

Implementation of the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

European Parliament resolution of 17 February 2011 on implementation of the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its position of 8 September 2010 on the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States: Part II of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines¹,
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 12 January 2011 on the Annual Growth Survey: advancing the EU's comprehensive response to the crisis (COM(2011)0011), and the Draft Joint Employment Report annexed thereto,
 - having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States of 12 January 2011 (COM(2011)0006),
 - having regard to Council Decision 2010/707/EU of 21 October 2010 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States²,
 - having regard to Article 148 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, following the adoption of the Annual Growth Survey, the Commission proposed that the employment policies guidelines adopted in 2010 should be retained for 2011,
- B. whereas the current economic crisis continues to pose challenges in the form of increasing unemployment and social exclusion,
- C. whereas there is a strong interrelationship between economic recovery and growth, employment, the fight against poverty and social inclusion,
- D. whereas the European Employment Strategy and the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States are among the main instruments designed to steer EU and Member State policies towards efforts to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives and targets,
- E. whereas there is an urgent need to step up efforts at all levels, with the involvement of social partners and other stakeholders, to ensure that the employment guidelines are properly implemented, with a view to increasing labour market participation, developing a skilled workforce, and improving the quality and performance of education and training systems,

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0309.

² OJ L 308, 24.11.2010, p. 46.

Strengthen governance and raise ambitions in pursuing the Europe 2020 goals

1. Considers that, in the light of the Commission's proposal to retain the employment policy guidelines adopted in 2010 for 2011, the recommendations on the National Reform Programmes have become the main macroeconomic surveillance and orientation tool; deplores the failure to involve Parliament in this process and the lack of debate concerning it;
2. Considers that the major challenges faced by the EU and the Member States with regard to employment and unemployment should also be duly reflected in the future process on macroeconomic imbalances, within the policy framework of the European employment guidelines;
3. Considers that the Annual Growth Survey and the framework provided by the European Semester are crucial tools for the enhanced coordination of economic policies and, therefore, an important part of the Union's response to the crisis; notes, however, that these tools should be employed in a manner consistent with the need for democratic processes and support, and not serve to replace or diminish the importance of the existing tools provided for under the Treaty, in particular the broad economic policy guidelines and the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, with which Parliament must be closely involved and, on the latter, consulted; calls for these tools to be integrated into the framework of the European Semester and for particular attention to be paid to ensuring that their importance does not diminish, with a view to delivering on the Commission and Council's stated objective of increasing ownership and democratic accountability;
4. Calls on the Council and the Commission, when providing policy advice to Member States, to respect the principles of subsidiarity and social dialogue in the field of wages and pensions as well and, in keeping with Article 153(5) TFEU, to respect the competences of the Member States and social partners, in accordance with national practices, in these areas;
5. Urges the European Council, the Council and the Commission to ensure that the Europe 2020 strategy and the strengthened European economic governance system are effective and democratically legitimate; emphasises that this makes the genuine and timely involvement of Parliament throughout the surveillance and policy coordination procedures essential; deplores the lack of a reference to Parliament's role in the process in the timeline proposed in the Annual Growth Survey;
6. Calls on the Member States to involve more closely and regularly consult the national parliaments, the social partners, regional and local authorities and civil society; considers that the current lack of information on the consultation procedures in the National Reform Programmes should be addressed;
7. Notes the preliminary indication of the Member States' national employment targets; expresses deep concern at the lack of ambition in this regard, and in particular at the fact that in the best-case scenario the estimated collective outcome would fall short, by more than 2 percentage points, of the EU headline target and the commitment to reach an employment rate of 75% by 2020;
8. Calls on the Member States to reconsider their national employment targets, so that the EU headline target can be met, and to take these targets as seriously as their fiscal consolidation ones;

9. Calls, further, on the Member States to pay special attention to, and set national targets for, specific sub-groups, such as young people, women, people with disabilities and older workers;
10. Calls on those Member States which have not yet done so to set their national targets on social inclusion and the fight against poverty and to address the increasing problem of the working poor; invites the Member States, when doing so, to ensure that the ambitious target agreed by the European Council is met and that interaction between the targets, especially those on employment and education and training and on social inclusion and poverty, is duly taken into account;

Ensure that the employment guidelines are implemented

11. Notes that weak economic growth prospects limit the possibilities for job creation and employment;
12. Calls on the European Council not to make employment issues secondary concerns when considering the Commission's recommendation in the Annual Growth Survey to make rigorous fiscal consolidation the first priority for the 2011/2012 period;
13. Emphasises the urgent need for the Member States to step up their efforts to deliver in all priority areas, including increasing employment levels and reducing unemployment, exploiting the job potential of a new low-carbon economy, developing a skilled workforce, promoting job quality and lifelong learning, and facilitating the work-life balance; considers that these efforts should be reflected in the final National Reform Programmes;
14. Emphasises, in this context, the importance of the Structural Funds, and in particular the European Social Fund, in counteracting the effects of the crisis on employment; considers that the use of these Funds should be geared to supporting the groups with most severe difficulties in entering or remaining on the labour market;
15. Considers also that, in addition to the implementation of more effective labour market measures, closer interaction between employment, social and other policy areas, in particular macroeconomic, R&D and innovation, education and training policies, is essential if the Europe 2020 goals are to be met;

Step up action to deliver on more and better jobs

16. Calls on the Member States, in their National Reform Programmes, to give the highest priority to increasing labour market participation, tackling unemployment and preventing long-term exclusion from the labour market;
17. Considers that much more emphasis must be given to job quality and decent work and to supply side-oriented economic policies in an effort to boost demand on the labour market;
18. Considers, in that connection, that efforts are needed to make better use of the potential of younger people, including early school leavers, women, the elderly, disadvantaged and disabled people, migrants and members of ethnic minorities, including the Roma; calls on the Member States to adapt their labour markets to the needs and skills of these groups at every stage of their lives;

19. Stresses the importance of policies facilitating the transition of young people from school to work; stresses that the risk that early school leavers will face poverty is predictably high; emphasises that any flexible or temporary forms of work used in this context should incorporate the right to training and access to social security and should help people make the transition into more secure employment;
20. Calls on the Member States to continue developing the policies needed to bring more women on to and keep them on the labour market, including by improving the provision of affordable and high-quality care facilities and flexible working arrangements to meet the needs of family carers;
21. Emphasises the importance of targeted activation and skills policies in supporting those with low or no qualifications who have been the hardest hit by the crisis and face the highest risk of long-term unemployment;
22. Urges the Member States to attach due importance to the provision of high-quality education and training and to lifelong learning and the recognition of qualifications;
23. Calls on the Member States to invest more in facilitating occupational and geographical mobility, enhancing the tools needed to analyse labour markets needs and reforming the education and training systems which can help to overcome skills mismatches;
24. Emphasises the importance of employment policies that contribute to job creation, for example through support for SMEs and self-employment and the promotion of entrepreneurship;

Act decisively to deliver in fighting poverty and social exclusion

25. Considers it essential that Member States take action now to deliver on the commitments made to increase employment levels, improve people's skills, create job opportunities, reduce poverty and enhance social inclusion;
26. Emphasises that social protection systems have played an acknowledged role in stabilising the economy and cushioning the social impact of the crisis; calls, therefore, on the Member States, in particular when fiscal consolidation is required, to make sure that social protection systems continue to provide adequate support and play their part in safeguarding and improving skills and employability, so that human capital can be preserved and enhanced and full advantage taken of the recovery;
27. Emphasises that more effective exchanges of best practice and experience between Member States in the area of the fight against social exclusion and poverty reduction are vital and would help to facilitate the achievement of the Europe 2020 poverty reduction targets;

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28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.