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85. Calls on the Commission to submit to Parliament and the Council during the current parliamentary term a proposal for a regulation on a European Statute for Mutual Societies and Associations;
86. Calls on the Commission to take the requisite steps to propose, as soon as possible, a feasibility study and consultation process designed to lead to the introduction of a European Mutual Society Statute;
87. Calls on the Commission to focus more closely on market monitoring, especially in the areas of financial services, insurance, telephony, banking services and utilities, and believes that the effective monitoring of markets will strengthen fair competition and increase their efficiency, thus benefiting both the economy and consumers;
88. Takes the view that the quality of consumer protection in the financial services sector requires considerable improvement, especially in respect to the monitoring and supervising aspects;
89. Maintains that continued sustainable development of the internal market depends on: (1) the Commission's continued commitment to all market initiatives required to stimulate and improve significantly our standing and competitive edge in the global market; (2) adoption of an overall framework to ensure that the single market really delivers for all stakeholders; and, crucially, (3) the single market also reaching citizens;
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90. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
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University Business Dialogue: a new partnership for the modernisation of Europe's universities

P7_TA(2010)0187

European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2010 on university-business dialogue: a new partnership for the modernisation of Europe's universities (2009/2099(INI))

(2011/C 161 E/15)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 April 2009 entitled 'A new partnership for the modernisation of universities: the EU Forum for University Business Dialogue' (COM(2009)0158),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 May 2006 entitled 'Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: education, research and innovation' (COM(2006)0208),
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions issued following the Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions issued following the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008, notably the part on 'investing in people and modernising labour markets',
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions issued following the European Council of 19 and 20 March 2009, notably the part on 'making full use of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs',

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- having regard to the Council resolution of 15 November 2007 on the new skills for new jobs ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2008 entitled 'Adult learning: it is never too late to learn' ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 September 2008 on the Bologna Process and student mobility ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 4 December 2009 on university-business dialogue ⁽⁵⁾ and to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 17 December 2009 ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to the study published by the European Parliament entitled 'Further Developing the University-Business Dialogue',
 - having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A7-0108/2010),
- A. whereas the European Council of 19 and 20 March 2009 called on the Member States to encourage partnerships between business, research, education and training,
- B. whereas the communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education of 28-29 April 2009 calls for public policies that 'fully recognise the value of various missions of higher education, ranging from teaching and research to community service and engagement in social cohesion and cultural development',
- C. whereas, in view of their threefold function (education, research and innovation), universities have a vital part to play in the future of the Union and the education of its citizens, and whereas the role of higher education is to provide a learning environment that promotes autonomy, creativity and optimum use of knowledge,
- D. whereas responsibility for setting education policies remains a matter for the Member States, which are responsible for the organisation, content and reform of their education systems,
- E. whereas the differences in the economic and social levels of the inhabitants of the various parts of Europe call for a levelling of educational opportunities for all European Union citizens and support for talented economically disadvantaged youth,
- F. whereas the continuing economic crisis, which is resulting in the loss of jobs, makes it important to have extremely effective cooperation between higher education institutions and businesses,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 290, 4.12.2007, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0013.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0423.

⁽⁵⁾ CdR 157/2009 fin.

⁽⁶⁾ SOC/347.

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- G. whereas it is urgent to implement, coordinate and promote a coherent approach among all those countries having signed the Bologna Process, especially in the field of student mobility and full recognition of diplomas, and to do so necessitates a proper assessment of the said process that identifies the difficulties and obstacles,
- H. whereas the European Commission has an important role to play in facilitating exchanges of information and good practices among the EU Member States and the EU's neighbouring countries,
- I. whereas the diverse range of higher education institutions, business circles and types of cooperation makes it hard to agree on an ideal cooperation model that would match the profile, priorities and requirements of every institution in Europe; whereas the autonomy of universities and their ability to choose the most suitable business partnership models for their purposes should be maintained in all circumstances,
- J. whereas education is a task of society as a whole for which the State must not shirk its financial responsibility,
- K. whereas higher education remains a public responsibility and therefore public financing to universities is needed in order to preserve equal financing to all fields of study, e.g. humanities; whereas it is important to support universities financially (for example through public-private partnerships), while at the same time guaranteeing their autonomy and quality assurance,
- L. whereas education and training, which should lead to acquisition of the fundamentals of general and civic culture, are excellent means of helping underdeveloped regions close up and, in addition to job creation and the promotion of competitiveness, are essential for cultural and intellectual plurality and civic life,
- M. whereas university-business cooperation is supported by many EU programmes, but such action is not always coordinated among institutions,
1. Welcomes the above-mentioned Commission communication entitled 'A new partnership for the modernisation of Europe's universities: the EU Forum for University Business Dialogue', and the areas on which it proposes to focus future cooperation;
2. Welcomes the Commission's communication, taking stock of the first three years of operation of the EU University-Business Forum and setting out the challenges for the future, such as supporting innovation, promoting research, creating entrepreneurship, enhancing knowledge transfer and attracting young researchers to the European labour market;
3. Recognises that the challenges identified in the communication are not new, and that they have not been addressed successfully to date; believes, however, that continuous dialogue and collaboration at local, regional, national and European level, including exchanges of best practice in relation to programmes and instruments, are vital in establishing closer links and partnerships between the university and business communities, thus overcoming possible cultural, institutional and operational barriers between them, as well as helping to create a knowledge-based society, develop applied research and improve graduates' labour market prospects;
4. Recognises the fact that there are wide differences among European universities, with regard to their size, resources, disciplines, organisation, nationality and type; believes, however, that each of them could benefit in its own way from national and cross-border collaboration with the business community, provided that there is a clear awareness of the actual context in which their research and education capacities are developed; takes the view that a major contribution is also being made at regional level to boost collaboration between universities and the business community;

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5. Welcomes the communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education of 28-29 April 2009, which stresses their commitment to 'the goals of the European Higher Education Area, which is an area where higher education is a public responsibility, and where all higher education institutions are responsive to the wider needs of society through the diversity of their missions';
6. Endorses the view that dialogue and cooperation between business and higher education institutions should remain one of the priorities for the near future, along with dialogue and cooperation with all other sectors of society, so that all stakeholders can benefit from the cultural, scientific and technical knowledge produced and disseminated by higher education institutions; stresses that the intellectual and financial independence of higher education institutions vis-à-vis business must be maintained and no relations of dependency on business must arise on the part of higher education; underlines that universities should in all circumstances maintain the autonomy to decide over their curricula and governance structures;
7. Calls for awareness and concrete action by Member States where legal and financial framework still fail to reward or even inhibit the efforts of universities to cooperate with the business sector;
8. Emphasises that university-business dialogue should not be targeted only at the mathematics, science and technology (MST) education but should cover all fields of study, e.g. humanities;
9. Considers it necessary to strengthen the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of education and research programmes as well as cooperation among universities, and that ICT are an essential tool in this respect;
10. Calls for improvements in the performance of European universities through the implementation of the principle of the 'research-education-innovation' knowledge triangle, bearing in mind the need for better business-university links, as exemplified by the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), and at the same, encourages universities to take into account the social and economical environment within their main area of influence in their research and innovation programme;
11. Emphasises that improved dialogue and collaboration between universities and business will offer increased opportunities to gain mutual benefits that not only stimulate economic growth, but are also useful in a wider social sense in that they contribute to an ever-improving knowledge-based society;
12. Emphasises that the benefits of improved dialogue and collaboration between universities and business in this context would be equally relevant in terms of enhancing dialogue and collaboration between universities and national, European and international institutions and civil society organisations, as well as improving the interaction between universities and society at large;
13. Calls on national, regional and local authorities to continue, in association with the private sector, to explore and fund processes that enhance the interaction between universities and business, and to remove the administrative obstacles that impede them; points out that the Structural Fund regulation offers the possibility of funding support measures for SMEs along the lines of the system of knowledge vouchers currently in use in a number of Member States;
14. Suggests that a special focus should be placed at securing SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) access to university education and research both by increasing public funding and by simplifying bureaucracy;
15. Underlines the need to dignify and give an incentive to investigation and research, not only in scientific and technologic areas but also in social and human areas where valuable knowledge for state-of-the-art business is provided;
16. Supports the role of small and medium-sized research projects ahead of networks of excellence based on large integrated projects;

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17. Calls on businesses and universities to act together in order to balance the unequal gender distribution present in some university departments;

Lifelong learning

18. Recalls the importance of the definition of lifelong learning and the many concepts it covers, ranging from general education to non-formal and informal learning useful for economic, social, cultural and civic life and vocational education and training;

19. Stresses that since lifelong learning is a continuous contact not only with education and training but also with culture, it is of crucial importance for the EU to encourage, for the national states to support and for the public universities to preserve and promote the inclusion of the humanities in their educational curricula;

20. Recalls that one of the key messages is to raise the level of investment in Europe's human resources in order to give priority to the EU's most important asset – its people, who can adapt to the constantly changing circumstances of the labour market;

21. Points out the need to match lifelong learning opportunities as closely as possible to the needs of individuals, of vulnerable social groups and of the labour market, and emphasises that the constantly changing nature of those needs makes continuing education an inevitable necessity and, in this connection, lays particular stress on the social and financial challenges involved; recalls that there is no longer any such thing as a 'job for life' and that training and retraining are essential; reiterates that conditions suitable for promoting a positive attitude to learning need to be created from childhood;

22. Emphasises that lifelong learning, information and training, as well as providing particularly important skills for the labour market, are also a precondition for man's intellectual development and personal growth;

23. Emphasises the importance of creating and promoting modern techniques for lifelong learning through the internet, so that education can become more direct and less time-consuming, especially for workers in businesses;

24. Bearing in mind the demographic transformation of Europe (into an ageing society) and also the changing conditions of the labour market due to the economic, social and employment crisis, calls on universities to widen access to learning and to modernise curricula addressing the new challenges in order to upgrade the skills of the European workforce;

25. Bearing in mind also that education is one of the most important and effective means of social inclusion and of combating poverty and inequalities, urges universities to widen access to learning and international exchange programmes also for people with disabilities;

26. Reiterates the importance of transmitting and exchanging the knowledge, skills and experience gained by adults, as a mean of guiding younger generations into the labour market (for example through mentoring schemes);

27. Suggests the further use of new educational methods, focused on experimental learning, distance learning, e-learning, and mixed forms of learning;

28. Emphasises that a stronger learning culture must be established, promoted and reinforced, and that continuing training and retraining at all stages of life are critical to increase Europe's competitiveness and foster growth and jobs in Europe;

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29. Stresses the need to provide more scope for stimulating continuous adaptation to the changing labour market – which is a priority for the European Union, especially in the current recession – by fostering lifelong learning, particularly through the development of distance learning courses specially adapted to the new technologies and courses for the over-45s, who are more vulnerable and at greater risk of social exclusion;

30. Encourages businesses to give their employees more incentives for training, for example through continuing seminars and through financing post-graduate qualifications;

31. Suggests a new approach of guidance through life, whereby universities, students and the whole range of economic and social sectors would benefit from following up young graduates more closely in order to assess the economic and social usefulness of education programmes;

32. Recalls the necessity to further increase the attractiveness and availability of virtual learning;

Mobility, partnerships and curricula

33. Reiterates that mobility is a cornerstone of the European higher education area, in which European universities are invited to undertake innovative, far-reaching and methodical curricular reform; affirms that this should be a political priority in the context of redefining the major goals of the Bologna Process beyond 2010;

34. Emphasises that mobility between countries and between universities and business is a key to achieving closer cooperation between the two worlds;

35. Asks the Commission to propose a legal framework designed to support and facilitate mobility between universities and business, and among students and university lecturers, and to emphasise the need to recognise and certify this form of learning and teaching;

36. Encourages not only the extension and expansion of individual mobility schemes such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and Erasmus for Apprentices, but also the organisation of postgraduate European Masters of Excellence programmes, in cooperation with different universities and with the active participation of businesses, coupled with grants for students and incentives for researchers; believes that such initiatives could also serve the goals of mobility, language learning and the acquisition of multicultural and entrepreneurial experience;

37. Stresses the need for higher education institutions to provide more extra-curricular opportunities to learn other languages, bearing in mind that the acquisition of new languages is vital in order to promote and encourage mobility and exchanges of students, researchers, teachers and business employees;

38. Encourages universities to explore new methods of cooperation between public institutions and the private sector, especially through joint public and private innovation funds in order to improve mobility in all areas;

39. Stresses the importance of students acquiring skills in the new technologies, to improve their chances of finding employment;

40. Having regard to good educational practices in other countries, suggests that countries from outside the European Union be invited to participate in the EU Forum in order to share and debate their experiences and concerns, bearing in mind that such debates should be based on defined targets, terminology and concepts and focus on specific fields of activity;

41. Stresses the need for proper preparation and training of teachers of subjects in the field of entrepreneurship; supports the idea of integrating a culture of entrepreneurship into curricula (beginning early with primary curricula);

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42. Encourages the business world to participate actively in the design of educational material on the functioning of entrepreneurial commerce to be made available at all levels of education, while leaving educational institutions to decide autonomously on the use of such material, and to present on a regular basis the employment opportunities they can offer to students;
43. Encourages the business world to help adapt the university curriculum, by initiating and financing specific courses, with the aim of familiarising students with the challenges of entrepreneurship;
44. Calls for the study and promotion of the integration of university lecturers in businesses and of entrepreneurs in universities;
45. Stresses the importance of the new technologies, which make mobility and cooperation between businesses, students, teachers and researchers more immediate;
46. Recalls that commercial entrepreneurship in its various forms should be envisaged as one of the possible professions for young graduates and that it is essential for higher education institutions to provide students with detailed knowledge of all forms of entrepreneurship, including the social and charitable economy, encouraging them, for instance, to establish their own spin-off firms;
47. Stresses that dialogue and collaboration between universities and business should be based on reciprocity, trust, mutual respect and transparency, encouraging more entrepreneurial universities and more knowledge-driven companies; reiterates that this can be achieved, for example, through the introduction of a system of knowledge vouchers such as that currently in use in a number of Member States, enabling SMEs in particular to improve their research capacity without compromising the independence, autonomy and public character of universities;
48. Acknowledges that education and research need to adopt a more multidisciplinary approach to knowledge, and believes, therefore, that both universities and business could benefit from jointly developing multi- and interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial skills and flexibly adapting fields of study, specialties and specialisations to the needs of the economy, including those of small and medium-sized enterprises; highlights successful initiatives such as internships for students and staff, the use of entrepreneurs as visiting professors, dual courses and joint staff;
49. Stresses that, in order to foster a spirit of enterprise among students, all those involved (academic staff, students and business people) should be properly informed about the tools and mechanisms they can use to develop more efficient, effective and mutually beneficial cooperation; believes it is essential, on the one hand, to enhance training for university academic staff in this sector through initiatives such as lifelong learning and, on the other hand, for universities to open their doors to businesses and employers so that they can make recommendations regarding teaching content and the training, knowledge and skills students should possess;
50. Recommends that university careers offices be fully safeguarded institutionally, further developed and more closely linked to the labour market;
51. Stresses the importance of widespread provision of work placements in companies as part of the curriculum, especially for students in higher education, and of remunerating such placements financially or through the European Credit Transfer System;
52. Calls on the Commission to launch a European Industrial PhD scheme comparable to existing Industrial PhD schemes in Europe as part of the Marie Curie activities within the Framework Programme in order to promote targeted and affordable research for European companies as well as inputs from the business sector into European universities;
53. Suggests that business associations cooperate with universities to establish curricula that enable students to adapt quickly to the business world;

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54. Stresses the importance of the business world sponsoring universities and encourages companies to grant scholarships allowing students to gain knowledge and skills which have substantial value on the labour market;

55. Stresses the essential value of passing on to society the knowledge and results gained from collaboration between universities and the business world;

56. Calls on businesses to step up their support of young talented people by means of scholarships;

Research

57. Emphasises the need for enterprises to increase their absorption capacity to use and transform the scientific knowledge generated by universities by fostering internal research, lifelong learning and continuing education and engaging in an active policy of communicating their needs to the academic community and recruiting doctoral and post-doctoral graduates and researchers;

58. Highlights the need for specialised staff at research institutions who are able to identify and manage knowledge resources with business potential;

59. Attaches great importance to knowledge transfer in an open environment; acknowledges that there are different instruments for achieving this, such as publications and seminars, technology transfer offices, regional cooperation, support for start-ups and spin-offs, collaborative research and researcher mobility; believes, however, that the social and human dimension of interaction is extremely important; strongly supports, therefore, initiatives to foster face-to-face interaction between universities and business, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises;

60. Welcomes the launch of a single European network of business and innovation centres, incorporating the services currently provided by Euro Info Centres (EICs) and Innovation Relay Centres (IRCs);

61. Sees greater researcher mobility – in both the short and long term, across nations and between academia and business, with due regard to the non-discrimination principle – as imperative in enhancing knowledge transfer; calls on the Member States and the Commission, in this connection, to review thoroughly the existing legal and financial framework and to eliminate unnecessary barriers to mobility, paying special attention to the recognition of academic qualifications and the reduction of bureaucracy; calls on universities to introduce more flexible and dual career paths for staff;

62. Encourages the Commission to create incentives for the development of a competitive EU market for intellectual property rights (IPR), which would allow universities, public research organisations and SMEs to find partners and investors for their IPR, skills and knowledge; points out that the management of IPR could be more professional at most universities;

63. Emphasises the need to speed up efforts to promote a Single European Patent ensuring low-cost, efficient, effective and high-quality legal protection for innovative products and services, especially for SMEs, and a harmonised European patent litigation system;

64. Points out that the joint participation of universities and business in public-private partnerships, such as European Technology Platforms, Joint Technology Initiatives and Knowledge and Innovation Communities, could enhance the exploitation of knowledge and help the EU to address the major challenges it faces; points, in this connection, to the existing Responsible Partnering Guidelines;

65. While acknowledging that each collaboration requires a tailored approach and that there are different types of cooperation mechanism, believes that lessons can be learned from successful structures, examples, showcases and role models, and that the dissemination of, and access to, examples of good practice and success stories should be enhanced; especially emphasises the need to take account of good practices implemented by innovative enterprises, as well as knowledge gained as part of the Sixth Framework Programme for Research in relation to collaborative doctoral education;

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66. Believes that, if closer links are to be sought between the business and research communities and universities, the Member States and the Commission must facilitate the joint involvement of foundations, hospitals and public and private universities in the education process and the promotion of research;

Good practices

67. Notes and welcomes examples of good practices found within and outside the EU that demonstrate the value of this kind of cooperation for all involved, bearing in mind that such examples are needed in order to help develop the right conditions for dialogue and increase the chances of success;

68. Welcomes the Commission's initiative of establishing an inventory of existing best practices, and calls on it to make this inventory available to all interested parties, by effective dissemination of all original practices;

69. Invites the Commission to promote a new form of structured partnership between businesses, universities and other educational and training sectors, in particular secondary schools and vocational training agencies, in order, inter alia, to bring teaching staff up to date; such partnerships can also provide for the presence of sectoral bodies;

70. Proposes that a website be set up for the purpose of sharing and disseminating experience and for communication focusing on sharing good practice and providing visitors with inspiration and concrete tools and mechanisms for designing and implementing cooperation projects, and points out the importance of using new technologies to foster closer cooperation between the university and business communities;

71. Hopes, on the basis of existing good practice in various Member States, for the promotion of a European day devoted to young inventors, i.e. to innovations, inventions or patents conceived by young Europeans;

72. Encourages the Commission to continue promoting dialogue at national, local and regional level with a focus on best practices, and to ensure that such dialogue involves all interested parties (for example the social partners) and all types of enterprise (SMEs, social and charitable enterprises, etc., as well as representatives of third countries (NGOs, etc.), with a view to highlighting the economic and social added-value of collaboration between the two worlds of university and business;

73. Calls on the Commission – in order to ensure consistency among EU actions and avoid duplication of activities – to have an inter-DG task force assess and develop synergies between such dialogue and other initiatives, bearing in mind that discussions should cover both policy priorities and funding opportunities;

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74. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
