Employment in Europe. Annual report 1998

1998/2195(COS) - 18/11/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Parliament adopted the report by Mr Wim van VELZEN (EPP, NL) which analysed the Commission proposal for guidelines for Member States' employment policies in 1999 and its report on employment in 1998 (results achieved by the Member States on employment). Parliament pointed out that the national action plans had given new impetus to employment policies in all the Member States. However it was important that the next European summit in Vienna should add depth and detail to these plans in the light of experience gained during the first year. The Commission should use these guidelines to continue to set practical objectives based on comparisons. Parliament also dealt with the following points: 1) financial and economic aspects: Parliament advocated more effective coordination of economic and employment policies. The Council, Commission and Parliament should conclude an interinstitutional agreement on this coordination. The European Council should also set up a framework for dialogue between the institutions responsible for economic policy and the European social partners. Parliament once again stressed the need to develop alternatives to taxation on labour. The Commission and the Member States should look into the possibilities and implications of VAT reduction on labour-intensive services. Parliament was particularly concerned by the slow pace at which the Member States have cooperated in taking explicit measures in the legal and taxation areas to strengthen the employment pillar of the guidelines and to stimulate entrepreneurship and it called on them to complete the single market and remove tax incentives for the relocation of investment. Parliament considered that a broadly based European investment programme was essential to promote growth and employment in the medium and long term. The Commission should undertake a feasibility study of the various financing mechanisms needed for such a programme; 2) prevention: considerable efforts should be made to reduce the number of new unemployed. Parliament hoped in particular to see greater implementation of the guidelines on training and equal opportunities. The Member States and the social partners should double the percentage of workers benefiting from training, with special attention being paid to older workers (50-64 years). Parliament also considered that efforts should be made to use the structural funds to preserve the qualifications of the labour force; 3) participation: Parliament called for a policy of gender mainstreaming throughout the guidelines and various measures facilitating women's (and migrants') access to work. The Council also had a responsibility to adopt a policy throughout the guidelines which encouraged non-discrimination of the sexes; 4)implementation: Parliament wished to see monitoring structures for equal opportunities and a timetable for the Commission's proposals on the proposed guidelines for employment. It also called for the funding for national action plans to be quantified as accurately as possible in order to provide adequate resources for employment policy reforms. With regard to working time, Parliament called on the social partners to negotiate agreements on more flexible arrangements for working time in line with workers' needs and the requirements of the production process. It also called for proposals for the reduction of the maximum weekly working time, with a reduction in the present limit of 48 hours. It asked that, before the end of 1999, the Union should have common indicators so that it could assess and monitor the application of the guidelines more effectively. The Commission was asked for a timetable for the presentation of its proposal on draft employment guidelines. Lastly the Commission was asked to submit a report on the employment implications of EMU for the countries inside the euro zone and those outside it.