Basic information

2011/2088(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Tackling early school leaving **Subject** 4.40.03 Primary and secondary school, European Schools, early childhood 4.40.15 Vocational education and training	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CULT Culture and Education	HONEYBALL Mary (S&D)	03/03/2011
	Shadow rapporteur KELLY Seán (PPE) TAKKULA Hannu (ALDE) BENARAB-ATTOU Malika (Verts/ALE) MCCLARKIN Emma (ECR) VERGIAT Marie-Christine (GUE/NGL)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	HIRSCH Nadja (ALDE)	17/02/2011

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Agriculture and Fisheries	3104	2011-06-28
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	3090	2011-05-20

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Education, Youth, Sport and Culture	VASSILIOU Androulla

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
31/01/2011	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2011)0018	Summary
12/05/2011	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
20/05/2011	Debate in Council		Summary
28/06/2011	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
05/10/2011	Vote in committee		Summary
18/10/2011	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0363/2011	
01/12/2011	Decision by Parliament	T7-0531/2011	Summary
01/12/2011	Results of vote in Parliament		
01/12/2011	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2011/2088(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
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Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CULT/7/05977

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE464.821	24/05/2011	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE464.808	14/07/2011	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE467.197	19/07/2011	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0363/2011	18/10/2011	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0531/2011	01/12/2011	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2011)0018	31/01/2011	Summary
For information	COM(2011)0019	31/01/2011	

Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2012)104	20/03/2012	

National parliaments

Document type	Parliament /Chamber	Reference	Date	Summary
Contribution	PT_PARLIAMENT	COM(2011)0018	20/04/2011	

Tackling early school leaving

2011/2088(INI) - 28/06/2011

The Council adopted a recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving which seeks to promote progress towards the Europe 2020 headline target of reducing school dropout rates to less than 10% by 2020 (as compared with 14.4% in 2009). Reducing early school leaving addresses the Europe 2020 aims of both 'smart growth' - by improving education and training levels - and 'inclusive growth' - by tackling one of the major risk factors for unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

The Council **recommends that Member States**:

- identify the main factors leading to early school leaving and monitor the characteristics of the phenomenon at national, regional and local level as the foundation for targeted and effective evidence-based policies;
- ensure that **comprehensive strategies on early school leaving are in place by the end of 2012**, and that they are implemented in line with national priorities and the Europe 2020 objectives. Comprehensive strategies are taken to include **prevention measures, intervention measures and compensation measures**, the latter being aimed at re-engaging people who have dropped out of education;
- ensure that those strategies include appropriate measures for **groups at increased risk** of early school leaving in the Member State, such as children with a socio-economically disadvantaged, migrant or Roma background, or with special educational needs;
- ensure that those strategies address in a coherent manner both general education and vocational education and training, and the challenges specific to each;
- integrate measures which support the reduction of early school leaving rates in relevant policies targeted at children and young people, and coordinate activities among different policy sectors;
- whilst acknowledging the key role played by teachers, school leaders and other educational staff, ensure the involvement in those measures and activities of all relevant stakeholders to help people who are at risk of early school leaving, including those who have dropped out already.

It invites the **Commission**:

- to contribute to the efforts made by Member States by monitoring developments at different education levels across Member States in order to identify trends;
- to **support Member States' strategies through the exchange of experience and good practice**, and to facilitate effective peer-learning, networking and experimentation with innovative approaches among the Member States on measures aimed at reducing early school leaving and improving the educational outcomes of children from groups at risk of early school leaving;
- to integrate measures which support the reduction of early school leaving rates in **all relevant Union actions targeted at children and young adults**;
- to support the development of effective policies against early school leaving by launching comparative studies and research, and to encourage cooperation between the Member States in this area;
- to ensure, in cooperation with the Member States, and without prejudice to the negotiations on the future financial framework, that the Union programmes in the fields of lifelong learning, youth and research, as well as the European Structural Funds, support and contribute to the implementation of Member States' strategies on early school leaving;
- to report periodically on the progress towards the Europe 2020 target and on the implementation of Member States' strategies on early school leaving.

Tackling early school leaving

2011/2088(INI) - 20/05/2011

The Council reached **political agreement** - the United Kingdom voting against - on the recommendation regarding policies to reduce early school leaving, which seeks to promote progress towards the Europe 2020 headline target of reducing school drop-out rates to less than 10% by 2020 (as compared with 14.4% in 2009). Reducing early school leaving addresses the Europe 2020 aims of both 'smart growth' – by improving education and training levels - and of 'inclusive growth' - by tackling one of the major risk factors for unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Despite some significant progress over the last decade, rates of early school leaving in Europe - i.e. the number of 18-24 year olds with only lower secondary education or less, and no longer in education or training - are still too high and constitute an urgent and serious problem in many EU countries.

In general, ministers considered that a successful approach in this area requires consistent, cross-sectoral and comprehensive policies. This is not just an education issue: it has implications across a range of social, youth, health and employment policies. Policies that focus on preventive rather than compensatory measures appear to be the most effective.

Several delegations underlined that support should be systematic from early years to adult life and address, in particular, the need to focus on all levels of the education and training system: structural aspects, school level factors and individual support.

Prevention policies to combat early school leaving

As a follow-up, ministers debated in public, on the basis of a background paper prepared by the Presidency (see Council doc. *9043/11*), prevention policies to combat early school leaving, aimed in particular at the socio-economically disadvantaged, including the Roma.

Commissioner Reding made a short intervention on this subject, recalling the recently issued Commission communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 and the important conclusions adopted on 19 May by the EPSCO Council, which is the leading Council configuration on this matter. She recalled that early school leaving creates and perpetuates socio-economic inequality: currently less than half of Roma children benefit from primary education, compared to almost 95% of other European children, and their educational attainment often remains below the average.

Although the situation of the Roma varies from Member State to Member State, it was generally agreed that the majority of Roma people living in the EU suffer from social exclusion, discrimination, segregation and deep poverty and many of them live in territories with limited access to quality services, including in the field of education. The economic and social integration of Roma is one of the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency which, like several Member States, considers it crucial for the present and the future of the EU's competitiveness and the well-being of its citizens. Most Member States have already put in place preventive measures and programmes to tackle this problem, going from special schools and learning support programmes to specific training for teachers, appointment of education counsellors, and targeted interventions. Several ministers underlined the importance of involving families, particularly mothers, in these efforts.

Effective policies for integrating Roma must be based on four pillars: education, employment, health and housing, whilst acknowledging Member States' primary responsibility in this regard.

Most ministers called for the establishment of a European platform/data base for the exchange of information and best practices on Roma issues.

A summary of this debate, together with the conclusions of the EPSCO Council will be forwarded -via the General Affairs Council - to the June European Council.

Tackling early school leaving

2011/2088(INI) - 31/01/2011 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: tackling early school leaving in the context of the Europe 2020 Agenda.

BACKGROUND: in 2009, more than six million young people, 14.4% of all 18 to 24 year olds, left education and training with only lower secondary education or less. Even more worrying, 17.4% of them completed only primary education. Early school leaving represents missed opportunities for young people and a loss of social and economic potential for the European Union as a whole:

- at **individual level** the consequences of early school leaving affect people throughout their lives, and reduce their chance to participate in the social, cultural and economic dimensions of society. It increases their individual risk of unemployment, their lifetime earnings, their wellbeing and their own health and that of their children. The Commission indicates that, in 2009, 52% of early school leavers in the EU were unemployed or outside the labour market;
- at the **level of economy and society at large**, high early school leaving rates have long-term effects on the societal developments and on economic growth. Early leavers tend to participate less in democratic processes and are less active citizens. The Commission indicates that **to reduce the average European early school leaving rate by just 1 percentage point would provide the European economy each year with nearly half a million additional qualified potential young employees.**

It is important to take action at the appropriate level. This is why the Commission is proposing a strategy designed to tackle early school leaving as part of Europe 2020.

CONTENT: this Communication analyses the impact of early school leaving on individuals, society and economies, outlines its causes, and gives an overview on the existing and forthcoming EU-level measures to tackle it. It is accompanied by a proposal for a Council Recommendation and by a Staff Working Document that present a framework for comprehensive policy approaches which Member States can use for effective policies in reducing early school leaving, and detailed examples of actual policy measures.

The reasons for early school-leaving: the reasons why young people leave education and training prematurely are highly individual. Some groups in society are especially affected by early school leaving, particularly those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds and vulnerable groups, such as youth from a public care background and persons with physical and mental disabilities or other special educational needs (SEN) and young people of migrant origin. Early school leaving is influenced by educational factors, by individual circumstances and by socio-economic conditions. It is a process rather than a one-off event. It often starts already in primary education with first experiences of school failure and growing alienation from school. Transitions between schools and between different educational levels are particularly difficult for pupils at risk of dropping out. Education and training systems often do not provide sufficient targeted support for pupils to cope with emotional, social or educational difficulties and to remain in education and training. Early school leaving is also a gender issue which requires more attention. In the EU, 16.3% of boys are early school leavers, compared to

12.5% of girls. Member States experience different challenges with regard to early school leaving. In some, early school leaving is a predominantly rural phenomenon, has high incidence in remote areas and can be linked to insufficient access to education. In others it mostly affects disadvantaged areas in big cities.

Given the range of causes, strategies for combating early school leaving have to take as a starting point an analysis of the national, regional and local specificities of the phenomenon. Strong disparities in rates of early school leaving might indicate structural problems in certain geographical areas or educational tracks.

Strategy to tackle early-school leaving: according to the Commission, comprehensive policies against early school leaving should focus on **prevention, intervention and compensation**:

> **1. prevention**seeks to avoid the conditions from arising where processes leading to early school leaving can start: Increasing participation in good quality early childhood education and care has been identified as one of the most effective measures to give children a good start in education and to build their resilience. However access to high-quality early childhood education and care services needs to be improved. Other preventive measures address questions such as **systematic language support** for children with a migrant background, an active desegregation policy which improves the social, ethnic and cultural mix in schools, allows for better peer learning and helps integration, or the targeted support of disadvantaged schools. Additional potential obstacles to successful school careers can be removed by increasing the permeability of educational pathways and increasing the quality and status of vocational education pathways;
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> **2. intervention** addresses emerging difficulties at an early stage and seeks to prevent them from leading to school drop-out. Intervention measures can focus on the whole school or training institution or can address individual pupils who are at risk of discontinuing their education or training. Whole school measures aim at improving the school climate and the creation of supportive learning environments. Early warning systems and better cooperation with parents can be an efficient form of help for pupils at risk. Also networking with actors outside the school and access to local support networks tends to be highly efficient in providing relevant support. Student-focused measures focus on mentoring and tutoring, personalized learning approaches, improved guidance and financial support such as education allowances;
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> **3. compensation** measures offer opportunities for education and training for those who dropped out. They can take the form of financial or other types of support. They aim to help young people to re-enter mainstream education or provide a so-called “second chance”. Successful approaches in second chance institutions differ therefore considerably from mainstream schools by addressing the difficulties pupils had in mainstream schooling. Nevertheless there is evidence that prevention of early school leaving shows better results than compensating the negative effects of early school leaving. The experience of failure, a lack of self-confidence in learning and increased social, emotional and educational problems after dropping-out reduce the likelihood of achieving a qualification and completing education successfully.

To support Member States better in developing efficient and effective national policies against early school leaving, several measures and tools, offering a comprehensive approach to this multifaceted challenge, will be put in place:

- the **proposed Council Recommendation** on policies to reduce early school leaving, accompanied by a Staff Working Document of the Commission, is designed to help Member States innovate and develop strategies with a high impact and a good cost-benefit ratio. It is proposed that the Recommendation should set a common European framework for effective and efficient policies against early school leaving and that Member States should adopt comprehensive national strategies against early school leaving by 2012, in line with their national targets;
- the **forthcoming Commission Communication on early childhood education and care**, to be adopted in 2011, will underline that early childhood education and care systems can help to establish the basis for lifelong learning, as the most powerful way to combat disadvantage through education, and so effectively prevent much school drop-out. The Communication will set out key issues for reinforcing quality and access in early childhood education and care;
- the Commission will present in 2011 a **Communication on a New European Agenda on Integration** to support Member States' integration policies. To support the educational attainment of students with migrant background, the need to address early school leaving should also be taken into account in this context;
- **vocational education and training** (VET) has the potential to be an important vehicle to prevent young people from leaving education early. Following the Commission Communication ‘A new impetus for the European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy’, Education Ministers agreed an ambitious VET modernisation agenda, including specific action to reduce drop-out from VET;
- a **benchmark to measure the employability of young people** will be proposed by the Commission in early 2011. Increasing their employability is crucial for improving young people’s prospects for employment and for their future careers, and so for engaging them fully in education and training;
- in order to target policy developments most effectively and to accelerate the process of mutual learning, a **European level group of decision-makers** will accompany the implementation of the Council Recommendation and support the Commission and Council in monitoring the developments in Member States and at European level. It will help in identifying effective policies and practices to tackle shared challenges across the Member States, support the exchange of experience and help to formulate better targeted policy recommendations;
- **ministerial and high level official discussions** will continue, as well as high-profile events such as Commission or Presidency **conferences.** They will provide important input into the ongoing discussions and improve the uptake of effective new policy approaches and measures;
- the **Lifelong Learning Programme** as well as the **research and innovation related programmes** will be more intensively used to support experimentation and innovative approaches to reduce early school leaving. It allows for exchange of experiences and good practice on the level of education and training institutions and promotes the development of effective and efficient support measures for pupils at risk of dropping out. Funding priorities for 2011 include reducing early school leaving, improving the learning of students with a migrant background and promoting gender equality and inclusive approaches to learning;

- the **European Structural Funds**, especially the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, are very important sources for financing national and regional measures to reduce early school leaving. The common European policy framework contained in the Council Recommendation will add focus and rigour to investments under the European Structural Funds and so strengthen their cost-effectiveness in combating early school leaving.

Tackling early school leaving

2011/2088(INI) - 01/12/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 543 votes to 83, with 4 abstentions, a resolution on tackling early school leaving (ESL).

Parliament recalls that rates of ESL vary across EU Member States. In 2009, the average ESL rate stood at 14.4%. One of the five Europe 2020 headline targets is to reduce the proportion of early school leavers to less than 10% and to increase the share of the younger generation with a degree or diploma or equivalent level of education to at least 40%.

Noting that most Member States still have a fragmented and inadequately coordinated approach to tackling the problem, Parliament note the following:

- linguistic support should be provided for students from a migrant background;
- targeted provision of high-quality early childhood education and care by highly trained professionals leads to a reduction in ESL;
- steps must be taken to enable **Roma** children and children with no identity papers to attend school;
- ineffective work-life balance policies increase the prevalence of ESL and academic failure in general and that there is a need to step up efforts to improve such policies;
- family structures have a significant influence on children's ability and motivation to succeed at school;
- according to the OECD, socio-economically disadvantaged students are often at a double disadvantage because they attend schools affected by various types of socio-economic disadvantage and in which there are fewer and less well-qualified teachers.

The need for a personalised approach: Members stress that equality of opportunities and choice in education, and access to high-quality education for individuals from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds, regardless of gender or disability, is vital for creating a fairer, more equal and inclusive society that is vibrant, innovative and cohesive. School education is one of the best ways of giving everyone an equal chance of success. In this regards, Members call for a **personalised and inclusive approach to education**, beginning with early school education and care, which includes targeted support for individuals at risk of ESL where necessary.

The resolution:

- calls for greater efforts to be made to ensure that this personalised approach specifically benefits those pupils suffering from learning difficulties caused by dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, attention deficit or hyperactivity, for example;
- encourages an early response to emerging learning difficulties;
- considers that parental advisory services should be offered, in view of the influence that the family has on the educational and social development of pupils;
- advocates better careers guidance and high-quality work-experience schemes, as well as cultural and educational visits and exchanges, organised by schools;
- recognises the need for clear-cut policies to integrate students with sensory disabilities in ordinary schools, and calls on the Member States to abandon policies based on separate special education;
- recommends that mentoring schemes be set up in schools to provide pupils with exposure to former pupils in particular in order to exchange views on possible study and career options;
- calls on Member States to consider introducing a system of means-tested financial support for those who need it;
- points out that information and communication technologies (ICT) can have positive effects under structured teaching conditions and can encourage motivation and learning;
- calls on the Member States to provide financial support for parents who devote time and love to bringing up young children and provide future benefits to society by investing in a human capital whose value is often underestimated;
- points out that additional support should be offered to persons with disabilities, in order to reduce the risk of their leaving school early and ensure that they obtain a proper qualification;
- calls for special efforts to be made to **prevent and address bullying** and violence at school.

Shared responsibility: Parliament emphasises that there are many actors who can take steps to prevent children from leaving school prematurely. In this connection, it stresses the importance of student grants which enable children from disadvantaged backgrounds to enjoy the same opportunities as others. Members note that a **'joined-up' approach** can be effective in helping the individuals concerned to overcome multiple barriers to educational achievement and employment. In this connection, they stress the importance of student grants which enable children from disadvantaged backgrounds to enjoy the same opportunities as others.

The resolution stresses the need to **strengthen the special relationship between parents and children**, since it is vital to children's development and future stability and their smooth progress through school. It stresses that young people, including early school leavers themselves, must be involved in discussions about the design and implementation of ESL policies and programmes. It suggest that Member States should make **parents responsible for their children's education until the latter reach their 18th birthday**, thus extending compulsory school attendance by two years from the child's 16th to his or her 18th birthday or up to the end of secondary education.

Members recognise that mapping the interventions provided in Member States by different actors can be difficult, but should be encouraged with the aim of exchanging good practices. Members States should invest in teacher training and qualified staff for both pre-school and compulsory education, and regularly to review and update educational systems and programmes for the continuous development of teachers' skills. They highlight the importance of appropriate class and group sizes and a stimulating and inclusive learning environment for young people.

Diverse learning approaches: Parliament calls on Member States and regional governments with powers in the area of education to recognise and validate knowledge acquired in a non-formal and informal way. It recognises the benefits of sport, cultural activities, volunteering and active citizenship in providing a forum for non-formal education and lifelong learning. The resolution stresses the importance of **varied educational pathways** for schoolchildren, combining general and vocational training, and is convinced that it is a judicious blend of the two, based on a pupil's age and strengths, that offers them the best chance of a securing a high quality job. Member States should also take account of the requirements of the labour market and to take steps to raise the status of vocational qualifications, while also strengthening cooperation between vocational institutions and businesses.

Parliament stresses that the principle of 'learning to learn' should be at the heart of all school curricula and notes that active teaching methods are crucial to engaging more young people in the process of learning and encouraging them to expand their knowledge. It recommends the incorporation of new technological applications.

The resolution recognises that in all EU Member States **adequate levels of literacy and numeracy** are rarely reached by all school students, which contributes to ESL. It emphasises that Member States should, as a matter of urgency, set targets to ensure that all pupils leave primary school with the ability to read, write and perform arithmetic at an appropriate level for their age.

Second-chance solutions: the resolution calls on Member States to find ways of reintegrating early school leavers into the school system by implementing suitable programmes, such as **'second-chance' schools**, which provide a suitable learning environment that enables young people to rediscover confidence in themselves and in their capacity to learn. It stresses that the highest reintegration rates are achieved by programmes which address the individual needs of early school leavers. Members emphasise the need to organise activities at local level to encourage people to return to school and to promote a positive environment for people who left school early and intend to return. Member States are urged to set up more second-chance schools, strengthening the content of their curricula and their material and technical equipment and boosting the capacity of the teaching staff available.

Education system and employment: Parliament reiterates that a reduction in ESL to no more than 10%, meeting the EU 2020 headline target, would have an effect in reducing youth unemployment and in improving the employment rate, since currently 52% of school leavers are unemployed and, according to academic estimates, the number of jobs available for low-skilled or unskilled labour will decline even further in the coming years. It points out that **reducing the ESL rate by only 1% could boost the number of qualified potential employees by 500 000**. Members consider that the European countries cannot afford this enormous waste of talent. The resolution highlights the link between ESL and youth unemployment.

The resolution also notes that the long-term economic and social effects of ESL create a significant risk of poverty and that combating ESL is a way to prevent social exclusion among young people. It therefore considers reducing the number of early school leavers to be a key measure in reaching the target, under strategies at both national and European level, of lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty, and urges the Member States **not to reduce the statutory school-leaving age**. Members stress the need to adapt education systems to meet the requirements of the labour market.

It is equally important to:

- expand the scope for taking company traineeships in parallel with continuing school education;
- promote vocational education and training and taking measures to ease the transition between education and the labour market;
- pay special attention to boys who have difficulties adapting to the school environment and not to lower the compulsory school-leaving age;
- make efforts to enable early school leavers to return to the labour market invariably go hand in hand with additional training programmes to improve their future employment prospects;
- upgrade the skills provided in technical vocational training;
- recommend that training in NITC (new information and communication technologies), as well as in language technologies.

EU policies: Parliament welcomes the Commission proposal for a Council recommendation on policies to reduce ESL. It believes that, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, a **European framework for comprehensive strategies to tackle ESL** could provide a useful guide for Member States in ascertaining the correct approach to upgrading existing policies and developing their National Reform Programmes.

The resolution warns that the possible public spending cuts in the education sector on account of the economic crisis and the budgetary austerity policies being implemented in Member States will have adverse effects, in that they will further increase the numbers of early school leavers in the EU. It stresses that investing more money in combating ESL can have the long-term effect of preventing young people from becoming dependent on social security. Members advocate the targeted, efficient and coherent deployment of the Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund, with a view to the full implementation of the Youth strategies, in particular for early school leavers, in order to promote social inclusion under specific programmes in each Member State, ensure high-quality education for all and prevent ESL and truancy.

Lastly, the resolution calls for:

- an in-depth analysis of the problem of ESL in all the Member States;
- **more funds and improved accessibility for the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme**;
- the promotion of the visibility of the Comenius action programme on individual pupil mobility, which can contribute to reducing ESL.