Employment policy: European strategy for developing at local level

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The committee adopted the report by Fiorella GHILARDOTTI (PES, I) welcoming the Commission communication as a practical tool for those working on the ground. It approved of the proposal to increase references to local initiatives in the employment guidelines and regretted that the European employment strategy was not yet sufficiently known at regional and local level. The Commission's involvement of the municipal authorities when drafting its paper was seen as a positive step. The committee felt that this process should be further developed in order to create cohesion between the relevant local and regional authorities - who had a key role in promoting local employment - and the work of the EU institutions, thereby maximising the impact upon job creation. It suggested that such authorities should occasionally hold joint conferences of regions and cities and set up coordination units at all levels to ensure that their action was compatible with job creation. The report also welcomed the fact that the new generation of Structural Funds supported local initiatives and established risk capital schemes for social purposes, but regretted that funding for innovative approaches had been cut. Greater efforts were needed to encourage businesses to become involved in innovative initiatives at local level. SMEs in particular had a crucial role to play in implementing local employment strategies, and large businesses could also make a vital contribution to a local strategy, for example by sponsoring other companies. The committee called for Internet sites to be set up and operated at local level to match the demand for jobs with supply in given regions. It also urged Member States to make use of experimental initiatives undertaken by the social partners in predetermined areas suffering severe socio-economic hardship and to support the development of the "third system" to facilitate new forms of entrepreneurship and links between public and private sectors.