



EURONEST PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE EURONEST
PARLAMENTARISCHE VERSAMMLUNG EURONEST

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RESOLUTION

on 'Innovation in education and education reforms in the EU and Eastern partners' countries: challenges and opportunities'

Resolution by the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly on innovation in education and education reforms in the EU and Eastern partners' countries: challenges and opportunities'

The Euronest Parliamentary Assembly,

- having regard to Article 2, Article 6 (e) and Article 165, in particular §3, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU);
- having regard to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the right to education as defined in Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to Article 2 of the Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, concerning the right to education (ETS No.009),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 March 2016 on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, work experience and university diplomas within the Bologna process²,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 10 June 2016 entitled 'Analytical underpinning for a New Skills Agenda for Europe' (SWD(2016)0195),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 December 2016 on improving and modernising education (COM(2016)0941),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 22 May 2018 on building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies (COM(2018)0268),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 17 January 2018 for a Council recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (COM(2018)0023),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 17 January 2018 for a Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (COM(2018)0024),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 January 2018 on the Digital Education Action Plan (COM(2018)0022),
- having regard to the joint communication of the Commission and the High

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50.

² OJ C 193, 31.5.2016, p. 17.

Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 8 June 2016 entitled ‘Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations’ (JOIN(2016)0029), and to the European Parliament’s resolution of 5 July 2017 thereon³,

- having regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (A/RES/70/1),
 - having regard to the Paris Communiqué of 25 May 2018 following the ministerial meeting of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA),
 - having regard to the European Parliament recommendation of 15 November 2017 to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the Eastern Partnership (EaP), in the run-up to the November 2017 Summit⁴,
 - having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU⁵,
 - having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 11 December 2018 on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU policy design⁶,
 - having regard to the joint staff working document of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 9 June 2017 on the ‘Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020 – Focusing on key priorities and tangible results’ (SWD(2017)0300),
 - having regard to the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Brussels on 24 November 2017,
- A. whereas the right to education is a fundamental human right;
- B. whereas in line with Article 6(e) of the TFEU, ‘competence in the field of education and training lies with the Member States, but the European Union has a vital supportive role to play in terms of supporting Member States in their reform efforts, setting challenges and goals and promoting and exchanging best practices’⁷;
- C. whereas the open method of coordination as applied to education allows Member States to create and implement a common strategy for education and training, also including the on-line platform ET 2020 (Education and Training 2020); whereas a similar cooperation structure could be established between the EU Member states and EaP countries, starting with a regular exchange of best practices;
- D. whereas the ability of education systems to meet societal, economic and personal needs depends on their quality, accessibility, efficiency, and diversity and equality measures, as well as on the availability of adequate human, financial and material resources;

³ OJ C 334, 19.9.2018, p. 112.

⁴ OJ C 356, 4.10.2018, p. 130.

⁵ Texts adopted, PA_TA(2018)0247.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0485.

⁷ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0247.

- E. whereas achieving equal opportunities is an important function of education, and access to education must therefore be made non-discriminatory; whereas to this end, more efforts are needed to ensure that everyone, with particular regard to disadvantaged groups, enjoys the same chances of accessing and completing education and training and of acquiring skills at all levels;
- F. whereas ensuring access to quality early childhood education and care services for all children is key to enabling them to enjoy a positive start in life and on educational paths;
- G. whereas education has been negatively affected by transformation processes and the economic and financial crisis; whereas public funding for education has been passively reduced in many countries; whereas there is a preoccupying trend to privatisation of education which violates the principle of equality of access to education; whereas increased public financial support for education, including for teachers and their working conditions, as well as for research, is crucial for ensuring free, inclusive and accessible public education;
- H. whereas the modernisation of all stages of the education system involves a large number of sectors and requires many steps, including curriculum design and delivery, the adoption or adaptation of legislative and regulatory frameworks for quality assurance to allow for new teaching and learning methods, the prioritisation of innovation in funding mechanisms and the strengthening of education governance;
- I. whereas digital skills are essential for social participation and for the successful professional realisation, as digital transformation is changing the public and political dialog and the job market and creating a need for new skill sets; whereas it is therefore important to ensure that all schools are equipped with computers and have access to internet connections;
- J. whereas basic education in cyber hygiene, cyber safety, data protection, copyright, media and internet literacy must be age- and development-oriented in order to help children become critical learners, active citizens, responsible internet users and shapers of a democratic digital society, make informed decisions, and be aware of and able to counter the risks associated with the internet, such as online disinformation, harassment and personal data breaches; whereas cybersecurity-related teaching programmes should be introduced in academic and vocational training curricula;
- K. whereas education poverty is a challenge faced by the EU and the EaP countries;
- L. whereas in order to better understand and manage the ecological, social and economic problems of our planet, it is imperative that people develop global awareness skills, especially in relation to global citizenship, intercultural dialogue and sustainable development;
- M. whereas digitalisation and the creation of shared educational platforms are helping to modernise education systems, especially by making it easier to offer distance learning and blended learning courses; whereas data protection issues also arise from such developments;

- N. whereas lifelong learning should be encouraged, for example through synergies between formal and informal types of learning and through quality vocational education and training systems;
- O. whereas all EU and EaP countries are members of the European Higher Education Area;
- P. whereas education systems in the EaP countries are still marked by their Soviet heritage and those countries therefore have to contend with specific challenges in the educational sphere that do not exist in the EU;
- Q. whereas all bilateral agreements between the EU and the EaP countries contain a chapter dedicated to education, training and youth; whereas one of the aims of platform 4 of the EaP policy is to increase the participation of the EaP countries in EU programmes inter alia in the fields of education, research and innovation, to foster cooperation between the EU and the education and training authorities, higher education institutions, schools and research institutions of the EaP countries, and to enhance knowledge and exchange good practices in those fields; whereas encouraging the modernisation, internationalisation, digitalisation (e-learning) and improvements in the quality of higher education and vocational education and training (VET) systems is listed as one of the priorities of the 2018-2019 work programme of platform 4's panel on education, culture and youth;
- R. whereas several EU programmes in the field of education and innovation are open to, or specifically designed for, the EaP countries, such as Erasmus+, eTwinning Plus, EaP connect, EU4Innovation, Creative Europe, COSME and Horizon 2020 and their successors for 2021-2027; whereas such programmes may significantly help in coping with the social and economic changes or the main challenges facing Europe until the end of this decade, inter alia the fight against youth unemployment, greater integration of Europe's societies, the development of social capital of young people, the creation and development of efficiently functioning systems of education and training, as well as the social inclusion of persons from disadvantaged environments;
- S. whereas the need for deeper and more effective cooperation between institutions of non-formal and formal education, to employ young people and incorporate them in activities of a civil society was expressed at the Eastern Partnership Youth Forum in Kaunas;
- T. whereas gender inequality in education hinders both personal development and employment and affects numerous socio-cultural fields; whereas gender equality is a core principle of the European Union and of the EaP policy enshrined in its treaties and should be reflected in all EU policies, not least in the sphere of education and culture; whereas education is a powerful instrument for overcoming gender inequality;
- U. whereas youth work and non-formal education would enhance incorporation and activation of young people affected by social and economic exclusion
- V. whereas there are still limitations on education in minority languages and there is limited access to education in poor areas in some of the EaP countries;
- W. whereas EaP countries have been rapidly depopulating on the course of the last decade, and young people are prone to leave their home countries and regions in search for

better education and decent jobs;

General considerations

1. Underlines that ensuring equal access to quality inclusive education is the key to developing prosperous societies and to achieving continued social cohesion, combating poverty, social exclusion and gender stereotypes; calls on the EU Member States and EaP countries to make public investment in education at all levels, including by providing adequate financial resources, a priority in their policies;
2. Stresses that new ways of learning are needed to meet the requirements of increasingly mobile and digital societies; takes the view that education should not only be delivered by means of lectures, theoretical learning and passive learning, but should also involve experiential and participatory learning under the supervision or participation of teachers and be related to the chosen vocation of pupils and students;
3. Stresses that countries must transform all levels of their education and training systems to make full use of the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the natural skills of children, and to help children develop the skills and abilities they need to meet the demands of the societies and labour markets of the future;
4. Stresses that appropriate funding is required to reform education systems and ensure that innovative and high-quality education is made available not only in big cities, but also in rural areas with little access;
5. Emphasises that in order to ensure the accessibility and quality of education, it is necessary to provide not only an increase funds for improving the infrastructure, raising the salaries of teachers and researchers, but also ensuring a transparent distribution of financial support between educational and research institutions;
6. Stresses that inclusiveness, equal access and innovation should be the leading principles for education and training in the digital age; believes that digital technologies should not reinforce existing inequalities, but should instead be used to close the digital divide between pupils, students and learners from different socio-economic backgrounds and different regions of the EU and the EaP countries;
7. Stresses that while it is essential to increase learners' basic and advanced digital skills, other skills, including social and civic skills and ethical awareness, should nevertheless continue to be a key part of education systems; believes that it is also important to teach people the personal and civic skills that help them to live and work together; highlights, furthermore, the paramount importance of prioritising the development of critical, constructive and innovative thinking, as well as media literacy in all education systems; underlines the importance of education in literature, history and developing cultural competences;
8. Emphasises the positive impact of cultural diversity and multilingualism in schools on pupils' linguistic and cognitive development, as well as on the promotion of intercultural awareness, respect and pluralism;

9. Underlines the essential role of formal and non-formal education in advancing the core understanding and respect for the human rights, fundamental freedoms, dignity and cultural diversity, in preventing and eradicating all forms of intolerance, discrimination, extremism, and hate speeches, and in combatting antisemitism, antigypsyism, homophobia and denigration of ethnic and cultural groups; calls on EU Member States and Eastern Partner countries to ensure that all teachers are effectively trained to shape attitudes and behavioural patterns based on the principles of non-discrimination, mutual respect and tolerance;
10. Stresses that the adaptation of educational institutions to new technologies and innovative pedagogical approaches should never be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a tool for improving the quality and inclusivity of education;
11. Stresses that sexual education is a necessary part of the school curriculum to meet the WHO standards for Europe to educate and protect young people; affirms that such education should include topics like sexual expression, relationships and affirmative consent, and information about negative outcomes or conditions such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, unintended pregnancy, sexual violence and harmful practices such as grooming and female genital mutilation;
12. Highlights the potential of developing e-evaluation tools for education systems and of using digital solutions, such as analytics and creative tests, more widely to enable teachers to adopt a learner-centred approach;
13. Highlights the pivotal role of teachers and lecturers in any education system and the need to encourage them to innovate by remunerating them appropriately, providing them with adequate training opportunities and establishing reward systems; stresses the instrumental role of peer-to-peer activities and exchanges of best practices in this field;
14. Stresses that schools cannot be expected to transform the education system unaided and need support from other stakeholders;
15. Deplores the fact that on average, the number of young people not in education, employment or training is much higher in the EaP countries than in the EU; highlights, therefore, the need to profoundly reform the curricula and the general approach to education, including life-long learning, in the EaP countries in order to meet the needs of the labour market;
16. Welcomes, in this respect, the strong focus placed on young people and education at the 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit and in the 2020 deliverables, and the increase in support in these fields offered by the EU; welcomes, furthermore, the opening of the first Eastern Partnership European School in Tbilisi in September 2018;
17. Recommends to counter the trend of depopulation of EaP countries by (a) strengthening the connection between education systems reform and labour markets demands, (b) investing in programmes favouring youth (with a major focus on rural youth) and social entrepreneurship, and (c) creating a new programme for young professionals modelled on Erasmus+ (EU4Young Professionals);

18. Calls on the EU Member States and EaP countries to recognise education as investment, and to provide greater public funding for early childhood education and care, public schools, vocational training, lifelong learning, public universities and research;

Recommendations

19. Recommends that partnerships between governments, non-profit organisations, educational institutions and businesses are established so as to understand the existing gaps and develop ways to tackle them; reiterates the call of the European Parliament for the establishment of the European Child Guarantee as a main tool to fight child poverty and social exclusions that should contribute to children's equal access to free education, free childcare, free healthcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition;
20. Calls on the responsible bodies of the EaP countries and the EU to apply approaches in assessing the quality of education aimed primarily at increasing motivation, and not towards punishment;
21. Calls on the Member States and EaP countries to fight gender stereotypes in education in order to ensure that women have the same opportunities and freedom of choice in terms of the career they wish to pursue; is concerned, in this context, at the stereotypes that persist in learning materials in some countries and teachers' differing behavioural expectations as between girls and boys; stresses that education systems need to take into account the needs of people suffering from discrimination;
22. Encourages an increase in support for training on global awareness skills and new educational practices such as deeper learning, the evolution of teacher-student relationships and new learning practices such as STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics);
23. Recommends that an agenda item dedicated to educational reforms and the monitoring of the implementation of the relevant clauses of bilateral agreements be included in all inter-parliamentary meetings between the European Parliament and the parliaments of the EaP countries;
24. Calls on EU, Member States and Eastern Partner countries to increase efforts to improve media literacy and civic education through culture and schooling from an early age in order to allow citizens to identify and effectively contextualize misinformation and biased reporting; encourages Member States and Eastern Partner countries to include specific courses or trainings on media literacy in their school curricula, and to develop information campaigns addressing the segments of the population that are especially subject and/or vulnerable to disinformation;
25. Invites the Commission, primarily through the EU delegations, to proactively distribute to educational establishments in the EaP countries an overview of all available resources (including online resources such as School Education Gateway) and educational funding for which they, and especially the teachers who work for them, might be eligible; recommends establishing one clearly identified central point of contact for education in every EU delegation to an EaP country;
26. Echoes the call made in the European Parliament resolution of 11 December 2018 on

education in the digital era for the formulation of recommendations for a minimum level of digital competence to be acquired by students during their studies; takes the view that a specific ICT module, for example based on the PISA ICT module, could be introduced both in the EU Member States and the EaP countries to ensure that educational establishments in all of those countries aim for the same minimum level of digital competence;

27. Calls for the Commission to work with the EaP countries to open more Eastern Partnership European Schools and encourage the EaP countries to fulfil the pre-conditions for the establishment of such schools;
28. Welcomes the increase in funding made available for digital skills across the next generation of multiannual financial framework (MFF) programmes, but nevertheless insists that the Commission needs to promote synergies across and ensure coordination between MFF programmes, including Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, the European Social Fund, InvestEU and Digital Europe, so as to maximise the effectiveness of funding for the development of high-quality digital skills;
29. Encourages future teachers to gain practical teaching experience abroad through the Erasmus+ scheme, for example by applying to take part in the International Credit Mobility programme; calls for a specific focus in Erasmus 2021-2027 on primary and secondary school teachers from EaP countries to be allowed to participate in mobility schemes in EU schools;
30. Encourages school staff, i.e. teachers, librarians, heads of school, from EaP countries to engage their schools in e-Twinning, part of the Erasmus programme for collaboration, development of projects, sharing and becoming part of a learning community;
31. Encourages the Commission to work with the EaP countries to produce – possibly as part of the work carried out by the dedicated EaP platform – an overview of the reforms of all stages of the education system that have been carried out in the EaP countries;
32. Recommends to the EaP countries an increase in dual education streams and the inclusion in the students' programme of practical courses run by companies that correspond to the profile of the faculties they study in.