Employment in Europe. 1995 annual Report

1995/2231(COS) - 29/11/1995 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Anne VAN LANCKER (PSE, B), the European Parliament took stock of the European employment policy in 1995: I. Employment situation in the EU: in this first section, the European Parliament expressed its concern with regard to the figures set out in the Commission's report on employment for 1995 (COM(95)396). Whilst it welcomed the forecasts predicting a 7.5% unemployment rate in the year 2000, Parliament pointed out that this scenario would only be achieved if all the Member States' macro-economic policies were mobilised. In this respect, the Commission's estimates were sensitive, to say the least. Indeed, according to the EP, an annual GDP growth rate which was only a quarter of a point lower than that projected over the period 1996-2000 would put the unemployment rate in 2000 at 9% instead of 7.5% in the optimum scenario. It also noted that the Commission's scenario suggested that GDP growth would remain stuck at 2% or 2.5%, which would result in a temporary fall in unemployment (it would fall to about 9.75% in 1997 but rise to 11% in 2000). II. Employment policy in the Union (follow-up to Essen COM(95)74): whilst determined measures to combat unemployment were necessary to reduce ancillary wage costs, the reduction in non-wage labour costs was particularly important for unskilled jobs. In this context, the reduction of labour costs went hand in hand with measures in cooperation with the social partners. The EP also called for a detailed study of all alternative sources of revenue, such as the tax on CO2 emissions or other energy taxes. It called on the Member States to use their expenditure more actively to help job-seekers. Parliament also stressed that actively converting unemployment benefits into job subsidies and permitting these benefits to be drawn during training or when a job was found could help members of high-risk groups to re-enter employment. Genuine flexibility in various aspects of the labour market would have a positive impact on the growth of employment and would make the labour market more accessible to young people, women and long-term unemployed. This flexibility should be taken as a different planning of working life throughout a person's professional career and as different forms of organisation. As regards wage moderation, Parliament was in favour of positive but moderate wage increases, particularly for the lowest-paid groups. It called on the Madrid Council to take decisions on additional financing for the realisation of trans-European networks, environmental investment, research and the information infrastructure. It supported, in particular, the establishment of a job-creating strategy based on ecological restructuring. In this connection, Parliament called on the Commission to submit proposals for environmental investment ("Joint Environment Projects"). III. Strategy towards a European Employment Union (COM(95)465): Parliament urged the Council to adopt as soon as possible a coherent strategy for employment, assessing developments at all levels. The Commission should ensure that the criteria established in all the Member States to measure unemployment indicators were homogeneous and therefore comparable. It called for an interinstitutional agreement to be concluded on the procedure for monitoring employment, in which connection the EP should be able to play a more active role. It also proposed holding an annual employment conference and inserting in the Treaty a new chapter on employment policy which would lay down the objectives, procedures, monitoring criteria and the coordination of national measures in this area in line with the procedures established for EMU (a system of stages and penalties for non-compliance with objectives).