Modernisation of education in the EU

2017/2224(INI) - 17/05/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the report by Krystyna ?YBACKA (S&D, PL) on the modernisation of education in the European Union.

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, exercising its prerogatives as an associated committee in accordance with Article 54 of the Rules of Procedure, also gave its opinion on the report.

The report stressed the crucial role of education in shaping the future of Europe both economically and socially, while providing for the needs of Europes citizens and building a community of diverse citizens united by their common core values.

Members believe that an all-encompassing approach to education policy, with strong political and public support, is vital to the educational reform process, and that in order to achieve these objectives it is essential to involve both society as a whole and all relevant and interested actors, including parents.

The report highlighted the potential of new information and communication technologies (ICT) and innovation, as instruments for offering new opportunities in education and stressed the opportunities that digitalisation and the establishment of common educational platforms offer for modern education. The objective of this being to develop reasoning, reflection, and scientific curiosity capable of building on the foundations of an artistic, scientific, and technical humanistic culture.

Members called on Member States to support the creation of a European education area which should focus on achieving common objectives, including ensuring quality education for all, and to strengthen cooperation in the development and implementation of its objectives.

They made several recommendations for the effective development and implementation of the education reform process:

Early childhood education and care (ECEC): the report called on Member States to ensure free and fair access to high-quality ECEC and encouraged them to take the necessary measures to ensure that the material and financial conditions are met to enable every child to have access to ECEC without discrimination, as well as to provide more nursery and kindergarten places.

Members called on the Commission to consider establishing a common European framework for ECEC and support the establishment of a European benchmark for quality ECEC.

School education: Members encouraged the implementation of a Whole School Approach in order to increase social inclusion, accessibility, democratic governance, quality and diversity in education. They highlighted that the large number of NEETs almost 6.3 million young people aged 15 24 are neither in employment nor in education and training could be reduced by preventing early school leaving, and by making schools more practical and connected to their local environment, by developing links with local companies.

The report stresses, inter alia, the need to:

- strengthen opportunities and structures for internal and external collaboration at school level;
- make school education more flexible in order to improve response to the actual living circumstances of students;
- encourage more STEAM initiatives (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) at school level,
- support language skills by developing innovative multilingual pedagogies;
- create more inclusive learning environments by promoting the rights of the most vulnerable groups;
- promote the importance of health and relationships education, which must include teaching children and young people about relationships based on equality, consent, respect and reciprocity, as well as teaching about women's and girls' rights;
- adopt measures for the recognition of study periods abroad that do not lead to a diploma or qualification;
- develop prevention programmes and awareness raising campaigns on the issues of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, addiction and violence by developing, at school level and in cooperation with the direct beneficiaries and all stakeholders.

Higher education: Members called for the creation of a European education area and encouraged Member States to invest at least 2 % of their respective GDPs in higher education. National or regional resources and the allocation of European Structural and Investment Funds should give priority to educational programmes and the foster of cooperation between higher education, the world of work, industry, research communities and society as a whole.

The report recommended, inter alia:

- fostering more inclusive and accessible mobility of students, trainees, apprentice teachers, researchers and administrative staff;
- increasing funding for the mobility of teachers and researchers;
- ensuring mutual cross-border recognition and compatibility of academic qualifications and degrees;
- developing comprehensive strategies and tools to determine the quality of new modes of teaching and learning, e.g. e-learning, open online courses;
- including work placements, recognised through ECTS credits, in higher education programmes, as well as to take account of local issues and needs by integrating them into teaching curricula and research projects.

The teacher as a guarantor of quality teaching: Members called on the Member States to introduce incentives to attract and motivate young people and qualified teachers to enter and work in the education system. They emphasised the need to recognise the professional status of early childhood education and care employees and support for teachers delivering multilingual courses.

The Commission and the Member States are encouraged to support teachers in incorporating innovation and technology into teaching through the strengthening of their digital skills. Members expressed support for the creation of an Academy of Teaching and Learning, as a complementary facility enabling teachers to train and exchange best practices at European level.

Lastly, Members called for a substantial increase of funding for Erasmus+ in the multi-financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027, in order to make it more accessible and inclusive and enable it to reach out to more students and teachers.