

Boosting skills in the Union – opportunities for vocational education and training in times of transition

2026/2070(INI) - 21/10/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 504 votes to 63, with 99 abstentions, a resolution on boosting skills in the Union – opportunities for vocational education and training in times of transition.

Members pointed out that **34.7% of Europeans** have obtained a vocational education and training (VET) qualification and that 49% of all students in the EU are enrolled in a VET programme. However, VET is regarded as less valuable than academic education in many Member States.

Recognising the value of VET in society

While welcoming the renewed political attention given to VET in the context of the Commission's Union of Skills initiative and the future European strategy for vocational education and training, Parliament stressed **the importance of VET for the EU's social progress**, as well as the importance of promoting and valuing VET in order to improve its attractiveness as a quality inclusive pathway to quality education and employment.

The Commission is invited to ensure that the future VET strategy focuses on **the quality and relevance of VET programmes**, as well as on better promoting them to learners, employers and the general public, in order to raise awareness of the opportunities that VET offers in terms of employment and career development.

The resolution underlined the need to ensure that students and graduates of VET feel that their qualifications and professions are **valued equally** as university education and to promote vocational pathways to young people, especially girls.

Members stressed that VET must be **inclusive** and should play a key role in supporting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds or those at risk of exclusion from society and the labour market, and that it should address barriers related to gender, disability, migration background, geography, and socioeconomic status. They called on Member States to **improve the accessibility and fairness of financial support** for VET learners and emphasised the potential of micro-credentials to promote skills development and retraining throughout working life.

Parliament also emphasised that vocational education and training (VET) can only become an **attractive pathway** if it leads to quality jobs. It stressed the importance of offering fair wages, decent working conditions, job security, and career advancement opportunities to attract and retain workers from vocational training programmes. It underlined the need to implement tailored support programmes for unemployed young people who are not in education or training.

Deploring that persistent structural and financial obstacles continue to limit the participation of VET learners in international mobility programs, Members called for the establishment of a **robust common European framework** guaranteeing the automatic recognition of diplomas and learning outcomes obtained during periods of mobility, traineeship and apprenticeship abroad, in order to ensure greater legal certainty for learners and VET providers.

Improving VET quality and relevance through increased investment

Parliament called on the Commission to help Member States to:

- **invest sufficiently in VET** through country-specific recommendations in the European Semester and through the effective use of EU funding instruments;
- **propose an ambitious European VET strategy**, which strengthens the coherence and practical use of existing European tools and helps Member States and VET providers to ensure that all VET programmes and credentials meet the criteria and standards set out in widely recognised quality assurance schemes.

The next framework must explicitly recognise gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental objectives of VET. The Commission is encouraged to systematically involve social partners and VET providers from the earliest stages of the design, implementation, and governance of VET policies.

The resolution emphasised that **vocational centres of excellence** should be central to the future development of VET systems in Europe. In this regard, it called on the Commission to maintain the budget allocated to vocational centres of excellence in the next Erasmus+ programme. It also recognised that **businesses play a central role** in vocational education and training, particularly in dual vocational training systems. It called on the Commission and Member States to strengthen work-based training and the role and visibility of businesses as key learning environments within VET systems.

Members called for a **broader inclusion of VET in existing EU policies and programmes**. They encourage deeper integration of VET institutions in the design and implementation of innovation policies and urge the Commission to ensure the active participation of VET institutions in Horizon Europe.

Recognising the mobility of students and workers

Parliament underlined the importance of **recognising qualifications, diplomas, and skills** to ensure free movement and address fair study mobility for VET students, and fair labour mobility for apprentices and workers. It supported the objective of a genuine European Education Area in which the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications would gradually become automatic.

The resolution underlined the need to establish a **recognition convention** within the Copenhagen process to enable EU-wide recognition of VET qualifications, based on existing tools such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), WorldSkills occupational standards and learning outcomes, in order to improve cross-border comparability and workforce mobility.