

European job mobility action plan (2007-2010)

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Monica Maria **IACOB-RIDZI** (EPP-ED, RO) on the European Job Mobility Action Plan (2007-2010).

Firstly, the report recalls that free movement of workers remains one of the four fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Treaty. Although significant progress has been made as regards ensuring the free movement of workers such as reformed legislation in the field of social security, Parliament has in numerous resolutions drawn attention to the outstanding obstacles to mobility. It has proposed possible means of removing such obstacles. However, experience has shown that identifying obstacles and advancing proposals has not sufficed for the complete removal of the obstacles to freedom of movement and mobility. Numerous texts of the EU institutions have also spelt out the problems and have proposed corrective measures. However, these have not always been implemented.

Parliament will continue actively to seek solutions to all problems encountered by citizens in exercising their right to mobility within the territory of the EU.

The committee supports the launch of the Action Plan and reaffirms the crucial importance of mobility, both within the labour market and between Member States and regions, for consolidating the EU labour market and attaining the Lisbon objectives. It further welcomes the Commission's intention to promote mobility on fair conditions, including by opposing clandestine employment and social dumping.

Although it welcomes the Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across Europe, the committee regrets that it has not been provided adequate time to issue an opinion on the proposal before the recommendation is adopted.

MEPs consider that the EU needs to **support the inclusion of the concept of labour mobility in all Community policies**, especially those concerning the completion of the internal market, the protection of workers, rules concerning posted workers and protection against non-secure work, which may affect mobility within the EU or combat discrimination. In this context, they call on the Commission to treat labour mobility as a priority **transversal policy**, involving all relevant EU policy areas and all levels of authority in the Member States. The Commission is also called upon to draw up a **long-term mobility strategy** which takes into account the requirements of the labour market, economic trends and the prospects for enlargement of the EU, as only a long-term strategy can both guarantee free movement of workers without conflict and properly address brain-drain.

MEPs call on the Commission to take into account the specific needs of female workers wishing to exercise freedom of movement of all ages and to include concrete steps to meet their needs in the four areas of the European Job Mobility Action Plan. Member States are asked to consider and remove the obstacles to the mobility of women workers, by providing, among other things, fair access to qualified

jobs and high-level positions, equal pay, flexible working conditions, adequate healthcare and childcare services, good quality education facilities for children, portable pension rights, and ensuring the elimination of gender stereotypes.

The Commission is urged to prioritise the **streamlining of administrative practices and administrative cooperation** so as to allow synergies to develop between national institutions and authorities whose interaction is decisive when trying to resolve problems between Member States efficiently. In addition, MEPs consider that Member States should vigorously tackle all legal and administrative barriers and

obstacles to geographical mobility at European, national, regional and local levels, such as the non-recognition of mobility-related experiences for career prospects or social security and pensions, particularly within SMEs.

According to the report, Member States should ensure that the labour rights and collective agreements of citizens who choose to move to another Member State are fully respected, without discrimination between nationals of that Member State and non-nationals. The committee believes that, to that end, the Commission's measures should focus on ensuring that migrant citizens receive equal treatment and are not turned into a cheap labour force.

MEPs call on the Member States actively to **promote foreign language teaching** (especially for adults), given that linguistic barriers are among the main remaining obstacles to the mobility of workers and their families.

The report reiterates that **labour mobility is a key instrument for the efficient working of the internal market**. It calls, therefore, on the Member States to take appropriate measures to emphasise **flexicurity** on the one hand and to protect workers' security on the other, bearing in mind the fundamental principles of opportunities, access and solidarity referred to in the renewed social agenda.

MEPs note with concern that some Member States are **maintaining labour market restrictions on workers from the new Member States**. They call on the Council to ensure greater involvement and closer monitoring on the part of the EU institutions, especially the Parliament, with regard to the process of authorisation and justification by Member States of the transitional periods for access to their labour markets for the citizens of the new Member States, including from the first year of membership.

The report notes with concern certain moves by Member States to **alter their internal legal frameworks for immigration** and interpret and apply the principle of the free movement of labour in a manner that is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Community rules in force. MEPs call for an immediate end to such practices, and encourage the Member States to introduce comprehensive schemes for the integration of Union citizens exercising their right of free movement on their territory, where appropriate, in cooperation with the Member States of origin.

On the issue of **reintegration**, MEPs call on the Member States and the Commission to work together in order to draw up, implement, monitor and evaluate a programme of social reintegration for citizens and their families returning to their Member State of origin after a period spent working in another.

MEPs take the view that **border workers** occupy a special position in the area of European labour mobility.

On **qualifications**, MEPs encourage the Member States to speed up the implementation of the common framework for qualifications (European Qualifications Framework-EQF). They consider that, while alignment with this reference system is due in 2010, its accelerated implementation in all Member States could reduce the obstacles currently facing workers. They encourage educational authorities to work together pro-actively on the mutual recognition of qualifications – gained from formal, informal and non-formal education – and professions which correspond to the standards set by Member States. They also endorse the Commission's commitment to developing Europass in order to make qualifications more readable for employers and they stress the value of the Euraxess Services.

The report calls on the Commission, the Member States, and the two sides of industry to open discussions with a view to **harmonising salary scales** with the different levels of qualifications laid down in the EQF so as to enable labour mobility to be guaranteed by virtue of wage levels corresponding to workers' skills.

The report highlights that throughout the EU, there is still **diversity in the regulation of healthcare professionals**. Member States and their regulatory authorities for healthcare professionals are urged to share information and establish standardised accreditation systems for healthcare professionals in order to ensure patient safety. The lack of a common framework for comparing, transferring and recognising vocational qualifications at EU level is a serious barrier to transnational mobility. In this context, MEPs welcome the Commission's initiative on the establishment of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (**ECVET**).

On **social security and pensions**, MEPs stress the need for **further progress in recognition and cumulation of social security entitlements and in the portability of pensions**. They take the view that the portability of social security provisions is better coordinated on the basis of Regulations (EEC) No 1408/71 and (EC) No 883/2004 (applicable from 2009) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems, and bilateral agreements. Member States are urged to implement fully these Regulations, as well as related legislation on social security matters and the payment of allowances of any kind. They also call on the Member States and the Commission to urgently address the recurring problems raised in petitions and complaints concerning social security, pensions, and health care and support the Commission's plans for the introduction of an **electronic version of the European health insurance card**. They suggest that there should also be an electric revision of form "E106". MEPs advocate a discussion on social security arrangements, inter alia with reference to access to health care and the fact that workforce mobility can, in some cases, lead to the loss of social security benefits. They support the Commission's plans to improve its proposal for a directive on minimum requirements for enhancing worker mobility by improving the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights. Accordingly, they call on the Commission to submit **a revised proposal for a directive on the portability of occupational pensions**.

EURES: MEPs express their ongoing support for the contribution of the EURES network to facilitating workforce mobility in the EU. They support the idea of transforming EURES into a one-stop mobility information portal which would operate as a centralised helpdesk where potentially mobile workers can obtain information about all aspects of job mobility – not only about job vacancies, social security, health care, pensions and the recognition of qualifications, but also about language issues, housing, employment for spouses, education for children and integration in general in the target state; points out that, where appropriate, it should be expanded to the benefit of third-country nationals, including those who have not yet acquired long-term resident status.

They consider that the **supplementary budget of EUR 2 million** allocated to innovative mobility projects up to 2013 **is too low**, given the need to inform as many Union citizens as possible about labour mobility in the Union and the objectives set out in the various programme documents in support of labour mobility in the Union.

Specific types of mobility: MEPs stress the need to distinguish the specific mobility of artists from that of workers in the Union in general, in terms of the nature of the performing arts and the irregularity and unpredictability resulting from a particular employment regime.

They call on firms to support worker mobility, for example through **flexible working hours and tele-working**. The Commission is urged to seek instruments by means of which to eliminate the complex obstacles which can prevent workers from opting to **work abroad**, such as difficulty in finding work for one's partner or spouse, high relocation costs, language barriers, the risk of losing tax advantages or no longer being able to contribute to national pension, health insurance or unemployment insurance

Schemes.

SOLVIT is supported by the MEPs as an instrument for swift resolution of problems in the internal market and equally of problems related to worker mobility. They recommend that **more resources be made available to SOLVIT.**

Acknowledging the contributions made by the Comenius, Erasmus and Leonardo programmes to enabling young people to study abroad, and stressing their importance from the point of view of later professional mobility; MEPs call on the Commission to examine the scope for expanding access to the programmes, bearing in mind the special needs of disadvantaged groups.