



24.6.2010

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

**Subject: Petition 0116/2010 by Alexandros Chantzaras (Greek) bearing one other signature on the Greek government's winding up of training programmes in Greece**

### 1. Summary of petition

The petitioner refers to the Greek government's decision to phase out the training programs which the OAED (Greek Manpower Employment Organisation) has held over the past fifteen years. The aim of these training programs is to give young people the opportunity to be incorporated into the labour market and gain the work experience necessary for their future careers. The petitioner points out that thousands of young people who have performed their services on an equal footing with other workers, are now confronted with unemployment instead of obtaining a permanent job, and that, as a result of their trainee status, do not enjoy full social security rights. The petitioner therefore calls on the European Parliament to take the matter up.

### 2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 3 May 2010. Information requested from Commission under Rule 202(6).

### 3. Commission reply, received on 24 June 2010.

Council Directive 1999/70/EC of 28 June 1999 concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP requires Member States to establish a framework to prevent abuse arising from the use of successive fixed-term employment contracts or relationships.

Greece has exercised the option provided for in Clause 2(2) of the annex to this Directive and

has excluded from its transposing legislation employment contracts or relationships concluded as part of a special programme of training, integration and vocational retraining supported by the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED).

Following parliamentary question E-5452/2009, the Commission has written to the national authorities in Greece for information and clarification concerning the operation of such training schemes and stages. Up until now, the Commission has not received the requested information.

The Commission would like to note that, in another exchange of letters with the Greek Ministry of Labour, concerning the issue of apprenticeship schemes in the Greek public sector, the Commission had reiterated its position that the *acquisition of work experience can in some cases help ease the transition from education to working life*, but at the same time, expressed the opinion that *careful planning, strict selection criteria and close monitoring of the programs is necessary* in order to ensure that the programs support the employment status of the participants and benefit those in need.

It is also noted that activities for work experience "(stage)" of new entrants or re-entrants in the labour market, both in the public and private sectors, have in the past been co-financed by the European Social Fund (hereafter 'ESF'). In the programming period 2007-2013, 'stage' programmes in the public sector have been excluded from co-financing by the ESF and only work-experience programmes *in the private sector* are foreseen.

Throughout 2009, 'stage' programmes implemented in the public sector have been financed exclusively by the Greek budget. In 2010, the Greek authorities announced the ending of all 'stage' programmes in the public and wider public sector, in the framework of measures adopted within the updated 'Stability and Growth Programme' of the Hellenic Republic.

The European Social Fund in Greece has as an objective the promotion of employment and employability of vulnerable groups of the population. The community allocation to Greece, to be used to this end, amounts to almost € 4,4 billion in the programming period 2007-2013 (shared out between four operational programmes, including the operational program 'Human Resources Development' which specifically targets the promotion of youth employment and benefits from an ESF allocation of €2,26 million)

## Conclusion

The decision as to which employment programs the Greek authorities will continue to support is primarily a national question. Nevertheless, the European Union, in particular by means of the European Social Fund, is ready to support youth employment in Greece via a number of other measures, included in the operational programmes for the period 2007-2013.