

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The European Job Mobility Action Plan (2007-2010)'

(2008/C 325/11)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- strongly supports the Commission's view that 'worker mobility is a key instrument for an efficient functioning single market and is essential for allowing more people to find better employment, a key objective of the Lisbon Strategy';
- underlines that 'mobility' in this context must be understood and promoted both in terms of geographical mobility (both within and between EU Member States) as well as economic and social mobility and mobility between jobs;
- shares the Commission's objective of fostering greater awareness of the possibilities and advantages of mobility among the wider public and underlines the particular role that local and regional authorities can play in disseminating the relevant information;
- calls for removal of all legal and administrative barriers to the free movement of labour by the end of this Action Plan in 2011:
 - this to include removal of all remaining barriers to the free movement of workers from the 10 Member States who joined in 2004 and from Bulgaria and Romania;
 - that no restrictions should apply to new Member States when they join the EU;
- recommends that local and regional authorities should increase the possibilities for short or medium-term work placements for individuals from other Member States;
- considers that local and regional authorities must have the legal authority to carry out these roles on job mobility especially in the dissemination of information at the local and regional level to both employees and employers. Similarly it is also important that they are given the competences to do this, where appropriate, by national and European bodies.

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Reference documents

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — 'Mobility, an instrument for more and better jobs: The European Job Mobility Action Plan (2007-2010)'

COM(2007) 773 final

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General remarks

1. Strongly supports the Commission's view that 'worker mobility is a key instrument for an efficient functioning single market and is essential for allowing more people to find better employment, a key objective of the Lisbon Strategy';

2. Underlines that 'mobility' in this context must be understood and promoted both in terms of geographical mobility (both within and between EU Member States) as well as economic and social mobility and mobility between jobs;

3. Stresses that in the spirit of the agreed principles of flexibility, mobility should be exercised as a choice of the workers and must be supported in order to minimise the risks associated with it and to maximise the benefits for both workers and employers;

Follow up from the 2002 Action Plan

4. Supports making education and training systems more responsive to the labour market and to preparing people for mobility via language learning and skills development;

5. Supports removing legal and administrative barriers and promoting the cross-boarder recognition of qualifications;

6. Supports the setting up of a one-stop mobility information portal based on the EURES job vacancy system;

Job Mobility Action Plan 2007-2010

7. Supports intentions to improve existing legislative and administrative practices regarding worker mobility in order to make sure that exercising the right to mobility does not entail a loss of social security protection or other disproportionate risks;

8. Acknowledges the need to ensure policy support for the objective of job mobility from authorities at all levels: local, regional, national and European;

9. Agrees the need to reinforce EURES as an instrument to facilitate mobility of workers and their families;

10. Shares the Commission's objective of fostering greater awareness of the possibilities and advantages of mobility among

the wider public and underlines the particular role that local and regional authorities can play in disseminating the relevant information;

11. Welcomes the creation of the 'European Job Mobility Partnership', an initiative hosting a network of stakeholders committed to developing job mobility in the EU (Action 14) and the inclusion, within the PROGRESS Programme, of support for the financing of pilot activities, exchange of good practices, disseminating results on new developments and the emergence of innovative schemes. (Action 15);

12. Calls for removal of all legal and administrative barriers to the free movement of labour by the end of this Action Plan in 2011:

(i) this to include removal of all remaining barriers to the free movement of workers from the 10 Member States who joined in 2004 and from Bulgaria and Romania;

(ii) that no restrictions should apply to new Member States when they join the EU;

13. In order to secure the success of this strategy such that mobility becomes a reality for all workers who wish to seek employment in another Member State:

(i) information on job vacancies in other Member States should be provided through EURES, national employment services, and at the local and regional level through local or regional authorities;

(ii) Member States should be encouraged to include geographic and job-to-job mobility as a priority in their national employment and life long learning strategies. (Action 5);

(iii) workers must be made aware of their right to seek employment in other Member States and the practicalities how they can go about doing this, and what they need to do to safeguard their social security rights in this process;

(iv) employers, particularly those in SMEs at the local level, must be made aware that they can recruit workers from other Member States, subject to strict compliance with current labour law and employment and social protection provisions, and of the potential benefits of doing so;

(v) greater emphasis must be placed on language learning and the promotion of multilingualism;

- (vi) there should be greater cross border recognition of qualifications including vocational qualifications;
 - (vii) the social partners must be involved in all aspects of job mobility;
 - (viii) portability of pension provision (Action 4) and more flexible social security provisions in and between Member States are essential;
 - (ix) appropriate training of local, regional and national civil servants, which are working in the area on all issues related to workers mobility, has to be ensured to enable them to provide employees seeking work in other countries with quick and right information and to assist them in communicating with the competent authorities of the host country in relation to the exercise of their right to social protection;
14. Considers that to ensure that this mobility does not lead to tensions and social instability in host communities, it is necessary:
- (i) to support the European Commission in promoting the concept of 'fair mobility';
 - (ii) ensure that we continue to combat both undeclared work and social dumping (Action 6);
 - (iii) support the general principle that migrant workers receive the same pay and working terms, and equivalent conditions as the worker in the same job or industry in the host Member State;
 - (iv) support the concept of social solidarity and inclusion between migrant workers and those in the host Member State;

The role of regional and local authorities in promoting job mobility

15. Considers that local and regional authorities have a key role in providing information in conjunction with other national and European agencies about job vacancies in other Member States and the practicalities of accessing these;

16. Believes that it is necessary to ensure that local employers, especially those in SMEs, understand their right to access workers from across the EU, and in addition provide practical help and advice if they wish to do so;

17. Acknowledges that local and regional authorities are often the main providers of education at primary and secondary level and considers that this should include language training, the promotion of multilingualism and the development of inter-cultural skills which are necessary to prepare people for living and working in different cultural environments;

18. Stresses that local and regional authorities promote and provide lifelong learning (often in partnership with other agencies);

19. Draws attention to the fact that local and regional authorities are major employers and should be encouraged to seek workers to fill job vacancies throughout the Member States of the EU. Recommends that local and regional authorities should also increase the possibilities for short or medium-term work placements for individuals from other Member States;

To carry out these tasks and be generally involved in job mobility, local and regional authorities need the following:

— The legal and competence base

20. Considers that local and regional authorities must have the legal authority to carry out these roles on job mobility especially in the dissemination of information at the local and regional level to both employees and employers. Similarly it is also important that they are given the competences to do this, where appropriate, by national and European bodies;

— The resources

21. Strain can be placed on local and regional authorities when a large number of migrant workers take up work and residence in their area, in particular if this change occurs suddenly. This is particularly true in social services, education, health care and housing; as a consequence resources must be made available to deal with this. This is not only helpful to the new arrivals but also lessens the potential for tension between the migrant workers and the host community. The CoR therefore supports efforts to acquire the statistical evidence about the needs of different parts of the labour market and exchange this information at European level, in order to improve planning and management of labour movement. National, regional and local authorities, in conjunction with each other, need to plan in advance on how to shape such social services so as to better handle the influx of European migrants. This is partly because inter-European labour migration will increase significantly in the future, and partly because failure to plan, and consequent social strain and poor community relations, will damage inter-European migration and could compromise even European unity itself;

22. Resources must also be made available to provide information concerning job mobility and the expansion of language learning;

— Awareness and access to 'good practice'

23. Stresses the willingness of the CoR to continue to be active on the issue of job mobility both in its promotion and also in seeking out good practice and to then making sure it is widely available to other local and regional authorities;

24. Encourages local and regional authorities to join with the appropriate institutions in the other Member States to develop 'good practice' in this field and then to promote it nationally and across the Member States (Actions 7 and 15);

As regards EURES

25. Supports the Commission in its aims to develop and strengthen EURES 'as the one stop instrument to facilitate mobility of workers and their families'. However in respecting subsidiarity this must be integrated with structures at the national, regional, and local level;

26. Agrees with the Commission that a key task for EURES is to 'raise awareness on the principle of equal treatment and respect of labour standards within the European labour market' (Action 9);

27. Agrees that EURES should 'enhance its services to meet the needs of specific categories of workers (long-term unemployed, younger workers, older workers, women, etc.)' (Action 10).

Brussels, 9 October 2008.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Luc VAN DEN BRANDE
