Employment in Europe. Annual report 1998

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OBJECTIVE: to propose guidelines for Member States' employment policies in 1999. CONTENT: in response to the new employment objectives of the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Commission proposes new employment guidelines for 1999, based mainly on the guidelines for 1998. The idea is to limit changes to previous guidelines to simple adjustments in order to maintain continuity in the employment projects launched by Member States (national action plans - NAPs) which integrate the objectives of the 1998 guidelines into employment plans for the Member States). The main approach for 1999 is to: - emphasise active measures by strengthening actions to make the acceptance of a job or training more attractive. The measures recommended involve reforming the tax and benefit systems and early retirement benefits; - life-long learning: encouraging older workers to gain new skills in the new information technologies; - labour market open to all: the objective is to integrate disadvantaged and other persons excluded from the labour market (such as ethnic minorities) into the employability pillar of the guidelines; - exploit the employment potential of services: the aim is to encourage employment in the particularly dynamic service sector and to tap the employment potential of the information society; - reconcile work and family life: the objective is to strengthen the present guideline so that responsibilities at work and at home can be better reconciled (mainly by proposing flexible working arrangements to those who want them and promoting leave schemes to allow employees to look after dependants). At the same time, the Commission proposes a number of more lateral changes which aim to promote apprenticeship training for young people who drop out of school early, strengthen entrepreneurship by training entrepreneurs and reducing start-up costs and charges, promoting the adaptability of workers by developing the partnership between the European Union, the Member States and enterprise and by adapting the existing regulatory framework. Finally, horizontal problems relating to the implementation of the guidelines need to be taken into account by the Member States when drawing up their 1999 NAPs: gender mainstreaming throughout the guidelines, the information society, undeclared work, promoting local development, re-structuring the European Social Fund. Quantitative targets and comparable indicators in all Member States also need to be defined so that actual progress can be monitored in the Member States in 3 job-creating areas: enterprise start-up, the cost of hiring additional workers and the cost of a home-help service.