Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States in 2016

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the report by Laura AGEA (EFDD, IT) on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States.

Regretting that the Council, chose, yet again, to ignore the European Parliament's legislative resolution of 8 July 2015 on the 2015 guidelines, the committee approved the Commission proposal subject to the following amendments:

Guideline 5: Boosting demand for labour

- **reduce employment barriers**: Members States should facilitate and invest in sustainable and quality job creation and take measures to improve accessibility for at-risk groups, in particular by reducing administrative barriers;
- **promote, inter alia, green, white and blue sector jobs**: Members States should actively promote green, white and blue sector jobs, the social economy and foster social innovation;
- **alleviate the tax burden**: the tax burden should be shifted away from labour to other sources of taxation that are less detrimental to employment and growth;
- **increase wages**: measures should be taken to ensure that **wages allow an adequate living income**. When setting minimum wages in accordance with national legislation and practices, Member States and social partners should ensure their adequacy as well as consider their impact on in-work poverty, household income, aggregate demand, job creation and competitiveness.

Guideline 6: Enhancing labour supply and skills:

- **promote productivity in areas of shortages**: there should be particular focus on health care, social services and transport services which are facing or will face staff shortages. Member States should make effective investments in high-quality and inclusive education and vocational training systems;
- **support adult training**: Member States should promote vocational training for adults and with particular focus on high-risk groups and their needs;
- **simplify access to education**: support should be provided to families to help balance work and family life, and increase young people's chances on the labour market;
- **combat life-long unemployment, including youth unemployment**: Member States may prevent this problem through a mix of demand and supply-side measures. The number of long-term unemployed and the problem of skills mismatch and skill obsolescence 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;
- **improve quality of teaching**: Member States are called upon to ensure high-quality learning outcomes and prevent and tackle early school leaving, and promote an all-embracing, high-quality education from the most basic level onwards. They should gear their training systems more closely to the labour market;
- **mobilise the Structural Funds**: Member States should make a full, effective and efficient use of European Social Fund and other Union funds support in order to combat poverty, improve quality employment, social inclusion, education, public administration and public services.

Guideline 7: Enhancing the functioning of labour markets

- **tackle undeclared labour**: Member States should also tackle precarious employment, underemployment, undeclared labour and zero-hour contracts;
- **improve social dialogue**: measures should be taken to combat the deregulation of labour markets and weakness of collective bargaining;
- **protect workers**: Member States should also ensure that their social protection systems effectively activate and enable those who can participate in the labour market, protect those (temporarily) excluded from the labour markets and/or unable to participate in it, and prepare individuals for potential risks and changing economic and social conditions;
- **promote worker mobility**: language barriers should be tackled (through training) and appropriate use should be made of the EURES network.

Guideline 8: Improving the quality and performance of education and training systems at all levels

- measures are needed to improve childcare structures and early childhood education.

Guideline 9: Ensuring social justice

- **improve social protection systems**: Member States should ensure basic standards to provide effective, efficient and sustainable protection while fully respecting social rights and addressing inequalities;
- **eliminate poverty and social exclusion**: measures should be taken to eliminate all forms of poverty, in particular child poverty.
- **restructure the pension systems**: the aim being to ensure safety and adequacy for women and men by strengthening retirement schemes to guarantee a decent retirement income;
- **improve the quality of healthcare**: Member States should improve the quality, affordability, accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare and long term care systems and welfare services as well as decent working conditions in the related sectors.

Lastly, measures are called for, in the context of the Europe 2020 headline targets, raise the employment rate for women and men aged 20 to 64 to 75% by 2020; to reduce the drop-out rate to less than 10 %; to increase the share of 30 to 34-year-olds completing tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40 %; and to promote social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion.