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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

7.3.2006

## OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Regional Development

on Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs: Community strategic guidelines, 2007-2013  
(COM(2005)0299 - 0000/0000(INI))

Draftswoman: Ana Mato Adrover

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that widening the base of economic activity, raising employment levels and reducing unemployment are vital to sustain economic growth, promote socially inclusive societies and combat poverty.
2. Considers that, given the recent and forthcoming EU enlargements, an adequate level of funding is more necessary than ever in order to ensure the necessary degree of economic and social cohesion to enhance real convergence. Regrets that the European Council has failed to make available sufficient resources to pursue cohesion policy; points out that, although their problems are the same as in previous funding periods, there are still some European regions that will not be covered by the convergence objective; urges the Member States to ensure that all programmes are effectively implemented.
3. Is convinced that cohesion policy must be an inclusive policy counteracting social exclusion and discrimination on the labour market; to this end, it must promote participation in all areas of society, particularly in economic activity by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups (women, young people, early school leavers, the long-term unemployed, the elderly, the handicapped, members of minorities and immigrants) in a targeted manner. Believes that cohesion policies and instruments, with the contribution of local and regional authorities' initiatives, should give particular attention to areas with underdeveloped infrastructure and high unemployment or with other specificities prejudicial to economic development and to the above-mentioned groups and should be used to enhance their employability, social integration and active citizenship; accompanying and supporting measures to prevent social exclusion in general must also be incorporated into support for the above-mentioned groups, in order to increase their employability.
4. Given the experience of the Equal programme, training and validation of competences acquired abroad, personalised guidance and language training should be supported in order to facilitate integration into society of all migrants, including asylum seekers.
5. Believes it necessary in particular for cohesion policies to take into account the problem of gender-based violence, with these policies being used to promote the employability of victims of ill-treatment.
6. Believes that cohesion mechanisms should promote the social economy and include adequate social services which, as well as being a source of employment, help to achieve a balance between personal and family life and work, which is specially beneficial to promote employment for women, and therefore helps to overcome social exclusion by accompanying support measures; calls on the Member States to include in their strategic reference frameworks elements which promote flexibility combined with security for the workers, and reduce labour market segmentation and occupational segregation, having due regard to the role of the social partners.

7. Calls on the Commission to involve more actively Member States representatives, regions, local authorities and social partners in the Cohesion Policy; considers that the social partners are an essential pillar of the partnership for growth and employment; and therefore also considers essential that trans-European social partner networks should be strengthened.
8. Worries about the fact that the ageing population will provoke a decline in the employment in the European Union. Welcomes the Commission proposal to invest more in health promotion and disease prevention, in order to ensure higher employability, longer working lives, higher productivity and lower healthcare and social costs.
9. Urges the Commission to make provision for ESF funds to be used to improve general working conditions and particularly to promote health and safety and reduce occupational accidents.
10. Recognizes the importance of the development and enhancement of human capital and welcomes the emphasis placed by the Commission on active policies, particularly in the field of lifelong learning and training particularly for women and older workers in order to achieve the goal of raising their employment rates set by the Lisbon strategy; urges Member States to include in their strategic reference frameworks these elements and measures which help to improve the educational and training systems, ensuring an adequate supply and completion of high-quality education and easing the transition from education to work, to encourage a spirit of enterprise and the knowledge economy through research and innovation.
11. Points in this connection to the important role played in the European economy by micro-enterprises, as provided for in the European Charter for Small Enterprises, and the self-employed. Considers it necessary, therefore, to support programmes to promote the development of these sectors, enhance their research, development, and innovation capacities, foster the development of their human resources, and afford them easier access to funding. Believes that all this will serve to boost competitiveness, growth, and job creation, thus helping to attain the Lisbon objectives.
12. Calls on the Member States, in order to boost competitiveness and promote employment, particularly in the poorest and remotest regions, to include measures in their strategic reference frameworks so as to strengthen economic activities of SMEs by improving the infrastructure and services networks and the availability of ICT, providing appropriate assistance and access to financing for newly-established undertakings, speeding up the removal of bureaucratic obstacles and rewarding entrepreneurial initiative while ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment.
13. Calls on the Member States through national and regional development programmes to promote a life-cycle approach to work, ensure inclusive labour markets, enhance work attractiveness, and make work pay for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people, and the inactive.
14. Takes the view that cohesion policy should create an environment conducive to the mobility of workers, by ensuring the availability of support social facilities and ensuring non discriminatory administrative procedures for both workers and their families.

15. Calls on the Member States to integrate into national and regional development programmes measures which will attract and retain people in employment and modernise social protection systems, improve adaptability of workers and enterprises and the flexibility of the labour market.
16. Calls on Member States to foresee in their strategic reference frameworks support mechanisms as to assist enterprises in exchanging best practices and evaluating the possibilities of cooperation with public research foundations and European information centres, with a view to promoting innovative products and applications.
17. Urges the Commission to give special importance to programmes intended to promote the skills needed in a knowledge-based society - ICT and entrepreneurship - given their important social, territorial and cultural impact.
18. Calls for the carrying out of studies, taking into account, for example, former positive experiences, to identify in advance possible depopulation in areas with low economic performance, especially rural areas, and their needs and special problems in order to put into place preventive measures to avoid over-concentration in highly industrialised regions and to achieve a more balanced spread of economic activities across all regions of the EU, including the creation of new and better jobs and an easier access to social services for all citizens.
19. Stresses the importance of ESF participation in integrated support for rural areas, and considers that support for rural areas must be grounded in a comprehensive programming process, in the light of the positive experiences of the Leader programme involving those working in rural areas; stresses that priority must be given to the creation of synergies from all the Funds for rural areas, and that decentralised funding concepts such as the global grant are therefore particularly well suited to this purpose.
20. Considers that in some Member States public and private sector investment partnerships show to be effective and calls on the Member States to encourage them.
21. Considers that the EU should encourage the restructuring of companies in the Member States in order to promote and maintain employment, social welfare and competitiveness in newly liberalised markets and mitigate social consequences of Globalisation.

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs: Community strategic guidelines, 2007-2013
<b>Procedure number</b>	0000/0000(INI)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	REGI
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	EMPL ---
<b>Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary</b>	no
<b>Drafts(wo)man</b> Date appointed	Ana Mato Adrover 5.10.2005
<b>Previous drafts(wo)man</b>	---
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	26.01.2006      21.02.2006
<b>Date adopted</b>	22.02.2006
<b>Result of final vote</b>	for:                34 against:          3 abstentions:     0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Jan Andersson, Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, Jean-Luc Bennahmias, Emine Bozkurt, Iles Braghetto, Philip Bushill-Matthews, Milan Cabrnich, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Luigi Cocilovo, Jean Louis Cottigny, Proinsias De Rossa, Harald Ettl, Richard Falbr, Ilda Figueiredo, Joel Hasse Ferreira, Roger Helmer, Stephen Hughes, Karin Jöns, Ona Juknevičienė, Sepp Kusstatscher, Raymond Langendries, Bernard Lehideux, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Ana Mato Adrover, Maria Matsouka, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Csaba Öry, Siiri Oviir, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Pier Antonio Panzeri, José Albino Silva Peneda, Jean Spautz, Gabriele Zimmer
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Elspeth Attwooll, Edit Bauer, Mihael Brejc, Elisabeth Schroedter
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	---
<b>Comments (available in one language only)</b>	...