Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

2020/0030(NLE) - 26/02/2020 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to adopt guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, in conjunction with the broad guidelines of the economic policies of the Member States and of the Union.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the Council adopts the act after consulting the European Parliament but without being obliged to follow its opinion.

BACKGROUND: the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the Employment Policy Guidelines were adopted jointly for the first time in 2010 to support the Europe 2020 strategy.

The Integrated Guidelines remained stable until 2014, after which revised guidelines were adopted in 2015. In 2018, they were aligned with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed in November 2017 by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, with the aim of stimulating a process of reform at national level and pointing the way towards renewed convergence in Europe. In 2019, they remained unchanged.

Alongside the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, the Employment Guidelines are presented in the form of a Council Decision and serve as a basis for country-specific recommendations in the different areas concerned.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes to amend the Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States in order to integrate the four dimensions of the Annual Strategy for Sustainable Growth (ASGS) and, in particular, the dimension of environmental sustainability, to reflect the vision of a strong social Europe for just transitions and to take into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The revised ‘Employment Guidelines’ are as follows:

Guideline 5: Boosting the demand for labour

- promote a sustainable social market economy and support investment in the creation of quality jobs (reducing barriers to employment, promoting responsible entrepreneurship and genuine self-employment, supporting the creation and growth of SMEs, including through access to finance);

- promoting the development of the social economy, stimulating social innovation and social enterprises and encouraging those innovative forms of work, which create quality employment opportunities and have positive social impacts at local level;

- ensure, in association with the social partners, that all workers have the right to adequate and fair pay through collective agreements or appropriate statutory minimum wages, taking into account their impact on competitiveness, job creation and working poverty;

- taxation should weigh less on labour and more on other sources to create more favourable conditions for employment and inclusive growth and be aligned with climate and environmental objectives.

Guideline 6: Enhancing labour supply and improving access to employment, skills and competences

- encouraging citizens to acquire knowledge, skills and competences throughout their lives, addressing structural weaknesses in education and training systems and increasing their relevance to labour market needs, also with a view to enabling environmental transition;

- equipping all learners with key competences, including basic skills, e-skills and transversal competences, in order to lay the foundations for their future adaptability;

- ensuring the transfer of training entitlements during career changes, including through individual learning accounts, and enabling individuals to anticipate and better adapt to labour market needs through continuous retraining and development to support fair and equitable transitions for all;

- promoting equal opportunities for all, including by ensuring access to quality early childhood education, raising overall educational attainment and reducing the number of early school leavers;

- increasing the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;

- improving the provision and use of flexible forms of continuing vocational education and training and helping low-skilled adults to maintain or develop their long-term employability;

- provide timely, effective, coordinated and individualised support to unemployed and inactive persons, based on job search assistance, training and retraining, and access to other support services;

- ensuring gender equality, increasing women's participation in the labour market and

Guideline 7: Enhancing the functioning of labour markets and the effectiveness of social dialogue

- reduce and prevent segmentation within labour markets, fight undeclared work and promote the transition to permanent forms of employment;

- avoiding employment relationships that make working conditions more precarious, including in the case of platform workers and combating the abuse of atypical contracts;

- make public employment services more effective by ensuring that they provide timely and personalised assistance to job seekers, support labour market demand and introduce results-based management;

- provide unemployed people with adequate unemployment benefits for a reasonable period of time. These benefits should not discourage a rapid return to employment and should be accompanied by active labour market policies.

Guideline 8: Promoting equal opportunities for all, fostering social inclusion and fighting poverty

- ensure equal treatment as regards employment, social protection, health and long-term care, education and access to goods and services, irrespective of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;

- develop and integrate the three strands of active inclusion: adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality support services, responding to individual needs;

- ensuring the availability of affordable, accessible and quality services and the universal provision of essential services, including for children, specifically addressing homelessness, ensuring rapid access to affordable and good quality health and long-term care;

- ensure the adequacy and sustainability of pension systems for employed and self-employed workers, ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in the acquisition of pension rights.