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6. Joint Employment Report for 1999

A5-0046/1999

European Parliament resolution on the Commission's draft Joint Employment Report 1999 SEC(1999) 1386 – C5-0215/1999)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Joint Employment Report (SEC(1999) 1386 – C5-0215/1999),
 - having regard to the Commission recommendation for the Council recommendations on implementing employment policy in the Member States (COM(1999) 445),
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Presidency following the special summit in Luxembourg on 20 and 21 November 1997, the Cardiff summit on 15 and 16 June 1998, the Vienna summit on 11 and 12 December 1998 and the Cologne summit on 3 and 4 June 1999,
 - having regard to the resolution of the European Council of Amsterdam of 16 June 1997 on growth and employment⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the resolution of the European Council of Cologne on 3 and 4 June 1999 on the European Employment Pact,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 November 1998 on the Commission communication – Proposal for Guidelines for Member States' Employment Policies 1999⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 March 1999 on the communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 'The EU economy at the arrival of the euro: promoting growth, employment and stability' (1999 annual economic report)⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 May 1999 on the European Parliament's contribution on the European Employment Pact and on the Commission's communication on Community policies in support of employment (under Article 127 of the EC Treaty)⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to Articles 2, 3(2), 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 137(1) and 141 of the Treaty establishing the European Community,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (A5-0046/1999);
- A. whereas nearly 60 million people are living below the poverty line in the Member States, and this constitutes a threat to social cohesion and to the European social model,
- B. whereas, although the Community created 1,8 million additional jobs in 1998 by means of its employment-policy initiatives, the relative level of youth unemployment still varied markedly across the Member States and in two instances no improvement was registered at all and whereas the overall figure of 19,5% remains unacceptably high, which means that considerable and sustained efforts are still required to reduce youth unemployment perceptibly,
- C. whereas in 1998 only a few Member States managed to significantly reduce long-term unemployment and it is still the case that approximately half the unemployed persons in the European Union are unemployed long-term and whereas, therefore, preventive measures must be pushed through on a sustained basis in all Member States to reduce long-term unemployment,
- D. whereas less than half the population of working age between the ages of 50 and 64 are employed and whereas, therefore, coherent strategies are needed to combat the exclusion of older workers from the labour market,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 236, 2.8.1997, p. 3.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 379, 7.12.1998, p. 88.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p. 296.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 279, 1.10.1999, p. 111.

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- E. whereas tax systems and benefits must be redesigned in such a way as to encourage jobs,
- F. whereas throughout the Union only about 40% of workers are employed in the services sector, compared with over 54% in the US, a difference which accounts for more than 36 million jobs and whereas, therefore, the employment potential of this sector in the EU has still not been exhausted,
- G. whereas over the last decade the implicit rate of tax on labour has risen by about six percentage points to its current level of 43% and whereas, therefore, measures to reduce the tax burden on labour, without jeopardising the financial stability of State social security schemes, are one of the most pressing tasks of the Member States,
- H. whereas modernisation of the way in which work is organised, combined with an effective reduction in working time, can help increase productivity, competitiveness and hence the growth in employment, and also improve living and working conditions; whereas, therefore, the partnership approach to modernising the way in which work is organised should be further developed, particularly with the aid of a thorough analysis of the various experiments in the reduction of working time which are under way,
- I. whereas additional and better targeted initiatives need to be undertaken which are aimed at enabling disabled people to find and retain a job on the open labour market including giving special priority to health and safety policies aimed at preventing the occurrence of occupational accidents and diseases,
- J. whereas the strategy of gender mainstreaming was endorsed by the Beijing Platform for Action, which called on governments and other actors to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes,
- K. whereas Member States' commitments to equal opportunities between women and men, and to gender mainstreaming, have not been translated into practice in a satisfactory way, and, therefore, unacceptable barriers of a fiscal, educational, cultural and social nature remain, hindering the access of women to the labour market and their progression within it,
- L. whereas there is a need to pay particular attention to the quality of employment, as far as stability and security are concerned, and therefore both quantitative and qualitative criteria must be developed at national and European level,
- M. whereas it should be remembered that European labour markets are different from each other and that specific guidelines may be more or less relevant for the individual Member States,
- N. whereas in its draft of the Joint Employment Report the Commission records some progress but also numerous shortcomings in respect of implementing the employment policy guidelines at national level,

Conclusions on the implementation of the Luxembourg process

1. Calls on the Commission and the Council to improve the relationship between the broad economic guidelines and the employment guidelines with regard to their content, their timing (by discussing and adopting them simultaneously), and the relationship between the Council committees involved;
2. Expects the Commission and Council to submit their proposals on the employment guidelines at a time agreed with Parliament;
3. Believes it would be very useful for Parliament to participate in developing the employment policy guidelines and, jointly with the Commission, monitor implementation of the European employment initiatives in the Member States;

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4. Acknowledges that evaluating the employment policy guidelines calls for a substantial administrative input, but considers that the annual monitoring cycle should be retained in order to ensure that Member States are unremitting in their efforts to promote employment;
5. Calls on the Council to adopt, unamended, the Commission's draft recommendations on implementation of Member States' employment policies, and calls on the Member States to take these recommendations into account, as a matter of priority, in their National Action Plans;

Conclusions on coordination between employment and economic policy

6. Underlines the fact that the implementation of Economic and Monetary Union is a powerful tool for increasing the performance of the economy and creating a good climate for new jobs;
7. Believes a substantial improvement in the ability of the policy areas to engage in a dialogue is essential and expects better coordination between the actors at both national and European level in the fields of employment and social policy, economic policy and finance, environment and structural policy;
8. Expects full recognition and closer involvement of the European Parliament within the existing institutional framework in developing and implementing the European Employment Pact, and its full involvement in macroeconomic dialogue — if appropriate, also by means of an Interinstitutional Agreement;

Conclusions on active measures to create jobs

9. Points out that there are clear distinctions between direct and indirect measures by Member States to promote the labour market; expects Member States to pursue their employment policies in a more balanced manner;
10. Supports the call made by its Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for financial aid for regional and local employment initiatives;
11. Considers that the financial and/or fiscal aid granted to enterprises should be monitored better to ensure that it genuinely helps to create jobs rather than assisting restructuring and relocation accompanied by redundancies; considers that such monitoring, in which representatives of the two sides of industry should be involved, must be regular and public;

Conclusions on the Guidelines

12. Points out that measures to satisfy the employment policy guidelines must benefit everyone, including special target groups;
13. Calls on the Member States to involve the two sides of industry more closely in the process of implementing the employment policy guidelines;
14. Strongly supports the proposal for a new guideline on communication and information technology, and points out that this is a clear example, in view of its implementation, of the need to boost public and private investment in a more pro-active way;
15. Takes the view that the concept of lifelong learning needs to be strengthened in the employment guidelines, and calls on the Commission to devise verifiable minimum targets for participation by the labour force of the different age groups of both sexes in further training;
16. Requests the Member States to gear their training systems more closely to the requirements of the labour market; in particular, initial and further training should be targeted more closely at the service sector, which has high growth potential;
17. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop feasible alternatives to taxation on labour, as already suggested in the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment and in the Monti working party on taxation;

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Conclusions on the employment strategy and social protection

18. Believes that the link between employment, quality of job creation and social protection must be strengthened in the framework of the Luxembourg strategy;
19. Calls for common minimum social standards not only with regard to terms of employment but also in various other areas of employment and social legislation, e.g. right to give notice, integrating the disabled into the world of work and the right of workers to be consulted on matters concerning their enterprises;
20. Considers that minimum information standards include information about the development of pension entitlements;
21. Calls on the Member States, if the retirement age is raised by an amendment to the social security legislation applicable to unemployed workers, to ensure that the latter enjoy precedence in employment programmes, so that they do not remain deprived of both employment and pensions;

Conclusions on equality of opportunity and mainstreaming

22. Calls upon the Council and the Member States to enhance national capacities and strengthen legal and institutional frameworks for mainstreaming gender into employment policies;
23. Calls upon the Council and the Member States to set targets – based upon the average of the three most successful Member States in this respect – that measure the inclusion of women in training programmes;
24. Calls upon the Council and the Member States to develop a set of benchmarks and criteria for the implementation and evaluation of gender mainstreaming in national employment policies;
25. Calls upon the Council and the Member States to create benefit incentives that encourage female participation, by extending availability of parental and child care benefits, and taking child care costs into account in means testing of benefits to low income families;

Conclusions on evaluation

26. Regards the introduction of specific quantifiable targets, including at EU level, based on benchmarks, as a distinct improvement to the employment policy guidelines; therefore expects more Community-wide targets to be set on the basis of the existing guidelines;
27. Expects the Commission and the Member States to formulate the targets in such a way as to permit evaluation;
28. Repeats its call, in view of the proposals submitted by the Commission, for comparability of national statistics in order to facilitate uniform appraisal and appropriate monitoring of application of the employment policy guidelines;
29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make their statistical systems relating to employment factors comparable by the start of the year 2000, in order to enable implementation of the employment guidelines to be uniformly evaluated and properly monitored;

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30. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the two sides of industry at European level.
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