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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on statements by the Council and Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Jan Andersson

on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on implementation of the guidelines for the employment policies of the
Member States 2008-2010

B6-0133

European Parliament resolution on implementation of the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States 2008-2010

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its legislative resolution of 20 May 2008 on Employment Guidelines 2008-2010 ,
 - having regard to the Commission's Communication of 26 November 2008 on A European Economic Recovery Plan (COM(2008)0800),
 - having regard to the Council Decision of 15 July 2008 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States ,
 - having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States of 28 January 2009 (COM(2008)0869),
 - having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 11 and 12 December 2008, which set out the EU framework of action to avoid recession and sustain economic activity and employment,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU ,
 - having regard to Rule 103 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas there is a strong interrelationship between economic growth, employment, the fight against poverty and social inclusion,
- B. whereas the current economic crisis presents unprecedented challenges of increasing unemployment and social exclusion, and whereas the EU's economic situation is forecast to deteriorate even further, generating decreased or even negative employment growth and increased unemployment in the EU for 2009,
- C. whereas the European Employment Strategy and the Employment Guidelines are the main instruments within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy aimed at addressing labour market challenges,
- D. whereas the European Union and the Member States have a shared responsibility for addressing the challenges, opportunities and uncertainties of citizens regarding globalisation,
- E. whereas the global financial and economic crisis requires the EU to respond in a decisive and coordinated way in order to prevent job losses, support adequate income of citizens and avoid recession, and to turn the present economic and employment challenges into opportunities,

- F. whereas it is therefore urgent to step up efforts at all levels of governance, with the involvement of social partners and other relevant actors, in investing in people and modernising European labour markets, in particular by applying flexicurity approaches,

General: economic recovery and employment policy guidance

1. Welcomes the Commission's Communication on A European Economic Recovery Plan and its emphasis on the connection between short-term fiscal stimulus and the long-term Lisbon Strategy and the Integrated Guidelines; underlines in this respect the importance of ensuring that any short-term measures taken by Member States to recover the economy contribute towards achieving the commonly agreed objectives;
2. Notes as a central dilemma in the current crisis that European economic policy instruments are not yet developed enough to successfully meet the challenges ahead; requires, therefore, a review and an update of the essential policy tools, in particular the Integrated Guidelines, the Stability and Growth Pact, as well as the Sustainable Development Strategy, in order to integrate them under the umbrella of a New Deal for Smart Growth in the European Union;
3. Stresses the necessity to refocus the Integrated Guidelines against the background of the economic downturn and urges the Council to agree on short-term measures to safeguard the 2008 employment rate and to invest in the fight against climate change, and to call on the Member States and the social partners, in accordance with national practice, to ensure sufficient incomes with special regard to the most vulnerable groups of society; expects the Commission to launch initiatives and present proposals with respect to these goals in time for the forthcoming Spring European Council;
4. Recalls that education, qualification and training are the best employment policy measures, and that childcare infrastructure is to be regarded as one of the preconditions for increasing participation, particularly by women in the labour market; encourages the Member States to mainstream these common principles in consultation with the social partners regarding their national reform programmes;

Employment Guidelines 2008-2010: urgent need for a rigorous implementation

5. Reiterates the importance of using the flexicurity concept in guideline 20 to create a bridge between employments, and emphasises that this demands a high level of protection in the social security schemes as well as active labour market policies;
6. Welcomes in this regard the Commission's statement that it is essential to reinforce activation schemes, in particular for the low-skilled; enhance job subsidies and short training courses for vulnerable groups and those most at risk of long-term unemployment; provide (re)training and new skills needed in less badly affected sectors; ensure adequate social protection that provides income security, as well as make a crucial commitment to the social dialogue and the involvement of the social partners;
7. Underlines the importance of targeted actions for vulnerable groups in times of high unemployment, and in particular of targeted actions for groups of long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and immigrant groups;

8. Believes that, in view of the severity of the economic crisis, the Commission must be prepared to take exceptional measures, including a widening of access to the Globalisation Adjustment Fund, which must be able to support workers in a wider range of situations, including temporary workers who have lost their jobs, and a temporary opening of the European Social Fund to support employment preservation measures via training schemes;
9. Believes that the economic crisis requires the strengthening of EU measures to deal with restructuring, in particular the strengthening of information and consultation rights;
10. Believes that the next reform of the EU Structural Funds should focus their objectives more closely on the creation of sustainable, high-quality employment;
11. Stresses, moreover, the importance of education not only to increase workers' employability but also to improve their mobility, which is important for the functioning of the internal market; emphasises, therefore, the importance of validation of formally and non-formally obtained skills;
12. Underlines the importance of guideline 23 and substantial investments in lifelong learning in order to lower the unemployment rate as well as achieve the goal of creating better jobs in Europe; stresses in this context the need for all citizens to have equal access to, and opportunity to take part in, lifelong learning programmes while special attention is paid to vulnerable groups; stresses that the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) should be used to finance such actions immediately;
13. Regrets the fact that those with the lowest levels of initial education, older people, people in rural areas, and the disabled are the least likely to participate in education, training and lifelong learning in all countries;
14. Stresses that improving the delivery of adult learning is essential to raise participation, and that measures to promote effective delivery include availability of learning sites and childcare facilities locally; open and distance learning services for those in remote areas; information and guidance; tailored programmes and flexible teaching arrangements;
15. Recalls the fact that the unemployment rates among young people in Europe are still too high; recalls also that experience from earlier economic crisis shows that young adults who leave their education and go into unemployment have substantially weakened ability to enter the labour market; stresses, therefore, the importance of all Member States fulfilling the objective of guideline 18, that every young person having left school be offered, within 4 months, a job, apprenticeship, additional training or other employability measure;
16. Calls for decisive action to combat the problem of low participation of women in the labour market; recalls that women's employment rates are generally lower, and that it is more common for women than for men to have a part-time job; underlines, therefore, the importance of a policy in which men and women take equal responsibility; in order to achieve this, calls on Member States to urgently fulfil their obligations according to the Barcelona targets;

17. Notes with concern that part-time employment, in which the majority of workers are women, is proving to be particularly susceptible to the economic crisis;
18. Considers that in times of high unemployment, there is an obvious risk that regional and social cohesion will suffer, and therefore underlines the importance of guideline 17 concerning social and territorial cohesion being implemented to prevent deficiencies in this area;
19. Emphasizes the importance, especially in the economic crisis, of investments in the welfare sector; considers this to be a sector that is performing a wide range of important community services, as well as employing a large proportion of the population; stresses that the welfare sector therefore needs to be maintained in order to prevent a decline in quality of community services and a rise in unemployment rates;
20. Notes with regret that it is possible that during this time of economic crises there may be some pressure on wages in some companies as a voluntary alternative to selective redundancies; emphasises, however, the importance of not letting the crisis put downward pressure on wages in general; considers it important that:
 - each Member State, in accordance with national tradition and practices, establish a policy of taking competition on the basis of poverty wages out of the market,
 - collectively bargained agreements have a wide coverage,
 - the hierarchy of collective agreements be respected,
 - wages and working conditions, as laid out in collective agreements and/or labour law, be respected and implemented in practice;

Need for coordinated action in response to the economic crisis

21. Underlines the importance of proactive and coordinated investments across Member States, including in productive infrastructure, education and climate change, to achieve the goal of raising employment levels, contribute to the creation of quality jobs and ensure social cohesion; emphasises in this context the importance of EU support to the development of modern and sustainable industry;
22. Underlines the importance of not only creating additional jobs but also of retaining and improving the quality of jobs available today;
23. Calls on Member States to continue promoting ownership and improving the involvement of all actors concerned, including social partners and other stakeholders, where appropriate, in order to implement the Employment Guidelines effectively;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee.