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P9_TA(2022)0217

Establishing the European Education Area by 2025 — micro credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment**European Parliament resolution of 19 May 2022 on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 — micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment (2022/2568(RSP))**

(2022/C 479/06)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union and Protocol No 2 to the Treaties on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,
 - having regard to Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 1 July 2020 entitled 'European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience' (COM(2020)0274),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 17 January 2018 on the Digital Education Action Plan (COM(2018)0022),
 - having regard to the Commission's final report of December 2020 entitled 'A European approach to micro-credentials — output of the micro-credentials higher education consultation group',
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 November 2021 on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the questions to the Commission and the Council on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 — micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment (O-000011/2022 — B9-0013/2022 and O-000012/2022 — B9-0014/2022),
 - 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 Culture and Education,
- A. whereas in accordance with the European Pillar of Social Rights, access to quality and inclusive education and lifelong learning is a basic human right for all, and is essential for acquiring and retaining skills, playing a full and active part in society, and securing effective access to an evolving labour market;
- B. whereas the Commission aims to establish the European Education Area by 2025;
- C. whereas changes in the labour market have been making skills rapidly more obsolete and led to growing demand for flexible learning opportunities; whereas motivation, time and funding are key factors in upskilling and reskilling;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0452.

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1. Welcomes the Commission's proposals to develop a European approach to micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for environmental sustainability as part of the European Education Area by 2025, which would help make learning paths more flexible, broaden learning opportunities, deepen mutual recognition, create ties with the digital and green transitions and strengthen the role played by both higher education and vocational education and training (VET) institutions in lifelong learning;
2. Highlights that micro-credentials and individual learning accounts can be important for people who want to upskill, reskill and obtain officially recognised qualifications so as to keep pace with the rapid changes in society and an increasingly digitalised labour market, as well as switch paths for personal development or upward social mobility;
3. Calls on the Council to adopt a common definition for the European Education Area of micro-credentials and common standards, which would form the basis for quality assurance, recognition, transparency and portability;
4. Calls on the Commission to deliver a robust instrument that motivates the Member States to implement micro-credentials, which should remain voluntary; notes that this is currently absent from the proposal for a Council recommendation and highlights, in this regard, the successful piloting of the European Universities Initiative as a model;
5. Insists on the importance of providing user-friendly and regularly updated national registers, which should be visible and easily accessible through an EU portal, with a view to guaranteeing the quality of micro-credentials and making micro-credentials available in a digital format to support upskilling, reskilling and the acquisition of new competences, increase transparency and improve cross-border and international mobility, exchanges and cooperation;
6. Highlights that European micro-credentials are particularly necessary for the cross-sectoral and cross-border recognition of shorter periods of learning, which is fundamental for encouraging greater mobility across Europe; asks the Commission to assess and report on the use of micro-credentials in the recognition of skills and competences acquired through European learning mobility and civic engagement under the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes;
7. Underlines the supporting role micro-credentials should play in linking informal and non-formal learning with formal education; urges that a common framework be developed and implemented to recognise the skills, competences and methodologies acquired through informal and non-formal learning;
8. Urges the Commission to propose a common approach to psychosocial and soft skills in line with the definitions adopted by the World Health Organization and UNESCO; stresses that this approach should take inspiration from current initiatives and projects funded under EU programmes and from the Commission Joint Research Centre policy report on lifelong competences⁽³⁾, and should be devised in consultation with the Member States, educational institutions, teachers and labour market actors in order, inter alia, to address the practical aspects of implementation;
9. Points out that the automatic mutual recognition of micro-credentials within the European Education Area could be a step towards facilitating the automatic recognition of qualifications more generally; considers that establishing a coherent European micro-credentials system that involves relevant stakeholders would be a step forward in reinforcing Europe's educational power and global competitiveness;
10. Reminds public authorities of their essential role in ensuring balance in the skills training offered to adults and points out, in particular, that basic, transversal, psychosocial and soft skills are as important to the green and digital transitions as technical skills;

⁽³⁾ Joint Research Centre, Science for Policy Report, *LifeComp: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020.

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11. Calls on tertiary education institutions to develop micro-credentials to offer learners socially-engaged, high-quality and inclusive experiences, including volunteering, mentoring and youth work during their studies;
 12. Highlights the importance of providing resources for guidance and counselling services to help adults and young people identify and certify the skills and competences they have already acquired through informal learning and direct them towards opportunities to further develop their skill sets, so that micro-credentials become tools for inclusion rather than perpetuating or entrenching existing inequities in access to upskilling and reskilling; insists on the use of micro-credentials at undergraduate level in order to ensure that the primary beneficiaries are not learners from groups that already enjoy advantages in terms of education and professional status;
 13. Welcomes the fact that individual learning accounts are, together with micro-credentials, designed to make lifelong learning more inclusive, accessible and affordable; recalls that these initiatives are meant to be for all, regardless of age, gender, employment status, income or education level; highlights the need to promote a lifelong learning mindset among young people;
 14. Insist that the choices available through individual learning accounts should not be too narrowly limited to the needs of the labour market, but should serve to empower citizens by allowing them to make individual choices and opening up opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship;
 15. Encourages the Member States to prioritise training entitlements in individual learning accounts for lower-skilled adults, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged learners, persons from vulnerable or marginalised groups, refugees and those living in remote or rural areas, and to establish clear criteria for their allocation;
 16. Warns that the implementation of micro-credentials and individual learning accounts should not create unintended barriers for adult learners who need to cover the cost of longer-term and/or formal education programmes;
 17. Believes that learning for environmental sustainability should be mainstreamed across educational curricula throughout the EU with a lifelong learning perspective, including through European and global citizenship education, in order to empower learners to enable them to become active proponents of more inclusive and sustainable societies;
 18. Highlights the potential manifold benefits of all three initiatives, as increased participation in adult learning programmes is associated with improvements in environmental literacy, greater civic participation, and a better relationship with the environment, sense of well-being and life satisfaction;
 19. Highlights the importance of including the cultural and creative sectors to foster mindsets that are geared towards sustainable development in the regeneration of economic realities, as exemplified by certain European Capitals of Culture and the new opportunities provided by the New European Bauhaus;
 20. Insists that these initiatives be given excellent visibility at national, regional and local levels, including their European dimension and added value, so that Europeans can clearly identify the possible benefits and become aware of the merits of a European Education Area;
 21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
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