Employment policy: guidelines for 2007 (Decision 2005/600/EC)

2006/0271(CNS) - 12/12/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to maintain for 2007 the guidelines for Member States' employment policies as set out in the Annex to Council Decision 2005/600/EC.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

CONTEXT: the new Lisbon strategy operating from 2005 onwards is based on a new cycle of governance with an integrated package of guidelines remaining 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 confirms that employment is increasing and unemployment is falling. However, productivity growth and quality of jobs remain below Europe's needs. The responsiveness of European labour markets to the challenges of globalisation and ageing remain critical issues. Furthermore the analysis of the NRPs indicates the following key issues on each of the three European Employment Strategy priorities:

1. attracting and retaining more people in employment sees most policy implementation. More attention has been paid to an integrated lifecycle approach to work but policies for young people, women and older workers are still mostly treated separately;

2. the implementation reports show the weakest policy implementation in the area of improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises. A more comprehensive approach is necessary, better combining flexibility and security. An integrated flexicurity approach is receiving attention but a range of policy pathways needs to be developed to further flexicurity in all Member States;

3. there is quite some focus on structural reforms of education and training systems and their link with the labour market. However, coherent and comprehensive strategies still need to be set up in many Member States. Training initiatives still tend to be focussed predominantly on young people and participation in lifelong learning by those over 45 remains worrying low.

CONTENT : 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 2007 needs to be confirmed by a Council decision, following consultation of the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Employment Committee.

This is the objective of the proposal.