Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States in 2015

2015/0051(NLE) - 08/07/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 520 votes to 116, with 60 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States.

According to Eurostat estimates, there were 23 815 000 unemployed people in the Union in January 2015, 18 059 000 of whom were in the euro area.

Members recalled that Member States and the Union should work towards developing an effective and coordinated strategy for employment, designed to **counter the serious effects of unemployment**, for promoting a skilled, trained workforce and labour markets responsive to **economic, social and environmental change**.

In this respect, Parliament approved the Commission proposal subject to amendments as follows:

Guideline 5: Boosting demand for labour:

- Member States, in cooperation with regional and local authorities, should: (i) facilitate and invest in **sustainable and quality job creation**, (ii) address accessibility for at-risk groups, (iii) reduce barriers for business to hire people across skill levels and labour market sectors, including by cutting red tape, whilst respecting labour and social standards, (iv) promote **youth entrepreneurship** and in particular support the creation and growth of micro, small and medium enterprises, (v) promote, inter alia, **green**, white and blue-**sector jobs** and the social economy and foster social innovation;
- **revenue** should be protected for adequate social protection and expenditures directed towards public investment, innovation and job creation;
- the tax burden should be shifted away from labour to other sources of taxation that are less detrimental to employment. Reductions in labour taxation should be aimed **tackling discrimination** and at removing barriers to labour market participation, in particular for people with disabilities, while respecting existing labour standards;
- policies to ensure that wages allow an **adequate living income** remain important to create employment and decrease poverty in the Union;
- Member States should cut red tape in order to ease the burden on small and medium-sized enterprises, as they contribute significantly to job creation.

Guideline 6: Enhancing labour supply and skills:

- Member States should promote sustainable productivity and quality employability through an **appropriate supply of relevant knowledge and skills made available and accessible to all**. There should be particular focus on health care, social services and transport services; "soft skills" such as communication are becoming more important for a large number of occupations and should be taken into account;
- Member States should: (i) promote **entrepreneurship** among young people; (ii) step up efforts to **prevent young people from dropping out of school** and to ensure a smoother transition from education and training to professional life to **improve access and remove barriers to high-quality**

adult learning for all by offering retraining of skills when job losses and changes in the labour market necessitate active reintegration; (iii) implement **active ageing strategies** to enable healthy working up to the real retirement age;

- access to **affordable, high-quality, early childhood education and care** should be a priority for comprehensive policies and investment coupled with family and parenting support and reconciliation measures helping parents to balance work and family life;
- a solution should be found to the **issue of unemployment, in particular long-term unemployment** and the problem of skills mismatch and skill obsolescence. It should be addressed by means of comprehensive and mutually reinforcing strategies, including the provision of personalised needs-based active support and appropriate social protection schemes to long-term unemployed to return to the labour market in an informed and responsible manner;
- the youth unemployment needs to be comprehensively addressed, through an **overall youth employment strategy;**
- **discrimination on the labour market as well as with regard to access to the labour market need to be further reduced**, especially for groups that face discrimination or exclusion and prevent the exclusion of those with breaks in their careers due to family responsibilities such as family carers. In this sense, the Women on Board Directive and Maternity Leave Directive should be unblocked by the Member States;
- the European Fund for Strategic Investments and its investment platforms should also be mobilised to ensure that quality jobs are created.

Guideline 7: Enhancing the functioning of labour markets:

- Member States should reduce labour market segmentation by tackling **precarious employment**, underemployment, undeclared labour and zero-hour contracts;
- adequate levels of **protection** should be offered to those in employment and those seeking employment or employed on temporary, part-time, atypical contracts or independent work contracts, by actively involving the social partners and by promoting collective bargaining;
- access to the labour market should **facilitate entrepreneurship, sustainable job creation** in all sectors, including green employment, and social care and innovation;
- Member States should ensure **basic standards of quality of active labour market policies** and introduce a **minimum income** proportionate to their specific socio-economic situation; Members insisted on the promotion of upward convergence in working conditions across the Union;
- mobility of workers should be encouraged and investment in regions experiencing **labour outflows** should be promoted to **mitigate brain drain** and encourage mobile workers to return.

Improving the quality and performance of education and training systems at all levels (new title introduced by the Parliament):

- Member States should: (i) make **access to care and to affordable quality early childhood education** a priority; (ii) set up the comprehensive policies and investment needed to: (a) improve family and parenting support; (b) reconciliation measures helping parents to balance work and family life, as a contribution to preventing early school leaving and increasing young people's chances on the labour market.

Guideline 8: Ensuring social justice, combatting poverty and promoting equal opportunities:

- Member States should improve their **social protection systems** by ensuring basic standards to ensure life in dignity, full respect of social rights, ensuring inclusion in order to eliminate poverty, in particular for people excluded from the labour market and for the more vulnerable groups; child poverty in particular must be decisively tackled;

- **the pension systems** should be structured in a way that their sustainability, safety and adequacy for women and men is ensured by strengthening retirement schemes, aiming at a decent retirement income at least above the poverty level;
- reforms of pension systems should also, inter alia, reflect labour market trends, birth rate, demographic situation, health and wealth situation, working conditions and the economic dependency ratio;
- Member States should make a full use of European Social Fund and other Union funds support in order to fight poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, improve accessibility for people with disabilities to promote equality between women and men and improve public administration.

Lastly, Parliament recalled that the realisation of the Europe 2020 strategy in the employment and social area remains a key objective of Member States' employment policy.