Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States. Part II of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines

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The Council adopted a decision establishing new guidelines for the employment policies of the member states. The United Kingdom delegation abstained.

The employment policy guidelines form one part of the integrated guidelines, the other part being the broad guidelines for the economic policies of the member states, which the Council already adopted in July 2010. The integrated guidelines represent the main tool of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the new ten-year strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. They lay the foundations for structural reforms which the member states will have to carry out.

The integrated guidelines contain five EU headline targets, of which three belong to the guidelines for the employment policies of the member states and concern labour market participation, the fight against social exclusion and poverty, and the quality and performance of education and training systems.

The headline target for the labour market seeks to increase to 75%, by 2020, the labour market participation of women and men aged 20-64 through, inter alia, greater participation by young people, older workers and low-skilled workers and better integration of legal migrants. The headline target for social inclusion and combating poverty aims to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion.

The headline target for improving the quality and performance of education and training systems is to reduce drop-out rates to less than 10%, and increase the share of 30 to34- year-olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%.

The two remaining headline targets of the integrated guidelines belong to the broad guidelines for the economic policies of the member states; they aim to increase the combined public and private investment levels for research and development to 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2020 and to reduce by 2020 greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels, to increase the share of renewable energy sources in final energy consumption to 20 % and to move towards a 20% increase in energy efficiency.

All five headline targets must be translated by member states into national targets, taking into account their relative starting positions and national circumstances. Member states must submit their draft national reform programmes including their national targets by 12 November. By mid-April 2011, the national reform programmes should be finalised. The European Council will assess annually the progress made at both EU and member state level under the 2020 Strategy.