Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

2020/0030(NLE) - 10/07/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 550 votes to 128, with 10 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States.

Parliament approved the Commission proposal subject to amendments.

Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Parliament stressed that the current situation caused by the COVID-19 outbreak required unprecedented action to protect businesses and workers from immediate employment and income losses, as well as to contain the economic and social shock of the crisis and avoid massive job losses and a deep recession.

Members called for the guidelines to be revised no later than one year after their adoption in order to take into account the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and employment consequences, as well as to better address similar future crises. In addition, the European Parliament should be involved in the definition of the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs on an equal footing with the Council.

Guideline 5: Boosting the demand for labour

Member States should actively promote full, quality employment on the basis of a strong economy. They should take the lead in a major public investment drive and pursue smart and ambitious employment policies.

Temporary measures to protect workers should include (i) wage subsidies, (ii) income support and the extension of unemployment benefit schemes, (iii) the extension of paid sick leave and carer's leave and teleworking arrangements.

Member States should, with the involvement of the social partners:

- support the transformation of European enterprises towards ensuring self-sufficiency, in particular in protective equipment and medical devices;

- step up their support to businesses that are struggling as a result of the crisis;

- consider suspending dismissals during the crisis period.

These measures should be sustained over time until a full economic recovery has been reached, after which they should be phased out.

Members also stressed the need to:

- guarantee the rights and jobs of mobile and frontier workers that have been hit hard by border closures;

- foster responsible entrepreneurship including among women and young people;

- promote the development of the circular and social economy, foster social innovation, social enterprises and strengthen their sustainability, and encourage those forms of work which create quality job opportunities and generate social benefits at local level, particularly in strategic sectors with strong potential for growth, such as the digital and green economy sectors.

Members argued that taxation should not be a burden on inclusive growth while being fully consistent with sustainable development objectives as set out in the European Green Deal. They also stressed the importance of policies aimed at ensuring that wages provide a decent standard of living in order to create jobs and reduce poverty in the Union.

Member States should be able to call on the assistance of the Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency solidarity instrument (SURE). They should ensure that recipient undertakings refrain from making share buy backs or paying dividends to shareholders and bonuses to executives, and that these undertakings are not registered in tax havens.

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

Member States should, inter alia:

- promote social rights, sustainability, productivity, employability and human capabilities by encouraging citizens to acquire competences throughout their lives;

- address the needs of sectors facing chronic skills shortages, in particular with a view to enabling the simultaneous environmental transition as well as technological and digital changes which go towards solutions based on artificial intelligence;

- encouraging the right to paid educational leave for professional purposes;

- take measures to strengthen distance learning and training, ensuring that it is accessible to all and taking into account the needs of people with disabilities;

- develop mechanisms and systems to support labour market transition, with the assistance of the European Social Fund;

- implement the minimum percentage as laid down in the proposed Directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards, eliminate gender gaps in pay, pensions and employment, and move towards fully paid maternity and paternity leave.

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

While stressing the importance of strengthening social dialogue at all levels and collective bargaining, Members stated that Member States should in particular:

- fight undeclared work and bogus self-employment and ensure that these workers genuinely enjoy fair working conditions, social rights and access to adequate social protection and improved representation;

- promote and use relevant European tools, such as the job network EURES, and increase cross-border partnerships to help mobile workers in cross-border regions;

- invest in occupational health and safety, and ensure adequate means and provisions for labour inspectorates and trade union health and safety representatives;

- address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the labour market by supporting workers who are temporarily in “technical unemployment” because the employers were forced to close their services as well as by supporting self-employed people and small businesses to retain staff and maintain their activities.

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

Members called for more efforts to fight poverty and social exclusion, with a special focus and horizontal strategies on the working-poor, children, older persons, single parents and especially single mothers, ethnic minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities and the homeless.

Member States should also: (i) guarantee the universal access to affordable public preventive and curative health and long-term care of high and sustainable quality; (ii) protect the health of the elderly, providing them with necessary hospital treatment and healthcare and avoiding any age-based discrimination.