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REPORT

on boosting skills in the Union – opportunities for vocational education and training in times of transition
(2026/2070(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on boosting skills in the Union – opportunities for vocational education and training in times of transition

(2026/2070(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Herning Declaration on attractive and inclusive Vocational Education and Training for increased competitiveness and quality jobs 2026-2030, adopted by the Member States on 12 September 2025,
- having regard to the Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2025 entitled ‘The Union of Skills’ ([COM\(2025\)0090](#)),
- having regard to the recommendation for a Council recommendation on human capital in the European Union, adopted by the Council on 9 March 2026,
- having regard to Regulation 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013²,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights and in particular Principle 1 on the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning;
- having regard to its resolution of 11 July 2023 on fostering and adapting vocational training as a tool for employees’ success and a building block for the EU economy in the new industry 4.0³;
- having regard to the legacy of the European Year of Skills and the need to ensure that its objectives continue to guide EU policies on education, training and labour market participation;
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 March 2025 entitled ‘A Roadmap for Women’s Rights’ (COM(2025)0097);
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 5 March 2026 entitled ‘Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030’ (COM(2026)0113);
- having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,

¹ OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1.

² OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/817/oj>.

³ OJ C, C/2024/3998, 17.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3998/oj>.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A10-0259/2026),
- A. whereas the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognises education and access to vocational and continuing training as a fundamental right; whereas the UN's Sustainable Development Goals envisage equal access by 2030 for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education and a substantial increase in the number of young people and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship;
- B. whereas 34.7 % of Europeans have obtained a vocational education and training (VET) diploma; whereas 49 % of all students in the EU are enrolled in a VET programme⁴; whereas VET is regarded as less valuable than academic education in many Member States; whereas students and graduates of VET can experience social bias or reduced opportunities as a result of this perception gap; whereas this perception gap persists despite a significant structural skills gap, with 80 % of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reporting difficulties in finding workers with the required skills, while 22 % of employed persons with tertiary education are overqualified for their jobs, affecting women disproportionately (22.0 % compared with 20.5 % for men)⁵ and exceeding 30 % in several Member States; whereas in 2025, 11.0 % of young people aged 15 to 29 in the EU were neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET); whereas public investment per learner and direct financial aid are systematically lower for upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education – the levels where VET is concentrated – than for tertiary education across most Member States⁶;
- C. whereas the Draghi report on the future of European competitiveness⁷ warns that Europe's long-term productivity and competitiveness are constrained by structural weaknesses, including insufficient investment in skills, education, and human capital, and emphasises that closing the innovation and skills gap is essential for sustaining Europe's economic model in the face of global competition; whereas the importance of high-quality VET and in particular upskilling and reskilling plays a key role in ensuring the availability of skilled workers needed for Europe's industrial, technological and green transitions, which can only become a success if workers are provided with the necessary skills and competences;
- D. whereas the EU is experiencing a growing demand for vocational professions driven by the green and digital transition, strategic autonomy objectives, industrial reshoring, infrastructure investment and demographic change; whereas labour-market intelligence shows acute and persistent shortages in VET-intensive sectors; whereas Cedefop's skills forecast projects that, by 2035, 60 % of all job openings will require up to medium-level qualifications⁸, the level most commonly provided through VET pathways; whereas

⁴ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), '[VET statistics and indicators](#)'.

⁵ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), '[VET statistics and indicators](#)'.

⁶ Scarpato, G. and Pocius, D., '[Rights and benefit gaps for vocational education and training \(VET\) learners and professionals in the EU](#)', study commissioned by the European Parliament, June 2026.

⁷ Draghi, M. '[The future of European competitiveness](#)', September 2024.

⁸ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), '[Skills Forecast](#)'.

Cedefop also highlights that AI is reshaping labour demand in ways that strengthen and revitalise vocational occupations⁹;

- E. whereas VET is a key pillar of the European Education Area, the Union of Skills and the European lifelong learning ecosystem and contributes not only to critical economic and social infrastructure, labour market participation and skills development, but also to social cohesion, democratic engagement and resilience among young people; whereas VET institutions often serve as trusted and inclusive learning environments, particularly in urban and disadvantaged regions where young people may be at greater risk of social exclusion, disengagement from civic life, radicalisation or polarisation; whereas strengthening VET should therefore contribute to fostering inclusion and societal resilience across the EU by equipping people with the competences needed to think critically, adapt to change, participate fully in society and exercise active citizenship;
- F. whereas equal access to VET, including upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all workers and jobseekers, plays a key role in supporting access to quality employment and career development opportunities; whereas the upcoming VET strategy should treat initial and continuous VET as equal pillars, with clear objectives and dedicated funding; whereas quality VET pathways that ensure decent working conditions, as well as access to social security systems and quality public services, will play a prominent role in improving the attractiveness of vocational professions and retaining and attracting skilled workers; whereas strengthening personal development and learning guidance from an early age and supporting equal access to information can help people to choose suitable learning pathways to quality employment opportunities;
- G. whereas learner and teacher well-being is a crucial factor for the quality, outcomes, inclusiveness and attractiveness of VET; whereas according to a 2025 Cedefop survey, only 18 % of VET teachers believe that their profession is valued and on average VET teachers receive salaries 11 % lower than those of other tertiary educated professionals¹⁰; whereas growing shortages of VET teachers and trainers threaten the future quality, inclusiveness and attractiveness of VET in Europe; whereas the attractiveness, social recognition, remuneration and working conditions of the VET teaching profession are essential for recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and trainers;
- H. whereas the EU's policy orientation since the Lisbon Strategy has placed a disproportionate emphasis on academic attainment, underestimating the strategic importance of vocational professions for the EU's industrial base and resilience; whereas recent geopolitical developments, supply-chain disruptions, the green and digital transition, social and territorial cohesion and the need to strengthen Europe's productive capacity and industrial competitiveness demonstrate the necessity of investing substantially in VET and lifelong learning across the EU;
- I. whereas persistent societal and policy biases that frame educational pathways in hierarchical terms contribute to the unattractiveness of vocational pathways and to academic drift, thereby limiting equal recognition of talents, undermining social

⁹ Cedefop, '[Reverse gear: how AI is bringing vocational occupations back](#)'.

¹⁰ Cedefop, '[Cedefop launches the first European Vocational Teacher Survey to tackle critical VET teacher shortages](#)'.

cohesion and exacerbating critical skills shortages in vocational occupations; whereas such biases can also reinforce social and gender inequalities affecting career progression and income opportunities; whereas VET should be valued as a high-quality learning pathway in its own right, and whereas parity of esteem between vocational and academic pathways should be encouraged and supported by the Member States in policy design, learner guidance, mobility opportunities, recognition systems, investment in quality and public communication on VET;

- J. whereas the attractiveness and quality of VET depend not only on labour-market relevance, but also on teaching and training, guidance systems, inclusive access, permeability between education and training pathways, recognition of skills and qualifications and the development of basic, digital, green, civic, social and transversal competences; K. whereas while VET can play a key role in promoting women's economic independence, reducing gender gaps in employment and supporting equal opportunities throughout their working life, persistent gender stereotypes continue to shape educational and career choices and women remain under-represented in many VET pathways, particularly in STEM and technical fields with women representing only 15 % of graduates of mid-level VET in STEM fields in 2023; whereas VET policy should help close these gaps by promoting women's equal access, guidance and progression into sectors with strong labour demand, thereby contributing to labour market participation and fostering women's entrepreneurship, strengthening their financial independence and promoting their social inclusion; whereas the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy recognises gender-sensitive education as a key tool to combat stereotypes and promote equal opportunities for girls and women; whereas the Member States should be encouraged to share best practices for widening women's access to, and increasing their retention within, vocational education and training;
- L. whereas unnecessary administrative barriers, fragmented recognition procedures and insufficient interoperability between national systems continue to hinder the free movement of workers, particularly VET trained professionals; whereas enhanced cooperation between Member States and regional frameworks can contribute to building mutual trust, modernising recognition procedures and facilitating labour mobility for VET professionals, while maintaining high standards; whereas recognition systems should also support the validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, including volunteering and work experience;
- M. whereas the European Pillar of Social Rights sets the goal that at least 60 % of all adults should be participating in training every year by 2030; whereas the EU lags far behind on its 2030 target for adults participating in learning, hampering much needed upskilling and reskilling; whereas it can still be difficult for workers to access training as a result of work obligations and the cost of training; whereas participation in training and the use of learning entitlements remain significantly lower among vocationally educated compared to academically educated workers, thereby reinforcing current skills inequalities; whereas skills demand and training provision do not always sufficiently align, and learning opportunities are still too often disconnected from the workplace;
- N. whereas it is vital for European economic prosperity to have a thriving vocationally trained population; whereas individual mobility and apprentice mobility are key drivers for quality European vocational education and for fostering personal growth, skills

development and active citizenship; whereas participation rates in mobility remain lower for VET learners than for academic education students; whereas barriers include upfront costs, insufficient financial support, language obstacles, difficulties in recognising learning outcomes acquired abroad and limited employer support for apprentice mobility; whereas additional barriers, such as rising living and housing costs, might risk excluding learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds from vocational education and training mobility opportunities;

- O. whereas the Bologna Process has established comparability in the standards and transparency mechanisms for academic education qualifications; whereas the Copenhagen Process sought to increase transparency, improve quality assurance, facilitate mobility and foster mutual trust in VET across the Member States, but achieved only limited convergence due to the diversity of national VET systems and the strong embeddedness of VET within national labour market and industrial institutions;
- P. whereas apprenticeship-based and dual vocational education and training systems, which combine school-based learning with substantial work-based training in enterprises, have proven effective in supporting the transition from education to employment; whereas Member States with well-established dual VET systems have often recorded comparatively favourable youth labour market outcomes and can provide valuable examples of good practice for strengthening the Union of Skills¹¹;
- Q. whereas SMEs play a central role in apprenticeship-based vocational education and training across the EU; whereas their participation in cross-border mobility schemes can be constrained by administrative and organisational challenges, particularly where the temporary absence of apprentices places additional pressure on small businesses; whereas targeted support and simplified procedures can help increase participation in mobility opportunities for VET learners;

Recognising the value of VET in society

1. Welcomes the renewed political attention given to VET in the context of the Commission's Union of Skills initiative, the Herning Declaration within the Copenhagen Process¹², and the forthcoming European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training; highlights the importance of VET for the EU's social progress, economic prosperity and resilience, competitiveness, industrial sovereignty and human capital development, stresses the importance of promoting and valorising VET in order to improve its attractiveness as an inclusive quality pathway to education and quality employment; calls on the Commission to ensure that the upcoming VET strategy addresses the quality and relevance of VET curricula, coupled with improved promotion of VET programmes to learners, employers and the wider public so as to raise awareness of the employment and progression opportunities VET can offer;
2. Stresses that formal vocational education providers and established qualifications focusing on foundational skills should continue to form the basis of VET strategies and

¹¹ Cedefop, '[The role of work-based learning in VET and tertiary education: evidence from the 2016 EU labour force survey](#)', 2021.

¹² European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission, '[The Copenhagen Declaration](#)', November 2002.

provision, while modular, task-specific and digital learning programmes and credentials can play an important complementary role, provided that they meet relevant and transferable quality-assurance criteria³. Stresses that VET should be viewed as a tool that can both support the personal development of students and workers and address labour market shortages, thereby contributing to the EU's competitiveness and prosperity, supporting innovation across all sectors and promoting quality employment and career development opportunities;

4. Stresses the need to ensure that VET students and graduates feel that their qualifications and professions are valued equally to academic education, to ensure social cohesion and inclusion, and equal opportunities in access to employment, mobility, further learning and career progression; stresses the importance of promoting vocational pathways among young people, particularly girls, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to address persistent negative perceptions surrounding the image and value of VET through early and continuous career guidance, targeted engagement with parents and families, quality paid apprenticeships, awareness-raising campaigns and long-term investment in regional skills ecosystems that strengthen the visibility and attractiveness of VET; calls on the Member States to sufficiently invest in guidance services and tutoring systems, recognising the key role of tutors and counsellors in supporting learners, alongside teachers and trainers; calls on the Commission to build upon Cedefop's EU reference framework for lifelong guidance in the upcoming VET strategy;
5. Emphasises that VET must be inclusive and should play a key role in supporting learners with fewer opportunities or at risk of exclusion from society and the labour market and should address barriers linked to gender, disability, migration background, geography and socio-economic status; calls on the Member States to progressively close the gender gap in vocational education and career choices, particularly STEM, and to encourage a more balanced participation of women and men across vocational pathways, sectors and occupations by addressing gender stereotypes and equal access to quality training; highlights the importance of VET for persons with disabilities and stresses the need to develop strategies to provide more and better VET opportunities for them and facilitate their integration in the labour market;
6. Calls on the Member States to improve the adequacy, accessibility and fairness of financial support for VET learners; notes with concern persistent disparities in many Member States whereby learners in upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education receive lower levels of public financial support than those in tertiary education¹³; calls on the Member States, and the Commission, where appropriate and taking into account national specificities, to ensure that existing academic education support instruments and public support systems are extended to VET learners, rather than creating separate systems; emphasises that eligibility rules for student cards, financial support schemes, recognition systems and access to public sector job opportunities should be designed in an inclusive manner that does not discriminate between learners in VET and academic education;

¹³ Scarpato, G. and Pocius, D., '[Rights and benefit gaps for vocational education and training \(VET\) learners and professionals in the EU](#)', study commissioned by the European Parliament, June 2026.

7. Stresses the importance of vocational pathways that remain accessible after the completion of general upper-secondary education and that combine advanced educational attainment with work-based learning, thereby broadening career choices and supporting the development of highly skilled workers; further stresses that all VET qualifications and credentials should offer clear pathways for further studies or progression; emphasises that pursuing VET at upper-secondary level should not prevent individuals from continuing their studies in tertiary education institutions, including advanced VET institutions and universities;
8. Emphasises the potential of micro-credentials and modular learning opportunities to support upskilling and reskilling throughout working life and to provide flexible learning pathways for workers and employers in a rapidly changing labour market;
9. Calls for the EU institutions and the Member States to promote more respectful terminology for educational pathways based on the levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) rather than on terms such as ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ education; calls on the Commission to ensure that its relevant strategies, communications, guidance and funding instruments reflect and promote the equal recognition and valuation of vocational and academic pathways; calls on the Commission to amend the EU-level target for tertiary educational attainment to more explicitly recognise the contribution of tertiary-level VET, including short-cycle and other higher-level VET programmes, and to complement the existing tertiary-attainment target with an equally ambitious EU-level target for participation in and completion of initial VET, in order to reflect the equal value of vocational and academic pathways and the Commission’s intention to strengthen the status and attractiveness of VET and support access to quality jobs on the labour market or to further education;
10. Highlights the under-representation of vocationally educated individuals in political and administrative decision-making, limiting the diversity of vocational perspectives in policy design; welcomes, in this regard, Parliament’s decision to open a number of Schuman traineeships to candidates holding VET qualifications; calls for the Member States and EU institutions to involve VET students and their organisations, apprentices, graduates, teachers, trainers, employers, trade unions and chambers of commerce at all levels of policymaking to ensure equal participation, and to offer quality and fairly remunerated VET apprenticeships, traineeships and jobs; calls on the Commission to complement its Scientific Advice Mechanism with a practical advice mechanism to systematically integrate the expertise of the above VET actors on practical implementation of the policy cycle;
11. Regrets that discrimination on the basis of education pathway occurs in Europe; welcomes the fact that Bulgaria, Croatia, Portugal and Slovenia already provide legal protection against such discrimination in their national legal systems; highlights the advisory opinion of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights¹⁴ calling for the inclusion of educational attainment as a protected ground against discrimination in the provision of goods and services; calls on the Commission to assess and where necessary propose appropriate measures to ensure that discrimination on the basis of education is adequately addressed within the EU equality framework;

¹⁴ <https://www.mensenrechten.nl/actueel/nieuws/2024/09/04/advies-college-vul-wetgeving-aan-met-bescherming-tegen-discriminatie-vanwege-opleiding>.

12. Stresses that VET can only become an attractive pathway if it leads to quality jobs; underlines that fair wages, decent working conditions, job security and opportunities for career progression are essential to attracting and retaining vocationally trained workers; regrets that remuneration levels in many vocational occupations – particularly in public services – remain insufficiently aligned with the complexity, responsibility and societal value of these roles, contributing to persistent labour shortages and reduced attractiveness of vocational pathways; calls on the Member States, in cooperation with social partners, to promote fair wages, stable employment and quality working conditions in order to strengthen recruitment, retention and the long-term sustainability of essential vocational services and professions;
13. Recognises the contribution of WorldSkills and EuroSkills in promoting VET excellence, innovation and attractiveness across Europe; encourages closer cooperation between the Commission, the Member States, regional and sectoral organisations, social partners and VET skills competition organisations in order to promote vocational excellence and support the visibility of VET; acknowledges that these competitions and their associated frameworks, such as the WorldSkills Occupational Standards, should serve as an inspiration for policymakers and the development of VET policy including skills recognition, inclusion and quality conditions for VET professionals;
14. Recalls that although the Commission communication entitled ‘The Union of Skills’ states that VET should become ‘an equally valued learning pathway as higher education’, VET continues to receive a smaller share of Erasmus+ funding, compared with academic education; insists that its budget allocation be increased to ensure that this objective is met in practice, and to support the ‘Europe on the Move’ target of 12 % learning mobility for VET learners by 2030; insists that Erasmus+ should recognise not only labour market outcomes but also personal development, intercultural learning and young people’s experience as core objectives of VET mobility; calls on the Commission to increase accessibility, inclusion, gender equality and sustainability of mobility programmes, by dedicating specific earmarking in EU-managed programmes to support inclusive Erasmus+ scholarships, talent or excellence actions and mobility for apprentices, adult learners and learners with fewer opportunities, including through support for preparatory, linguistic and accompanying support measures;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Erasmus+ mobility schemes for apprentices and VET learners by simplifying the administrative procedures, providing targeted organisational support and taking account of the specific challenges faced by SMEs to make it easier and more attractive for companies and SMEs to host and send international apprentices; calls for the implementation of Erasmus Without Paper and the Erasmus Student Card in the VET sector as soon as possible; calls for sufficient support and resources for VET providers to strengthen their capacity for international mobility, including through increasing the number of international mobility coordinators to guide VET learners in their mobility projects, advise VET teachers in setting up European projects and facilitate contacts between VET institutions, the private sector and learners; welcomes the Commission’s ongoing efforts to facilitate cross-border mobility and skills portability, including through the forthcoming skills portability initiative and the digitalisation and simplification of administrative procedures such as the European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS), with a view to reducing unnecessary

administrative burdens and facilitating mobility for learners, workers and employers across the EU;

16. Underlines the need to develop tailored support pathways for young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), through guidance, tutoring and mentorship tools capable of addressing individual needs and removing barriers to access to education and vocational training pathways; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen inclusion and reintegration measures, fostering the participation of NEETs in vocational education and training programmes and in lifelong learning opportunities.
17. Regrets that persistent structural and financial barriers continue to limit participation in international mobility among VET learners; calls for the establishment of a strong common European framework ensuring the automatic recognition of diplomas and learning outcomes acquired during mobility periods, internships and apprenticeships abroad in order to provide greater legal certainty for learners, VET providers, employers and competent authorities; calls, furthermore, for national and Erasmus+ mobility grants to be based on actual costs of living in host countries and to take into account the specific additional costs faced by VET students, apprentices, teachers and staff participating in mobility activities;
18. Notes the importance of strengthening collaboration between VET and academic education students, for example through joint learning environments, to improve mutual understanding, support smoother progression pathways, and foster more innovative and inclusive learning ecosystems; calls on the Commission to explore an Erasmus+ pilot for cross-sectoral international mobility projects bringing together VET and academic students; considers active student participation and representation vital for effective governance in all education institutions and regrets that VET institutions often lack proper student involvement; calls on the Member States to ensure measures to strengthen student participation and on the Commission to support the development of a European VET student representation network;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen EQF level 5 and above as a coherent and recognised tertiary-level qualification pathway in order to enhance the attractiveness of VET, support lifelong learning and address skills shortages; emphasises the need for greater consistency in its role and visibility across Member States; stresses the importance of clear progression routes, strengthened credit transfer arrangements and improved permeability between VET and non-VET, and secondary and tertiary, education systems, while also stressing that EQF levels 3 and 4 should be recognised as a valued and complete qualification level for learners wishing to enter the labour market; calls, furthermore, for tertiary vocational education institutions at EQF levels 5 and 6 to be integrated into European research and innovation ecosystems as providers of specialist technical skills; ***Improving VET quality and relevance through increased investment***
20. Calls on the Commission to support the Member States in investing sufficiently in VET through country-specific recommendations in the European Semester and through the effective use of EU funding instruments; recalls the successful investment, under the Just Transition Fund, in local economies through a combination of funding for skills and

for small and medium-sized enterprises including social enterprises, and recommends that this example be followed under the Member States' national and regional partnership plans, as well as in just transition strategies, in order to promote VET; calls, furthermore, for investment in VET systems to pay particular attention to regions and sectors facing structural labour-market challenges such as persistent skills and labour shortages or limited access to training opportunities, including rural, remote, outermost, deindustrialised and economically disadvantaged areas and sectors of strategic industrial and societal relevance, so as to strengthen local skills ecosystems and support positive spillover effects on employment, gender equality, innovation and social and territorial cohesion;

21. Calls on the Commission to come forward with an ambitious European VET Strategy, building on the Copenhagen Process and the Herning Declaration, which strengthens the coherence and practical use of current European tools, and supports Member States and VET providers in ensuring that all VET programmes and credentials, including modular, task-specific and digital learning programmes, meet the criteria and standards defined in well-recognised quality-assurance systems; stresses, furthermore, the need for the upcoming framework to explicitly recognise gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental objectives of VET and to increase women's leadership in VET governance; encourages the Commission to systematically involve social partners and VET providers at an early stage in the design, implementation and governance of VET policies; calls on Cedefop to ensure that VET providers are systematically and structurally involved and consulted in the implementation of its tasks and activities; encourages the Commission to give VET provider representations a member role on the European Skills High-Level Board;
22. Stresses the need to value local VET providers, which serve as a vital link between learners and the local labour market and can help to align educational needs with regional labour demand; supports EU- and national-level partnerships between employers and VET providers as well as trade unions, employment services, local and regional authorities, youth organisations, representatives of learners, apprentices, teachers, and all other educational stakeholders, in order to improve the relevance and quality of VET curricula, including through providing high-quality apprenticeship opportunities; calls for the linking of VET providers to regional industrial and technological clusters; recalls the need to ensure strengthened social dialogue, fair wages, quality working conditions and continuous professional development for teachers and trainers in VET to improve the attractiveness of the profession and address growing labour shortages and for this to be addressed in the forthcoming EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda; calls for a broadening of the possibilities for VET practitioners to combine their professional activity with providing teaching and training in a hybrid manner;
23. Underlines that Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) should be at the heart of the future development of VET systems in Europe, as key drivers of structural reform, innovation, recognition and modernisation; calls on the Commission to safeguard the budget dedicated to CoVEs in the next Erasmus+ programme and to strengthen long-term investment pathways for CoVEs and ensure that they benefit from a funding approach that matches the ambition of the European University Alliances; stresses that CoVEs bring together education providers, businesses, research institutions, regional

authorities and social partners to address labour market needs, foster innovation, strengthen skills development and regional and sectoral competitiveness and support the green and digital transitions; calls for an independent evaluation of the CoVEs to assess their contribution to labour-market needs and support their further development; welcomes the growing commitment of the Member States to establish and strengthen national CoVE initiatives; notes in this regard the initiatives set up by France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Poland and Slovakia to develop or pilot national CoVE frameworks alongside their participation in the European CoVE ecosystem and calls on other Member States to follow these examples;

24. Recognises that enterprises play a central role in vocational education and training, particularly in dual training systems, by providing work-based learning environments, transmitting up-to-date skills and competences and supporting innovation; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen work-based learning and the role and visibility of enterprises as key learning venues within VET systems; calls for the EU and the Member States to address skills mismatches by strengthening cooperation between VET providers and employers, including through voluntary workplace-level skills audits and competence profiling, to identify existing skills and competences, support their formal recognition, determine where further training is needed and ensure that teaching curricula remain up to date with labour market developments;
25. Stresses the importance of supporting vocational education and training in rural, remote and economically disadvantaged regions in order to combat depopulation, strengthen local labour markets and preserve traditional skills and crafts; highlights the importance of intergenerational skills transfer in addressing labour shortages and encourages initiatives that support experienced workers in passing on their knowledge and expertise through mentoring, workplace training and apprenticeship schemes; stresses, furthermore, that SMEs are central actors in European VET systems, providing a significant share of apprenticeships, traineeships and workplace learning opportunities; recognises, however, that SMEs often face administrative, financial and organisational constraints and therefore calls for SME-friendly implementation of European VET initiatives, including reducing unnecessary administrative burdens and providing practical assistance mechanisms to facilitate their continued and expanded participation in skills development ecosystems such as CoVEs;
26. Calls for broader inclusion of VET in existing EU policies and programmes; encourages the deeper integration of VET institutions in the design and implementation of innovation policies in order to accelerate the adaptation and scaling up of innovations in the workplace; calls on the Commission to ensure active involvement of VET institutions in Horizon Europe; calls for proposals, particularly in projects at higher technology readiness levels where implementation, testing and scaling in real-world settings by VET trained professionals are critical for impact; stresses that EU investment in strategic sectors and the green and digital transitions can only deliver its full impact where workers, learners and employers have access to the skills needed to deploy, operate and scale new technologies; insists on the need to support skills investment within strategic sectors under the policy windows of the proposed European Competitiveness Fund; recalls in this regard Article 33(2) of the Financial Regulation¹⁵,

¹⁵ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the

which sets out that programmes and activities should, where feasible and appropriate in accordance with the relevant sector-specific rules, be implemented to achieve their set objectives, respecting working and employment conditions under applicable national law, EU law, International Labour Organization conventions and collective agreements;

27. Recognises the essential role of vocational occupations in safeguarding Europe's manufacturing base, energy security, transport systems, construction sector and strategic infrastructure, and emphasises VET's potential to deliver quality jobs for the green transition as well as social economy opportunities; calls on the Member States to position vocational education and training as a cornerstone of skills development, particularly for women and young people, and to leverage the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF) to finance upskilling and reskilling in strategic sustainable sectors; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen cooperation in the development of VET learning environments, curricula and practices that respond to the needs arising from the ecological transformation, ensuring that topics such as the circular economy, construction and renovation of sustainable, affordable and climate-resilient housing, energy efficiency and the energy transition are adequately addressed, and that future professionals are equipped with the knowledge, skills and competences needed to drive sustainable transformation across industries and businesses;
28. Calls for further promoting effective, efficient and gender-sensitive public spending on VET, as well as complementarity and synergies of funding under the next MFF, in particular under Erasmus+, AgoraEU, the European Social Fund and other cohesion funds, in addition to the European Competitiveness Fund; calls for improved gender-disaggregated data and monitoring of VET, as well as renewed efforts to implement the EU-level VET benchmarks effectively in all the Member States;
29. Stresses that technological innovation and digitalisation, including artificial intelligence and automation, require continuous upskilling and reskilling; emphasises, in this context, the increasing importance of accessible training and basic, sustainability and digital skills for all workers for their current or alternative careers; calls on the Commission to establish an individual right to training for workers as proposed in the Draghi report on the future of European competitiveness¹⁶, available during working time and at no cost to workers;
30. Stresses that State aid rules should support rather than constrain investment in skills, lifelong learning and workforce development, notably by expanding the possibilities under the General Block Exemption Regulation¹⁷ and related frameworks for funding training activities and skills ecosystems; stresses that VET institutions are active contributors to research and innovation, including through cooperation with companies, research organisations and sectoral organisations; calls for the GBER and related State aid frameworks to facilitate their participation in research, development and innovation

financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1046/oj>).

¹⁶ Draghi, M., The future of European competitiveness, September 2024, p. 19

¹⁷ Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ L 187, 26.6.2014, pp. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/651/oj>).

activities and avoid undue limitations on public support where they carry out such activities, enabling their full contribution to skills and innovation ecosystems; stresses the importance of ensuring that female VET students and workers are fully included in the action plan for women in research, innovation and start-ups;

31. Recalls that quality jobs are essential to the attractiveness of vocational pathways and to the EU's capacity to retain skilled workers; calls on the Commission, the Member States and employers to ensure fair remuneration and quality working conditions for apprentices in VET in accordance with EU and national legislation and applicable collective agreements in order to improve the attractiveness, quality and inclusiveness of work-based learning; calls for balanced VET systems that combine workplace learning with structured educational environments, ensuring that learners benefit from both professional practice and broader educational formation; emphasises the importance of the active involvement of social partners in the design, monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeship schemes; emphasises the value of VET's hands-on, work-based learning as a source of inspiration for a meaningful component of university education;
32. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, in cooperation with social partners and VET providers, to develop comprehensive and actionable strategies to strengthen the well-being of learners, teachers and trainers across VET learning environments; in this context, stresses the importance of special education professionals, psychologists and assistants in addressing the individual needs of all VET learners; further stresses the importance of flexible and family-friendly working arrangements to improve the participation and retention of women in vocational occupations;
33. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and relevant stakeholders to promote skills-first approaches in recruitment, progression and access to services; stresses that VET graduates may face structural disadvantages due to a lower signalling value of vocational qualifications compared to academic diplomas;

Recognising the mobility of students and workers

34. Stresses the importance of qualifications, diplomas and skills recognition to ensure freedom of movement and address fair study mobility for VET students, and fair labour mobility for apprentices and workers; encourages Member States to promote the full range of opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme, which provides young people not only with opportunities to study abroad, but also with opportunities for apprenticeships and work placements; calls on the Commission to establish a VET diploma, in line with the Union of Skills Communication, which should include development of transnational joint VET programmes and bottom-up initiatives to promote VET internationally and increase mobility opportunities;
35. Calls for the upcoming Skills Portability Initiative to deliver a coherent EU ecosystem for qualifications, diplomas and skills recognition and mobility, ensuring interoperability between Europass, the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO), national qualifications frameworks, micro-credentials and digital credentials; emphasises that this system should be transparent, citizen-friendly, digital and free of charge;

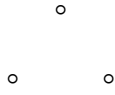
36. Notes Cedefop's findings¹⁸ on persistent fragmentation in the cross-border recognition of VET qualifications and the need for stronger cooperation mechanisms; calls on the Commission to expand the ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union) networks, by broadening their mandate and technical capacities to fully encompass VET qualifications, thereby enhancing cross-border recognition to support national authorities and VET stakeholders, improve transparency and comparability of qualifications, and facilitate the recognition and portability of VET qualifications and skills across the EU;
37. Emphasises that improved recognition and portability of vocational qualifications can not only contribute to improved labour mobility but also to lower unemployment and a better matching of skills and labour-market needs across the EU; calls on the Commission and the Member States to further simplify and accelerate the recognition of vocational qualifications across the EU and to move towards the automatic recognition of academic and professional qualifications between Member States for comparable levels of education, in order to reduce barriers to mobility and strengthen the functioning of the single market; welcomes the European Court of Auditors' special report on the recognition of professional qualifications in the EU and calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement its recommendations, in particular reducing deadlines for recognition through the automatic system for sectoral professions for temporary and permanent mobility;
38. Calls for the development of skills and training partnerships with non-EU countries in sectors facing persistent labour shortages, combining high-quality training opportunities with transparent recognition pathways and mutually beneficial mobility arrangements such as common EU procedural principles for the recognition of third-country nationals' qualifications, including transparent timelines, clear criteria, and the systematic use of skills-based assessments, such as practical tests and validation of prior learning where documentation is incomplete; stresses the importance of ensuring full respect for national laws and practices and applicable collective agreements and protection from any kind of violation of working conditions or social rights of such workers;
39. Calls for the development of interoperable, secure and verifiable digital credentials for qualifications and professional skills, issued by competent and recognised authorities, and easily shareable across borders, while ensuring coherence with existing EU initiatives and maintaining standards; considers the potential of AI for the modernisation of VET systems in Europe including support for curriculum innovation skills assessment and the recognition of qualifications and micro-credentials; encourages the development of EU-wide AI-enabled certification mechanisms to enhance the transparency and transferability of VET qualifications across the Member States;
40. Supports the objective of a genuine European Education Area in which the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications progressively becomes automatic, strengthening mutual trust between education systems and facilitating the mobility of

¹⁸ Cedefop, 'Recognition and validation of foreign VET qualifications in Europe', July 2026.

skilled workers; calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish regional pilot areas for the portability of skills and qualifications, building on current cross-border cooperation frameworks such as that between the Benelux Union and its neighbouring border regions, in order to test innovative approaches to the recognition, validation and automatic portability of qualifications, skills and micro-credentials across borders; considers that successful pilot projects could generate valuable evidence, strengthen mutual trust between competent authorities and create positive spillover effects for wider implementation across the EU;

41. Regrets the fact that uptake of Common Training Frameworks under Directive 2005/36/EC¹⁹ has been limited; calls on the Commission to assess the reasons for this limited uptake and identify potential barriers and encourages the Member States and the relevant professional bodies to actively promote their development and implementation in vocational sectors, where common training requirements could support professional mobility; encourages the extension of automatic recognition regimes, particularly in sectors experiencing labour shortages or high cross-border mobility, building on successful pilot approaches in regional cooperation frameworks;
42. Emphasises the need to establish a recognition convention within the Copenhagen Process to enable EU-wide recognition of VET qualifications, based on current tools such as EQF, WorldSkills Occupational Standards and learning outcomes, to enhance cross-border comparability and labour mobility; calls on the Member States and the Commission to strengthen the use of ESCO as a common reference language for skills in non-regulated professions, enabling employers, employment services and platforms to better recognise and compare skills across borders and sectors; considers that greater coherence between the Copenhagen and Bologna processes is needed; welcomes the Commission's intention to explore the extension of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) to VET, as part of efforts to strengthen permeability between education sectors; underlines, however, that such an extension must be accompanied by robust, trust-based quality assurance mechanisms; calls for the establishment of a European network between quality assurance (QA) agencies for VET, similar to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education in academic education, to enable systematic peer learning, coordination, and trust-building across QA systems;
43. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen flexible and permeable education and training systems by promoting modularity and expanding the recognition and validation of prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning, to facilitate re-entry into education and training while ensuring quality standards; encourages the availability of flexible delivery modes, including part-time, blended and online learning, to accommodate learners with caring responsibilities, employment commitments or interrupted educational pathways; calls on the Commission to encourage the Member States to promote curricula agility, flexibility and modularity through concrete measures in the upcoming VET strategy;
44. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

¹⁹ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications (OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 22, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2005/36/oj>).



EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is indispensable to Europe's economic prosperity and competitiveness, industrial resilience and social cohesion. Nearly half of all upper-secondary students in the European Union are enrolled in vocational programmes, while millions of workers rely on vocational qualifications to contribute to sectors essential for Europe's functioning and competitiveness. Yet despite its strategic importance, vocational education continues to receive less recognition and prestige than academically oriented education in many Member States. This resolution responds to the European Commission's Union of Skills initiative and the objectives of the Herning Declaration, while also contributing to the debate surrounding the forthcoming European VET Strategy and the planned Skills Portability Initiative. It sets out the European Parliament's vision for a stronger, more attractive and genuinely equally valued vocational education and training sector.

Europe currently faces a paradox. At a time when the green and digital transitions, industrial modernisation, infrastructure investment and demographic ageing are creating unprecedented demand for vocational skills, vocational pathways continue to be perceived as less desirable than academic education. Labour market forecasts consistently indicate substantial shortages in sectors that rely heavily on vocational qualifications, including manufacturing, construction, transport, healthcare, energy and advanced technical professions. At the same time, many young people continue to receive the message that educational success is primarily measured by progression into higher education.

This challenge is not merely economic but also cultural. For decades, educational policy and public discourse across Europe have often treated academic and vocational pathways as existing within a hierarchy, rather than as different but equally valuable forms of learning and expertise. The expansion of higher education has created important opportunities for millions of Europeans, yet it has also contributed to a perception that vocational education represents a second-best choice. This hierarchy of esteem continues to shape educational decisions, career guidance, labour market outcomes, and public attitudes towards vocational professions.

The consequences extend far beyond education policy. In many Member States, practically educated citizens continue to encounter structural disadvantages in areas ranging from career progression and income opportunities to political representation and access to housing. While societies depend on skilled technicians, craftspeople, healthcare workers and other vocational professionals, these occupations often do not receive the same social and economic recognition as professions requiring academic qualifications. Such disparities risk reinforcing social divisions between practically and theoretically educated citizens, limiting social mobility, threatening democratic resilience and weakening confidence in the promise that all forms of talent are equally valued.

These inequalities also carry significant economic consequences. Europe's competitiveness increasingly depends on its ability to attract, develop and retain workers with vocational skills. The transition towards climate neutrality, the deployment of new technologies, the strengthening of European industrial capacity and efforts to reduce strategic dependencies all require a highly skilled vocational workforce. Skills shortages are therefore not only the result of demographic change or economic transformation; they are also partly the consequence of long-standing societal and policy choices that have undervalued vocational education and

vocational professions. Addressing labour shortages consequently requires more than training additional workers. It requires restoring the attractiveness, status and visibility of vocational pathways throughout society.

Improving the quality and relevance of VET is an essential part of this effort. Strong partnerships between education providers, employers, regional authorities and social partners are necessary to ensure that vocational programmes remain responsive to labour market developments and technological change. Centres of Vocational Excellence, work-based learning and apprenticeships demonstrate the potential of close cooperation between education and industry to foster innovation, regional development and economic growth. At the same time, lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling opportunities will become increasingly important as artificial intelligence, automation and digitalisation continue to transform occupations and skills requirements.

Labour mobility and the recognition of qualifications also remain fundamental to a well-functioning European labour market. The free movement of workers is one of the Union's core freedoms, yet vocational learners and professionals often continue to face unnecessary barriers when seeking opportunities across borders. Improving the transparency, portability and recognition of skills and qualifications can help address labour shortages, strengthen the internal market and ensure that vocational talent can move where it is most needed.

Taken together, this resolution seeks to contribute to a broader shift in how Europe values knowledge, skills and educational achievement. Building a genuine Union of Skills requires more than responding to labour market needs. As also reflected in the commitment stated in the Union of Skills that vocational education and training should become “an equally valued learning pathway as higher education,” this means the European institutions and Member States should also practice what they preach in policies, instruments, legislation and wording.

ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that she included in her report input on matters pertaining to the subject of the file that she received, in the preparation of the report, from the following interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register¹, or from the following representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies:

1. Interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register
EUpVET
EfVET
EVTA
EURASHE
European Federation of Education Employers
Benelux Union
European Trade Union Committee for Education
European Student Union
VNO-NCW
MBO Raad
MKB Nederland
Confederation of German Employers' Associations
Netherlands House for Education & Research
Cedefop
German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses
German Chamber of Industry and Commerce
Eurochambres
WorldSkills
Swedish Council for Higher Education
Nuffic
SMEUnited
OBESSU
2. Representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies
None

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI:http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinst/2021/611/oj).

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that she has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.

11.9.2026

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on boosting skills in the Union – opportunities for vocational education and
training in times of transition
(2026/2070(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Lina Gálvez

AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality submits the following to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible :

Amendment 1

Motion for a resolution

Citation 3 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- ***having regard to the legacy of the European Year of Skills,***

Amendment 2

Motion for a resolution

Citation 6 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- ***having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers^{1a},***

^{1a} ***OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj>.***

Amendment 3

Motion for a resolution

Citation 7 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- ***having regard to the Commission communication of 7 March 2025 entitled 'A Roadmap for Women's Rights' (COM(2025)0097),***

Amendment 4

Motion for a resolution
Citation 7 b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

– ***having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2026 entitled ‘Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030’ (COM(2026)0113),***

Amendment 5

Motion for a resolution
Recital A b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ab. whereas the objectives of the European Year of Skills should continue to guide EU policies on education, training and labour market participation;

Amendment 6

Motion for a resolution
Recital A

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

A. whereas 34.7 % of Europeans have obtained a vocational education and training (VET) diploma; whereas 49 % of all students in the EU are enrolled in a VET programme³; whereas VET is regarded as less valuable than academic education in many Member States; whereas students and graduates of VET can experience social bias or reduced opportunities as a result of this perception gap;

A. whereas 34.7 % of Europeans have obtained a vocational education and training (VET) diploma; whereas 49 % of all students in the EU are enrolled in a VET programme³; whereas VET is regarded as less valuable than academic education in many Member States; ***whereas this perception is compounded by gender segregation within VET itself, with female-dominated sectors, including care, health, welfare and human-centred services, regarded as even less valuable than male-dominated VET sectors, namely technical, industrial and engineering pathways;*** whereas students and graduates of VET can experience social bias or reduced opportunities as a result of this perception

gap;

³ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), ‘VET statistics and indicators’, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/statistics-and-indicators>.

³ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), ‘VET statistics and indicators’, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/statistics-and-indicators>.

Amendment 7

Motion for a resolution Recital A a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Aa. whereas, in 2025, 11 % of young people aged 15 to 29 across the EU were neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs)^{1a}; whereas care responsibilities remain a major barrier to labour market participation, with around 75 % of mothers of young children citing family and care responsibilities as their reason for not participating in the labour force^{1b}; whereas a persistent vertical mismatch between skills supply and demand continues to affect the EU, reflected in an average over-qualification rate of 21.3 % among tertiary-educated workers in 2024, and affecting women disproportionately (22 % compared with 20.5 % for men)^{1c};

^{1a} Eurostat, ‘Fewer young people not in work or education in 2025’, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20260528-2>.

^{1b} European Commission, Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2025 (ESDE 2025), Executive Summary, Chapter 2 ‘Untapped Labour Potential in the EU’, p. 64.

^{1c} Eurostat, ‘EU’s employment rate reached almost 76 % in 2024’, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products>

Amendment 8

Motion for a resolution

Recital B a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ba. whereas VET not only contributes to labour market participation, but also serves as a pathway for fostering women's entrepreneurship, strengthening their financial independence and promoting their social inclusion, particularly in regions where young people face a heightened risk of unemployment and social exclusion;

Amendment 9

Motion for a resolution

Recital C

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

C. whereas the EU's policy orientation under the Lisbon Strategy placed a disproportionate emphasis on academic attainment, underestimating the strategic importance of vocational professions for the EU's industrial base and resilience; whereas recent geopolitical developments, supply-chain disruptions and the green and digital **transition** demonstrate the necessity of investing substantially in VET;

C. whereas the EU's policy orientation under the Lisbon Strategy placed a disproportionate emphasis on academic attainment, underestimating the strategic importance of vocational professions for the EU's industrial base and resilience; whereas recent geopolitical developments, supply-chain disruptions and the green and digital **transitions** demonstrate the necessity of investing substantially in VET, ***including through dedicated measures to increase women's participation and reduce the long-standing imbalance between men and women in vocational professions;***

Amendment 10

Motion for a resolution

Recital C a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ca. whereas the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognises education and access to vocational and continuing training as a fundamental right; whereas the UN Sustainable Development Goals envisage equal access for all women and men by 2030 to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, and a substantial increase in the number of young people and adults with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship;

Amendment 11

**Motion for a resolution
Recital C b (new)**

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Cb. whereas ensuring women’s equal access to the information and communications technology (ICT), financial and industrial sectors is essential to strengthening the competitiveness of the European economy; whereas gender disparities in these fields prevent the EU from fully mobilising its talent, resources and economic potential, while undermining innovation, as recognised in the Draghi report, which called for increased economic activity and participation by all – women and men;

Amendment 12

**Motion for a resolution
Recital C c (new)**

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Cc. whereas gender disparities persist in strategic sectors such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), both in education and employment; whereas women represented only 15 % of graduates from medium-level VET in STEM fields in 2023, compared with 44 % in vocational upper secondary education; whereas women remain significantly under-represented in high-technology sectors, accounting for only 22 % of scientists and engineers, compared with 41 % across the economy as a whole;

Amendment 13

**Motion for a resolution
Recital C d (new)**

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Cd. whereas the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy recognises gender-sensitive education as a key tool to combat stereotypes, promote equal opportunities and encourage more girls and women to pursue STEM studies and careers, while supporting greater gender balance across all fields of education and employment;

Amendment 14

**Motion for a resolution
Recital D**

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

D. whereas persistent societal and policy biases that frame educational pathways in hierarchical terms contribute to the unattractiveness of vocational pathways and to academic drift, thereby limiting equal recognition of talents, undermining social cohesion and

D. whereas persistent societal and policy biases that frame educational pathways in hierarchical terms *and gender stereotypes, which can affect career progression and income opportunities, especially for women and girls, who remain under-represented in VET*

exacerbating critical skills shortages in vocational occupations;

pathways linked to STEM, digital technologies, manufacturing and the green economy, while remaining over-represented in lower-paid sectors such as care and social services, contribute to the unattractiveness of vocational pathways and to academic drift, thereby limiting equal recognition of talents, undermining social cohesion and exacerbating critical skills shortages in vocational occupations leading to women and girls pursuing careers in health, care, education and social services; whereas gender stereotypes influencing educational and career choices emerge early in life and are reinforced through school, the media, peers and learning environments; whereas targeted measures are needed to promote gender balance in traditionally ‘male’ or ‘female’ professions, and to broaden career choices free from gender stereotypes;

Amendment 15

Motion for a resolution Recital D a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Da. whereas VET can play a key role in promoting women’s economic independence, reducing gender gaps in employment and supporting equal opportunities throughout working life;

Amendment 16

Motion for a resolution Recital E

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

E. whereas unnecessary administrative barriers, fragmented recognition procedures and insufficient interoperability between national systems continue to

E. whereas unnecessary administrative barriers, fragmented recognition procedures and insufficient interoperability between national systems continue to

hinder the free movement of workers, particularly VET professionals; whereas enhanced cooperation between Member States and regional frameworks can contribute to building mutual trust, modernising recognition procedures and facilitating labour mobility for VET professionals, while maintaining high standards;

hinder the free movement of workers, particularly VET professionals; whereas ***the*** enhanced cooperation between Member States and regional frameworks ***and the promotion of common approaches to skills assessment and qualification recognition can reduce administrative burdens for professionals and competent authorities, while supporting a fairer assessment of the value of work and remuneration, particularly in sectors and occupations predominantly occupied by women, and*** contribute to building mutual trust, modernising recognition procedures and facilitating labour mobility for VET professionals, while maintaining high standards; ***whereas greater participation of women in VET, especially in digital and technical sectors, as well as greater participation of persons with disabilities, including those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, and of women living in rural or remote areas, particularly the EU outermost regions, is indispensable for unlocking the EU's talent potential and supporting a competitive, resilient and sustainable economy;***

Amendment 17

Motion for a resolution Recital E a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ea. whereas responsibility for organising, governing and financing VET rests chiefly with the Member States and must remain fully consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, while Member States should be encouraged to share good practices for widening women's access to, and retention within, VET;

Amendment 18

Motion for a resolution
Recital E b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Eb. whereas VET stands as a vital piece of economic and social infrastructure, extending well beyond its role as an educational route, and is capable of: (i) developing a competent workforce able to absorb technological change and support human development, (ii) spreading innovation across a broad array of economic and social sectors, (iii) easing skills shortages via contemporary work-based learning, adult education and lifelong learning, (iv) upgrading and retraining professionals, (v) advancing equal opportunities for men and women by increasing the presence of women in vocational routes and in occupations where they remain a minority, and (vi) building resilient industrial ecosystems throughout Europe; whereas its full potential deserves greater recognition and investment at both national and EU level;

Amendment 19

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 1

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

1. Highlights the importance of VET for the EU's economic prosperity and competitiveness; stresses the importance of promoting and valorising VET in order to improve its attractiveness as a quality pathway to employment; calls on the Commission to ensure that the upcoming VET strategy addresses the quality and relevance of VET curricula, coupled with improved promotion of VET programmes to learners, employers and the wider public;

1. ***Stresses that gender segmentation in VET limits individual choice, contributes to a poor use of existing talents and weakens the EU's capacity to address skills shortages;*** highlights the importance of VET ***as a public good*** for ***enabling access to the labour market, especially for women, and thereby boosting*** the EU's ***employment, economic growth,*** prosperity and competitiveness; stresses the importance of promoting and valorising VET in order to improve its attractiveness as a quality pathway to employment; calls on the Commission to

ensure that the upcoming VET strategy addresses the quality and relevance of VET curricula, coupled with improved promotion of VET programmes to learners, employers and the wider public, *while also ensuring equal access for learners with fewer opportunities and addressing barriers linked to gender, disability, sexual orientation and identity based on gender, racial discrimination, migration background, socio-economic status, geographical location, care responsibilities, age and access to digital tools; calls, furthermore, for the upcoming framework to explicitly recognise gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental objectives of VET alongside employability, competitiveness and lifelong learning; highlights that this would require all Member States to integrate gender mainstreaming into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of VET programmes; calls on the Commission and the Member States to make the reduction in gender segmentation in VET and vocational occupations a core objective of skills policies in order to broaden participation across sectors and improve Europe's competitiveness and labour market resilience;*

Amendment 20

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 2

Motion for a resolution

2. Stresses that VET should be viewed as a tool *that can both support the personal development of students and workers* and *address* labour market shortages, thereby contributing to the EU's competitiveness and supporting innovation in strategic sectors;

Amendment

2. Stresses that VET should be viewed as a tool *for developing students' and workers' human and cultural capital, for promoting women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and access to venture capital, business angel networks and other forms of private investment and financial independence,*

for facilitating equal access to quality employment and for addressing labour market shortages, thereby contributing to the EU's competitiveness and supporting innovation in strategic sectors; considers that VET, by providing practical routes to employment, constitutes a critical instrument not only for young people entering the workforce, but also for adults seeking to upskill or reskill throughout their careers, especially for women who continue to experience lower labour market participation rates, wage disparities, and greater employment interruptions due to childcare, other caregiving responsibilities or discrimination in employment opportunities, career progression or remuneration; calls on the Commission and the Member States to address gender gaps in adult learning, particularly among low-qualified women, women in part-time or precarious employment, women returning from career breaks and women with care responsibilities, by providing targeted upskilling and reskilling programmes, and ensuring paid training leave, accessible and affordable childcare, flexible learning arrangements and schedules, outreach measures, recognition of prior learning, and digital learning opportunities to enable mothers and other working parents to access and complete vocational training;

Amendment 21

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 3

Motion for a resolution

3. Stresses *the need to ensure that VET students and graduates feel* that their qualifications and professions are valued equally to academic education, to ensure social cohesion and *inclusion*;

Amendment

3. Stresses *that VET should provide equal opportunities for women and men, and ensure* that their qualifications and professions are valued equally to academic education, *so as* to ensure social cohesion, *inclusion* and *equal*

opportunities in access to employment, mobility, further learning and career progression, particularly for women in vulnerable situations and those facing intersectional discrimination, including third-country nationals, single mothers, women facing discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation or identity based on gender, women living in rural areas, women with disabilities and long-term unemployed women especially due to intensive caregiving responsibilities, in order to promote equal opportunities, combat stereotypes regarding educational paths, allow their full participation in economic, social, and political life, and encourage girls and women to pursue VET in sectors where they remain under-represented, including STEM, digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), engineering, cybersecurity and construction, while also promoting greater participation of men in the care and education sectors; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that VET curricula, teaching materials and assessment methods are designed to guarantee genuine accessibility for learners with disabilities; stresses that the principle of accessibility, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, must be embedded throughout the entire training pathway, including during on-the-job learning and work placements;

Amendment 22

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 4

Motion for a resolution

4. Calls for the EU institutions and the Member States to promote more respectful terminology for educational pathways and to move away from terms such as ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ education; calls on the

Amendment

4. Calls for the EU institutions and the Member States to promote more respectful terminology for educational pathways and to move away from terms such as ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ education; calls on the

Commission to repeal the EU-level target for higher education attainment as a benchmark, since it does not comply with the Commission's intention to value VET equally;

Commission to repeal the EU-level target for higher education attainment as a benchmark, since it does not comply with the Commission's intention to value VET equally; ***calls, in addition, on the Commission and the Member States to guarantee that tertiary-level vocational education at ISCED^{1a} Level 5 and EQF^{1b} Levels 5 and 6 is clearly acknowledged and encouraged within EU skills policy frameworks as a route equal in value to academic higher education, paying particular attention to increasing enrolment and completion rates among young women;***

^{1a} *International Standard Classification of Education.*

^{1b} *European Qualifications Framework.*

Amendment 23

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 4 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

4a. Calls on the Commission, in order to ensure and verify compliance with gender equality requirements, to promote the utilisation of key measures including: (i) a requisite gender impact assessments for new VET policies, (ii) gender mainstreaming in all EU budgetary policies so as to ensure adequate funding for equality initiatives to build solid skills foundations and promote continued investment in lifelong and future-oriented upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all and (iii) collection and publication of sex-disaggregated data on enrolment, completion, apprenticeships, employment outcomes, wages, and career progression; calls on the Commission and the Member States, in cooperation with social partners and in full respect of national labour

market models, to promote gender-neutral job evaluation tools in order to better assess and compare the value of work in different sectors and support fairer remuneration and equality, particularly in certain female-dominated sectors and occupations;

Amendment 24

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 5

Motion for a resolution

5. Calls for the Member States and the EU institutions to involve VET students and graduates at all levels of policymaking to ensure equal participation, and to offer VET traineeships;

Amendment

5. Calls for the Member States and the EU institutions to involve VET students and graduates at all levels of policymaking to ensure equal participation, and to offer VET traineeships, *ensuring that girls have the same chance to enrol in vocational programmes across all sectors, including traditionally male-dominated industries, and to strengthen gender-sensitive career guidance and counselling so that all young people can make informed choices based on their interests and competences rather than on prejudice or gender stereotypes; calls on the Member States and VET providers, considering that some sectors continue to recruit significantly fewer female apprentices, limiting opportunities for practical experience and career progression and undermining girls' confidence in entering these professions, to address hostile learning environments, gender stereotypes, harassment and discrimination in both school and work-based learning, and to develop targeted measures to improve retention, completion and transition into quality employment for students from the under-represented gender; calls for targeted measures to remove gender barriers to VET mobility and provide adequate financial support; stresses the need to promote mobility among women apprentices, adult learners and learners*

from female-dominated sectors, which are often less represented in transitional mobility schemes;

Amendment 25

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 6

Motion for a resolution

6. Recognises the contribution of WorldSkills and EuroSkills in promoting VET excellence, innovation and attractiveness across Europe; encourages closer cooperation between the Commission, the Member States and VET skills competition organisations in order to promote vocational excellence and support the visibility of VET; acknowledges that these competitions and their associated frameworks, such as the WorldSkills Occupational Standards, should serve as an inspiration for policymakers and the development of VET policy and skills recognition;

Amendment

6. Recognises the contribution of WorldSkills and EuroSkills in promoting VET excellence, innovation and attractiveness across Europe; encourages closer cooperation between the Commission, the Member States and VET skills competition organisations in order to promote vocational excellence and support the visibility of VET ***while recalling that excellence in VET must also encompass inclusion, accessibility, quality working conditions for teachers and trainers and equal opportunities for all learners, especially in regard to gender;*** acknowledges that these competitions and their associated frameworks, such as the WorldSkills Occupational Standards, should serve as an inspiration for policymakers and the development of VET policy and skills recognition;

Amendment 26

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 7 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

7a. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to take targeted measures to close the gender gap in STEM-related education and training, including in VET, by addressing stereotypes, improving retention and progression, and ensuring equal access to quality training, apprenticeships and future careers in

strategic sectors;

Amendment 27

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 8

Motion for a resolution

8. Calls on the Commission to support the Member States in investing sufficiently in VET through country-specific recommendations in the European Semester and the earmarking of EU funding; recalls the successful investment, under the Just Transition Fund, in local economies through a combination of funding for skills and for small and medium-sized enterprises, and recommends that this example be followed under the Member States' national and regional partnership plans, in order to promote VET;

Amendment

8. Calls on the Commission to support the Member States in investing sufficiently in VET through country-specific recommendations in the European Semester and the earmarking of EU funding; recalls the successful investment, under the Just Transition Fund, in local economies through a combination of funding for skills and for small and medium-sized enterprises, and recommends that this example be followed under the Member States' national and regional partnership plans, in order to promote VET, ***paying particular attention to sectors that are essential for society and that are facing persistent labour shortages, including health, care, early childhood education and social services, recognising that adequate public investment in these sectors is essential to ensure high-quality VET across the EU and contributes both to gender equality and to resilient social systems; highlights the importance of increasing women's participation in skilled occupations to expand the labour force and help address demographic challenges associated with Europe's ageing population;***

Amendment 28

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 9

Motion for a resolution

9. Supports EU- and national-level partnerships between employers and VET

Amendment

9. Supports EU- and national-level partnerships between employers and VET

providers to improve the relevance and quality of VET curricula; calls for the linking of VET providers to regional industrial and technological clusters;

providers to improve the relevance and quality of VET curricula ***and to make VET more relevant, inclusive and better adapted to the needs of the labour market;*** calls for the linking of VET providers to regional industrial and technological clusters, ***placing particular focus on supporting women's entrepreneurship, by strengthening business, digital and leadership skills, including through partnerships with women-led businesses to strengthen mentoring and facilitate women's transition into skilled professions; stresses, in particular, the need to improve women's access to business capital, business angel networks and other forms of private investment, and to actively support women-led innovation and enterprise as key drivers of Europe's competitiveness, productivity and sustainable economic growth; stresses that employers, VET providers and social partners, including trade unions and business chambers, should be closely involved in the design and implementation of VET policies;***

Amendment 29

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 10

Motion for a resolution

10. Calls for broader inclusion of VET in existing EU policies and programmes; encourages better integration of VET bodies in the development of innovation policies to enhance the dissemination and uptake of innovative solutions across sectors; insists on the need to support skills investment in strategic sectors under the policy windows of the proposed European Competitiveness Fund;

Amendment

10. Calls for broader inclusion of VET in existing EU policies and programmes; encourages better integration of VET bodies in the development of innovation policies to enhance the dissemination and uptake of innovative solutions across sectors; insists on the need to support skills investment in strategic sectors under the policy windows of the proposed European Competitiveness Fund; ***stresses that VET programmes should play a central role in addressing Europe's skills shortages, particularly in healthcare, AI, ICT, engineering, clean energy, advanced***

manufacturing, construction and other green and digital sectors, by equipping more women with the skills needed to contribute to the EU's green, digital and industrial transitions and with the competences needed to think critically, adapt to change, participate fully in society and exercise active citizenship; emphasises that increasing the participation of women and girls in these fields is essential for fostering innovation, strengthening competitiveness and social cohesion, and making full use of Europe's talent pool; emphasises the need for an equality-based approach that identifies and removes structural barriers and ensures equal opportunities throughout vocational education, apprenticeships and employment; stresses the importance of ensuring that female students and workers in (higher) VET are also fully integrated and included in the Action Plan for Women in Research, Innovation and Start-ups, with the aim of making the EU the most attractive place to work for women in these fields by 2030;

Amendment 30

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 11

Motion for a resolution

11. Stresses that AI and automation have led to an increased need for reskilling; emphasises, in this context, the increasing importance of accessible training for all workers for their current or alternative careers;

Amendment

11. Stresses that AI and automation have led to an increased need for reskilling ***and for the inclusion of critical digital and AI literacy in curricula, and have opened the possibility for new career paths, and in particular, for the inclusion of the basic, digital, AI, green, civic, media literacy, entrepreneurial, social and transversal competences needed for quality jobs, lifelong learning, active citizenship and democratic resilience;*** emphasises, in this context, the increasing importance of accessible training for all workers for their current or alternative

careers; *welcomes the Commission's commitment, as part of its Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030, to promote gender-sensitive education as a key driver of equal opportunities, skills development and Europe's long-term competitiveness; emphasises that modern VET policies should actively encourage more boys to consider HEAL (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy) fields and more women and girls to pursue vocational pathways in STEM, with a view to reducing pay gaps while recalling that increasing the participation of women in these sectors, in particular those affected by the digital transition, helps to reduce labour shortages while promoting gender equality and boosting European competitiveness, sustainable growth and social cohesion; underlines the importance of ensuring that AI is developed and deployed in an inclusive and gender-sensitive manner, with appropriate safeguards in place to prevent it from perpetuating or deepening gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls;*

Amendment 31

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 11 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

11a. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to prioritise skills development for the EU's defence technological and industrial base, including through VET, apprenticeships and work-based learning; stresses that strengthening defence-related skills, particularly in advanced manufacturing, engineering, cybersecurity, AI and dual-use technologies, is essential for Europe's security, competitiveness and defence preparedness; calls for targeted measures to encourage more women and girls to

pursue careers in the defence sector;

Amendment 32

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 12

Motion for a resolution

12. Calls on ***the Commission***, the Member States and employers to ensure fair remuneration ***and*** decent working conditions for apprenticeships and internships in VET in order to improve the attractiveness, quality and inclusiveness of work-based learning;

Amendment

12. Calls on the Member States and employers, ***in cooperation with social partners***, to ensure fair remuneration, decent working conditions, ***adequate maternity protection and inclusive, harassment-free learning environments*** for apprenticeships and internships in VET ***and to ensure that training companies are supported in preventing gender stereotypes and discrimination in the workplace***, in order to improve the attractiveness, quality and inclusiveness of work-based learning; ***stresses the importance of flexible and family-friendly working arrangements to improve the participation and retention of women in vocational professions; highlights that this is particularly important for female dominated VET sectors, which are too often undervalued and underpaid despite their social and economic importance;***

Amendment 33

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 12 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

12a. Underlines the need to increase women's leadership in VET governance to allow women's perspectives to be represented in decision-making bodies responsible for vocational education policy, in order to provide role models for young people; notes that, in order to achieve this, the Commission and the Member States should encourage: gender

parity on VET advisory boards, increased recruitment of women instructors in technical fields, and consultation with women's organisations, trade unions, business chambers and civil society when developing VET strategies, in particular in emerging and high-growth sectors and in trainings on neurodiversity and specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia;

Amendment 34

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 12 b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

12b. *Calls for increased and targeted EU funding, as well as specific support measures, to address the structural constraints faced by the EU outermost regions, in accordance with Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, taking into account their specific characteristics, including remoteness, insularity and the small size of markets; stresses that such measures should ensure effective access to high-quality VET, reduce territorial inequalities, bridge existing gender gaps and promote equal opportunities for skills development, lifelong learning and employment;*

Amendment 35

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 12 c (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

12c. *Stresses the importance of developing financial literacy, particularly targeting women, as a gender gap exists in financial knowledge; notes that, on average in the EU, men score 18 percentage points higher than women*

when it comes to correctly answering at least three out of five questions in a financial knowledge survey conducted by the Commission;

Amendment 36

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 14 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

14a. *Calls on the Commission to examine how excessive regulatory burdens affect technical professions and to pinpoint the scope for simplification that would facilitate vocational graduates' access to employment, entrepreneurship and self-employment, paying particular attention to women, who still encounter greater obstacles when setting up their own businesses;*

Amendment 37

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 14 b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

14b. *Acknowledges the crucial part played by vocational professions in protecting Europe's manufacturing capacity, energy security, transport networks, construction sector and strategic infrastructure; calls for vocational education policy to reflect these priorities while actively encouraging greater participation by women;*

ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT

The rapporteur declares under her exclusive responsibility that she did not include in her opinion input from interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register¹, or from representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies, to be listed in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinst/2021/611/oj).

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	10.9.2026		
Result of final vote	+	:	25
	-	:	6
	0	:	0

**FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL
BY THE COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION**

25	+
PPE	Bogdán Csaba, Estaràs Ferragut Rosa, Kopacz Ewa, Meleti Eleonora, Novakov Andrey, Nykiel Mirosława, Pietikäinen Sirpa, Princi Giusi
PfE	Androuët Mathilde, Disdier Mélanie
Renew	García Hermida-Van Der Walle Raquel, Van Den Berg Brigitte, Žalimas Dainius
S&D	Fritzon Helène, Gálvez Lina, Guzenina Maria, Rafowicz Emma, Scheuring-Wielgus Joanna, Vind Marianne
The Left	Gedin Hanna, Kountoura Elena, Morace Carolina
Verts/ALE	Freund Daniel, Langensiepen Katrin, Strolenberg Anna

6	-
ECR	Donazzan Elena, Gemma Chiara
ESN	Boßdorf Irmhild
NI	Kartheiser Fernand
PfE	Kruis Sebastian, De La Pisa Carrión Margarita

0	0
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Key:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstentions

14.7.2026

LETTER OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Ms Li Andersson
Chair
Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
BRUSSELS

Subject: CULT Opinion on Boosting skills in the Union – opportunities for vocational education and training in times of transition (2026/2070(INI))

Dear Madam Chair,

Under the procedure referred to above, the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) has been asked to submit an opinion to your committee and decided to send the opinion in the form of a letter.

The Committee on Culture and Education considered the matter at its meeting of 14 July 2026. At that meeting, it decided to submit the opinion set out below to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible.

Yours sincerely,

Nela Riehl

SUGGESTIONS

- Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,

A. whereas VET is a key pillar of the European Education Area, the Union of Skills and the European lifelong learning ecosystem, contributing to personal development, quality employment, social cohesion, the EU's competitiveness and resilience, including strategic autonomy, in times of green, digital, demographic and industrial transitions; whereas vocational education and training plays a crucial role in strengthening Europe's industrial base, preserving and improving specialised technical know-how, and addressing labour shortages in sectors essential to the Union's competitiveness and resilience; Whereas the Copenhagen Process launched in November 2002 to strengthen European cooperation in VET has been providing a consistent framework for European VET policy;

B. whereas VET should be valued as a high-quality learning pathway in its own right, and whereas parity of esteem between vocational and academic pathways should be encouraged and supported by Member States in accordance with their national education and training systems in policy design, learner guidance, mobility opportunities, recognition systems, investment in quality and public communication on VET; whereas equal value should mean effective access and opportunities for learners of all ages and backgrounds, not a zero-sum competition between education and training sectors;

C. whereas the attractiveness and quality of VET depend not only on labour-market relevance, but also on teaching and training, guidance systems, inclusive access, permeability between education and training pathways, recognition of skills and qualifications and the development of basic, digital, green, civic, social and transversal competences;

D. whereas public investment per learner and direct financial aid are systematically lower for upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education – the levels where VET is concentrated – than for tertiary education across most Member States¹;

E. whereas VET learner and apprentice mobility remains one of the clearest areas where this ambition still needs to be translated into practice; whereas too many VET learners and apprentices continue to face legal uncertainty, administrative barriers, limited provider capacity, unclear responsibilities, and unresolved questions related to insurance, remuneration, social security and recognition; whereas learners are

¹ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2026/783536/CASP_STU\(2026\)783536_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2026/783536/CASP_STU(2026)783536_EN.pdf)

often unaware of their rights and of the procedures available to report abuses; whereas additional barriers, such as rising living and housing costs, might risk excluding learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds from vocational education and training mobility opportunities;

F. whereas persistent skills mismatches continue to hamper productivity, economic growth and innovation across the Union, highlighting the need for closer cooperation between training providers, employers, SMEs and local productive ecosystems; Whereas apprenticeship-based and dual vocational education and training systems, which combine school-based learning with substantial quality work-based training in enterprises, have proven effective in supporting the transition from education to employment;

G. whereas strengthening common European principles and provisions for mobile VET learners and apprentices could help provide greater legal certainty for learners, VET providers, employers and competent authorities, in full respect of Member State competences and national VET systems;

H. whereas VET mobility requires stronger support capacity inside VET institutions, including dedicated staff, guidance, employer partnerships, simplified procedures and digital tools;

I. whereas Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), introduced as such in the current Erasmus+ programme are transformative cooperation projects and partnerships connecting VET providers, public authorities, academia and the private sector, with a role in skills ecosystems, world of work, innovation and the green and digital transitions, supported by innovative pedagogies, professional development of teachers and trainers, learners and staff mobility and VET internationalisation strategies;

J. whereas VET needs adequate, visible and progressively strengthened support under the next MFF, in particular within Erasmus+, while preserving the flexibility and balanced lifelong-learning architecture of the programme and also other complementary EU funds; whereas VET excellence also depends on teachers, trainers, workplace mentors, permeability between education and training pathways and inclusive access;

K. whereas the shortages of VET teachers is affecting all EU 27 Member States; Whereas according to a Cedefop survey in 2025, only 18% of VET teachers believe that their profession is valued, and for one third of VET teachers their profession was not the first choice, and on average VET teachers receive 11% less salary than other tertiary educated professionals².

² <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/press-releases/cedefop-launches-first-european-vocational-teacher-survey-tackle-critical-vet-teacher-shortages>

1. Welcomes the renewed political attention given to VET in the context of the Union of Skills, the Herning Declaration within the Copenhagen Process, and the forthcoming European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training, and recalls its role as a pillar of the European Education Area, the Union of Skills and the European lifelong learning ecosystem to boost competitiveness and resilience;
 2. Calls on the Commission and Member States to translate parity of esteem between vocational and academic pathways into concrete measures in policy design, learner guidance, mobility opportunities, recognition systems, investment in quality and public communication on excellence and inclusiveness in VET, in particular to boost its attractiveness;
 3. Stresses that equal value should mean effective opportunities for learners, not a zero-sum competition between education and training sectors;
 4. Emphasises that the future VET Strategy should remain learner-centred and should support both Europe's competitiveness and the personal development, social inclusion and democratic participation of learners, fostering a high-quality, inclusive, innovative and attractive European VET with an international outlook; stresses in this regard the importance of clear progression pathways within VET, including higher vocational education and training and qualifications at EQF level 5 and above;
 5. Warns that many traditional craft, and cultural-heritage conservation skills are at risk of disappearing as a result of demographic change and the lack of structured transmission pathways; highlights the importance of intergenerational skills transfer in addressing demographic change and labour shortages; encourages initiatives that support experienced workers in passing on their knowledge and expertise through mentoring, workplace training and apprenticeship schemes; calls on the Commission and the Member States to use vocational education and training, as a means of safeguarding and transmitting those skills; calls for VET strategies to be linked to local cultural ecosystems and heritage, as a tool for territorial cohesion and to counter demographic decline ; calls for the cultural and creative sectors to be fully reflected in the forthcoming VET strategy;
 6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to address, as a priority, the legal and administrative uncertainty affecting mobile VET learners and apprentices, including as regards learner status, contractual arrangements, remuneration, social security, insurance and the recognition of learning periods abroad;
 7. Calls on the Commission to strengthen common European principles and provisions for mobile VET learners and apprentices, in full respect of Member State competences and national VET systems, in order to provide greater legal certainty for learners, VET providers, employers and competent authorities, including by developing a common European framework for the automatic mutual recognition of
-

study qualifications and learning periods abroad in school, VET and higher education; Calls on the Member States to guarantee the portability of domestic grants and loans for VET learners taking part in recognised mobility, so that support follows the learner abroad; Stresses the importance of regularly reviewing and indexing to inflation grants and financial support for VET learners, apprentices, teachers and staff participating in mobility activities;

8. Calls for the Erasmus+ programme to finance support systems for mobility inside VET institutions, such as mobility coordinators in the institutions themselves, building on successful experimentations such as the MONA project in France, in order to including mobility coordinators, to guide VET learners in their mobility projects, advise VET teachers in setting up European projects and facilitate contacts between VET institutions, the private sector and learners;

9. Encourages the development of a VET-adapted digital mobility infrastructure, inspired by the experience of Erasmus Without Paper in higher education, to simplify administrative processes, learning agreements, recognition procedures and cooperation between VET providers, employers and competent authorities;

10. Highlights the transformative role of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) as cooperation projects and partnerships bringing together VET providers, public authorities, academia and the private sector, with the aim of strengthening ties between those stakeholders, building innovative curricula and pedagogical formats that respond to Europe's skills needs, fostering the mobility of VET learners, teachers, trainers and staff, and finding solutions to the administrative, financial, legal and practical barriers that hinder the mobility within VET;

11. Calls for the budget dedicated to CoVEs to be safeguarded in the next Erasmus+ programme, and for successful CoVEs to receive the stability and visibility needed to continue to innovate and transform the VET sector at European, national, regional and local levels;

12. Highlights the role of regional, metropolitan and local authorities in building inclusive, fair and employer-connected apprenticeship and VET ecosystems and in directly managing public training centres;

13. Recalls that VET needs adequate, visible and progressively strengthened support within Erasmus+, based on learner demand, quality, inclusion, absorption capacity and the Europe on the Move target for VET mobility, while preserving the flexibility and balanced lifelong-learning architecture of the programme;

14. Calls for any future Erasmus+ scholarships, talent or excellence actions in strategic educational fields to be open, where relevant, to VET learners and higher VET pathways, while complementing, rather than reducing, core Erasmus+ funding for learning mobility, inclusion and cooperation;

15. Calls for the forthcoming EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda to explicitly address the causes of shortages and needs of VET teachers and trainers and other related staff, including career attractiveness, initial and continuing professional

development, flexible professional pathways, pedagogical innovation, digital, AI and green competences, inclusion skills and support for in-company mentors;

16. Stresses the importance of permeability between VET and other education and training pathways, such as higher education, adult learning, and employment, so that learners can progress between pathways without dead ends; calls, in this regard, for stronger recognition of VET qualifications and learning outcomes, better guidance throughout life, quality-assured micro-credentials, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and pathways from initial VET to higher VET, higher education and continuing VET;

17. Calls for VET curricula to equip learners not only with occupation-specific skills, but also with the basic, digital, AI, green, civic, media literacy, entrepreneurial, social and transversal competences needed for quality jobs, lifelong learning, active citizenship and democratic resilience; recalls that excellence and inclusion in VET must be pursued together, and that high-quality VET, mobility and innovation opportunities should be accessible to learners with fewer opportunities, learners with disabilities and learning difficulties, adult learners, learners in outermost regions, rural, remote and disadvantaged areas, and women and girls in STEM-related VET pathways including through mobile training offers, blended learning, distance guidance and cooperation between schools, training centres and local communities;

18. Calls on Member States to challenge gender stereotypes and structural barriers affecting educational and career choices, with a view to promoting gender equality and a more balanced participation of women and men across all vocational pathways, sectors and occupations;

19. Calls for further promoting effective and efficient public spending on VET, as well as complementarity and synergies of funding under the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework, in particular under Erasmus+, AgoraEU, the European Social Fund and other cohesion funds, in addition to the European Competitiveness Fund; Calls for improved data and monitoring of VET, as well as renewed efforts for implementing the EU-level benchmarks in VET effectively in all Member States;

20. Calls for the future European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training to build on the Copenhagen Process and its latest milestone the Herning Declaration, while avoiding the creation of disconnected new initiatives, and to strengthen the coherence and practical use of existing European tools, including the European Qualifications Framework, EQAVET, Europass, micro-credentials, digital credentials and the validation of non-formal and informal learning;

ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur for opinion declares that she included in her opinion input on matters pertaining to the subject of the file that she received, in the preparation of the opinion, prior to the adoption thereof in committee, from the following interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register¹, or from the following representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies:

1. Interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register
French Education Ministry
2. Representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies
None

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur for opinion.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur for opinion declares that she has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinstit/2021/611/oj).

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL BY THE COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

21	+
ECR	Lara Magoni, Ivaylo Valchev
PPE	Niels Geuking, Sunčana Glavak, Eleonora Meleti, Giusi Princi, Helder Sousa Silva, Viktor Weisz, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver
PfE	Catherine Griset
Renew	Hristo Petrov, Marjan Šarec
S&D	Isilda Gomes, Hannes Heide, Emma Rafowicz, Sabrina Repp, Sandro Ruotolo, Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus
Verts/ALE	Diana Riba i Giner, Nela Riehl

0	-

1	0
ESN	Zsuzsanna Borvendég

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

**INFORMATION ON ADOPTION
BY THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE**

Date adopted	1.10.2026	
Result of final vote	+: 38	
	–: 1	
	0: 4	

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL BY THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

38	+
NI	Branislav Ondruš, Jan-Peter Warnke
PPE	Maravillas Abadía Jover, David Casa, Henrik Dahl, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Gheorghe Falcă, Borja Giménez Larraz, Sérgio Humberto, Miriam Lexmann, Jagna Marczułajtis-Walczak, Dennis Radtke, Liesbet Sommen, Romana Tomc, Michał Wawrykiewicz
Renew	Valérie Devaux, Elisabetta Gualmini, Irena Joveva, Hristo Petrov, Jana Toom
S&D	Marc Angel, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Estelle Ceulemans, Vivien Costanzo, Isilda Gomes, Alicia Homs Ginell, Marit Maij, Idoia Mendia, Christel Schaldemose
The Left	Li Andersson, Konstantinos Arvanitis, Leila Chaibi, Kathleen Funchion, Rudi Kennes
Verts/ALE	Katrin Langensiepen, Maria Ohisalo, Nela Riehl, Villy Søvndal

1	-
ESN	Stanislav Stoyanov

4	0
ESN	Petr Bystron
PfE	Marie Dauchy, Mélanie Disdier, Séverine Werbrouck

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention