Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States in 2012

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PURPOSE: to maintain, in 2012, the employment guidelines adopted under Council Decision 2010/707/EU on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision 2012/238/EU on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States.

BACKGROUND: on 26 March 2010, the European Council agreed to the European Commission's proposal to launch a new strategy for jobs and growth, Europe 20201, based on enhanced coordination of

economic policies, which will focus on the key areas where action is needed to boost Europe’s potential for sustainable growth and competitiveness. To that end, the European Council agreed to set EU headline targets, which constitute shared objectives guiding action of the Member States and of the Union.

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) stipulates in Article 145 that Member States and the Union shall work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce as well as labour markets that are responsive to economic change and with a view to achieving the objectives defined in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).

The "Europe 2020 Strategy" proposed by the Commission enables the Union to turn its economy towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, accompanied by high level employment, productivity and social cohesion.

Guidelines: on 13 July 2010, the Council adopted its Recommendation on broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and of the Union. Furthermore, on 21 October 2010, the Council adopted its Decision 2010/707/EU on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States. Those sets of guidelines form **the integrated guidelines for implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy**. Five headline targets, listed under the relevant integrated guidelines, constitute shared objectives which guide the action of the Member States, taking into account their relative starting positions and national circumstances as well as the positions and circumstances of the Union. They give precise guidance to the Member States on defining their national reform programmes and on implementing reforms, reflecting interdependence and being in line with the Stability and Growth Pact.

The employment guidelines should form the basis for any country- specific recommendations that the Council may address to the Member States under Article 148(4) of the TFEU, in parallel with the country-specific recommendations addressed to the Member States under Article 121(2) of the TFEU. The employment guidelines should also form the basis for the establishment of the Joint Employment Report sent annually by the Council and the Commission to the European Council.

The guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, as set out in the Annex to Decision 2010/707/EU, should hereby be maintained for 2012 and shall be taken into account by the Member States in their employment policies.

CONTENT: the examination of the Member States' draft national reform programmes, contained in the Joint Employment Report adopted by the Council on 17 February 2012, shows that Member States should continue to make every effort to address the following priorities:

- increasing labour market participation and reducing structural unemployment;
- developing a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs and promoting job quality and lifelong learning;
- improving the performance of education and training systems at all levels and increasing participation in tertiary education;
- promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.

The employment guidelines adopted in 2010 should remain stable until 2014 to ensure a focus on their implementation. In the intermediate years, until the end of 2014, their updating should remain strictly limited.

Member States should explore the use of the European Social Fund when implementing the employment guidelines.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 24/05/2012.