Guidelines for the employment policies 2008-2010

2007/0300(CNS) - 20/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 584 votes to 72, with 11 abstentions, a legislative resolution approving, with amendments, the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (part V of the package proposed by the Commission).

The report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Anne **VAN LANCKER** (PES, BE) on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs.

The main amendments, adopted in accordance with the consultation procedure, aimed at:

1. taking greater account of the requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, guaranteeing adequate social protection, fighting against social exclusion, promoting a high level of education, training and protection of human health, and combating all forms of discrimination;

2. strengthening interaction between the guidelines and the open method of coordination on the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process.

In particular, the Parliament calls for better cooperation between Member States and social partners in order to improve the compliance of national legislation with the application of European social legislation and the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. Member States are also called upon to implement their own pathways based on the common principles of **flexicurity**, within the framework of effective social dialogue.

The Parliament introduces, in particular, an **additional annex** setting new benchmarks for the European Employment Strategy. According to the Parliament, this strategy shall aim to:

- offer a new start before reaching 4 months of unemployment in the case of young people and 12 months in the case of adults (in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure);
- ensure, by 2010, the participation of 25% of the long-term unemployed in a programme of active measures, with the aim of achieving the average of the three most advanced Member States;
- ensure that jobseekers throughout the EU are able to consult all job vacancies advertised through Member States' employment services;
- increase by five years, at EU level, the effective average exit age from the labour market by 2010 (compared to 59.9 in 2001);
- ensure the provision of childcare, by 2010, for at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age;
- reduce the average rate of early school leavers to 10%;
- ensure that, by 2010, at least 85% of 22-year olds have completed upper secondary education and that at least 12.5% of the adult working-age population (between the age of 25 and 64) actively participate in lifelong learning.

At the same time, the Parliament makes a series of technical amendments to the guidelines themselves, which can be summarised as follows:

- **Guideline 17**: the Parliament calls for the promotion of labour markets that encourage integration and advocate support for businesses through financial assistance so that they can compete in the market. It also calls for increased investment in human capital. Furthermore, it reinserts the

provision in the approach advocated by the European Pact for Gender Equality and by the European Alliance for Families;

- **Guideline 18**: the Parliament considers that that this guideline should aim to "enhance a life cycle approach to work" through a series of measures aimed at, among other things, combining work with caring for a close relative, enabling persons who lose their job later in life to get back to work (particularly people over the age of 40), focusing on the different impact of benefits systems on men and women, adapting parental leave schemes and establishing more flexible terms for temporary leave;
- **Guideline 19a**: the Parliament inserts a new guideline that aims to ensure the social integration of all workers and tackle poverty and social exclusion by guaranteeing a decent income and better access to quality social services together with better access to the labour market through the expansion of job opportunities and vocational training;
- **Guideline 20**: the Parliament asks that this guideline encourage better access to the labour market, preventing the brain drain of the EU through sufficient investment in training;
- **Guideline 21**: the Parliament asks that this guideline (which aims to promote flexibility of the labour market) include the following components: (i) flexible and reliable arrangements through modern labour laws, collective agreements and work organisation (the plenary deleted the part of the paragraph that stated that indefinite-term contracts should remain the norm) ; (ii) comprehensive lifelong learning strategies to ensure the continual adaptability and employability of workers; (iii) effective active labour market policies which do not involve an active early retirement policy and which better integrate older workers; (iv) modern social security systems that provide adequate income support, encourage employment and facilitate labour market mobility. In particular, the Parliament calls for control measures for workers, in order to **combat the problem of undeclared work** by means of appropriate sanctions;
- **Guideline 22**: the Parliament requests that, within this guideline, workers be guaranteed **sufficient purchasing power** and that gender pay gaps be avoided;
- **Guideline 23**: as part of lifelong learning, the Parliament calls for the number of early school leavers to be significantly reduced, and for access by women to education, continuous training and lifelong learning to be facilitated;
- **Guideline 24**: lastly, the Parliament calls for foreign language learning to be promoted as part of both initial and lifelong training.