



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2020)0373

Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience

European Parliament resolution of 17 December 2020 on the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020/2767(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Article 14 thereof on the right to education,
- having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 4 and its targets,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the Council, Parliament and the Commission in November 2017, and in particular principles 1 on education, training and lifelong learning and 4 on active support to employment thereof,
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation of 1 July 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (COM(2020)0275) and to the accompanying staff working document (SWD(2020)0123),
- having regard to the Commission report of October 2017 entitled ‘Mapping of VET graduate tracking measures in EU Member States’,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)¹,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational

¹ OJ C 155, 8.7.2009, p. 1.

Education and Training (ECVET)¹,

- having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 June 2020 on countering the COVID-19 crisis in education and training,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 8 November 2019 on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems²,
- having regard to the Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships³,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 July 2020 on a European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (COM(2020)0274) and to the accompanying staff working documents (SWD(2020)0121) and (SWD(2020)0122),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 July 2020 on Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation (COM(2020)0276),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation of 1 July 2020 entitled ‘A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee’ and replacing Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (COM(2020)0277),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (COM(2020)0625) and to the accompanying staff working document (SWD(2020)0212),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 – Resetting education and training for the digital age (COM(2020)0624) and to the accompanying staff working document (SWD(2020)0209),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 January 2018 on the Digital Education Action Plan (COM(2018)0022),
- having regard to the policy framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020),
- having regard to the European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence (LifeComp),
- having regard to the synthesis report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) of 15 April 2020 based on information provided by the Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts and entitled ‘How are European countries managing apprenticeships to respond to the COVID-19 crisis?’,
- having regard to the Cedefop report of 2020 entitled ‘Vocational education and training

¹ OJ C 155, 8.7.2009, p. 11.

² OJ C 389, 18.11.2019, p. 1.

³ OJ C 153, 2.5.2018, p. 1.

in Europe, 1995-2035 – Scenarios for European vocational education and training in the 21st century’,

- having regard to the series of seven Cedefop research papers entitled ‘The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe’,
- having regard to the Cedefop publication of 2013 entitled ‘Benefits of vocational education and training in Europe for people, organisations and countries’,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2020 on the Youth Guarantee¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU²,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on a new skills agenda for Europe³,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on skills policies for fighting youth unemployment⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 April 2016 on Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in VET – a lifelong learning approach⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 June 2011 on European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the Europe 2020 strategy⁶,
- having regard to its legislative resolution of 20 May 2008 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council repealing Council Decision 85/368/EEC on the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community⁷,
- having regard to the study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 6 May 2020 entitled ‘VET in a time of crisis: Building foundations for resilient vocational education and training systems’,
- having regard to the questions to the Council and the Commission on the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (O-000068/2020 – B9-0027/2020 and O-000069/2020 – B9-0028/2020),
- having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Employment and

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0267.

² OJ C 28, 27.1.2020, p. 8.

³ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 135.

⁴ OJ C 11, 12.1.2018, p. 44.

⁵ OJ C 58, 15.2.2018, p. 65.

⁶ OJ C 380 E, 11.12.2012, p. 67.

⁷ OJ C 279 E, 19.11.2009, p. 119.

Social Affairs,

- A. whereas vocational education and training (VET) is an essential part of European education and lifelong learning systems, equipping young people and adults with the knowledge, know-how, skills and competences they need for employment; whereas VET accounts for about half of upper secondary graduates in the European Union; whereas VET could be crucial to for addressing the challenges caused by the accelerating macro trends and future transitions, and could be key to filling the widening skills gap in the EU labour market;
- B. whereas according to Cedefop, around two thirds of Europeans (68 %) think that vocational education at upper secondary stage has a positive image in their country, while just under a quarter (23 %) say it has a negative image¹;
- C. whereas education and training also play a central role in integrating people into society and promoting participation in the political process, thereby helping to build inclusion as well as democratic and active citizenship;
- D. whereas VET can boost students' and workers' professional development, company performance, competitiveness, research and innovation and is a central aspect of successful employment and social policy;
- E. whereas VET in Europe is highly diverse and not equally attractive for all learners; whereas national systems and initiatives need to be more compatible and interconnected at EU level; whereas the Commission and the policies of the EU can play an important role in supporting and coordinating Member States' actions on VET at EU level; whereas the role of transnational and national VET providers' networks and partnerships is crucial in the dissemination of the VET policy agenda and EU best practice;
- F. whereas initial vocational education and training (IVET) is no longer only considered a vocational pathway, but an alternative pathway to the academic route that contains many elements of an academic education which can, ultimately, lead to a tertiary level, university education; whereas in countries where the dual system is well established the vocational pathway has always combined practical experience in the workplace with academic study in the classroom;
- G. whereas continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is key to achieving the social and economic objectives of the EU; whereas CVET improves the participation of adults in lifelong learning, reinforces their employability and increases employment in Europe;
- H. whereas European VET systems are facing important challenges; whereas these systems need to be equipped with the capacity to adapt to the rapidly evolving green and digital transitions, technological developments, occupational changes and the shift towards more highly skilled jobs, changing labour market needs, meeting current skills shortages and averting future ones, new business models, new forms of work organisation, demographic trends, cohesion and infrastructural developments; whereas Member States and EU institutions need to step up their efforts and their support to create the

¹ Cedefop, *European public opinion survey on vocational education and training*, 2017.

best possible conditions for VET in order to adapt quickly to these challenges and skills needs in the labour market;

- I. whereas countries with well-designed vocational training programmes find it easier to avoid youth unemployment, even in times of crisis; whereas according to analysis by the IZA Institute of Labor Economics, countries with a dual vocational training system coped better with the economic crisis of 2008 and its effects on young people in the labour market; whereas the youth unemployment rate in countries without a dual VET system increased significantly at the time¹;
- J. whereas despite efforts being made to establish a coordinated European Qualifications Framework and the development of national qualifications frameworks, numerous mobile workers in the EU have difficulties in having their skills and training recognised and finding equivalent employment in other Member States;
- K. whereas the dual system usually does not provide for the possibility to continue the education process at all levels; whereas the dual system must be flexible and be able to respond to the changes in the labour market and new, as yet unknown jobs;
- L. whereas internships and vocational training with foreign employers within the Erasmus+ programme have a significant impact on supporting students and graduates of vocational and technical schools to find employment and to develop the competences required in the labour market, including language, professional language and social skills;
- M. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has put vocational education and training activities, as well as standard education in general, under serious strain, interrupting learning in both workplaces and the classroom; whereas the pandemic has been particularly disruptive to work-based learning, including apprenticeships and training schemes with often significantly decreasing numbers of attendance, offers and new students; whereas the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis also present an opportunity to launch a digital and technological revolution in VET, which can break physical barriers, where possible, and significantly increase its reach and impact on expected results;
- N. whereas in many sectors apprenticeship training is massively affected by company closures and short-time working;
- O. whereas it is likely that young people will suffer disproportionately from the consequences of the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of unemployment; whereas in August 2020, having risen rapidly in the previous months, youth unemployment stood at 17,6 % in the EU and 18,1 % in the Euro area (compared to 14,1 % and 15,4 % respectively in August 2019) and whereas it is expected to rise further in the near future and keep many young people trapped in precarious and non-standard forms of employment or inactivity with insufficient social protection; whereas the EU must make youth unemployment and those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) one of the top political priorities to avoid creating another 'lost generation' as a consequence of the current crisis, which will also have a detrimental effect on the mental health and lives of millions of young people; whereas VET is a key

¹ Eichhorst, W., *Does vocational training help young people find a (good) job?*, IZA Institute of Labor Economics.

factor for preparing learners for democratic societies and successfully entering and participating in the labour market;

- P. whereas the recent socio-economic developments and the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic have increased social inequalities and accentuated the need to make VET systems not only more efficient but also more accessible and inclusive with respect to vulnerable groups and people in rural or remote areas; whereas equal opportunities for all are key; whereas access to computers, a broadband connection, digital support and other technological learning tools is crucial, not only for VET providers but also students, in order to avoid deepening inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind;
- Q. whereas 60 million adults in the EU are low-qualified; whereas according to Cedefop, there are 128 million adults in the EU who have a low level of education, low digital skills or low cognitive skills or who have a medium-high level of education but are at risk of skill loss and skill obsolescence and therefore in need of upskilling and reskilling; whereas well-designed and inclusive VET systems are of strategic importance to increase the competences and skills of all learners and support access to quality job opportunities;
- R. whereas in 2017, 4,3 % of pupils in lower secondary education in the EU followed vocational programmes, with this share reaching 47,8 % for upper secondary education and 92 % for post-secondary non-tertiary education; whereas in 2017, 46,7 % of all graduates from vocational programmes in upper secondary education in the EU were female¹;
- S. whereas in VET as in education, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted some challenges and limitations of distance learning in technical and content-related areas;
- T. whereas distance learning risks increasing dropout rates for vulnerable learners and must therefore remain a complement rather than an alternative to conventional learning;
- U. whereas there is neither an agreed definition nor a common understanding of micro-credentials in VET at EU level; whereas micro-credentials should be conceived as complementary to full qualifications and recognised as a proof of meaningful and high-quality achievements, based on standards on delivery mode, assessment procedure and duration;
- V. whereas in 2015, almost one third (30,5 %) of all companies with 10 or more people employed in the EU-28's business economy provided IVET, although this proportion varied greatly across the Member States²;
- W. whereas in 2015, 72,6 % of companies employing 10 or more people in the EU-28 provided CVET to their staff; whereas this marked an increase on 2005 and 2010, when the corresponding shares were 59,7 % and 65,7 %³;

¹ Eurostat, *Vocational education and training statistics*, data extracted in September 2020.

² Eurostat, *Vocational education and training statistics*, data extracted in September 2020.

³ Eurostat, *Vocational education and training statistics*, data extracted in September

- X. whereas the impact of IVET and CVET on labour market outcomes often reflects direct or indirect aggregate individual productivity effects; whereas the main outcomes stressed by countries are higher participation in the labour market, lower unemployment, the opportunity to acquire a qualification for all categories which did not previously have one, and the chance to advance in a professional hierarchy; whereas through lifelong learning, individuals can improve their work opportunities and qualification levels, which leads to higher remuneration and greater economic and social outputs, such as economic autonomy, and can also enhance psychological wellbeing¹;
- Y. whereas IVET and CVET have a direct impact on generational changes and the situation of families;
- Z. whereas IVET and CVET help to make companies and innovation more effective;
1. Underlines that VET, particularly through its focus on practice and work-based learning, plays a vital role in a labour market that is geared towards a just transition and in constant change; underlines that VET, if geared towards quality, can offer relevant and high-quality knowledge, skills and competences at all levels in companies of all sizes and sectors and for people in both initial and continuing education tailored to their individual needs; stresses that VET is important for filling skills gaps in the EU labour market, for equipping young students with the skills they need to get into employment, and for upskilling and reskilling workers to align their competences with employers' needs, which is particularly important for SMEs and new investments in the economy; stresses, in addition, the need to foster personal development skills to help individuals grow both personally and professionally in order to maximise their potential;
 2. Calls for VET to be coordinated with formal and traditional education systems and integrated as a policy area within the scope of all education policies, at EU and Member State level, without being consigned to the background or made only a secondary priority; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that VET and classical education are complementary and equal in priority;
 3. Recalls the importance, moreover, of approaching VET as a fundamental tool for promoting integration and inclusion for the development of a more cohesive society;
 4. Emphasises the urgent need to modernise and significantly expand VET policies to make them more inclusive, accessible, resilient, attractive and effective in supporting fair employment, human capital development and active participation in society; considers that VET policies should equip people with good basic skills and key competences to enable them to adapt to current and future socio-economic and labour market developments and the opportunities of and challenges posed by the digital and green transitions, demographic change and all other macro trends, and should deliver on the objectives of the European Green Deal; stresses the key role of VET policies in upskilling and reskilling all workers to deal with these key transitions better;
 5. Recalls that VET contributes to competitiveness and social cohesion; underlines the need to increase investment in human capital and skills and to deliver a skills base

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¹ Cedefop, *The benefits of vocational education and training*, 2011.

relevant to working life;

6. Recalls that the containment measures put in place to halt the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have put European VET systems under serious strain and its learners in precarious situations; stresses that the disruption to VET is exacerbating pre-existing education inequalities by reducing the opportunities for many of society's most vulnerable people, who need to be supported by sustainable investment and effective non-financial measures in the sector; stresses, in this respect, that particular attention should be given to ensuring equal access to high-quality VET, including in remote or rural areas where distance learning could be hampered by a lack of internet coverage;
7. Underlines that it is crucial to provide the necessary financial means, technical assistance and guidance to ensure access to digital devices and e-learning solutions for VET providers, teachers, trainers and students; encourages Member States to promote flexible education models and support for distance learners by means such as e-resources, e-materials, free online training and – most importantly – equipment and broadband internet for all schools and households; stresses that public authorities should pay special attention to and incentivise solutions for households that do not have access to computers and a good broadband connection, so as to prevent a digital divide and an increase in inequalities in an education sector in which many disadvantaged students are enrolled;
8. Fears a dramatic decline in the number of apprenticeship training places for next autumn given the potential reduction in training activities in many sectors that the COVID-19 crisis could entail; underlines that this lack of training opportunities for young people could also lead to an intensification of the shortage of skilled labour in some areas in the medium term; calls on Member States and regions to consider how alternative supra-company training could be sensibly expanded in order to bridge the looming gap in apprenticeship training places;
9. Calls for a quality guarantee ensuring that people who finished their training and/or education during the COVID-19 crisis can fill any gaps in their training by (re-)taking courses from their traineeship or apprenticeship even after obtaining their degree and/or finishing their traineeship or apprenticeship, which might have had to be cancelled or curtailed or fallen short in some other way while anti-COVID-19 measures were in place;
10. Welcomes the proposal for a Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience; supports the proposal's overall aims to modernise EU policy on VET and confirm VET's central role in the lifelong learning continuum and in the rapid adaptation to a rapidly changing labour market; welcomes the efforts to simplify VET governance, to develop an internationalisation strategy and to secure more European cooperation and mobility opportunities for learners and teachers; highlights the key role of skills reaching all kinds of workers in the transition to a green and digital economy;
11. Welcomes the proposal's quantitative objectives, namely that – by 2025 – the share of employed graduates should be at least 82 %, 60 % of recent graduates from VET should benefit from exposure to work-based learning during their VET, and 8 % of learners in VET should benefit from a learning mobility abroad; invites Member States to encourage learning pathways including work-based learning; recalls that specific targets

can help Member States in setting goals and making VET policies more inclusive and adapted to labour market needs; calls on the Commission to report to Parliament and the Council every five years on the implementation of the recommendation;

12. Calls on the Commission to expand worthwhile mobility programmes for apprentices, such as ErasmusPro, by strengthening synergies between European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and Erasmus+ programmes and by ensuring adequate resources in the 2021-2027 programming period; calls on the Member States to set a more ambitious target on learning mobility abroad for VET students; recalls that in similar initiatives under the ET2020 framework and Erasmus programme for higher education, the target on mobility for higher education graduates was set at 20 % for 2020; underlines that increased mobility opportunities can help to expand apprentices' personal, educational and professional networks and make VET more attractive, rather than it being perceived as a second choice, and unlock the mobility potential of VET, which can, in turn, contribute to the success of the future Erasmus+ programme;
13. Calls on the Commission to include an indicator on skills gaps in the Social Scoreboard, in line with the aims and implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which could be useful for VET national policymakers to identify where more efforts are required and to coordinate better at EU level, tracking skills gaps evolutions and progress, and incentivising upward convergence among the Member States;
14. Stresses that well-targeted awareness-raising campaigns and youth-friendly communication channels, such as social media, can play a decisive role in reaching out to young people to raise the profile of VET and make it more attractive; underlines the crucial role of schools, especially primary and lower secondary, in communicating the possibilities offered by VET, making VET more attractive and doing more to guide young students on these professional paths;
15. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to work with stakeholders to devise an EU online platform on VET, as requested by many VET providers and policymakers in a recent EU survey¹, which should be promoted as soon as possible; supports the idea that such a platform could offer opportunities for networking and exchanging good practices and could provide digital solutions, including for work-based learning, and all the available material for online learning in a safe, quality-assured and multilingual environment; underlines that a VET platform can be the link between the platforms of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) at EU level; suggests that the platform should be linked to an EU web portal on VET, open to contributions from stakeholders, in order to bring visibility to the activities and services provided by CoVEs to their ecosystems, to showcase the wealth of opportunities offered by VET to learners at national and EU levels, and to step up communication efforts and increase the attractiveness of VET;
16. Calls on the Commission to explore the idea of an EU web job portal specifically dedicated to traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities around the EU, gathering together all similar existing EU initiatives in a more visible, comprehensive and user-friendly fashion; considers that this instrument, if adequately publicised through the appropriate channels, can become a focal point for young Europeans, education institutions, and companies around the EU; is of the opinion that the portal could be

¹ Commission survey for European Vocational Skills Week 2020, 9-13 November 2020.

connected to VET, help to guide youth talent where most required by labour market needs, increase EU mobility, tackle youth unemployment, and bridge current and future skills gaps; considers that such an initiative could be supported by the Youth Guarantee and Erasmus+ programmes to amplify the impact of those programmes, and could be complementary and connected with other EU initiatives such as the European Job Mobility Portal (EURES), Europass and a future EU VET portal;

17. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to analyse and provide support and solutions for the requests made by VET stakeholders in the recent EU survey undertaken by the Commission between March and May 2020 on the challenges and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vocational education and training; supports, in particular, in addition to the creation of a common EU platform for VET, the development of virtual reality simulation systems and other digital tools for VET education with the aid of research projects and test phases, the creation of vocational online open courses (VOOC), virtual European projects such as Erasmus virtual, an EU YouTube channel on VET for the general public, European training weeks, and, furthermore, making ESF and the future ESF+ more flexible and able to fund educational technology, training for teachers and trainers, and the implementation of e-learning;
18. Underlines that the disruption to the provision of VET caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable educational and social impact on VET students, in particular from disadvantaged backgrounds, and poses difficult challenges for students who work best under direct guidance and in the presence of a teacher; highlights that this should not only be seen as a problem but that it also provides a unique opportunity to modernise VET systems through technological innovations in fields such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things, as well as an increased use of online and distance learning, hybrid apprenticeships and alternative assessment; highlights that such reforms could ultimately contribute to making VET systems stronger, more responsive, and more resilient than before the COVID-19 crisis and equip students and workers for the skills and jobs of tomorrow; notes, at the same time, that advanced digital skills for teachers, trainers and students is a key prerequisite for high-quality online learning;
19. Underlines the urgent need to adopt all the necessary measures to reduce the number of student drop-outs from VET, to reinforce the inclusiveness and quality of VET, to ensure equal access to quality apprenticeships for all young and adult learners and to guarantee equal access and the right to employee training for all workers in all companies of all sizes and sectors, with a specific focus on SMEs;
20. Welcomes the idea of developing virtual mobility opportunities to overcome the constraints of COVID-19 and encourages Member States and VET providers to facilitate location-less learning opportunities, including in the future, allowing students in remote and rural areas or abroad to access courses around the EU without location constraints, where feasible;
21. Recalls that the involvement of all the relevant actors in the policy design and delivery of VET helps to ensure that VET addresses the skills needs in the labour market and contributes to better policy implementation; calls on the Member States, therefore, to cooperate closely with all the relevant stakeholders such as social partners, enterprises, including MSMEs, social economy enterprises, such as cooperatives and non-profit

organisations, VET providers and their associations, VET students, VET student unions, research centres, civil society organisations, public and private employment services, guidance practitioners and local and regional authorities to coordinate at EU level for better interconnections between different systems and to exchange best practices; calls for the setting-up of local eco-systems, including the aforementioned stakeholders, in order to reinforce the quality, quantity, inclusiveness and reputation of VET as a positive choice; underlines the need to actively promote among potential applicants the employment opportunities linked to VET and to direct students towards sectors lacking employees with VET qualifications; stresses that a strong connection between VET and the world of work is essential; stresses that the training offered should cater to local challenges and needs;

22. Maintains that a strong educational foundation that provides students with broad knowledge and basic skills in literacy, numeracy and communication, digital skills and soft skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving and emotional intelligence, serves as the basis for further learning and on-the-job training and is key for young people's futures as both workers and individuals, enabling them to adapt to changing demands throughout their professional lives;
23. Highlights the need for a transparent common definition of micro-credentials; believes that micro-credentials can be only complementary to full qualifications and must be quality assured, accredited and based on standardised delivery mode, assessment procedure and duration; underlines the paramount importance of well-defined quality requirements of micro-credentials providers;
24. Recalls the intrinsic value of education beyond its role towards the labour market; calls on the Member States to put more emphasis on the role of education beyond the needs of the labour market, taking into account the development of knowledge and skills that support personal development, wellbeing and active citizenship;
25. Calls on the Member States to design, with the involvement of social partners, quality and inclusive VET systems and adult learning policies with a view to improving skills and competences of low-qualified adults, both workers and unemployed people, who need urgent support to access quality jobs;
26. Supports the establishment and promotion of representative structures for VET learners at all levels in order to give VET learners a voice in the management of VET schemes and thereby help to improve the quality of VET programmes;
27. Supports the proposed promotion of CoVEs bringing together a wide range of VET stakeholders and local partners; underlines that such centres can be drivers for innovation, quality and inclusiveness and facilitate the exchange of good practices, foster mutual learning and help improve the quality and provision of VET across the EU; calls on the Member States to ensure solid investment in the development of these centres and all VET institutions and recalls that support for CoVEs through the Erasmus+ programme requires an ambitious programme budget; calls on the Member States to take further measures to bring together and involve the relevant stakeholders in order to help increase the relevance and quality of the education in these centres and to better match the supply and demand of skills and support employers in finding vocational training facility solutions; calls on the Member States to make CoVEs the driving force for the development of joint European VET qualifications, curricula and

diplomas; calls on the Member States, furthermore, to foster regional cooperation strategies with a view to devising cross-border programmes aimed at facilitating the mobility of learners and workers and improving territorial and regional cooperation, including through the European Qualifications Framework;

28. Strongly believes that all pupils should have access to a balanced, rigorous and cognitively demanding, knowledge-based curriculum, as this is the best possible preparation for both vocational and academic studies, guaranteeing that young people who have opted for a VET programme have done so because that was their choice or vocation rather than due to low achievement or an inability to pursue other academic options; underlines that digital and green skills should be integrated across educational curricula, recognising that they are basic skills for all learners; recalls Cedefop's assertion that adapting curricula and including environmental awareness, with an understanding of sustainable development and business efficiency, is better than devising completely new training programmes;
29. Calls on the Member States to ensure appropriate funding for VET policies, both at national and EU level, in order to guarantee the investments needed to make VET systems more modern, resilient, attractive and inclusive; underlines the need for increased funding for VET mobility for learners and teachers, including in Erasmus+; calls on the Member States to develop incentives to help SMEs encourage VET learners to take part in European mobility; underlines the need for increased funding for training centres to finance dedicated teams tasked with the practical organisation of mobility; calls on the Commission to organise an EU-wide campaign targeting SMEs to underline the benefits to their prosperity of incoming and outgoing vocational mobility;
30. Underlines the need to develop more programmes like e-Twinning and the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), which serve to promote networking and inter-school cooperation; recalls that these projects can assist in the implementation of core curricula and help to encourage students who are reluctant to learn remotely to participate;
31. Calls on the Member States to devote specific attention to the continuous training and professional development of teachers and trainers in VET to enable them to fulfil their increasingly multi-functional roles and responsibilities as drivers for quality and innovation in education; recalls that it is important that VET teachers have high-quality digital skills and the right technological equipment at their disposal to be able to fully embrace the opportunities offered by digital education and to help equip students with the skills required by the digital transition; underlines that the representatives of the branches and companies cooperating within VET must have pedagogical competences; calls on the Member States and the Commission to better develop the opportunity for VET teachers to also carry out research throughout their career, as this could allow them to exchange and stimulate best practices and help to realise the full potential of the European Research Area;
32. Calls on the Member States to promote the dual VET model, which could make it much easier for young people to get into the labour market, especially when compared to general education, as training that combines structured workplace learning with theory leads to certified skills that are relevant to employers and transferable to the labour market; underlines, in this context, the potential of digital solutions, which can make a positive contribution to an effective dual system;

33. Urges the Member States, when devising VET, to take better advantage of the development of the green jobs sector, to create highly skilled apprenticeships to provide young people with specialised knowledge and training, and to help tackle the high levels of youth unemployment;
34. Encourages the Member States and regional and local authorities to integrate sustainable development and environmental competences and skills into training and education systems, in particular by strengthening VET systems and by encouraging research centres to develop technologies, projects and patents for green products, in collaboration with new green companies; encourages exchanges of ideas between research centres and networks of companies and professionals; recalls the importance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills and the need to ensure that more women study STEM subjects;
35. Calls on the Member States to improve skills anticipation systems to better identify emerging changes and skills needs so that VET systems are better informed about where investments in skills are needed and are more responsive to changing labour market needs, and to ensure that education, training and lifelong learning is a right for all; stresses that VET will be more effective if it is based on solid skills forecasting enabling skills gaps to be anticipated and identified and vocational and lifelong training programmes to be tailored to a future-oriented labour market; believes that VET programmes should be made more flexible and adaptable to match and resist labour market fluctuations and enable intelligent and targeted orientation of VET learners, for initial training as well as for upskilling and reskilling adult learners, in order to reduce skills mismatches and skill obsolescence;
36. Calls for the establishment of paid educational leave policies in line with the ILO Paid Educational Leave Convention, which allows workers to attend training programmes during working hours and at no personal cost, in order to promote lifelong learning;
37. Calls on the Member States, regional governments and local authorities to adopt and implement, together with the social partners and training providers, skills development and anticipation strategies with the aim of improving generic, sectoral and occupation-specific skills; notes that these strategies should include a thorough assessment of the type and level of jobs to be created and the requisite skills and knowledge, leading to the anticipation and identification of skills gaps and targeted vocational and lifelong training programmes focusing on matching skills and jobs, with the aim of increasing employment;
38. Welcomes the recommendation that VET providers should get an appropriate degree of autonomy, flexibility, support and funding; recalls that financial and strategical independence of VET providers is important to rapidly adapt to changes in skills demands and to the opportunities of and challenges posed by the digital and green transitions; calls on the Member States to step up their efforts to create qualified training programmes in sectors that lack an adequate workforce, such as the health and care sectors, agriculture, construction, the environmental sector and the circular economy;
39. Calls on the Member States to put greater emphasis on making VET systems more inclusive and accessible to all throughout their working lives, including vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, NEETs, older workers, the long-term

unemployed, low-qualified and low-skilled adults, displaced workers, minorities and ethnic groups, people with migrant backgrounds, refugees, and people with fewer opportunities because of their geographical location; calls for concrete measures to ensure that people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, who often find themselves in a vicious circle of poverty, have access to VET in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights; encourages Member States facing demographic decline to ensure that younger people benefit from VET programmes in particular as a pathway to quality employment; underlines that preventive actions such as skills assessments and careers and vocational guidance may reduce the number of NEETs in the longer term and address the needs of companies and sectors suffering from skills shortages;

40. Welcomes the suggestion that VET systems should play an equally important role for adults in need of continuous upskilling and reskilling; calls on the Commission to adopt a holistic approach to VET and adult learning encompassing formal, non-formal and informal learning; calls on the Member States to make VET more attractive and accessible to adult learners and to forge stronger links and closer cooperation between VET for adults and non-formal adult learning in order to promote key competences, including good basic skills, digital skills, and transversal, green and other life skills which provide strong foundations for resilience, lifelong employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development; stresses that efforts to improve the image and inclusiveness of VET programmes need to be accompanied by efforts to strengthen their educational value and to increase the quality and respect for apprentices' social and labour rights;
41. Stresses the importance of reaching people in rural and remote areas and making VET accessible and designed for people working in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and other jobs in those regions, and to provide them with all the necessary skills, including green and digital skills, to better grasp present and future opportunities offered by the green and blue economy and enable them to make an important contribution to the preservation of the environment;
42. Underlines that work-based learning and the promotion and implementation of the dual VET system should be priorities of the new Erasmus programme;
43. Calls on the Member States, in line with the EU Strategy for Gender Equality, to continue to address gender bias and gender-stereotypical choices by ensuring and encouraging the equal participation of women in vocational training for what are usually traditional 'male' professions and of men in 'female' professions; calls for the gender dimension to be reinforced in efforts to modernise VET systems and to make learning both at and outside work more accessible to women employees and those with family care duties, not least in sectors where women are under-represented, notably the digital, STEM and green sectors, in order to combat gender segregation in education and employment and combat gender stereotypes;
44. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, when making the transition to the green economy, to take account of the needs of women and girls for better lifelong learning opportunities, especially in fields which have considerable potential for providing a significant number of new green jobs, such as science, research, engineering, digital technology and new technologies, with the aim of strengthening women's position in society, eliminating gender stereotypes and delivering jobs which fully correspond to women's particular needs and skills;

45. Calls on the Member States to promote VET participation through campaigns emphasising the benefits to the individual and the employer and by providing incentives, including long-standing incentives, to cover some of the costs to employers of apprenticeships; recognises the significance of initiatives such as WorldSkills competitions, which make a key impact in terms of the positive image of VET, the promotion of new jobs and new skills, attracting young people to VET careers, adapting VET systems to the modern economy, and boosting cooperation between education, employers and the labour market;
46. Welcomes the objective of the European Education Area of developing a genuine European learning space where high-quality and inclusive education and training is in no way hampered by borders; considers that the recommendation should fulfil this aim;
47. Welcomes the proposal to enhance the flexibility of VET programmes, to use micro-credentials and to increase the permeability with other educational sectors, as this increased flexibility enables VET programmes to be customised to individual needs, while respecting full qualifications; notes that this initiative also allows transfers of recognition and the accumulation of learning outcomes; welcomes, in this respect, the idea of European vocational core profiles and of integration with the Europass platform, including with future individual learning accounts, which should serve to facilitate recognition of qualifications and mobility; underlines that curricula need to establish the basis to enable people to transfer between academic and vocational routes, including the competences they obtain; stresses that the qualification structure needs to allow for comparability; underlines that curricula also need to provide for the future employability of the individual by anticipating skill needs over the medium to long term; calls on the Member States to encourage the further modularisation of VET in order to build more bridges between education and training systems; stresses the importance of the ECVET system, which has provided better recognition of learning outcomes obtained during mobility periods; calls on the Member States to consider the development of the ECTS credit points system for VET; calls on the Member States to ensure that VET programmes can create higher skill levels;
48. Welcomes the framework provisions of EQAVET and calls for an assessment of their implementation; welcomes the integration of the EQAVET framework and elements addressing the shortcomings of its implementation into the recommendation, specifically in relation to quality standards, and the inclusion of key principles of ECVET to support flexibility and mobility, developed in the framework of other instruments such as Erasmus+;
49. Welcomes all possible synergies and a greater role for VET under the Youth Guarantee, in view of its effectiveness in easing the transition to the labour market for young people at risk of unemployment and social exclusion;
50. Calls on the Member States to strengthen language learning in VET systems as the lack of proficiency in this area is a major impediment to mobility, while a good command of several languages is of added value on labour markets;
51. Underlines that any improvement to the provision of VET needs to be accompanied by improvements to the access to information, advice and guidance services in an accessible format for all adult learners and students from an early age;

52. Stresses that apprenticeships are a vital part of VET programmes; urges Member States to make further efforts to ensure high-quality, diversified and tailored apprenticeships, including fair remuneration, that are aligned with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, including ensuring a working environment adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities, access to social protection and training; calls on the Commission, in this regard, to review the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships; calls on the Member States to encourage VET mobility by easing national administrative prerequisites for VET foreign students; encourages the Commission and the Member States to work towards the creation of a European Apprenticeship Statute;
53. Stresses the importance of ensuring that the objectives of the recommendation are aligned with the current policy and legislative framework in the context of the Recovery Plan for Europe, with particular regard to investment in skills, education and training through the Recovery and Resilience Facility and REACT-EU, as well as the European Skills Agenda, the Digital Education Action Plan, the European Education Area, Erasmus+ and the Youth Guarantee;
54. Underlines the need to improve the tracking of VET graduates, as a better understanding of their performance in the labour market is one of the key ways of assessing and improving the quality and relevance to the labour market of VET, alongside forecasts on the supply and demand of skills;
55. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase the resources allocated to the digitalisation of VET programmes and to graduate tracking;
56. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.