Employment policy: strengthening the local dimension of the European strategy

2002/2034(COS) - 06/11/2001 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to strengthen the local dimension of the European Employment Strategy. CONTENT : this Communication is adopted in the context of (a) last's year campaign "Acting Locally for Employment" which highlighted the desirability of strengthening the local dimension of the European Employment Strategy; (b) the year 2000 Resolution of the European Parliament on "Acting locally", encouraging the Member States and the Commission to play a supportive role for local development; and (c) the Commission's White Paper on European Governance stressing the need for a stronger interaction between European institutions, national governments, regional and local authorities and civil society. There is a growing awareness that the objectives the EU has set itself to improve performance in the area of employment cannot be achieved without greater participation of the regional and local levels in cooperation with national authorities. The Guidelines of the European Employment Strategy (EES) underline the special role of local authorities and social partners in developing local strategies for employment. This Communication draws on past experience, on the lessons of existing policies and initiatives including the White Paper on Governance, and on the results of the Acting Locally consultation process. The communication suggests ways to help local actors play their full part in the European Employment Strategy in cooperation with national authorities and Community institutions, pooling their resources, and establishing local employment strategies where appropriate, thus eventually increasing the employment rate in Europe and providing stable, quality jobs. Candidate countries should be fully involved in this process in view of enlargement. The European Employment Strategy has introduced a new dimension in the promotion of more and better jobs. At the Community level, through the employment guidelines, annual examination and peer review of Member States' performance, and recommendations to individual countries, the EES is providing an integrated framework to meet the Union's objectives in the field of employment and labour market reforms. At the Member States level, through the NAPs and both community and national financial support, the employment Guidelines are translated into a coherent employment strategy. At the regional and local levels, actors should be given the opportunity to work increasingly together, to interact with national and European institutions and policies, and to develop partnerships in support of the European Employment Strategy. Local actors also have a key role to play in promoting gender equality and developing integrated approaches to social inclusion. While respecting the existing distribution of competencies within the Community and Member States, the Commission will: - in line with the principles of the White Paper on European Governance promote the information of local actors on the EES and NAPs, as well as the exchange of best practices, benchmarking and peer review in the implementation of NAPs in the area of local development. In particular, the Commission will: - attach a priority to local employment in its own information activities. It will facilitate access of local actors to Community programmes and initiatives by setting up a localdevelopment website and coordination between the different Commission services involved; - propose the inclusion of local employment among the priorities of Member States' information policies, notably through the existing institutional bodies such as the Social Fund Committee, the Employment Committee and the Informal Network of ESF Information Officers (INIO); - monitor and support the development of local employment strategies in order to promote and integrated approach to local development in the Member States, notably through National Action Plans and the Employment Committee (EMCO); through NAPs for Social Inclusion; and through the implementation of the ESF Regulation's provisions aimed at facilitating the participation local partners and NGOs in ESF-supported programmes; - ensure that the experiences gained in the development of local employment strategies, including as concerns the promotion of gender equality, are disseminated within Member States and candidate countries, and integrated in the EES. For this purpose, the Commission proposes to hold, at the beginning of 2003, a

Local Development Forum where the parties concerned - local and regional actors, national governments, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee - could meet, exchange experiences and information, and contribute to the development of the EES.