

Wednesday 15 February 2017

P8\_TA(2017)0039

## **European Semester for Economic Policy Coordination: employment and social aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2017**

**European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2017 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2017 (2016/2307(INI))**

(2018/C 252/15)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
- having regard to Articles 9, 145, 148, 152, 153 and 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Article 349 TFEU on a specific statute for the outermost regions,
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on Better Law-Making,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular to its Title IV (Solidarity),
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
- having regard to ILO Convention 102 on minimum standards for social security, and ILO Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors,
- having regard to the Revised European Social Charter,
- having regard to Sustainable Development Goal 1 ('End poverty in all its forms everywhere'), and in particular to Target 3 ('Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable'),
- having regard to Commission recommendation 2013/112/EU of 20 February 2013 entitled 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage',
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 November 2016 entitled 'Annual Growth Survey 2017' (COM(2016)0725),
- having regard to the Commission recommendation of 16 November 2016 for a Council recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area (COM(2016)0726),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 November 2016 entitled 'Towards a positive fiscal stance for the euro area' (COM(2016)0727),
- having regard to the Commission report of 16 November 2016 entitled 'Alert Mechanism Report 2017' (COM(2016)0728),
- having regard to the draft Joint Employment Report from the Commission and the Council of 16 November 2016 accompanying the communication from the Commission on the Annual Growth Survey 2017 (COM(2016)0729),

Wednesday 15 February 2017

- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 November 2016 entitled ‘2017 Draft Budgetary Plans: Overall Assessment’ (COM(2016)0730),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 June 2016 entitled ‘Europe investing again — Taking stock of the Investment Plan for Europe and next steps’ (COM(2016)0359),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 22 November 2016 entitled ‘Europe’s next leaders: the Start-up and Scale-up Initiative’ (COM(2016)0733),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 September 2016 entitled ‘Strengthening European Investments for jobs and growth: Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan’ (COM(2016)0581),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 October 2016 entitled ‘The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on’ (COM(2016)0646),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 September 2016 for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (COM(2016)0604),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 September 2016 entitled ‘Mid-term review/revision of the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 — An EU budget focused on results’ (COM(2016)0603),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2016 entitled ‘A new skills agenda for Europe — Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness’ (COM(2016)0381),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 June 2016 entitled ‘A European agenda for the collaborative economy’ (COM(2016)0356),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 March 2016 launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights (COM(2016)0127) and its annexes,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 26 November 2015 for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the Structural Reform Support Programme for the period 2017 to 2020 and amending Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 1305/2013 (COM(2015)0701),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 October 2015 on steps towards completing Economic and Monetary Union (COM(2015)0600),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 15 February 2016 for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (COM(2016)0071), and to Parliament’s position thereon of 15 September 2016 <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 13 January 2015 entitled ‘Making the best use of the flexibility within the existing rules of the Stability and Growth Pact’ (COM(2015)0012),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 November 2014 entitled ‘An Investment Plan for Europe’ (COM(2014)0903),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 October 2013 entitled ‘Strengthening the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union’ (COM(2013)0690),

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0355.

**Wednesday 15 February 2017**

- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 February 2013 entitled ‘Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion — including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020’ (COM(2013)0083),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 April 2012 entitled ‘Towards a job-rich recovery’ (COM(2012)0173),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 December 2011 entitled ‘Youth Opportunities Initiative’ (COM(2011)0933),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2010 entitled ‘The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion’ (COM(2010)0758), and to Parliament’s resolution thereon of 15 November 2011 <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Commission recommendation 2008/867/EC of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to the Five Presidents’ Report of 22 June 2015 on ‘Completing the Economic and Monetary Union’,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe (13414/2015),
- having regard to its resolution of 26 October 2016 on ‘The European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2016 priorities’ <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2016 on ‘Refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market’ <sup>(4)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 February 2016 on ‘The European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2016’ <sup>(5)</sup>,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of 24 September 2015 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of the priorities for 2015,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2015 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2015 <sup>(6)</sup>,
- having regard to its position of 2 February 2016 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a European Platform to enhance cooperation in the prevention and deterrence of undeclared work <sup>(7)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 153 E, 31.5.2013, p. 57.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 307, 18.11.2008, p. 11.

<sup>(3)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0416.

<sup>(4)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0297.

<sup>(5)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0059.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 316, 30.8.2016, p. 83.

<sup>(7)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0033.

Wednesday 15 February 2017

- having regard to its resolution of 24 November 2015 on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 28 October 2015 on cohesion policy and the review of the Europe 2020 strategy <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to question for oral answer O-000121/2015 — B8-1102/2015 to the Council and to its related resolution of 29 October 2015 on a Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 September 2015 on ‘Creating a competitive EU labour market for the 21st century: matching skills and qualifications with demand and job opportunities, as a way to recover from the crisis’ <sup>(4)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 September 2015 on Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation in combating unemployment <sup>(5)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2014 on employment and social aspects of the Europe 2020 strategy <sup>(6)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 July 2014 on youth employment <sup>(7)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 April 2014 entitled ‘How can the European Union contribute to creating a hospitable environment for enterprises, businesses and start-ups to create jobs?’ <sup>(8)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 February 2009 on ‘Social Economy’ <sup>(9)</sup>,
- having regard to the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the initial report of the European Union (September 2015),
- having regard to the European Court of Auditors’ Special Report No 3/2015 on ‘The EU Youth Guarantee: first steps taken but implementation risks ahead’ <sup>(10)</sup>,
- having regard to the document ‘Employment and Social Developments in Europe — Quarterly Review — Autumn 2016’ of 11 October 2016,
- having regard to Eurofound the fifth and sixth editions of the European Working Conditions Surveys (2010 and 2015) <sup>(11)</sup>,
- having regard to the OECD document ‘Employment Outlook 2016’ of 7 July 2016,
- having regard to the OECD working paper of 9 December 2014 on ‘Trends in Income Inequality and its Impact on Economic Growth’,
- having regard to the Social Protection Committee’s report ‘Adequate social protection for long-term care needs in an ageing society’ of 10 October 2014,

<sup>(1)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0401.

<sup>(2)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0384.

<sup>(3)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0389.

<sup>(4)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0321.

<sup>(5)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0320.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 289, 9.8.2016, p. 19.

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ C 224, 21.6.2016, p. 19.

<sup>(8)</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2014)0394.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ C 76 E, 25.3.2010, p. 16.

<sup>(10)</sup> [http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR15\\_03/SR15\\_03\\_EN.pdf](http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR15_03/SR15_03_EN.pdf)

<sup>(11)</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/european-working-conditions-surveys-ewcs>

Wednesday 15 February 2017

- having regard to the Commission's roadmap and consultation addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families,
  - having regard to the meetings of 3 October and 8 November 2016 in the framework of the structured dialogue on the suspension of funds for Portugal and Spain,
  - having regard to the debate with representatives of national parliaments on the priorities of the 2017 European Semester,
  - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0037/2017),
- A. whereas unemployment in the EU has been slowly decreasing since the second half of 2013, 8 million new jobs have been created since 2013, and unemployment stood at 8,6 % in September 2016, reaching its lowest level since 2009; whereas, however, the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) remains high and represents 14,8 % of those aged between 15 and 29 <sup>(1)</sup> <sup>(2)</sup>; whereas although unemployment is falling on the aggregate level, it is regrettably still very high in some Member States; whereas according to the Commission the rate of in-work poverty remains high;
- B. whereas employment rates are generally lower among women, and in 2015, the employment rate for men aged 20–64 stood at 75,9 % in the EU-28, as compared with 64,3 % for women; whereas the gender gap in access to employment remains one of the main barriers for achieving gender equality, and urgent efforts are needed to narrow the gap in the employment rate between men and women;
- C. whereas if the current trends are reinforced with adequate public policies, the Europe 2020 employment rate target of 75 % could in fact be reached;
- D. whereas the youth unemployment rate stands at 18,6 % in the EU and 21,0 % in the euro area; whereas 4,2 million young people are unemployed, including 2,9 million in the euro area; whereas the level of youth unemployment remains markedly higher than at its low point in 2008, which recalls that implementation and full use of the youth employment initiative (YEI) by the Member States should be a priority; whereas low wages, sometimes below the poverty level, unpaid internships, lack of quality training and lack of rights at work unfortunately remain characteristics of youth employment;
- E. whereas NEETs are estimated to cost the EU EUR 153 billion (1,21 % of GDP) a year, in benefits and foregone earnings and taxes, while the total estimated cost of establishing Youth Guarantee schemes in the euro area would be EUR 21 billion a year, or 0,22 % of GDP;
- F. whereas the number of NEETs, recorded in 2015, will continue to decline; whereas 6,6 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are still in this situation, a figure equivalent to 12 % of this age group;
- G. whereas the primary responsibility for tackling youth unemployment rests with the Member States in terms of developing and implementing labour market regulatory frameworks, education and training systems and active labour market policies;

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/young-people-and-neets-1>

<sup>(2)</sup> See Eurofound report on youth unemployment.

Wednesday 15 February 2017

- H. whereas people with disabilities continue to be significantly excluded from the labour market, with very little improvement over the past decade, in part due to a lack of investment in appropriate support measures; stresses that this often leads to poverty and social exclusion and therefore negatively impacts on the Europe 2020 target;
- I. whereas structural challenges in the labour market such as low participation, as well as skills and qualification mismatches, remain a concern in many Member States;
- J. whereas the long-term unemployment rate (referring to unemployment of more than one year) fell by an annual rate of 0,7 % up to the first quarter of 2016, to 4,2 % of the labour force; whereas the very long-term unemployment rate (referring to unemployment of more than two years) fell to 2,6 % of the labour force; whereas nevertheless the number of long-term unemployed remains high, at around 10 million; whereas long-term unemployment is particularly a problem for younger and older jobseekers, with 30 % of those aged between 15 and 24 and 64 % of those aged between 55 and 64 year being jobseekers for more than one year; whereas many older workers who are inactive are not included in unemployment statistics; whereas the level of unemployment and its social consequences vary between European countries and whereas it is essential to take into account specific microeconomic circumstances;
- K. whereas the Europe 2020 strategy aims at reducing poverty by lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020; whereas this objective is far from being achieved and therefore more efforts are needed; whereas there were in 2015 119 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, around 3,5 million less than in 2014; whereas in 2012 32,2 million persons with disabilities were in this situation in the EU; whereas in 2013 26,5 million children in the EU-28 were at risk of falling into poverty or social exclusion; whereas high levels of inequality reduce the output of the economy and the potential for sustainable growth;
- L. whereas the accompaniment of the long-term unemployed is crucial, since otherwise this situation will begin to affect their self-confidence, wellbeing and future development, putting them at risk of poverty and social exclusion and jeopardising the sustainability of national social security systems, as well as the European social model;
- M. whereas the weakening of social dialogue has a negative impact on workers' rights, on the purchasing power of EU citizens and on growth;
- N. whereas there are a number of positive developments in the EU, signalling the resilience and recovery of the European economy;
- O. whereas the social economy, which represents 2 million enterprises employing more than 14,5 million people in the Union, has been an important sector, contributing to Europe's resilience and economic recovery;
- P. whereas growth in most Member States remains low, the EU growth rate for 2016 having even declined to stabilise at 2 %, despite positive temporary aspects showing therefore that the EU can do more to boost the economic and social recovery so as to make it more sustainable in the medium term;
- Q. whereas as the Commission has stated <sup>(1)</sup>, employment and social divergences within and between Member States persist and social developments still point to further divergence across the EU, hindering growth, employment and cohesion; whereas societies which are characterised by a high level of equality and investment in people do better in terms of growth and employment resilience;

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Joint employment report 2016, p. 2.

Wednesday 15 February 2017

- R. whereas undeclared work is still a reality which has serious budgetary implications, leading to loss of tax revenues and social security contributions, as well as having negative effects on employment, productivity, the quality of work and the development of skills;
- S. whereas the outermost regions (ORs) face huge difficulties related to their particular specificities, which limit their potential for growth and development; whereas unemployment, youth unemployment and long-term unemployment in these regions are among the highest in the EU, in many cases exceeding 30 %;
- T. whereas the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) has already approved 69 projects in 18 countries and signed 56 operations, and this is expected to result in more than EUR 22 billion in investment and to involve around 71 000 SMEs;
- U. whereas in many Member States the working-age population and the labour force are continuing to shrink; whereas women's participation in the labour market is an opportunity for Member States to cope with this issue and reinforce the labour force in EU; whereas the ongoing arrival of refugees and asylum seekers could also help to reinforce the labour force;
- V. whereas the EU is facing demographic challenges that are not only related to the ageing population and the falling birth rate, but also include other elements such as depopulation;
- W. whereas the gender pay gap currently stands at 16 % and the gender pension gap at 38 %, exposing women to a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion as they age;
- X. whereas the provision and management of social security systems are a Member State competence which the Union coordinates but does not harmonise;
- Y. whereas the healthy life expectancy rate for women has been receding, from 62,6 in 2010 to 61,5 in 2013 with a slight increase in 2014 and has been stagnating for men at 61,4;
1. Welcomes the fact that in the Annual Growth Survey 2017 emphasis is placed on the importance of ensuring social fairness as a means of stimulating more inclusive growth, as well as on creating quality and inclusive employment and enhancing skills and on the need to strengthen competitiveness, innovation and productivity; calls on the Commission to ensure that the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) relating to labour market reforms also stress the importance of active labour market policies and promote workers' rights and the protection of workers;
  2. Welcomes the progress towards achieving a balance between the economic and social dimensions of the European Semester process, the Commission having met some of Parliament's requests; stresses, however, that more effort is needed to improve the political visibility and impact of the scoreboard of key employment and social indicators; welcomes the Commission proposal for amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020 and including new social indicators to present employment and social data connected to the evolution of the macroeconomic data, so that the analysis presents a comprehensive picture of the interconnection and impacts of different policy choices; stresses that employment indicators should be put on an equal footing with the economic indicators, thus allowing them to trigger in-depth analyses and corrective action in the relevant Member States;
  3. Highlights that the European Semester cycle still lacks a child-centred approach, which would include commitment to children's rights, mainstreaming of combating child poverty, and wellbeing objectives across all relevant policy areas of policymaking; stresses that a strategic approach with clear objectives and targets is necessary to break the cycle of disadvantage;

Wednesday 15 February 2017

4. Calls for programmes offering support and opportunities as part of an integrated European plan to invest in early childhood and combat child poverty, including the creation of a Child Guarantee aimed at fully implementing the Commission recommendation 'Investing in Children', which will ensure that every child in Europe at risk of poverty (including refugees) has access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition;
5. Stresses that investment in social development contributes to economic growth and convergence; takes note of recent studies by the OECD <sup>(1)</sup> and the IMF <sup>(2)</sup> that underline that social inequalities in Europe hamper economic recovery; calls for stronger efforts to combat poverty and rising inequality, and, where needed, for greater investment in social infrastructure and support for those hit hardest by the economic crisis; calls on the Commission to ensure that the CSRs include a specific focus on combating inequalities;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Council to improve the strategy for an overarching gender equality objective; supports the use of the Commission's annual gender equality reports in the context of the European Semester to enhance gender mainstreaming; calls on the Member States to incorporate the gender dimension and the principle of equality between women and men in their National Reform Programmes and stability and convergence programmes, by setting targets and defining measures that address persisting gender gaps; calls on the Commission to continue to provide CSRs with regard to improved childcare services and long-term care that can have a positive impact on the labour market participation of women; reiterates its call on the Commission and the Member States to consider using gender-disaggregated data where appropriate in the European Semester monitoring process; suggests involving the European Institute for Gender Equality more closely in the European Semester;
7. Highlights that public and private debt is too high in some Member States and that this hampers investment, economic growth and employment;
8. Is of the opinion that the data included in the Employment and Social Scoreboard is useful, but is not enough to assess the evolution of the employment and social situation in the EU; calls on the Commission and the Member States to complement the Scoreboard with data on the quality of employment and on poverty, with especial emphasis on multidimensional child poverty;
9. Calls on the Commission to define and quantify its concept of social fairness, taking into account both employment and social policies, to be achieved through the 2016 Annual Growth Survey and the European Semester;
10. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to speed up the implementation of all programmes which can boost the creation of decent, quality, long-term employment for all categories of the population, and particularly young people; stresses that youth unemployment remains at 18,6 %, despite the slight decrease in unemployment in the EU; calls on the Member States to ensure a more proactive follow-up of the programme managing authorities;
11. Underlines that the implementation of the Youth Guarantee should be strengthened at national, regional and local level and prolonged until at least 2020 with the active participation of the social partners and strengthened public services, and stresses its importance for school-to-work transitions; urges the Commission to carry out impact studies with a view to determining precisely what results have been achieved so far and to take additional measures, and to take into account the awaited audit by the Court of Auditors and the sharing of best practices and the organisation of workshops which bring together all the actors concerned and are designed to make this instrument more effective; highlights that Member States should ensure that the Youth Guarantee is fully accessible, including to vulnerable persons and persons with disabilities; stresses that this is not the case in all Member States, and calls on Member States to remedy this situation as soon as possible, as it runs counter to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); emphasises the need to ensure that the Youth Guarantee reaches young people facing multiple exclusions and extreme poverty; points out that

---

<sup>(1)</sup> OECD report: 'In it together: why less inequality benefits all', 2015.

<sup>(2)</sup> IMF report: 'Causes and consequences of income inequality', June 2015.



Wednesday 15 February 2017

special attention should be paid to young women and girls, who could face gender-related barriers; calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide adequate funding for the Youth Guarantee in order to ensure that it is implemented properly in all Member States and to help even more young people;

12. Notes the adoption of EUR 500 million in commitment appropriations for the YEI for 2017; stresses that this amount is not sufficient and needs to be increased and secured in the current MFF; notes also, however, that an agreement on appropriate additional financing for the YEI to cover the remainder of the current MFF period must be reached in the context of the mid-term revision;

13. Highlights the potential of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) regarding youth employment; stresses that further promotion of, and investment in, the cultural and creative sector may contribute substantially to investment, growth, innovation and employment; calls on the Commission to therefore consider the special opportunities offered by all cultural and creative sectors (CCSs), including NGOs and small associations, for example in the framework of the YEI;

14. Underlines that insufficient investment in the public education system may undermine Europe's competitive position and the employability of its workforce; stresses the need to invest in people as early as possible in the life cycle in order to reduce inequality and foster social inclusion at a young age; also stresses the need to fight stereotypes from the youngest age in schools, by promoting gender equality at all levels of education;

15. Calls on the Member States to introduce policies to implement and monitor more inclusive forms of social protection systems and income support, in order to ensure that these systems offer a decent standard of living for the unemployed and those at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and provide access to education, training and opportunities to enter the labour market;

16. Welcomes the increase in the employment rate; notes, however, that the rising employment rate in Member States has been accompanied by the growing emergence of atypical and non-formal forms of employment, zero-hours contracts included; highlights that sustainability and quality of employment created should be a priority; is highly concerned that high unemployment continues, especially in countries still suffering from the crisis; recognises the phenomenon of in-work poverty as a consequence of deteriorating wage and working conditions, which must be addressed as part of any actions in favour of employment and social protection; encourages the Member States to make further efforts, as well as to remain open towards new solutions and approaches in order to reach the Europe 2020 employment rate target of 75 %, including by focusing on groups that have the lowest labour market participation such as women, older workers, low-skilled workers and persons with disabilities; calls on the Member States to increase their offer in terms of lifelong learning and effective upskilling;

17. Considers that migration could play an important role, including through education schemes, complemented with efficient public expenditure, with a view to making high-quality social and environmentally sustainable investments with the aim of integrating workers into the labour market and reducing unemployment;

18. Recognises that women continue to be under-represented in the labour market; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to put in place proactive policies and appropriate investment intended and designed to promote women's participation in the labour market; emphasises that a better work-life balance is essential for increasing the participation of women in the labour market; points out in this regard that flexible working arrangements, such as telework, flexitime and reduced working hours can play an important role according to the Commission; shares the view with the Commission that the provision of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave in Member States tends to boost female labour market participation; also calls on the Member States to set appropriate policies to support women and men entering, returning to, staying in and advancing in the labour market after periods of family and care-related types of leave, with sustainable and quality employment; deplores gender inequalities in terms of the employment rate and the pay and pensions gender gap; calls for policies encouraging and supporting women to build a career in entrepreneurship, facilitating access to finance and business opportunities and offering tailor-made training;

Wednesday 15 February 2017

19. Recognises, however, that employment support and measures to improve active labour market participation need to be part of a broader rights-centred approach to tackling social exclusion and poverty, which takes into consideration children and families and their specific needs;
20. Calls on the Member States to exchange best practice and to consider new innovative ways of developing an adaptable and flexible labour market to meet the challenges of a global economy while ensuring high labour standards for all workers;
21. Welcomes the reminder to Member States that welfare systems need to be anchored in strong social standards, and that promoting work-life balance and addressing discrimination contribute not just to social fairness but also to growth; underlines that parents' reintegration into the labour market should be supported by creating the conditions for a quality and inclusive employment and working environment, enabling parents to balance their work and parenting roles;
22. Recognises that alongside job creation, the integration of long-term unemployed individuals into quality employment through individually tailored measures, in particular through active employment policies, is a key factor for fighting their poverty and social exclusion if sufficient decent work is available; points out that emphasis should be put on improved measures aimed at the creation of decent jobs; stresses that integrating those furthest from the labour market has a double effect, benefiting the individual as well as stabilising social security systems and supporting the economy; considers it necessary to take account of the social situation of these citizens and their specific needs, and to better monitor at European level the policies implemented at national level;
23. Highlights the importance of skills and competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning environments and their validation and certification, and of access to life-long learning, as well as of the commitments and benchmarks of the Strategic Framework on Education and Training 2020; calls on the Commission and the Member States to build systems of recognition of non-formal and informal competences; calls further on the Member States to implement policies ensuring not only access to quality, inclusive education and training at an affordable cost, but also the implementation of the lifelong learning framework approach in the direction of a flexible education path that will foster equity and social cohesion and allow employment opportunities for everyone;
24. Calls for the establishment and development of partnerships between employers, social partners, public and private employment services, public authorities, social services and education and training institutions in order to provide the tools needed to better respond to the needs of the labour market and prevent long-term unemployment; recalls that personalised and individualised follow-up, capable of delivering effective responses for the long-term unemployed, is indispensable;
25. Regrets the continuing low rates of public investment, as such investment can be an important trigger for job creation; stresses that EFSI has not developed sufficient investment in social infrastructure and that this is a lost opportunity that must be urgently addressed;
26. Calls for policies that respect and promote collective bargaining and its coverage in order to reach as many workers as possible while at the same time also aiming at better wage floors in the form of minimum wages set at decent levels and with the involvement of social partners, all this with a view to ending the competitive wage race to the bottom, supporting aggregate demand and economic recovery, reducing wage inequalities and fighting in-work poverty;
27. Calls on the Member States to ensure that people on temporary or part-time contracts or who are self-employed enjoy equal treatment, also regarding dismissal and pay and have adequate social protection and access to training, and that framework conditions are set to enable them to make a career; calls on the Member States to implement the framework agreements on part-time work and fixed-term employment and to effectively enforce the directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation;
28. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take adequate measures to help refugees settle and integrate, as well as ensuring that public services are sufficiently resourced and that there is early anticipation of the requirements to facilitate their integration;

Wednesday 15 February 2017

29. Deplores the fact that the percentage of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion remains high; points out that high levels of inequality and poverty affect social cohesion while hindering social and political stability; regrets that policies to address this efficiently lack the necessary ambition to have sufficient economic leverage; requests Member States to accelerate their actions towards the achievement of the Europe 2020 target to reduce the number of persons at risk of poverty by 20 million; calls on the Commission and the Member States to make the reduction of inequality a priority; calls for better support and recognition of the work of NGOs, anti-poverty organisations and organisations of people experiencing poverty, encouraging their participation in the exchange of good practices;

30. Expresses its concern at the low labour market participation rate of ethnic minorities, in particular the Roma community; calls for the proper implementation of Directive 2000/78/EC; stresses the need to foster the role played by specialist NGOs in promoting their participation in the labour market and supporting not only the enrolment of children in education but also avoiding early school leaving, in order to break the circle of poverty;

31. Considers that it is important to close the investment gap in order to create sustainable growth while not risking the economic and social sustainability of Member States; stresses, in this regard, the emergence of guaranteeing the consolidation of public finances, which is essential for continuing to provide the European social model that characterises the EU;

32. Regrets that the Commission's latest recommendations ignored Parliament's request to strengthen the application of Article 349 TFEU, namely by adopting differentiated measures and programmes to reduce asymmetries, as well as to maximise social cohesion in the EU; urges the Member States, in this context, to establish specific investment programmes for their subregions where unemployment rates exceed 30 %; reiterates its call on the Commission to assist Member States and European regions, particularly outermost regions, in the design and funding of the investment programmes under the MFF;

33. Recognises the continued fragile situation on the European labour market, which is unable to solve the still high unemployment rates, on the one hand, while on the other companies are demanding a skilled and suitable labour force; calls on the Commission to promote, at Member State level, forms of cooperation involving governments, enterprises, including social economy enterprises, educational institutions, individualised support services, civil society and the social partners, on the basis of exchange of best practices and with a view to adapting the education and training systems of the Member States in order to combat skills mismatch, so as to meet labour market needs;

34. Stresses that education is a fundamental right that should be guaranteed to all children, and that disparities in the availability and quality of education should be addressed in order to strengthen schooling for all and reduce early school leaving; stresses that matching skills and qualifications with demand and job opportunities is supportive to creating an inclusive EU labour market; believes that guidance and counselling which address individual needs and focus on the evaluation and expansion of individual skills must be a core element of education and skills policies from an early stage on, in every person's education; calls on Member States to better align education and training with labour market needs across the EU underlines the importance of evaluating the different employment situations in the Member States in order to ensure their specificity and peculiarities;

35. Recognises that advances in new technologies and the digitisation of European industry present significant challenges for the EU; stresses that the productive models of the EU and of the Member States, supported by their educational models, have to be directed towards high-productivity sectors, in particular those related to ICTs and digitisation, in order to improve the EU's competitiveness at global level;

36. Underlines that insufficient and inadequately focused investment in education in digital skills, programming and STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) included, is undermining Europe's competitive position, the availability of a skilled workforce and the employability of the workforce; takes the view that better skills matching and improved mutual recognition of qualifications will be beneficial for overcoming the gap in terms of skills shortages and mismatches on the European labour market and for jobseekers, especially young people; calls on the Member States to prioritise comprehensive training in digital skills, programming and skills that are highly sought after by employers for all, while at the same time maintaining high standards in traditional education, and to take into account the shift towards the

Wednesday 15 February 2017

digital economy in the context of upskilling and retraining, which should not be limited to knowledge from the user's perspective;

37. Notes that an increased effort is required in many Member States to educate the workforce, including adult education and vocational training opportunities; highlights the importance of lifelong learning, including for older workers, in order to adapt competences to the needs of the employment market; calls for an increase in the promotion targeted at women and girls of STEM subjects, in order to address existing education stereotypes and combat the long-term gender employment, pay and pensions gaps;

38. Acknowledges the value of new technologies and the importance of digital literacy for the individual's personal life and successful labour market integration; suggests, therefore, that Member States enhance their investment in better ICT infrastructure and connectivity in educational institutions and develop effective strategies to harness the potential of ICTs in supporting informal learning by adults, and to improve their formal and non-formal education opportunities;

39. Welcomes the contribution of Erasmus+ in fostering mobility and cultural exchanges across the EU and with third countries; calls for better promotion and use of the European tools for transparency, mobility and recognition of skills and qualifications, with a view to facilitating mobility as regards learning and working; reaffirms the need to ensure mobility opportunities for vocational training, disadvantaged young people and people suffering from different forms of discrimination;

40. Welcomes the new policy and investment framework provided by the Paris agreement, which will contribute to the creation of new employment opportunities in the low-carbon and low-emission sectors;

41. Calls on the Commission to stress the importance of mitigating the obstacles and barriers, both physical and digital, that are still faced by people with disabilities in the Member States;

42. Welcomes the explicit mention of childcare, housing, healthcare and education in relation to improving access to quality services;

43. Recalls that free movement of workers is a fundamental principle of the Treaty; welcomes the fact that in the Annual Growth Survey 2017 emphasis is placed on the importance of ensuring social fairness through a fair collaboration between the various institutions of the Member States; calls, therefore, on the Member states to provide labour inspectorates or other relevant bodies with adequate resources, and also to improve cross-border cooperation between inspection services and the electronic exchange of information and data, in order to improve the efficiency of the controls intended to combat and prevent social fraud and undeclared work;

44. Underlines the need to boost domestic demand by promoting public and private investment and promoting socially and economically balanced structural reforms that aim to reduce inequalities and promote quality and sustainable employment, sustainable growth and social investment and responsible fiscal consolidation, thus reinforcing a favourable path towards an environment of greater cohesion and upward social convergence for business and public services; stresses the important role of investment in human capital as a common strategy; also stresses the need to reorientate the Union's economic policies towards a social market economy;

45. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take suitable measures to guarantee to digital workers the same rights and level of social protection as exist for similar workers in the sector concerned;

46. Notes that micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which represent more than 90 % of all businesses in Europe and are the engine of the European economy, as well as health and social services and social and solidarity enterprises, contribute effectively to sustainable and inclusive development and the creation of quality employment; calls on the Commission and the Member States to give greater consideration to the interests of MSMEs in the policy-making process by applying the SME test all along the legislative process, in accordance with the 'Think small first principle', and to promote existing forms of financial support for micro-enterprises, such as the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme; considers it of utmost importance to reduce the administrative burden on such companies and to eliminate unnecessary legislation while not undermining labour and social rights; stresses the need to facilitate

Wednesday 15 February 2017

a second chance for entrepreneurs who in their first attempt failed in a non-fraudulent way and had respected employees' rights;

47. Highlights that social entrepreneurship is a growing field that can boost the economy while simultaneously alleviating deprivation, social exclusion and other societal problems; therefore considers that entrepreneurship education should include a social dimension and should address matters such as fair trade, social enterprises, and alternative business models, including cooperatives, with a view to achieving a more social, inclusive and sustainable economy;

48. Urges the Commission and the Council to explore how to increase productivity by investing in human capital, taking into account that the most competent, well-integrated and fulfilled workers are those that can best address the demands and challenges facing enterprises and services;

49. Encourages the Member States to focus on the status of self-employed entrepreneurs, in order to ensure that they have adequate social protection as regards sickness, accident and unemployment insurance and pension rights;

50. Recalls the importance of implementing a true culture of entrepreneurship, which stimulates young people from an early age; calls, therefore, on the Member States to adapt their education and training programmes in line with this principle; alerts Member States to the importance of creating incentives for entrepreneurship, in particular through the implementation of fiscal rules and reduction of administrative burdens; calls on the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States, to take measures to provide better information on all European funds and programmes having the potential to boost entrepreneurship, investment and access to finance, such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs;

51. Stresses the leverage effect of the EU budget on national budgets; stresses the complementary role played by the EU budget in achieving the Union's goals under the social policies charted in the Annual Growth Survey 2017, aiming at the creation of more and better jobs throughout the EU;

52. Is concerned with the delay in implementing the operational programmes during the current programming period; notes the fact that by September 2016 only 65 % of competent national authorities had been designated, and calls on the Member States to make more active use of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) and the YEI to address employment and social priorities and support the implementation of the CSRs that address, in particular and in an inclusive manner, social and employment matters; however, at the same time underlines that these funds should not be used solely to implement the CSRs, since this could potentially lead to other important investment areas being left out; highlights that further efforts should be made to simplify procedures, notably in the case of horizontal and sectorial financial rules, and to remove barriers for civil society to accessing funds;

53. Notes that economic growth in the EU and the euro area remains modest; stresses that investment is needed in research, innovation, and education; notes that the 2017 EU budget allocates EUR 21 312,2 million in commitment appropriations for competitiveness, growth and jobs, through programmes such as Horizon 2020, COSME, and Erasmus+;

54. Highlights that European funds and programmes such as Erasmus for Entrepreneurs, the European Employment Services (EURES), the programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME), the programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), include the potential to facilitate access to financing and boost investment and, therefore, entrepreneurship; recalls the importance of the partnership principle, the principle of additionality, the bottom-up approach, adequate resource allocation, and a good balance between reporting duties and data collection from those profiting from the funds; calls on the Commission to ensure the close monitoring of the use of EU funds to improve effectiveness; Calls on the Commission to provide CSRs on the implementation of EU funds, in order to increase the coverage and effectiveness of social and active labour market policies at national level;

Wednesday 15 February 2017

55. Welcomes the allocation in 2017 of an additional EUR 500 million on top of the draft budget for the YEI and of EUR 200 million to boost key initiatives for growth and job creation; recalls the need to make better use of the available funds and initiatives related to education and training, culture, sport and youth, and to enhance their investment in these sectors where necessary, especially with regard to thematic areas with direct relevance to the Europe 2020 strategy, such as early school leaving (ESL), higher education, youth employment, vocational education and training (VET), lifelong learning and mobility, in order to build resilience and reduce unemployment, especially amongst the young and the most vulnerable groups, prevent radicalisation and ensure long-term social inclusion;

56. Welcomes the proposal from the Commission to extend EFSI and double its amount to reach EUR 630 billion by 2022, while at the same time improving geographical and sectorial coverage; notes that EFSI has so far not been particularly successful in improving social and economic convergence between Member States and their regions within the Union, or in targeting social infrastructure; recalls that most projects are being approved in the economically more healthy regions of western Europe, thus deepening the investment gap between Member States and reinforcing European imbalances; asks the Commission to help the weaker regions with the application process, but not to modify the basic premise of selecting projects solely on the basis of their quality; calls urgently on the Commission to support social enterprises and SMEs in being able to access the EFSI; calls on the Commission and the European Investment Bank to take additional and proactive steps to ensure that all Member States and sectors are being appropriately targeted with a view to accessing EFSI, in particular those contributing directly to tackling poverty and social exclusion; stresses the need to reinforce administrative capabilities such as the Advisory Hub; regrets that there is no available data on the jobs that are expected to be created as result of EFSI investments; calls on the Commission to monitor and control investments under the EFSI and measure their economic and social impact, and to ensure that EFSI does not duplicate existing financial programmes or substitute direct public spending; reiterates its call for investment in human and social capital in areas such as healthcare, childcare and affordable housing;

57. Points out that the outermost regions are facing a series of structural constraints, the permanence and combination of which severely restrain their development; calls on the Commission to bolster the application of Article 349 TFEU;

58. Stresses the need for the Commission and the Member States to reach a stronger commitment to apply Article 174 of the TFEU; emphasises that greater territorial cohesion implies greater economic and social cohesion, and therefore calls for strategic investment in the regions concerned, in particular in broadband, with a view to making them more competitive, improving their industry and territorial structure and, ultimately, stabilising their population;

59. Invites the Commission and the Member States to involve all levels of government and relevant stakeholders in the identification of obstacles to investment, focusing on the those regions and sectors most in need as well as making available adequate instruments bringing together public and private financing;

60. Calls on the Commission to introduce policies designed to combat demographic decline and the dispersion of the population; stresses that EU cohesion policy should prioritise attention for regions suffering demographic decline;

61. Highlights that universal access to public, solidarity-based and adequate retirement and old-age pensions must be granted to all; acknowledges the challenges faced by Member States to strengthen the sustainability of pension systems, but stresses the importance of safeguarding solidarity in pension systems by strengthening the revenue side without necessarily increasing the retirement age; underlines the importance of public and occupational pension systems which provide an adequate retirement income well above the poverty threshold and allow pensioners to maintain their standard of living; believes that the best way to ensure sustainable, safe and adequate pensions for women and men is to increase the overall employment rate and quality jobs across all ages, improve working and employment conditions and commit the necessary supplementary public spending; believes that pension system reforms should focus among other aspects on the effective

Wednesday 15 February 2017

retirement age and reflect labour market trends, birth rates, the health and wealth situation, working conditions and the economic dependency ratio; considers that these reforms must also take account of the situation of millions of workers in Europe, particularly women, young people and the self-employed, suffering insecure, atypical employment, periods of involuntary unemployment and reduced working time;

62. Points out to the Member States, in view of the ageing of Europe's citizens and its impact in terms of increasing informal and formal care needs, the need to invest in public health promotion and disease prevention while ensuring and improving the sustainability, safety, adequacy and effectiveness of social protection systems and the provision of quality long-term social services over the coming decades; encourages the Member States, therefore, to develop strategies to ensure adequate funding, staffing and development for those systems and services and to extend the coverage of social security systems for the benefit of society and the individual; in particular, urges the Commission, Member States and social partners to:

- encourage higher employment rates for all age groups;
- work to reduce gender segregation and the gender pay gap;
- adapt labour markets for older workers through age-friendly working conditions enabling them to work up to statutory retirement age;
- combat age stereotypes in labour markets;
- ensure a life-cycle and preventive approach to occupational health and safety;
- focus on work-life balance for persons with care responsibilities, through appropriate care-and-leave schemes and by supporting informal carers;
- support and inform employers, especially SMEs, on how work environments can be improved to allow workers of all ages to stay productive;
- support public employment services to enable them to provide meaningful assistance to older jobseekers;
- invest in and promote lifelong learning for workers of all ages, both inside and outside the workplace, and develop systems for skills validation and certification;
- help older workers to remain active longer and prepare for retirement through employee-driven flexible working conditions allowing them to reduce their working time during the transition between work and retirement;

63. Underlines the need for the Commission to monitor developments in homelessness and housing exclusion, in addition to the evolution of house prices in the Member States; calls for urgent action to address rising levels of homelessness and housing exclusion in many Member States; is concerned at the potential social consequences of the high volume of non-performing loans on banks' balance sheets, and especially at the Commission's statement that sale to non-bank specialised institutions should be encouraged, which could lead to waves of evictions; encourages Member States, the Commission and the EIB to make use of EFSI for social infrastructure, including implementation of the right to adequate and affordable housing for all;

64. Notes with concern that in some Member States wages are insufficient to ensure a decent life, thus transforming workers into 'working poor' and discouraging the unemployed from returning to the labour market; in this regard, supports boosting collective bargaining;

65. Encourages the Member States to implement the necessary measures for the social inclusion of refugees, as well as of people of ethnic minority or immigrant origin;

Wednesday 15 February 2017

66. Welcomes the fact that in the Annual Growth Survey 2017 emphasis is placed on the need to promote tax and benefit reforms aimed at improving work incentives and making work pay, as tax systems can also contribute to combating income inequalities and poverty, as well as increasing competitiveness at a global level; calls on the Member States to gradually shift taxes from labour to other sources;
67. Calls for reforms in health and long-term care systems to focus on the development of health prevention and promotion, the maintenance of quality universally accessible healthcare services, and the reduction of inequalities in access to healthcare services;
68. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to work together on removing the obstacles to labour mobility, ensuring that EU mobile workers are treated equally with non-mobile workers;
69. Calls on the Member States to increase the coverage, efficiency and effectiveness of active and sustainable labour market policies, in close cooperation with social partners; welcomes the call made in the AGS 2017 for more efforts to develop measures aimed at supporting labour market inclusion for disadvantaged groups, in particular persons with disabilities, in view of the long-term positive economic and social impact;
70. Calls on the Member States to set ambitious social standards based on their own CSRs, in line with their national competence and financial and fiscal situation, especially by introducing adequate minimum income schemes across the whole lifespan where such schemes do not exist, and by closing the gaps in adequate minimum income schemes created by insufficient coverage or non-take-up;
71. Welcomes the Commission's initiative as regards launching consultations on the setting- up of a European pillar of social rights; considers that this initiative should be able to stimulate the development of more flexible skills and competences, lifelong learning actions and active support for quality employment;
72. Reiterates the request made to the Commission in the latest opinion prepared by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs to consider the introduction of a procedure for social imbalances in the design of CSRs, in order to avoid a race to the bottom, in terms of standards based on the effective use of social and employment indicators in the framework of macroeconomic surveillance;
73. Calls on Member States to place greater emphasis on breaking the poverty cycle and promoting equality; calls on the Commission to make stronger recommendations to Member States regarding social inclusion and protection, also looking beyond the labour force, and in particular on investing in children;
74. Welcomes the involvement in the European Semester process of the social partners, the national parliaments and other relevant stakeholders from civil society; reiterates that social dialogue and dialogue with civil society are key to achieving sustained change for the benefit of all, and are essential for enhancing the effectiveness and adequacy of European and national policies, and must therefore be pursued in all phases of the Semester; highlights the need to make involvement more effective by ensuring useful timing, access to documents, and dialogue with interlocutors at the appropriate level;
75. Recalls the various requests for an agenda in which the position of Parliament is strengthened and taken into account before the Council takes a decision; calls, furthermore, for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs to be placed on an equal footing, considering their specific competences, with the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs whenever Parliament is called to give its opinion at the various stages of the European Semester;
76. Considers that a EU social convention should be convened in which representatives of the social partners, the national governments and parliaments and the EU institutions discuss the future and structure of the European social model, with public participation;
77. Calls once more for the role of the EPSCO Council in the European Semester to be strengthened;
78. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
-