Green employment initiative: tapping into the job creation potential of the green economy

2014/2238(INI) - 22/06/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Jean LAMBERT (Greens/EFA, UK) on the Green Employment Initiative: Tapping into the job creation potential of the green economy.

The report emphasised that a transition towards sustainable societies and economies can **generate the potential both to create new quality jobs** and to transform existing employment into green jobs in virtually all sectors and across the entire value chain. It also noted that the transition bears significant potential to create local jobs which **cannot be relocated**, and in sectors hit by the crisis such as the buildings sector.

Members highlighted the fact that **full implementation of environmental legislation**, as well as the improvement of environmental integration and **policy coherence across different sectorial polices in the EU**, are essential for a full deployment of the potential linked to the green economy and therefore for the creation of green jobs.

Towards a green economy: the report urged the Member States, and the Commission to commit to a **'just transition roadmap'** to pursue ambitious environmental goals with the promotion of the following aspects: (i) adequate social protection and remuneration, (ii) long-term jobs and healthy and safe working conditions, (iii) government-led investment in education, (iv) respect for labour rights and the strengthening of worker information, consultation and participation rights regarding matters concerning sustainable development, and effective workforce representation.

Members stressed the need to:

- provide the existing workforce with proper opportunities to acquire the **new skills** needed for the circular economy;
- **anticipate change in employment** requiring proactive transformation management and improved high-quality data collection on the current and future needs of the labour market, with the involvement of European higher-education institutions.

Local authorities can play a key role in promoting job growth in the green economy and more decent and inclusive jobs by green investment and supporting both green SMEs and greening of SMEs.

Skills for green employment: Members called for an **ambitious strategy** for creating sustainable jobs, including by addressing the skills mismatch with a particular focus on meeting the skills needs of a greener economy. In this regard, they called for:

- the setting up of a **data bank** listing training courses and job offers related to green employment, with the aim of improving the quality of information, advice and guidance available on careers;
- **better synergies between education systems and emerging new green jobs** through better coordination between educational institutions and employers' unions and other relevant organisations;
- the adoption by the Member States, regional governments and local authorities, together with the social partners and training providers, **skill development and anticipation strategies** with the objective of improving generic, sectoral and occupation-specific skills;

- the integration of sustainable development and environmental competences and skills into training and education systems.

The Commission is asked to: (i) open a public debate on, and to promote the concept of, 'education for sustainable development', with special emphasis on the education of girls and women; (ii) start applying a **new, social and climate-friendly indicator** on growth that includes non-economic aspects of wellbeing and sets its primary focus on issues related to sustainable development, such as gender equality, poverty reduction and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy coherence: the report called on the Commission and the Member States to **adopt ambitious, long-term and integrated regulatory, fiscal and financial frameworks** for sustainable investment and to encourage innovation. Policies should be developed in a framework of long-term horizons that includes targets as well as indicators to measure progress towards their achievement.

The European Union and the Member States should:

- set **mandatory energy-saving and efficiency targets**, and to support white certificates as an instrument to facilitate the achievement of EU energy-saving targets;
- consider examining whether the introduction of environmental and social criteria in **public procurement policies** could boost job creation in the greener economy;
- support the contribution of **public services** to the just transition towards a sustainable economy;
- **phase out** direct and indirect environmentally harmful **subsidies** including, but not limited to, those for fossil fuels;
- introduce targeted subsidies and/or tax exemptions for **start-ups** that provide goods and services offering high environmental added value;
- step up **international efforts** to create a global environmental policy that can limit the damage caused by offshoring of industrial production outside the EU and by carbon leakage.

For its part, the Commission should:

- help revive the repairs sector;
- issue country-specific recommendations to the Member States that can contribute to efforts to foster green employment and reduce ecological footprints;
- use the EU Semester and the review of the Europe 2020 strategy to support green job creation
- propose more ambitious social and environmental targets for 2030 and 2050;
- present its proposal to reform the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) as soon as possible.

Support to SMEs: the report called on the Commission and the Member States to promote, including in the framework of the European Fund for Strategic Investments, quality investments geared towards generating societal and economic benefits such as sustainable quality jobs, gender equality, quality education and innovation to promote the green transition and to fight energy poverty. Investments should be focused in areas with positive labour market impact.

Lastly, recalling that SMEs have enormous potential for creating employment, in particular youth employment, the report recognised that the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) could help micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to engage in activities involving a high degree of environmental and social innovation.