Basic information

2011/2294(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Modernising Europe's higher education systems **Subject** 4.40.01 European area for education, training and lifelong learning 4.40.04 Universities, higher education	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CULT Culture and Education	TŐKÉS László (PPE)	04/10/2011
	Shadow rapporteur ROTH NEVEĎALOVÁ Katarína (S&D) VATTIMO Gianni (ALDE) BENARAB-ATTOU Malika (Verts/ALE) MIGALSKI Marek Henryk (ECR) VERGIAT Marie-Christine (GUE/NGL)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
DEVE Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	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	ČEŠKOVÁ Andrea (ECR)	22/11/2011

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

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
20/09/2011	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2011)0567	Summary
17/11/2011	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
29/02/2012	Vote in committee		
12/03/2012	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0057/2012	Summary
19/04/2012	Debate in Parliament		
20/04/2012	Decision by Parliament	T7-0139/2012	Summary
20/04/2012	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/04/2012	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2011/2294(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CULT/7/07729

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE476.092	19/12/2011	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE480.629	02/02/2012	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE480.580	28/02/2012	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0057/2012	12/03/2012	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0139/2012	20/04/2012	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2011)0567	20/09/2011	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2012)487	19/09/2012	

National parliaments

Document type	Parliament/Chamber	Reference	Date	Summary
Contribution	RO_CHAMBER	COM(2011)0567	15/12/2011	
Contribution	UK_HOUSE-OF-LORDS	COM(2011)0567	10/05/2012	

Modernising Europe's higher education systems

2011/2294(INI) - 20/09/2011 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to propose a general framework to ensure the modernisation of higher education systems in Europe.

BACKGROUND: the Europe 2020 strategy, its Flagship Initiatives and the new Integrated Guidelines put knowledge at the heart of the Union's efforts for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; the Commission's proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 supports this strategy with a significant increase in the budget devoted to investment in education, research and innovation. This is because education, and in particular higher education and its links with research and innovation, plays a crucial role in individual and societal advancement, and in providing the highly skilled human capital and the articulate citizens that Europe needs to create jobs, economic growth and prosperity. Higher education institutions are thus crucial partners in delivering the European Union's strategy to drive forward and maintain growth.

Despite a challenging employment climate in the wake of the economic crisis, higher education represents a sound choice. **Yet, the potential of European higher education institutions to fulfil their role in society and contribute to Europe's prosperity remains underexploited.** While 35% of all jobs in the EU will require high-level qualifications by 2020, o**nly 26% of the workforce currently has a higher education qualification**. The EU still lags behind in the share of researchers in the total labour force: 6 per 100, compared to 9 in the US and 11 in Japan.

The main responsibility for delivering reforms in higher education rests with Member States and education institutions themselves. However, the Bologna Process, the EU Agenda for the modernisation of universities and the creation of the European Research Area show that the challenges and policy responses transcend national borders.

CONTENT: in order to maximise the contribution of Europe's higher education systems to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, reforms are needed in key areas:

1. to **increase the quantity of higher education graduates** at all levels;
2. to **enhance the quality** and relevance of human capital development in higher education;
3. to create **effective governance and funding mechanisms** in support of excellence;
4. and to strengthen the knowledge triangle between education, research and business;
5. the **international mobility of students, researchers and staff** as well as the growing internationalisation of higher education, have a strong impact on quality and affect each of these key areas.

The Communication identifies **key policy issues** for Member States and higher education institutions seeking to maximise their contribution to Europe's growth and jobs. It also presents **specific actions** that the EU will take, bringing its added value to support the modernisation efforts of public authorities and institutions.

Measures proposed at EU level: the EU should make better use of the policy tools available in the field of higher education, in particular the European cooperation framework in education and training 'ET2020'. The Commission can support transparency and excellence through **evidence-based policy analysis.** It can support **mobility of learners, teachers and researchers.** It can support **strategic cooperation** between European institutions, and, in a context of increasing global competition for talent, provide a common framework to support the **interaction of European higher education with the rest of the world**.

As concerns funding, the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 will offer an opportunity to ensure that EU instruments and policies – particularly education, research, employment, entrepreneurship, migration and Cohesion – work together effectively to support the modernisation of higher education. The Commission, in focussing EU spending closely on the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy and on the key drivers of growth and jobs, has proposed a substantial increase in the budgets for education programmes and for research.

The kep policy issues may be summarised as follows:

(1) Improving data: the European Commission will:

- launch U-Multirank: a new performance-based ranking and information tool for profiling higher education institutions, aiming to radically improve the transparency of the higher education sector, with first results in 2013. By moving beyond the research focus of current rankings and performance indicators, and by allowing users to create individualised multidimensional rankings, this independently run tool will inform choice and decision-making by all higher education stakeholders;
- in co-operation with Eurostat, improve data on European higher education learning mobility and employment outcomes, and work towards a European Tertiary Education Register;
- provide specific guidance and recommendations on raising basic and transversal skills and overcoming skill mismatches;
- in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, analyse the impact of different funding approaches on the diversification, efficiency and equity of higher education systems, as well as on student mobility.

(2) Promoting mobility: the European Commission will:

- improve the recognition of studies abroad, by strengthening the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), proposing incentives in EU programmes to improve implementation, and working through the Bologna Process;
- propose an Erasmus Masters Degree Mobility Scheme (through a European-level student loan guarantee facility), operational from 2014, to promote mobility, excellence and access to affordable finance for students taking their Masters degree in another Member State regardless of their social background;
- in the context of the EHEA, contribute to strengthening synergies between the EU and intergovernmental processe;
- support the analysis of the potential of student mobility flows, including within the Bologna process, to take into account the judgements of the European Court of Justice, and of Quality Assurance standards to support the quality of franchise education;
- promote the European Framework for Research Careers to foster cross-border researcher mobility, helping researchers to identify job offers and employers to find suitable candidates, profiling research posts according to four levels of competence.

(3) Supporting the internationalisation of European higher education: the Commission will:

- promote the EU as a study and research destination for top talent from around the world, by supporting the establishment and development of internationalisation strategies by Europe's higher education institutions;
- develop relations on higher education with partners beyond the Union;
- make use of existing Mobility Partnerships to enhance and facilitate exchanges of students and researchers;

- consider proposing amendments to the students and researchers Directives, to make the EU even more attractive to talent from non-EU countries, and examine whether the processes and the accompanying rights should be facilitated and/or strengthened;
- strengthen the tracking of non-EU doctoral students as a percentage of all doctoral students, as indicated in the Performance Scorecard for Research and Innovation to measure the attractiveness of EU research and doctoral training to the rest of the world.

(4) Strengthening the long-term impact and complementarity of EU funding: EU investment in higher education is proposed to be channelled through three main funding mechanisms of the 2014-2020 MFF:

1. Education Europe: the single programme for education training and youth: to contribute to the Europe 2020 goals, the Commission will propose a single programme for education, training and youth, with simplified entry points and management. The programme will focus spending on priorities such as quality and innovation in teaching, enhanced links with the world of work, and better recognition of skills gained through mobility. It will contribute to the Bologna 20% mobility target.

2. Horizon 2020: the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation: the new Horizon 2020 programme will cover all relevant EU research and innovation funding currently provided through the Seventh Research Framework Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme and other EU innovation initiatives, such as the EIT.

3. Cohesion Policy instruments: in the 2007-2013 funding period, around €72.5 billion EU cohesion funding will be spent on education and training, and €60 billion on research and innovation. A strategic use of the **EU's Cohesion Policy** can significantly enhance the social, economic and territorial contribution of higher education. **The European Regional Development Fund** can invest in building or renovating higher education institutions, providing equipment and promoting digitalisation, and support incubators, spin-offs and other forms of university-business partnerships. **The European Social Fund** (ESF) can finance modernisation processes, increase participation and attainment particularly for students from under-represented backgrounds, enhance educational content and the match between programmes and labour market demand.

The MFF proposal for 2014-2020 allocates a minimum of €84 billion to the ESF, of which over **€40 billion** could be expected, based upon past experience, to be made available for education and training.

Modernising Europe's higher education systems

2011/2294(INI) - 12/03/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the own-initiative report by László TŐKÉS (EPP, RO) on modernising Europe's higher education systems.

The report recalls that the Europe 2020 Strategy states that, by 2020, 40 % of 30-34-year-olds in Europe should complete higher education or equivalent studies. However, that in 2010 only 26 % of the workforce in the EU had attained this qualification level.

Members stressed that in the EU in 2010, **unemployment of tertiary education graduates stood at 5.4 %** compared with more than 15 % among those with only lower secondary education showing that it is taking longer and longer for the majority of those graduates to find secure employment. It is also noted that 75 of the top 200 universities worldwide are to be found in the EU Member States but only 200 of Europe's 4 000 higher education institutions rank among the top 500 in the world. This situation should be improved. In this regard, the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a significant development that could contribute to European integration while respecting the diversity of education in the various EU Member States and the goals of higher education in relation to society.

The changing role of higher education institutions: Members call on higher education institutions to integrate lifelong learning into their curricula, with the help of economic assistance and different study programmes, and to adapt to a student base that includes adults, elderly people, non-traditional learners, full-time students who have to work while studying and people with disabilities. They therefore call on higher education institutions to implement programmes aimed at **removing existing obstacles and barriers**.

Higher education institutions should take into account the needs of professionals who need, as lifelong learners, to update and broaden their skills at regular intervals, including through the organisation and fine-tuning of update courses. They are called upon to uphold the spirit of autonomy in teaching and research.

The report calls on Member States, regional and local governments and higher education institutions to strengthen – inter alia through the development of adequate financial support schemes – their efforts to **widen equitable access to studies for all**, from early childhood to higher education, irrespective of sex, ethnicity, language, religion, disability or social background, and to fight all forms of discrimination, recognising multiculturalism and multilingualism, including sign languages, as fundamental values of the EU that need to be fostered. Student participation in sports should also be encouraged.

Moreover, the education institutions should:

- emphasise the importance of promoting democratic values, while stressing the need to acquire a sound knowledge of European integration and ensuring that Europe's former totalitarian regimes are understood as part of its common history;
- not permit the education system to be totally subordinated to the labour market, in view of the need to shape ethical and moral values among students;
- establish a general framework – covering rules, responsibilities, political and educational objectives and the quality of, and priority given to, training and research – in which to promote best practices and respond to the challenges of the communication society;
- emphasise that academic staff and students, as well as their organisations and associations, need to be involved in the modernisation of higher education institutions.

Information about higher education institutions: Members propose the introduction of clear and uniform criteria for the creation of pan-European rankings of higher education institutions, thereby allowing prospective students to make an informed choice of university and providing comprehensive information about the respective universities. They support the Commission's initiative to launch, in cooperation with all the institutions, students and other stakeholders involved, a multi-dimensional tool for the differentiated classification and ranking of higher education institutions based on characteristics such as a long tradition of providing higher education in Europe, the quality of teaching, student support (i.e. scholarships, counselling, housing), physical and info-communication accessibility, regional engagement and knowledge transfer. On the other hand, they oppose the establishment of a classification of higher education institutions on the basis of non-homogeneous performance indicators which do not take into account the diversity of educational pathways, programmes and linguistic diversity in European universities.

Funding higher education systems: the report stresses that **higher education is a public good** that fosters culture, diversity, democratic values and personal development and prepares students to become active citizens who will support European cohesion. It insists once again that Member States should reach the target of investing **2 % of GDP in education**. Members consider that mainly public and also private funding is of primary importance for the modernisation of higher education systems and emphasise that investment in higher education in Europe is crucial to overcoming the current economic crisis.

The Member States and higher education institutions are called upon to expand scholarship and funding programmes for those institutions and to develop innovative methods of funding mechanisms which can contribute to more efficient functioning of higher education institutions, complement public funding without increasing the pressure on households and make higher education accessible to all. Members express regret at the **significant cutbacks to education budgets** in several Member States, as well as the constant increase in education fees, which is leading to a significant increase in the number of vulnerable students.

As EU level, Members call for the EU budget for 2014-2020 under the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund to include spending on higher education related to investments in university infrastructure and academic staff.

The transition from higher education to the labour market: Members call on higher education institutions to adapt to new challenges by creating new fields of study that reflect the needs of the labour market, taking into account the development of science and technology by maintaining an appropriate balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. They urge the Commission to present its **proposal for a quality framework for traineeships**.

The report calls on higher education institutions and institutions responsible for the education sector at regional, national and European level to monitor trends in labour market requirements in order to reflect more accurately future needs in terms of learning opportunities. There is a need to track graduates' employment outcomes to measure how well higher education responds to labour market demands. Members welcome the Commission's commitment to improving the availability of such data, with the principal aim of providing students with the necessary information to guide their study choices, while at the same time giving higher education and research institutions the necessary information to identify and, subsequently, develop programmes of study covering both **general knowledge and specific professional skills through lifelong learning**.

Other measures are called for, such as:

- to collect and publish statistical data regarding the correlation between different higher education degrees and employment opportunities;
- to develop an international databank, similar to AlmaLaurea, which helps graduates to identify suitable job, training, study and research opportunities;
- to increase the provision of support and guidance for students entering the labour market.

Gender balance in higher education: faced with existing gender disparities in European education systems, Members call for measures to combat persistent stereotypes in training. Recalling that women are more often overqualified and underpaid for their jobs and often end up unemployed or in casual jobs, the report calls for measures to combat this situation.

It also suggests:

- developing initiatives to provide information about gender equality and promote gender equality in education;
- that teachers should receive specific training on equality between men and women;
- that women learners may have specific additional responsibilities outside of learning which should be recognised such as caring for young children or elderly relatives;
- the need for educational institutions to supply parents – especially women – with a sufficient quantity of high-quality, affordable and accessible childcare, including community centres, so as to facilitate their equal participation in studies and research;
- the introduction of a greater variety of study modes, such as part-time and distance learning.

Engaged higher education institutions: Members encourage higher education institutions to **engage more intensively with their regions** and establish dynamic collaborative actions with regional governments, local councils, public bodies, non-governmental organisations and small and medium-sized enterprises to enhance regional development; points out that this should also strengthen interaction between higher education institutions and employers.

They call specifically on the Member States and their central and regional authorities, the Commission and the business world to:

- include and support higher education institutions in cross-border cooperation;
- intensify the interaction between the sides of the knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) as a key element for growth and job creation;
- develop partnerships with higher education institutions by providing high-quality internships for students and lecturers and capitalising on lecturers' general transferable skills.

Members call for a commitment to **more flexible and innovative learning approaches** and to delivery methods which are always centred on students' needs.

The report notes the need for cross-border higher education institutions and enterprises to cooperate in practical programmes and in shaping students' future careers by identifying the specific development pathways, expectations and challenges that will await them in the labour market. It also emphasises the usefulness of developing mechanisms and management strategies that facilitate the transfer of innovative ideas and research results into society and business.

Members reaffirm the value of democratic **governance** as a fundamental way to ensure academic freedom and promote active participation by all actors in the life of a higher education institution. It also emphasises that the principle of democracy and self-governance among higher education institutions and their staff and students should be respected and maintained in all collaborative projects. It emphasises the importance of cooperation between higher education institutions and NGOs and the European voluntary sector, in order to promote active citizenship and involve students in active participation through working for the NGO sector.

Member States are called upon to support and encourage:

- the importance of sport in the education process;
- the importance of culture in higher education and calls for the inclusion of special criteria for the humanities in both innovation and research;
- student initiatives, as well as assisting in the coordination of such activities among other higher education institutions, enterprises and local authorities from various Member States.

Mutual recognition of qualifications: the report calls on the Member States and these institutions to develop clear, integrated pathways that allow learners to progress from other types of education into higher education and to change between different tracks and types of institutions. It emphasises, however, the need to **maintain the diversity of educational pathways and programmes**, teaching methods and university systems in the EU. Members take the view that it is consequently necessary to develop a national qualification framework, while at the same time promoting the mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications across all Member States.

All EU countries are urged to implement the **national qualification frameworks** linked to the EHEA Qualifications Framework and to develop, and provide financial support for, mutual recognition. In this context, Members stress the need to strengthen student mobility through Erasmus and for the the home university to recognise qualifications acquired while studying at other universities.

Members support the Commission's proposal to improve recognition of study undertaken abroad.

Enhancing mobility in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond: Members stress that greater coordination among Member States in the field of higher education – including through strong financial and political support for agreements on common core curricula and well-defined learning outcomes – is a prerequisite for achieving the goals of employability and growth in Europe. They point out the need for collaboration between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA) as a means to support university research programmes in both science and the humanities.

The report calls for the **mobility** at staff and student level be strengthened, in particular with the countries which are covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) or which directly border the EU. It calls on the Commission to propose the creation of **Euro-Mediterranean Erasmus and Leonardi da Vinci programmes**, aimed at promoting transnational mobility among students from both sides of the Mediterranean. Members call for the opening of mobility, exchange, research and work experience programmes to students from countries affiliated to the Eastern Partnership. They emphasise the need for the higher education system in each Member State to provide higher-quality teaching so that increased mobility opportunities for students do not go hand in hand with a worsening of the '**brain drain'**, which is now a genuine social problem in some Member States.

Lastly, Members call for:

- the abolition of differences between western and central-eastern European higher education systems, with a view to encouraging and supporting cross-border collaboration between higher education institutions;
- the evaluation of the possibility of promoting, within the study cycle, a compulsory training period at a university in a Member State other than the one to which the student is affiliated;
- the strengthening of the principle that loan schemes cannot substitute the grant systems put in place to support access to education for all students regardless of their social background;
- further clarification of the proposal to create a financial instrument to help students secure funding for a Masters degree outside their home Member State.

Modernising Europe's higher education systems

2011/2294(INI) - 20/04/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 464 votes to 34 with 33 abstentions, a resolution on modernising Europe's higher education systems.

Parliament recalls that the Europe 2020 Strategy states that, by 2020, 40 % of 30-34-year-olds in Europe should complete higher education or equivalent studies. However, in 2010 only 26 % of the workforce in the EU had attained this qualification level.

Parliament also stressed that in the EU in 2010, **unemployment of tertiary education graduates stood at 5.4 %** compared with more than 15 % among those with only lower secondary education showing that it is taking longer and longer for the majority of those graduates to find secure employment. It is also noted that 75 of the top 200 universities worldwide are to be found in the EU Member States but only 200 of Europe's 4 000 higher education institutions rank among the top 500 in the world. This situation should be improved since more than 21 % of young people in the EU are unemployed.

The changing role of higher education institutions: recalling its resolution on the contribution of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna process, Parliament calls on higher education institutions to integrate lifelong learning into their curricula, with the help of economic assistance and different study programmes, and to adapt to a student base that includes adults, elderly people, non-traditional learners, full-time students who have to work while studying and people with disabilities. They therefore call on higher education institutions to implement programmes aimed at **removing existing obstacles and barriers.**

Higher education institutions should take into account the needs of professionals who need, as lifelong learners, to update and **broaden their skills at regular intervals**, including through the organisation and fine-tuning of update courses. They are called upon to uphold the spirit of autonomy in teaching and research.

Parliament calls on Member States, regional and local governments and higher education institutions to strengthen their efforts to **widen equitable access to studies for all**, irrespective of sex, ethnicity, language, religion, disability or social background, and to fight all forms of discrimination, recognising multiculturalism and multilingualism, including sign languages, as fundamental values of the EU that need to be fostered. Student participation in sports should also be encouraged.

Moreover, the education institutions should:

- emphasise the importance of promoting democratic values, while stressing the need to acquire a sound knowledge of European integration and ensuring that Europe's former totalitarian regimes are understood as part of its common history;
- not permit the education system to be totally subordinated to the labour market, in view of the need to shape ethical and moral values among students;
- establish a general framework – covering rules, responsibilities, political and educational objectives and the quality of, and priority given to, training and research – in which to promote best practices and respond to the challenges of the communication society;
- emphasise that academic staff and students, as well as their organisations and associations, need to be involved in the modernisation of higher education institutions.

Parliament underlines the complementary role of state, private and religious forms of higher education across Europe.

Information about higher education institutions: Parliament proposes the introduction of clear and uniform criteria for the **creation of pan-European rankings of higher education institutions,** thereby allowing prospective students to make an informed choice of university and providing comprehensive information about the respective universities. It supports the Commission's initiative to launch, in cooperation with all the institutions, students and other stakeholders involved, a multi-dimensional tool for the differentiated classification and ranking of higher education institutions based on characteristics such as a long tradition of providing higher education in Europe, the quality of teaching, student support (i.e. scholarships, counselling, housing), physical and info-communication accessibility, regional engagement and knowledge transfer. On the other hand, it opposes the establishment of a

classification of higher education institutions on the basis of non-homogeneous performance indicators which do not take into account the diversity of educational pathways, programmes and linguistic diversity in European universities.

Funding higher education systems: Parliament stresses that **higher education is a public good** that fosters culture, diversity, democratic values and personal development and prepares students to become active citizens who will support European cohesion. It insists once again that Member States should reach the target of **investing 2 % of GDP in education**. Members consider that mainly public and also private funding is of primary importance for the modernisation of higher education systems and emphasise that investment in higher education in Europe is crucial to overcoming the current economic crisis.

Member States and higher education institutions are called upon to expand scholarship and funding programmes for those institutions and to develop innovative methods of funding mechanisms which can contribute to more efficient functioning of higher education institutions, complement public funding without increasing the pressure on households and make higher education accessible to all. Parliament expresses regret at the significant cutbacks to education budgets in several Member States, as well as the constant increase in education fees, which is leading to a significant increase in the number of vulnerable students.

As EU level, Parliament calls for the EU budget for 2014-2020 under the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund to include spending on higher education related to investments in university infrastructure and academic staff.

The transition from higher education to the labour market: Parliament calls on higher education institutions to adapt to new challenges by creating new fields of study that reflect the needs of the labour market, taking into account the development of science and technology by maintaining an appropriate balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. It urges the Commission to present its proposal for a quality framework for **traineeships.**

Parliament calls on higher education institutions and institutions responsible for the education sector to monitor trends in labour market requirements in order to reflect more accurately future needs in terms of learning opportunities. There is a need to track graduates' employment outcomes to measure how well higher education responds to labour market demands. Members welcome the Commission's commitment to improving the availability of such data, with the principal aim of providing students with the necessary information to guide their study choices, while at the same time giving higher education and research institutions the necessary information to identify and, subsequently, develop **programmes of study covering both general knowledge and specific professional skills** through lifelong learning.

Other measures are called for, such as:

- to collect and publish statistical data regarding the correlation between different higher education degrees and employment opportunities;
- to develop an international databank, similar to AlmaLaurea, which helps graduates to identify suitable job, training, study and research opportunities;
- to increase the provision of support and guidance for students entering the labour market.

Gender balance in higher education: faced with existing gender disparities in European education systems, Parliament calls for measures to combat persistent stereotypes in training. Recalling that women are more often overqualified and underpaid for their jobs and often end up unemployed or in casual jobs, it calls for measures to combat this situation.

It also suggests:

- developing initiatives to provide information about gender equality and promote gender equality in education;
- that teachers should receive specific training on equality between men and women;
- that women learners may have specific additional responsibilities outside of learning which should be recognised such as caring for young children or elderly relatives;
- the need for educational institutions to supply parents – especially women – with a sufficient quantity of high-quality, affordable and accessible childcare, including community centres, so as to facilitate their equal participation in studies and research;
- the introduction of a greater variety of study modes, such as part-time and distance learning.

Higher education institutions: Parliament encourages higher education institutions to **engage more intensively with their regions** and establish dynamic collaborative actions with regional governments, local councils, public bodies, non-governmental organisations and small and medium-sized enterprises to enhance regional development. It points out that this should also strengthen interaction between higher education institutions and employers.

It calls specifically on the Member States and their central and regional authorities, the Commission and the business world to:

- include and support higher education institutions in cross-border cooperation;
- intensify the interaction between the sides of the knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) as a key element for growth and job creation;
- develop partnerships with higher education institutions by providing high-quality internships for students and lecturers and capitalising on lecturers' general transferable skills.

Members call for a commitment to more flexible and innovative learning approaches and to delivery methods that are always centred on students' needs.

Parliament stresses the need for cross-border higher education institutions and enterprises to cooperate in practical programmes and in shaping students' future careers by (i) identifying the specific development pathways, expectations and challenges that will await them in the labour market; (ii) developing mechanisms and management strategies that facilitate the transfer of innovative ideas and research results into society and business.

Members reaffirm the value of democratic governance as a fundamental way to ensure academic freedom and promote active participation by all actors in the life of a higher education institution. It also emphasises that the principle of democracy and self-governance among higher education institutions and their staff and students should be respected and maintained in all collaborative projects. It emphasises the importance of cooperation between higher education institutions and NGOs and the European voluntary sector, in order to promote active citizenship and involve students in active participation through working for the NGO sector.

Member States are called upon to support and encourage:

- the importance of sport in the education process;
- the importance of culture in higher education and calls for the inclusion of special criteria for the humanities in both innovation and research;
- student initiatives, as well as assisting in the coordination of such activities among other higher education institutions, enterprises and local authorities from various Member States.

Mutual recognition of qualifications: Parliament calls on the Member States and these institutions to develop clear, integrated pathways that allow learners to progress from other types of education into higher education and to change between different tracks and types of institutions. It emphasises, however, the need to maintain the diversity of educational pathways and programmes, teaching methods and university systems in the EU. Members take the view that it is consequently necessary to develop a national qualification framework, while at the same time promoting the mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications across all Member States.

All EU countries are urged to implement the national qualification frameworks linked to the EHEA Qualifications Framework and to develop, and provide financial support for, mutual recognition. In this context, Members stress the need to strengthen student mobility through Erasmus and for the home university to recognise qualifications acquired while studying at other universities.

Parliament supports the Commission's proposal to improve recognition of study undertaken abroad.

Enhancing mobility in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond: Parliament stresses that greater coordination among Member States in the field of higher education – including through strong financial and political support for agreements on common core curricula and well-defined learning outcomes – is a prerequisite for achieving the goals of employability and growth in Europe. It points out the need for collaboration between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA) as a means to support university research programmes in both science and the humanities.

Parliament calls for the mobility at staff and student level be strengthened, in particular with the countries which are covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) or which directly border the EU in order to turn the EHEA into a magnet for training and knowledge that is both macroregional and global, particularly in relation to exchange and professional training programmes.

It calls on the Commission to propose the creation of Euro-Mediterranean Erasmus and Leonardi da Vinci programmes, aimed at promoting transnational mobility among students from both sides of the Mediterranean. Members call for the opening of mobility, exchange, research and work experience programmes to students from countries affiliated to the Eastern Partnership. They emphasise the need for the higher education system in each Member State to provide higher-quality teaching so that increased mobility opportunities for students do not go hand in hand with a worsening of the 'brain drain', which is now a genuine social problem in some Member States.

Lastly, Parliament calls for:

- the reinforcement of language and sign language teaching
- the abolition of differences between western and central-eastern European higher education systems, with a view to encouraging and supporting cross-border collaboration between higher education institutions;
- the evaluation of the possibility of promoting, within the study cycle, **a compulsory training period** at a university in a Member State other than the one to which the student is affiliated;
- the strengthening of the principle that loan schemes cannot substitute the grant systems put in place to support access to education for all students regardless of their social background.