Access to continuing training in the Union. Report

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The Committee expressed its disappointment at the Commission's report on continuing training by unanimously adopting Susan Waddington's (PES, UK) report on the same topic. The Commission's report is the first systematic attempt to analyse and compare different approaches to promote workers's access to continuing training in the Member States. The Committee notes, however, that the national reports on which the Commission document is based fail to provide sufficient quantitative and qualitative information on these measures. The Commission's report is basically an inventory of best practices. The Committee stressed the need to monitor the trends in the labour market in order to identify changing requirements for skills in the work force. This is of paramount importance if the European Union intends to formulate policies for continuing vocational training. If the reporting procedure is to be continued, more importance should be attached to a precise definition and clear delimitation of topics in order to ensure that the results in the individual countries can be compared. The Commission and the Member States should pay particular attention to the implications of continuing training policies for working women when drawing up the next report. According to the report, the Commission should carry out further research into the quantity and quality of training made available to the unemployed and to underqualified workers, including older workers. The Commission should produce concrete proposals with the aim of identifying and disseminating information concerning good practices, experiences and know-how developed in the Member States. The Committee believes that access to continuing training cannot be considered in isolation from other employment issues, such as working time and work organization. Therefore, it called on the Commission to step up its efforts towards greater coordination between the initiatives taken and policies pursued in these two policy fields. According to the report, vocational training should be geared to equal treatment of men and women in the labour-market. Non-discriminatory access to training should be ensured, and women's occupational diversification should be promoted by positive action. The Committee emphasised the need to reach an agreement between the social partners on some of the issues of common concern. For instance, they should conclude a framework agreement to open up the workplace for training, as suggested in the Employment Guidelines produced by the the Commission. If this does not work out, the Commission should bring forward proposals of its own based upon Article 127.