Employment policy: maintain the guidelines for 2005-2008 in 2006 (Decision 2005/600/EC)

2006/0010(CNS) - 25/01/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to provide for the maintenance for 2006 and the implementation of guidelines for Member States' employment policies as set out in the annex to Council decision 2005/600/EC.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTENT : the new Lisbon strategy operating from 2005 onwards is based on a new cycle of governance with an integrated package of guidelines remaining in principle valid until 2008. Based on the integrated guidelines, which encompass economic, social and environmental dimensions, Member States have drawn up their national reform programmes, which set out their three year strategy to deliver growth and jobs.

The assessment of the national reform programmes by the Commission is set out in the Annual Progress Report and in the accompanying draft Joint Employment Report, which will be adopted in accordance with the procedure of article 128(1) of the Treaty. The assessment leads to the following overall conclusions as regards national employment policies:

- all programmes attach high importance to attracting and retaining more people in employment, but the chances of ensuring effective delivery would be enhanced if they were based on lifecycle approaches to facilitate swift employment transitions throughout a career;

- the importance of further measures to improve the adaptability of workers and enterprises is frequently neglected. Greater attention should be given to establishing conditions of "flexicurity" and better links between the tax and benefits systems, and to actively involve the social partners;

- although the crucial importance of developing the skills needed in knowledge-based economies is acknowledged, the need of stepping up investment and achieving a real breakthrough should better be reflected in the policy response;

- Member States should demonstrate their commitment to the new Lisbon agenda by ensuring that spending is targeted to support the Lisbon strategy, by promoting public ownership and by involving the social partners in the governance process.

These conclusions confirm the policies and the reform agenda expressed in the current Employment Guidelines. For procedural reasons laid down in article 128(2), their validity for 2006 needs to be confirmed by a Council decision, following consultation of the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions, the Economic and Social Committee and the Employment Committee.

The Commission considers it appropriate, at this stage of the three year governance cycle, not to propose Employment Recommendations, but draws Member States' attention to the priorities and conclusions of the detailed country assessments contained in the Annual Progress Report.