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*Plenary sitting*

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**B8-1093/2015**

23.10.2015

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B8-1102/2015

pursuant to Rule 128(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on a Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed  
into the labour market  
(2015/2820(RSP))

**Thomas Händel**

on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

**European Parliament resolution on a Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (2015/2820(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission proposal of 17 September 2015 for a Council recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (COM(2015)0462),
  - having regard to the Commission communication of 28 November 2014 on the Annual Growth Survey 2015 (COM(2014)0902),
  - 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>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council conclusions of 9 March 2015 entitled ‘The 2015 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report: Political guidance on employment and social policies’<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its position of 8 July 2015 on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to European Court of Auditors Special Report No 3/2015, entitled ‘EU Youth Guarantee: first steps taken but implementation risks ahead’,
  - having regard to the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) report entitled ‘Integrated support for the long-term unemployed: A study of national policies – 2015’,
  - having regard to the question to the Council on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (O-000121/2015 – B8-1102/2015),
  - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
  - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, as a result of the economic crisis and its consequences, long-term unemployment has doubled since 2007 and accounts for half of total unemployment, or more than 12 million people, representing 5 % of the EU’s active population; whereas over 60 % of the long-term unemployed had been out of work for at least two consecutive years in 2014;

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0068.

<sup>2</sup> Council document 6147/15.

<sup>3</sup> P8\_TA(2015)0261.

- B. whereas the long-term unemployment rate differs markedly across the Member States, ranging from 1.5 % in Austria to 19.5 % in Greece; whereas the Member States with the highest rates of long-term unemployment are Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Croatia, Spain and Greece; whereas the economic recovery must gain momentum, as it is currently not providing enough impetus to significantly reduce high rates of structural unemployment;
- C. whereas the non-registration of a large proportion of the long-term unemployed and methodological flaws relating to data collection mean that official statistics underestimate the situation;
- D. whereas long-term unemployment often leads to poverty, inequalities and social exclusion, and disproportionately affects vulnerable people who are in a disadvantaged position on the labour market;
- E. whereas long-term unemployment progressively distances people from the labour market owing to an erosion of skills and professional networks and a loss of work rhythm, and can lead to a spiral of disengagement from society, domestic tensions and feelings of alienation; whereas every year one in five of the long-term unemployed become discouraged and fall into inactivity as a result of unsuccessful job search efforts;
- F. whereas the consequences of long-term unemployment are especially grave in jobless households, often leading to low educational attainment, detachment from the ‘world of work’, increased mental and health problems, social exclusion and, in the worst cases, the passing-on of poverty from one generation to the next;
- G. whereas spells of long-term unemployment often have negative long-term consequences for employment prospects, career progress, earnings profiles and pensions (‘scarring effects’);
- H. whereas long-term unemployment has huge societal costs owing to a waste of skills and increased social expenditure, in addition to the non-monetary costs arising from a large number of people losing self-confidence and not attaining their personal potential, and from a loss of social cohesion;
- I. whereas continued high levels of long-term unemployment are jeopardising efforts to attain the Europe 2020 headline targets of having 75 % of 20- to 64-year-olds in employment and at least 20 million fewer people in, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion;
- J. whereas skills maintenance in the event of job loss, together with education, training and reskilling that anticipate future skills needs, is an important element in avoiding and redressing long-term unemployment;
- K. whereas this recommendation bears similarity to the Youth Guarantee; whereas lessons should be learned from initial experiences with the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;
- 1. Welcomes the Commission’s initiative of proposing a Council recommendation on the

integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market; stresses that an earlier release of the proposal, and agreement in the Council, could have prevented part of the long-term unemployment observed today; expresses concern that a Council recommendation may not be sufficient to redress swiftly the situation of the long-term unemployed, and encourages the Member States to deliver;

2. Supports the three main components of the proposal: (i) ambitiously stepping up the registration of the long-term unemployed through an employment service aiming at full coverage; (ii) assessing the individual potential, needs and job preferences of the long-term unemployed before they reach 18 months of unemployment; and (iii) offering a tailor-made, balanced and comprehensible 'job integration agreement' between the long-term unemployed and the services involved, at the latest by the time the person concerned reaches 18 months of unemployment; stresses, however, that an individual assessment should take place before the person reaches 12 months of unemployment, so as to ensure that the job integration agreement can be put in place before they reach 18 months of unemployment; insists that, where applicable, the three-step approach should not fall short in integrating non-state actors, such as social NGOs that work with the long-term unemployed, into the process as a whole;
3. Stresses the need to reach out to all the long-term unemployed, including those who are unregistered, and not only to those who have been unemployed for 18 months or more; considers it paramount that Member State policies targeted at short-term unemployment (< 12 months) and youth unemployment (including the Youth Guarantee) fit in seamlessly with policies aimed at tackling long-term unemployment;
4. Endorses the call for close cooperation between, and effective coordination of, all parties involved in the reintegration of the long-term unemployed (including civil society organisations, where applicable) and for the establishment of one-stop-shops where the unemployed person has one professional case manager (a 'single point of contact'), with this reintegration effort not being disrupted in the event of a benefit regime change for the unemployed person;
5. Underlines the need for an individual approach to assessing the abilities and needs of the long-term unemployed as regards their reintegration into the labour market – an approach which should respect their existing rights and take into account their wider personal situation and any related needs; stresses the need for sufficient and highly qualified staff capable of offering an individual approach to the long-term unemployed, who form a heterogeneous group;
6. Notes the recommendation to introduce a written and comprehensible 'job integration agreement' that spells out the respective rights and responsibilities of both the unemployed person and the authorities as represented by the case manager, and thereby sets clear expectations for all parties involved, is fair to the unemployed person and respects his or her personal qualifications and rights as a worker; urges that this agreement be updated regularly;
7. Considers it crucial that any programmes to reintegrate the long-term unemployed be geared to the needs of the labour market and be formulated in close cooperation with the social partners; calls on the Member States to motivate employers, including in a spirit of corporate social responsibility, to engage actively in offering job openings for the

long-term unemployed, and, where needed, to appoint mentors to facilitate the smooth reintegration of the long-term unemployed on the work floor; calls for Member States' employment services to assist SMEs in facilitating such mentoring; recalls that the long-term unemployed need not only jobs but also comprehensive counselling and preparation for successful re-entry into the labour market;

8. Calls on the Member States to match EU funding – in particular through the European Social Fund – of their national policies to tackle long-term unemployment with adequate national funding; stresses that the budgetary constraints faced by some Member States (especially those under Economic Adjustment Programmes) must not prevent the swift implementation of the recommendation; calls on the Commission to explore options for quick access to EU funding and to mobilise additional resources where possible, as was done in the case of the Youth Employment Initiative; stresses the need, in a number of Member States, to allocate adequate funding to strengthening the administrative capacity of employment services;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to assess how to support specific in-work training programmes, as well as business development and investment plans that have created sustainable, quality jobs for the long-term unemployed;
10. Emphasises that, for the effective implementation of the recommendation, close cooperation between the Commission and the Member States, and at national level between the (sectoral) social partners, civil society organisations representing the unemployed, local and regional authorities, public and private employment services, social and health care providers, and local and regional education and training institutes, is paramount, as is the active involvement of employers in order to better understand business requirements and needs;
11. Recalls its position on the Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, which insists on specific measures to protect the long-term unemployed from social exclusion and to reintegrate them into the labour market, with due respect for the Treaties;
12. Calls on the Member States to take into account regional differences, including differences between urban and rural areas, when formulating their national approach to tackling long-term unemployment;
13. Welcomes the Commission's suggestion of establishing, through the European Semester and the Employment Committee, multilateral surveillance of the implementation of the recommendation; insists that this surveillance must be thorough and, if necessary, be followed up by instructions in the Member States' country-specific recommendations; calls on the Commission to facilitate mutual learning processes that bring together those Member States with high rates of long-term unemployment and those that have been successful in quickly reintegrating the (long-term) unemployed into their labour markets;
14. Calls on the ministers for employment and social affairs to consider Parliament's input before reaching an agreement on the recommendation;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.