing the need for a greater European dimension in education as well as improved teacher training, Members support the creation of a common framework for the shaping and development of teacher qualifications across the Member States. The report also supports the initiative of the Commission to set up **teacher academies** and suggests that an adequate name for them would be the **'Comenius Teacher Academies'**. European history and cultural heritage should be taught and a common

framework on citizenship education with a European dimension should be developed according to Members.

In addition, the report called for a common system of recognition, validation and certification of digital skills, qualifications and credentials, to reduce gaps in digital competences across Europe.

Member States and the Commission should provide the requisite funding for the establishment, implementation and development of the EEA and the establishment of a dedicated financial instrument in the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework with a view to developing the EEA further and facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications. The report reiterated its call to allocate at least **10 % of the funding under the Recovery and Resilience Facility** to education, including digital education.

Sector-specific measures and considerations

The report underlined the importance of learning foreign languages, and of English in particular. Research and innovation should be promoted in education as well as the study of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics.

On vocational training, the report called for the creation of a **European apprentices statute**.

Members called for the gender gap to be closed in education, including in education and careers in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM).