Basic information

2007/2113(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems **Subject** 4.40.01 European area for education, training and lifelong learning 4.40.15 Vocational education and training	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CULT Culture and Education	ZATLOUKAL Tomáš (PPE-DE)	29/01/2007

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs (Associated committee)	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	PRETS Christa (PSE)	11/04/2007

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Education, Youth, Sport and Culture	FIGEĽ Ján

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
08/09/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0481	Summary
06/06/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
06/06/2007	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
10/09/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
18/09/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0326/2007	

26/09/2007	Debate in Parliament		
27/09/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0417/2007	Summary
27/09/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
27/09/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2113(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CULT/6/48618

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE390.493	05/06/2007	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE388.665	16/07/2007	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE392.144	23/07/2007	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0326/2007	18/09/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0417/2007	27/09/2007	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2006)0481	08/09/2006	Summary

Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems

2007/2113(INI) - 27/09/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 479 votes in favour, 53 against and 12 abstentions the own-initiative report drawn up by Tomáš **ZATLOUKAL** (EDD-ED, CZ) in response to the Commission Communication entitled ‘Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems’, and emphasised the need to develop efficient and equitable policies for both life-long learning and the need to invest in education early. The report endorsed the long-term-planning process in the field of lifelong learning, and the plan to create a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning which would facilitate recognition of educational achievement and allow visible, transparent switching between different study options. Parliament believed that was a need for a culture of appraisal in education and training systems, and hence, effective long-term policies must be based on reliable measurement. It also believed that investment in lifelong learning fostered social cohesion and enabled individuals to solve problems, to adapt, to build up their self-esteem and to cope with change, which made it easier for them to deal with other changes in their lives.

The report contains certain recommendations for ensuring efficiency and equity in the framework of education and training policies.

Pre-school education: Members were of the opinion that efficiency and equity could be achieved individually if investment and reform were focused on the early stages of education. They stressed the need: to develop, from the pre-school phase, measures to encourage the integration of children from third countries resident in the EU ; to invest much more in pre-school - including nursery – education; to ensure adequately trained teachers; and accordingly, a need for a financially viable strategy to be followed which will result in high quality education and satisfactory teaching careers; to ensure social diversity of classes and establishments in order to avoid a differentiation of curricula and expectations; to involve parents by means of educational and information programmes (particularly in the case of disadvantaged children). Parliament urged Member States to increase the number of subsidised places in pre-school education, thereby offering better opportunities to children under school age lacking financial security to benefit from the education system.

Primary and secondary education: compulsory attendance at school and the training system should provide basic education and key skills. However, Members felt that premature categorisation had a detrimental effect on efficiency and equity in education systems. They favoured the creation of a flexible range of study options at secondary-school level, which should not preclude a choice of a different track at subsequent educational stages. In view of the different levels of support from which each pupil may benefit at home, and the sometimes very unequal nature of the education provided, Members supported efforts to involve parents in the education process with a view to significantly reducing the risk of future social exclusion. Member States were asked to: support initial and further training for teachers, to boost their motivation and to improve the qualitative conditions of school life - these being decisive factors in the achievement of efficiency and equity; promote multilingualism at every level in the educational system; raise awareness of gender equality among teachers and education providers in order that they be able to promote respect for this principle among the younger generation.

University education: acknowledging that university education was a key aspect of a knowledge-based economy, Parliament supported the plan to modernise universities with a view to ensuring that university education becomes more competitive, is available to everyone on an equitable basis and remains financially viable and effective. It acknowledged that providing university education free of charge would not necessarily and by itself guarantee equity. It called for further studies on the assumption that tuition fees are not an isolated issue but are part of a nexus of factors connected with financial incentives in combination with accompanying financial support which, in the case of disadvantaged groups, can reduce inequity in terms of access to university education.

Vocational education and training: in view of the problem of an ageing population, Parliament supported better provision of adult education in order to make it easier for people to adapt to the requirements of the employment market and for the low-skilled to become involved in education.

It recommended improved access to tertiary education and the development of opportunities enabling those who have completed their training to continue studying and further their education whilst working. Member States were asked: to promote access for young women, especially from remote areas disabled women and low-skilled women, to education and training; to promote access for unemployed women, and those who have not succeeded in the compulsory education system, to publicly funded adult training schemes; to implement policies that would facilitate the school-to-work transition for young people; to support university excellence programmes; to increase the proportion of, and strengthen the position of, women in science, engineering and technology; to propose the flexible organisation of studies, in order to meet more effectively the needs of young men and women who are working or attending to family responsibilities at the same time as studying and to prevent them from leaving education prematurely; to involve education institutions, companies, social and other partners and the public sector in a joint partnership concerned with the implementation of successful training programmes.

European Union action: Parliament emphasised that the fundamental goal of EU action was to promote the convergence of EU education systems towards higher standards of performance. In order to better target EU action it would be necessary to develop a process, based on reports periodically submitted by Member States as well as on independent verification, for the appraisal of the performance of education and training systems in the EU, paying particular attention to the acquisition of basic skills by pupils and to the achievement of equity objectives. The Commission was asked to publish regular reports on efficiency and equity in European education and training systems in order to monitor progress towards higher standards of performance.

Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems

2007/2113(INI) - 08/09/2006 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to ensure high quality education and training systems that are both efficient and equitable.

CONTENT: in the context of public budget constraints and the challenges of globalisation, demographic change and technological innovation, greater emphasis must be placed across Europe on improving efficiency in the education and training sector. In 2004, 75 million EU citizens were low-skilled (32% of the workforce) but by 2010 just 15% of the new jobs will be for those with only basic schooling. Education and training policies can have a significant positive impact on economic and social outcomes, but inequities in education and training also have huge hidden costs which are rarely shown in public accounting systems. This includes income tax losses, increased demand for health-care and public assistance, and the costs of higher rates of crime and delinquency.

This Communication underlines the Commission’s view that education and training systems are critical factors to develop the EU’s long-term potential for competitiveness as well as for social cohesion. Investments in education and training take time to bear fruit so when deciding on spending priorities, governments should allow for long-term planning at local and national levels. This need for long-term investment planning underlines the importance of National Lifelong Learning Strategies, which Member States have agreed to adopt by the end of 2006. National and European qualifications frameworks will facilitate the validation of learning in all contexts. This is important for promoting equity because many of the least advantaged build up key competences and skills in non-formal and informal education. Ensuring that all learning is validated and transferable in order to remove “dead ends” in learning pathways is a gain both in terms of efficiency and equity.

The Communication emphasises the following main points:

1) Member States should develop **a culture of evaluation**. They should develop policies for the whole lifelong learning continuum which take full account of efficiency and equity in combination and in the long term, and which complement policies in related fields.

2) **Pre-primary education: focusing on learning at an early age**. Pre-primary education has the highest returns in terms of the achievement and social adaptation of children. Member States should invest more in pre-primary education as an effective means to establish the basis for further learning, preventing school drop-out, increasing equity of outcomes and overall skill levels.

3) **Primary and secondary education: improving the quality of basic education for all.** The bulk of research suggests that education and training systems which track pupils at an early age exacerbate the effect of socio-economic background on educational attainment and do not raise efficiency in the long run. Efficiency and equity can both be improved by focussing on improving teacher quality and recruitment procedures in disadvantaged areas, and designing autonomy and accountability systems which avoid inequity.

4) **Higher education: improving investment while widening participation**. Free access to higher education does not necessarily guarantee equity. To strengthen both efficiency and equity Member States should create appropriate conditions and incentives to generate higher investment from public and private sources, including, where appropriate, through tuition fees combined with accompanying financial measures for the disadvantaged. Specific actions at school level are also needed. Higher education institutions should offer a more differentiated range of provision and incentives to meet increasingly diverse social and economic needs.

5) **Vocational education and training: improving quality and relevance**. Member States should develop clear and diverse pathways through VET to further learning and employment. They should also improve public training programmes for the unemployed and for disadvantaged learners. The quality and relevance of such programmes can be enhanced by encouraging stakeholder partnerships at a regional and local level and facilitating private sector involvement.

Within the framework of the revised Lisbon Strategy and the “Education and Training 2010” Work Programme, the EU helps Member States design and implement their education and training policies by facilitating the exchange of information, data and best practice through mutual learning and peer review. Efficiency and equity will be a priority theme in this work and the EU will provide particular support to develop a culture of evaluation and to exchange best practice on pre-primary education. The Commission also intends to take forward work on adult learning, the development of a European Qualifications Framework and a European framework of statistics and indicators. This will be underpinned by research into efficiency and equity funded through the seventh EU framework for R&D.