



TEXTS ADOPTED

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European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience

European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2021 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020/2818(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Articles 14 and 15 thereof,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission in November 2017, and in particular its principles 1 ‘education, training and lifelong learning’ and 4 ‘active support to employment’,
- having regard to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Paid Educational Leave Convention of 1974,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience’ (COM(2020)0274) and to the accompanying Commission staff working documents (SWD(2020)0121) and (SWD(2020)0122),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (COM(2020)0275),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘achieving the European Education Area by 2025’, (COM(2020)0625) and to the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2020)0212),

- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Digital Education Plan 2021-2027. Resetting education and training for the digital age’, (COM(2020)0624) and to the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2020)0209),
- having regard to the Commission report entitled ‘Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020 Human capital’¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘A New Industrial Strategy for Europe’ (COM(2020)0102) which states that ‘the twin ecological and digital transitions will affect every part of the economy, society and industry’, ‘a competitive economy depends on recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce’, and which forecasts that ‘in the next five years alone, 120 million Europeans will have to upskill or reskill’,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘the European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640) which states that in order to make all of the change referred to in the communication possible, ‘pro-active re-skilling and upskilling are necessary to reap the benefits of the ecological transition’,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 8 June 2020 on reskilling and upskilling as a basis for increasing sustainability and employability, in the context of supporting economic recovery and social cohesion,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 June 2020 on countering the COVID-19 crisis in education and training,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 8 November 2019 on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems²,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 3 March 2017 on Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market³,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults⁴,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 14 December 2017 on a renewed EU agenda for higher education⁵,
- having regard to Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC⁶,

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/human-capital>

² OJ C 389, 18.11.2019, p. 1.

³ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6889-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

⁴ OJ C 484, 24.12.2016, p. 1.

⁵ OJ C 429, 14.12.2017, p. 3.

⁶ OJ L 112, 2.5.2018, p. 42.

- having regard to the policy framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020),
- having regard to the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 5 May 2020 on ‘Sustainable funding for lifelong learning and development of skills, in the context of a shortage of skilled labour’ (Exploratory opinion at the request of the Croatian presidency),
- having regard to the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 15 March 2018 on the ‘Future of work — acquiring of appropriate knowledge and skills to meet the needs of future jobs’ (Exploratory opinion requested by the Bulgarian Presidency)¹,
- having regard to the European Working Conditions Survey²,
- having regard to Eurofound research on the impact of digitalisation on skills use and skills development³,
- having regard to the Cedefop study entitled ‘Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways’, volumes 1 and 2,
- having regard to Cedefop’s report entitled ‘Skills forecast - trends and challenges to 2030’⁴,
- having regard the Cedefop’s Skills Panorama⁵ and European Skills Index⁶,
- having regard the STOA study entitled ‘Rethinking education in the digital age’⁷,
- having regard to the OECD skills for jobs database⁸,
- having regard to the OECD study entitled ‘Getting Skills Right. Increasing Adult Learning Participation. Learning from successful reforms’⁹,

¹ OJ C 237, 6.7.2018, p. 8.

² Sixth European Working Conditions Survey’, Eurofound.
https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1634en.pdf

³ Impact of computerisation on job profiles (changing tasks within occupations – hence requiring different types of skills):

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wpef19007.pdf>

⁴ https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3077_en.pdf

⁵ <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

⁶ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/european-skills-index>

⁷ [EPRS_STU\(2020\)641528_EN.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/STU(2020)641528_EN.pdf)

⁸ <https://www.oecdskillsforjobsdatabase.org/>

⁹ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/cf5d9c21-en.pdf?expires=1600261868&id=id&accname=ocid194994&checksum=3B44E0891A2F10A546C7CBF7A9521676>

- having regard to the OECD policy brief of 10 July 2020, entitled ‘Skill measures to mobilise the workforce during the COVID-19 crisis’¹ ,
 - having regard to its resolution of 22 October 2020 on the future of European education in the context of COVID-19² ,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2020 on Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee³ ,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU⁴ ,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on a new skills agenda for Europe⁵ ,
 - having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on skills policies for fighting youth unemployment⁶ ,
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 September 2015 on creating a competitive EU labour market for the 21st century: matching skills and qualifications with demand and job opportunities, as a way to recover from the crisis⁷ ,
 - having regard to the question to the Commission on the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (O-000006/2021 – B9-0004/2021),
 - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
- A. whereas the green and digital transitions, together with demographic trends and globalisation, are changing the nature of work, the content of jobs and the skills and qualifications required for them; whereas upskilling and re-skilling will be crucial to coping with the challenges and opportunities generated by the accelerating macro-trends, and will be key to fill the widening skills gap in the EU labour market;
- B. whereas the ‘European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience’ complies fully with the European Pillar of Social Rights, and in particular with its first principle, which establishes that ‘everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and

¹ https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=135_135193-hgf8w9g731&title=Skill-measures-to-mobilise-the-

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0282.

³ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0267.

⁴ OJ C 28, 27.1.2020, p. 8.

⁵ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 135.

⁶ OJ C 11, 12.1.2018, p. 44.

⁷ OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 233.

acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market’;

- C. whereas education in the digital age includes digital formal education and also the informal and non-formal education in technical, soft and citizenship skills throughout European citizens’ lifetime;
- D. whereas formal education and training systems are finding it increasingly difficult to respond to the full range of individual and social needs and demands in an ever changing world;
- E. whereas the COVID-19 crisis has changed the world of work, accelerating redundancy and the obsolescence of many jobs, has accentuated the importance of digital skills and digital literacy, increased the digital divide, and reinforced the need to update the skill sets of the European workforce, in particular as regards the dramatic increase in the need for digital and technological skills as well as soft skills such as resilience and adaptability; whereas these needs will be even more urgent with the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI), which might completely change work patterns and substitute some types of activity; whereas the pandemic has disrupted educational and training activities, particularly affecting VET learners, and led to an increase in unemployment, in particular among young people, who struggle with the transition from education to work; whereas the enforced lockdown during the COVID-19 crisis has provided the opportunity for workers to update their skills;
- F. whereas key competences are crucial in the knowledge society and in a lifelong learning context, as they guarantee more flexibility in adapting to changing societies and labour markets;
- G. whereas numerous inequalities persist in the access to education and skills for vulnerable groups in society, as well as between genders, with citizens stemming from different ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities or women being less likely to have the opportunity to learn new skills;
- H. whereas individuals need to be equipped with the skills required on the labour market and the ability to quickly adapt to changing skills demands throughout their lifetime; whereas 37 % to 69 % of tasks in the EU could be automated in many sectors, leading to a significant change in performance¹; whereas according to Eurofound research 28 % of workers report having the skills to cope with more demanding duties;
- I. whereas upskilling and reskilling is not only an individual but also a social responsibility, as low levels of basic skills and low participation of adults in training activities reduce their work opportunities in the labour market, generating social and economic inequalities and contributing to high levels of poverty;
- J. whereas skills mismatches and skills shortages present important challenges to the EU’s labour market and education systems; whereas there is an immense lack of digital skills

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9150&furtherNews=yes>

amongst the workforce, and 42 % of EU citizens lack basic digital skills¹; whereas significant investments are needed to fill the digital skills gap;

- K. whereas the current generation of young people is highly skilled; whereas skilling, reskilling, upskilling and lifelong learning are not the only answer to the lack of jobs for young people; whereas additional employment measures are needed to ensure the creation of quality and sustainable jobs; whereas the employment landscape is rapidly evolving, and it is estimated that 65 % of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that do not yet exist²; whereas already 85 % of citizens used the internet in 2019, and only 58 % possessed at least basic digital skills³;
- L. whereas the ambition of the European Deal to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and the target to cut CO₂ emissions with 60 % by 2030 will mean a transition to a climate-neutral, circular, energy-efficient economy; whereas this will fundamentally impact all sectors of the economy, making re-skilling of the workforce and a focus on green skills in all educational paths crucial to accomplishing a just transition that leaves no one behind;
- M. whereas in addition to the technological and digital skills, critical thinking is one of the key skills people need in the digital era; whereas there is a clear need to enhance critical thinking among all groups of citizens in order to enable them to enjoy the full potential of digital tools, and protect them from their dangers;
- N. whereas modern, innovative and inclusive education systems with digital technologies at their core are well placed to prepare new generations of professionals for future challenges and opportunities;
- O. whereas equal access to quality and inclusive skilling, upskilling and re-skilling measures, as well as to information on skills resources, counselling, education and vocational training for all people, including for vulnerable groups, elderly people and people living in deprived urban areas or in sparsely and depopulated rural and remote areas and islands, is crucial for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience; whereas Eurofound research shows that inequality in workers' access to training has increased⁴;
- P. whereas in some EU countries the amount of time children devoted to school activities halved during the COVID-19 crisis; whereas closure of education and training institutions, even if temporary, can have significant consequences for learners, negatively impact the learning outcomes and increase existing inequalities;

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/human-capital>

² 'The future of jobs', World Economic Forum, September 2018.

³ Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020, European Commission.

⁴ 'How your birthplace affects your workplace', Eurofound (2019).
https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef19004en.pdf

- Q. whereas, unlike the compulsory school system, adult learning is a voluntary commitment entered into out of personal or professional motivation, which represents more of a challenge for education and training providers;
- R. whereas having up to date skills facilitates people staying employed in the labour market and their social inclusion, which is also fundamental for the mental health and lives of millions of our citizens;
- S. whereas there is no such thing as different skills according to sex, but there are gender differences in choices and career development;
- T. whereas education, training and skills policies are the competence of the Member States; whereas the EU plays an important role in supporting, coordinating and complementing the actions of the Member States in these areas; whereas new challenges require the mobilisation of European tools and supporting policies within the European Education Area; whereas Union programmes such as Erasmus+, the European Youth Guarantee and the European Solidarity Corps play an important role in the upskilling of young people;
- U. whereas digital technologies should, however, be perceived as tools for providing quality education and training; whereas in the future there will be an increased need for digital skills (coding, logistics and robotics) - not only for IT education courses but also for the curriculum as a whole;
- V. whereas opportunities for digitally-enabled training and skills development should be better explored and facilitated, for example online training for vulnerable groups or SME staff requiring more flexible training provision in close cooperation with the responsible regional institutions and bodies;
- W. whereas the participation rates in early childhood education and care in Europe for children under three are still below 33 % in half of EU countries¹;
- X. whereas according to Eurofound, the skills implications related to the deployment of digitally enabled business models, such as platform work, should be better explored and strategically addressed, either by tackling skills mismatches and deskilling or through skills development such as for transversal and entrepreneurial skills;
- Y. whereas in 2019, 10,2 % of 18- to 24-year-olds in the EU had at most completed lower secondary education, and were not in further education or training (early leavers)²;
- Z. whereas the important role played by workplace learning for skills utilisation and development has long been recognised, the ECS 2019 shows that only a minority of organisations coherently combines workplace practices that optimise skills use and support skills development;

¹ 'Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care Education and Training in Europe - 2019 Edition' Eurydice Report, p. 26.

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Early_leavers_from_education_and_training#Overview

- AA. whereas in 2017, 72 % of teachers in Europe were women; whereas 9 % of teachers working in the EU were under 30 years old, while 36 % were aged 50 or older¹;
1. Welcomes the Commission communication entitled ‘European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience’, which places skills at the heart of the EU policy agenda and ensures that the right to quality and inclusive training and lifelong learning for all and in all areas and sectors, enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights’ very first principle, becomes a reality across the Union;
 2. Welcomes the 12 flagship actions set out in the communication as well as the quantitative objectives to be achieved by 2025; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide broad accessibility to skilling and upskilling for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, low-skilled adults, minorities, including the Roma, as well as people with a migrant background; calls on the Commission to conduct research how to implement this right, and to introduce a monitoring mechanism which encourages Member States to set up national action programmes and present regular national reports on how this right is being upheld;
 3. Highlights the importance of access to training and re-skilling for workers in industries and sectors that need to undergo fundamental changes with a view to a green and digital transition; highlights that qualifications and certified competences provide added value to workers, improving their positions in the labour market, and can be transferred in labour market transitions; calls for public policy on skills to be oriented to recognition, certification and validation of qualifications and competences;
 4. Underlines that skills and lifelong learning are vital for sustainable growth, productivity, investment, and innovation, and are therefore key factors for the competitiveness of businesses, especially SMEs; emphasises that close cooperation and exchange of best practices between all relevant actors involved in skills development, including social partners and all levels of government, is crucial to ensuring that everyone can acquire the skills needed on the labour market and in society at large; highlights in this regard the need to collect up-to-date data, information and forecasts regarding skills needs and demand on the labour market, including at local level; supports the launch of the Pact for Skills, aiming to enhance actions undertaken by companies for upskilling and re-skilling Europe’s workforce; calls for local Pacts for Skills to better reach people from sectors hit the most by the COVID-19 crisis and to help them requalify so as to remain active in the labour market;
 5. Recalls that modernising vocational, education and training systems is key to preparing young people and adults for the green and digital transitions, and to ensuring that core age and older workers maintain and develop the skills required to safeguard employability and extend working life; recalls, further, that this modernisation is key to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; welcomes the Commission proposal for a ‘Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience’; stresses that VET programmes need to

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20191004-1#:~:text=Among%20teachers%20working%20in%20the,were%20aged%2050%20or%20older.&text=In%20all%20EU%20Member%20States,in%202017%20were%20predominantly%20female>

be targeted, future-oriented, accessible, permeable, interconnected at EU level, and learner-centred, allowing for flexible individual pathways, providing VET learners and teachers with the skill set to become active and democratic citizens, and to thrive in the labour market and society; recalls that modernising VET programmes must go hand in hand with increasing their attractiveness so that more young people opt for them; highlights the importance of best practices related to dual education systems and VET which could contribute to structural changes in the labour market and lead to higher levels of youth employment;

6. Believes that apprenticeships can play an important role in this regard, as they prepare young people for jobs that are in high demand, and can thus contribute to their sustainable integration into the labour market; calls on the Commission and the Member States to use the EU resources for the promotion of VET and encourage employers to create paid internship and apprenticeship programmes for students of vocational schools and to organise competitions and industry tournaments for them; encourages companies to ensure up-reskilling and re-skilling of their workforce and to enhance provision of apprenticeships in line with the Quality Framework for Traineeships and European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships; calls in this regard on the Commission to review existing European instruments such as the Quality Framework for Traineeships and the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, and to insert quality criteria for proposals, including the principle of fair remuneration for trainees and interns, access to social protection, sustainable employment and social rights; stresses that these criteria would ensure the transition of trainees and apprentices into stable, quality employment, and help to ensure gender-balanced opportunities for people across sectors, as well as opportunities that offer long-term security, social protection and equal and decent working conditions, and that do not contribute to the creation of precarious employment;
7. Recalls that vocational skills are one of the driving forces of the European economy, and calls for a correlation between conventional education and VET, where the development of skills in VET, either as a central focus or a complementary part of the options available for both students and adults, can boost available opportunities for job-seekers, would foster job mobility and improve labour market resilience in crisis situations;
8. Advises the Commission to provide recommendations to Member States that correlate VET with the Skills Agenda, bearing in mind national competences and the principle of subsidiarity, with a focus on improving early VET career guidance and maximising the number of opportunities European youth have for their skills development; welcomes in this aspect the input provided on the topic by Cedefop and Eurofound;
9. Underlines the paramount importance of providing active support to teachers and trainers by adopting an effective policy package to ensure that they are well prepared and upskilled for the digital and green transformation of schools and education institutions; believes that educational trade unions must be involved in defining the necessary skills and competences to be acquired by teachers and trainers within initial and continuous professional development related to the green and digital transition; believes that investments in public education must be considerably increased, and that social dialogue with the trade unions must be a key pillar to guarantee adequate salaries, pensions and fair working conditions for professionals in the educational and training sectors;

10. Stresses the need to improve, with the involvement of the social partners, the system of skills anticipation to better identify emerging changes in skills needs, deliver generic, sectoral and occupation-specific skills where needed, and minimise skills bottlenecks and skills imbalances; welcomes in this respect the Commission's proposed actions to improve skills intelligence; highlights that applying artificial intelligence and big data analysis to skills intelligence in the definition of new job profiles needs to be monitored regularly and systematically to prevent bias and direct and indirect discrimination, and that corrective measures should be ensured; underlines that strengthening career guidance from an early age and equal access to information and support for students and adult learners can help them to choose suitable educational and vocational pathways leading to employment opportunities that match their interests, talent and competences, reducing skills mismatches; emphasises the importance of cooperation between employment services and social services to identify and support people who have recently lost or are at the risk of losing their job; underlines the importance of lifelong guidance in the European Skills Agenda and the need to improve the access to quality guidance;
11. Welcomes the recommendation to Member States to strengthen early warning systems with the aim of identifying young people at risk of becoming NEETs (not in education, employment, or training); is convinced that preventive actions, such as skills assessments and career and vocational guidance, which focus on helping early school leavers into employment or education before they become unemployed, if appropriately conducted, and the provision of inclusive and non-discriminatory mainstream education could lead to a reduction in the number of NEETs in the longer term;
12. Stresses the need to boost the role of social partners by ensuring that the skills policy encourages collective agreements regarding the definition and regulation of skills and continuing training by consulting the social partners about competency needs and the update of the curricula of education and training systems, and by co-designing on-the-job training with workers' representatives to adapt it to the needs of the workforce;
13. Calls on the Commission to include an indicator on skills gaps in the social scoreboard, in line with the aims and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which can be useful for policy makers at national level to identify where more efforts are required and to better coordinate at EU level, tracking skills gaps evolutions and progresses, and incentivising an upward convergence among Member States;
14. Is of the opinion that the mutual recognition of learning outcomes, diplomas, training, professional qualifications and skills acquired in another Member State must be improved, and will help to overcome skills shortages and skills mismatches; believes that this will also enable adults to obtain full qualifications, foster mobility, make the EU's labour market more integrated and resilient, and strengthen Europe's competitiveness; emphasises the importance of addressing skills shortages and mismatches by facilitating the mobility of learners and cross-border recognition of qualifications through a better use of tools such as the European Qualifications Framework, Europass CV, the European Credit Transfer System (ECVET), Skills Panorama, ESCO or EURES; welcomes the Commission communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025;
15. Emphasises that many citizens gain valuable skills and experience outside the system of formal education or training as is for example the case of informal carers providing care

to persons with disabilities or the elderly; believes that these informal skills should be recognised, as they can help the informal carers to increase their possibilities on the labour market;

16. Calls for the full implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive, as the common training framework it includes can increase the number of professionals benefitting from the automatic recognition system, and supports correlating it with the European Commission's development of a digital and pan-European EU Skills - Passport;
17. Calls on the Commission and Member States to increase their efforts in order to retain foreign students after they have graduated from EU universities; stresses that granting graduates access to intra-EU mobility and a jobseekers visa could increase the attractiveness of the EU as a whole;
18. Calls for the unblocking of the current Blue Card proposal in order to provide European companies with the competences necessary for them to remain or become competitive;
19. Notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the importance of both basic and advanced digital skills and resilient education systems, and their ability to adjust between in-person, distance and online and hybrid methods of teaching; notes further that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the skills demand on the labour market, thus increasing the digital skills gap, and exacerbated pre-existing education inequalities and deficits; highlights the need for every citizen to have at least basic digital skills and for highly-skilled specialists to be trained and equipped with advanced digital skills and innovative and entrepreneurial thinking;
20. Regrets that gender gaps persist in women's access to skills development and participation in the labour market¹; underlines that the main challenges women face include barriers to education and training in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects, sociocultural and economic constraints, especially in rural and informal economies, and a significant failure to promote women's equal opportunities to choose often male-dominated occupations; calls on the Commission to encourage mentoring networks, thereby allowing more female role models to encourage women to make alternative choices to classically gender-stereotyped occupations²; calls for the avoidance of stereotypes and gender stereotyping through training because it is linked to employability and creates a vicious cycle, thus perpetuating the pronounced segregation of labour; stresses that 90 % of jobs require basic digital skills, and women only represent 17 % of people in information and communications technology (ICT) courses and careers in the EU³ and only 36 % of STEM graduates⁴, despite the fact that girls outperform boys in digital literacy⁵;

¹ ILO Policy brief, August 2020, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/--ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_244380.pdf

² 'ICT for Work: Digital Skills in the Workplace', European Commission, 2017.

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20180425-1>

⁴ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9540ffa1-4478-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁵ 2018 International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS).

21. Highlights the importance of education and skills development to address gender bias and support gender equality, and calls for increased efforts at both the national and European level to break this gender imbalance and to ensure that women can access quality lifelong learning and training, including after periods of absence for care reasons; emphasises the need for gender-sensitive recruitment and selection processes in the private and public sectors, and particularly in future-oriented sectors such as STEM and the digital sector where women are underrepresented; highlights in this regard that discrimination on grounds of gender harms not only the individual affected but also society as a whole; recalls that measures must be taken so that the impact of the crisis does not exacerbate gender inequality, mitigating the disproportionate and long-lasting impact on women's rights, incomes and social protection, and preventing further inequalities and discrimination in the world of work, paying particular attention to the highly gendered labour market, the digital and green transition, and the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work;
22. Underlines that equal opportunities for all are key, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to make it a priority to close the digital skills gap by ensuring that vulnerable regions and deprived citizens, as well as those at the risk of social exclusion, including people with disabilities or coming from ethnic minorities, have access to digital education and training, the minimum required hardware, widespread access to the internet, and digital support and other technological learning tools; underlines that support must be given to these categories to raise the digital skills they need to thrive and to avoid deepening inequalities, ensuring that no one is left behind;
23. Notes with great interest the opportunities and challenges provided by the spread of digital solutions like telework, for which the development of digital skills is crucial; recalls the importance of a European legislative framework aiming to regulate telework conditions and the right to disconnect across the Union, and to ensure decent working and employment conditions in the digital economy driven by the acquisition of new skills;
24. Stresses the numerous opportunities that digital work offers to improve the working conditions of employees, including for employees close to the age of retirement, and to increase the inclusion of people with disabilities; regrets that people with disabilities continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market, and that too often their lack of access to education and training may be responsible for their exclusion from the labour market; calls for a particular focus to be placed by the Commission in its recommendations to Member States on ways to improve the access of people with disabilities to digital skilling or re-skilling, coordinating it with the new needs of the emerging global digital economy;
25. Notes that in the context of increasing teleworking, the Commission and Member States must make skills fostering this new way of work central to their strategies; underlines that tele-education and tele-schools pose challenges to both educators and recipients of education alike, and that the skills needed to deliver tele-education and the training of trainers and educators are a short-term priority for Europe at this time;
26. Calls on the Commission to support the offer of training for workers in receipt of short-time work or partial unemployment allowances including via the SURE scheme; calls on Member States to offer suitable training measures for affected workers;

27. Calls on employers to adapt workplace practices that capitalise on the skills of the workforce and that support skills development through focus on the education of the next generation of managers on issues regarding the deployment of organisational practices leveraging skills utilisation and development, as well as on backing national governments and social partners in developing networks and support structures to advise organisations on the most suitable combination of workplace practices for their circumstances;
28. Calls for the facilitation of the recognition, validation and portability of attainments in the field of non-formal and informal learning, including those developed in digitally-enabled employment forms such as platform work;
29. Calls for immediate and bold European, national, regional and local measures, evaluation mechanisms and resources to put digital skills at the heart of education and training policies, while safeguarding a high level of reading and mathematical skills among learners, making digital skills, IT tools and internet access available for all, improving the digital skills of teachers and trainers, and equipping schools, training institutions, VET providers, organisations active in the field of adult education and universities, with public and independent online learning platforms and other technologies and the digital infrastructure necessary to allow for online and distance learning, as well as blended learning; stresses, in this regard, the importance of a genuine lifelong learning approach; supports the Commissions planned actions as set out in the Skills Agenda and the Digital Education Plan 2021-2027, and calls for increased cooperation between the Commission and the Member States in this area; underlines the importance of incentives for the development of digital learning content and core curricula modules in line with labour market needs, focusing on digital and green skills, including through on-line training platforms;
30. Deplores the fact that in Europe there are still children without any access to education, as well as pupils and students without any or adequate access to digital education due to a lack of any or adequate digital equipment, software or internet connection; reiterates the need to improve connectivity at all levels, in particular in rural and remote areas where it is often lacking, and to increase access to digital equipment; points to the cutting-edge innovation in educational computers, tablets and software in Europe;
31. Underlines that the consequences of COVID-19 offer a unique opportunity to accelerate the digital and technological revolution in lifelong learning, which can break physical barriers, where possible, and significantly increase its reach and impact; encourages Member States and education providers to increase location-less learning opportunities, allowing students in remote and rural areas or abroad to access courses around the EU without location constraints;
32. Stresses that European and national measures, including educational programmes and targeted investments, should be developed and implemented with the ultimate aim of ensuring citizens' readiness and preparation for future jobs which require digital skills, in order to seize the full potential of the digital transition in the EU labour market and make it possible for companies to make full use of new working methods, such as telework;
33. Points out the need to further clarify the European Universities initiative and its ambition to set standards for higher education in the EU; reiterates that successful

cooperation between universities has always relied on a bottom-up approach, academic independence and excellence, and that the Bologna process is an important tool for university cooperation in the EU and beyond;

34. Notes that the green transition is an important driver of labour demand across all sectors and can create millions of jobs; recalls that a successful transition to a green economy needs to go hand in hand with skilling, re-skilling and upskilling measures to develop the skills, knowledge and competence required by a green economy; welcomes in this respect the Commission's actions to support the acquisition of skills for the green transition; calls for swift action to avoid skills bottlenecks in this area and to allow the EU to remain a global leader in the green economy; encourages the Member States and regional and local authorities to integrate sustainable development and environmental competences and skills into training and education systems;
35. Highlights that student and teacher mobility is one of the main tools for exchanging ideas and best practices, and to increase the quality of skills training across the Union; insists that such mobility has to be accessible and inclusive; notes that, while physical mobility should always take a prime role, virtual learning will become increasingly important as a complement, and also as a replacement in extremis, as evidenced by the COVID-19 measures;
36. Notes that creative and artistic skills are essential for the economy, and calls for the introduction of a more horizontal approach in the Skills Agenda in order to include them into all curricula;
37. Stresses that the implementation of the Skills Agenda requires appropriate funding both on the European, national and local level; expects the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework and Next Generation EU to provide for significantly increased resources for skills development; recalls that the main responsibility for up- and reskilling lies with the Member States and companies, and calls therefore on Member States to invest more in skills development and education budgets since important human capital investment is key to ensuring sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience;
38. Underlines the importance of programmes and instruments such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, the European Solidarity Corps, Creative Europe, the Digital Europe Programme and the Youth and Child Guarantees in supporting young people and adults to gain the new competences and quality skills needed in the digital and green economy and the world of work, and in providing learning mobility opportunities; calls for the potential of these programmes to be continuously explored by the Commission and Member States in order to foster permanent skilling correlation with job market needs;
39. Emphasises the potential opportunities offered by the Erasmus + programme, especially in the adult education field, and the need to boost its 2021-2027 budget;
40. Calls on the Member States to prioritise reskilling and upskilling in their recovery and resilience plans; calls on Member States to ensure that the Just Transition Fund and ESF+ have sufficient funding and support integrated plans at local level to help upskilling and reskilling especially for the most vulnerable groups – including people at risk of becoming unemployed – to ensure every person in vulnerable sectors can requalify and develop new skills to remain active in the labour market and benefit from the green and digital transitions; points out the potential of individual learning accounts,

a funding mechanism key to the implementation of Skills Agenda, as a step towards universal lifelong learning entitlements;

41. Underlines that vocational and career guidance is crucial to supporting motivated and smart career choices, and preventing students from leaving education and training early, and that support during studies and training is also key to a successful learning path and skills development; encourages the Commission and Member States to ensure the availability of such guidance for youth that includes the development of entrepreneurial skills;
42. Underlines the importance for investment in formal and informal training and in lifelong learning to ensure fair training and workforce transitions and the promotion of training and learning during working hours;
43. Notes that the main source of EU education funding is the European Social Fund+, and stresses the importance of ensuring that these funds remain available for this purpose, especially in times of crisis;
44. Calls for the establishment of paid educational leave policies in line with the ILO Paid Educational Leave Convention that allows workers to attend training programmes during work hours and at no personal cost in order to promote lifelong learning;
45. Underlines the need for education, outreach, guidance and motivation strategies as well as lifelong learning systems to be of high quality and inclusive, flexible and accessible for all, in order to promote labour market competitiveness, social inclusion and equal opportunities; calls on the Commission and in particular the Member States to ensure equal access to quality education, and to facilitate access to high quality programmes for skills development for adult learners, including low-qualified and low-skilled adults, as well as disadvantaged groups and vulnerable citizens, such as people with disabilities, elderly people, homeless people, NEETs and people with a migrant background; underlines the need to raise awareness of the importance of skills development throughout life for individual, economic and social benefit; encourages the involvement of educational stakeholders, including social services, civil society and non-formal education providers, to identify and reach those that are furthest from labour market; underlines the need for innovative local solutions to re-think how to address the skills gap and mismatch;
46. Underlines that education participants' potential can be boosted through practice, and stresses in this context the importance of increasing the influence of employers on the model for the vocational education system; emphasises that employers should play an important role in providing opportunities for teachers and trainers, internships in enterprises, and thus contribute to increasing the professional competences of teachers and trainers; calls for closer cooperation between business and education at all levels by providing internship and apprenticeship programmes in companies for VET learners and students;
47. Stresses the importance of reaching people in rural and remote areas and make up-skilling and reskilling opportunities more accessible and designed for people working in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and other jobs in these regions, and to provide them with green, digital and all the necessary skills to better grasp present and future opportunities

offered by the green and blue economy, and to enable them to make an important contribution to the preservation of the environment;

48. Recalls that out-of-school programmes and non-formal and informal learning, including volunteering activities, are important for providing adaptable learning opportunities and new skills and knowledge to the majority of people who are beyond the reach of formal education;
49. Underlines the need to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and treating teachers' high social status as a strategic direction for action in individual EU countries; stresses that attracting the best candidates to the teaching profession, together with improving qualifications and upskilling of senior teachers, should be treated as priority by the Commission and the Member States;
50. Underlines that the main competence for up- and re-skilling lies with the Member States; believes that in order to achieve the twin ecological and digital transitions, there is a real opportunity and benefit to developing a pan-EU high-tech skills one-stop-shop that coordinates best practice, industry-led high-tech up- and reskilling, and that uses data-driven approaches to determine skills needs across the EU;
51. Stresses the importance of transversal, interpersonal and intercultural skills, in addition to digital and technical skills, in ensuring a rounded education for individuals, in tackling present and future global challenges, and in supporting the digital and green transitions, making them more inclusive and fairer;
52. Notes the actions planned by the Commission to promote Skills for Life, in particular the updating of the European Agenda for Adult Learning; encourages the Commission to deepen this focus by embedding life skills into all sectors of education and training; stresses that life skills are also to be understood outside labour market needs; underlines that all citizens should have access to skills for personal development, in order to be empowered in today's fast changing societies; recalls that this is particularly important for supporting citizens' resilience in times of crisis, when attention needs to be paid to well-being; calls on the Commission and Member States to give specific attention to the development of soft skills such as analytical skills, emotional intelligence, leadership, entrepreneurship and financial skills, empowerment, teamwork, communication, cooperation, responsibility, adaptability, creativity, innovation, critical thinking and language skills, which will become even more important for active citizenship and the world of work post-COVID-19;
53. Points out that in an ageing society, it is crucial to ensure learning throughout life, anchoring lifelong learning culture from youth until older age; recalls that combating unemployment among elderly people in the EU remains important; calls on the Commission and Member States to pay greater attention to older workers and to ensure that they can participate in tailor-made upskilling and re-skilling programmes allowing them to adapt to changing skills needs, and thus to stay active in the labour market for longer, enjoy good quality of life and a sufficient level of independence; underlines that special attention should be paid to the improvement of digital skills and technologies, which can offer new methods and opportunities for adult and elderly people's education as well, and to guaranteeing internet access and improving digital infrastructure, in particular in rural and remote areas; notes in this regard the role of community centres, libraries and tailored distance learning solutions in order to make lifelong learning more

accessible to older people; underlines that older generations are also a precious resource because of their experience, which they should be encouraged to share in order to increase skills in younger generations of workers;

54. Underlines the need to increase the number of children under the age of three in early childhood education and care (ECEC), and to put a greater emphasis on development from the first years of a child's life, researching skills and a creative approach to learning about the world; points out that early start of pre-school education has a significant impact on achieving better outcomes in the later stages of education, and that the imbalance in participation in ECEC can contribute to the differences in the opportunities and educational activities available to children from the earliest stages of development;
55. Highlights the need for swift implementation of the actions announced by the Commission to meet the skills needs of the labour market and to contribute to a swift recovery from the COVID-19 crisis; calls on the Commission to provide a clear timeline of the envisaged actions;
56. Underlines the need for solutions aimed at enabling companies and private employers to encourage and support on-the-job training courses and training leave, including by examining training vouchers or the automatic recognition of skills acquired on the job; recalls the strategic importance of initiatives such as EuroSkills and WorldSkills, which are model examples of partnerships between business, government, and regional and educational authorities; calls for support for the further development of the EuroSkills initiative by financing joint projects, exchanging experiences, building the potential of institutions providing training for the needs of EuroSkills, creating EuroSkills master classes, industry campuses for talented youth, and a training system for trainers and industry experts;
57. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.