



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

2013/2008(INI)

27.11.2013

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Regional Development

on the European Commission's 7th and 8th progress reports on the EU Cohesion Policy and the Strategic Report 2013 on programme implementation 2007-2013
(2013/2008(INI))

Rapporteur: **Ádám Kósa**

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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. Welcomes the seventh and eighth progress reports and calls on the Commission to examine, in the sixth Cohesion Report in 2014, the long-term impact of the steadily decreasing cohesion between Europe's countries and regions as a result of the economic crisis and the measures which must be taken to reduce the gap, in particular cohesion between programme and non-programme countries;
2. Stresses that GDP should remain one of the main criteria for determining eligibility for regional policy assistance, but that this must be complemented by other indicators for identification of the most vulnerable regions; emphasises the fact that GDP alone does not have the capacity to provide a comprehensive picture of regional development and social cohesion as it fails to take account of relevant social factors such as income disparities and unemployment;
3. Encourages the Commission to support specific measures for the creation of more and sustainable jobs, for investment in regional and local development education, for the encouragement of local entrepreneurship and the creation of new financial instruments for all kinds of businesses and especially of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in order to combat increasing levels of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion;
4. Acknowledges that a large proportion of European Social Fund (ESF) expenditure is allocated with a view to promoting more and better jobs, supporting integration and participation of disadvantaged groups, including disabled people, and developing an inclusive society that is accessible to all; stresses, however, that at times of crisis, more emphasis should be placed on the ESF being efficiently targeted to combat local and regional inequalities and social exclusion, to provide access to employment for the most vulnerable groups and young people in particular, and to assist women's re-integration into the labour market by reducing gender-based segregation;
5. Notes that the high proportion of early school-leavers in some regions is significantly above the target of 10 % and that early school-leavers must receive an offer of education, training or work that meets their needs; refers, in this context, to the importance of the Youth Guarantee for early school-leavers; stresses that in order to reduce the number of early school-leavers it is important that the education system is inclusive, offering equal chances to all young people; stresses that a solution must therefore be found to the problem of integrating poorly-trained young people into the labour market, by providing barrier-free, accessible and quality vocational and in-work training to help them acquire skills, taking into account the fact that a lack of qualifications can increase the risk of unemployment, which in turn increases the poverty risk and involves a multitude of social challenges linked to exclusion, alienation and failed efforts to build an independent life; points out that, to this end, the ESF's contribution is crucial in helping more young people to stay at school and acquire the appropriate qualifications needed for a job and career and in ensuring wider access to high-quality education with special projects for children from

disadvantaged groups and minorities, including disabled people; calls on Member States to encourage appropriate vocational and on-the-job training for those who will benefit from it;

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to adopt growth-friendly policies, including the prioritisation of spending in the areas of education, life-long learning, research and innovation, because austerity measures alone are not sufficient to combat the current economic crisis;
7. Stresses that the employment situation of young people is highly dependent on the overall economic situation and that therefore it is very important to support, guide and monitor young people in their move from education to professional life; takes the view that the Commission could therefore align any future policy proposals in this area with the 'Youth on the Move' and 'Youth Opportunities' initiatives;
8. Stresses that employment in some regions remains below 60 % and that some regions are missing their national targets by a factor of 20-25 %, which is having a particularly adverse effect on young people, women, older people, carers and people with disabilities; stresses that certain crisis measures have had an adverse effect on cohesion and have fundamentally increased inequalities in the EU; stresses that keeping high-risk groups in employment or creating employment options for them requires targeted measures addressing job creation, training opportunities and job retention; stresses that unemployment has been a feature of certain isolated settlements for generations, and this poses a particular threat to marginalised communities;
9. Points out that employment rates have remained well below the Europe 2020 target of having at least 75 % of the population aged 20–64 in employment by 2020; notes that while there are no specific employment rate targets at a regional level, Member States have individually set national targets which, in most cases, have not been met as the financial and economic crisis has had a major asymmetrical impact on regional labour markets, predominantly in Southern Europe, with a marked increase in youth unemployment;
10. Highlights the inequalities that have been recorded between the highest regional employment rates in the north and centre of the EU, and the lowest regional employment rates in the southern regions;
11. Emphasises, with regard to the 'urban paradox', that the number of families on the brink of poverty, suffering as a result of material deprivation, environmental degradation and poor housing conditions, having very low work intensity and threatened by exclusion and energy poverty is in many cases higher in the regions around capital cities which, according to the indicators, are classified as developed; especially in the case of single-parent families, large families with four or more children, carers (especially carers of disabled family members), members of marginalised communities or older people close to retirement for whom access to equal opportunities is difficult, deems it important to take into account the issue of physical accessibility and access to information and communication media, the achievement of which must be assessed using objective, comparable indicators, taking into account the demographic challenges;

12. Highlights that the exchange of knowledge and of development and growth cooperation practices between regional and local authorities in the Member States could help to bridge the gap in terms of expertise and raise awareness with regard to employment mobility; takes the view, moreover, that decentralisation and territorial development should be further supported as effective ways of overcoming the current unemployment crisis;
13. Takes the view that it is important to address the issue of promoting the development of democracy at local and regional level, and that this requires a stronger political commitment from the EU when it comes to the endorsement of an enabling environment which could boost the capacity of local and regional authorities to influence and monitor job creation and the social inclusion of their populations; points out, to this end, that the diversity of civil society could play a key role through the involvement of the social partners in the process of reaching the EU target for inclusive growth;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase investment in the areas of entrepreneurship, business start-ups and self-employment as a means of creating more jobs, in particular since SMEs and microenterprises provide over two thirds of the EU's private sector jobs; takes the view that special emphasis should be placed on the regional and local levels; in addition, considers that investment in social business and social entrepreneurship provides a good additional option with a view to meeting social needs that are not satisfied by public goods and services.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	26.11.2013
Result of final vote	+: 30 -: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Phil Bennion, Pervenche Berès, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Alejandro Cercas, Derek Roland Clark, Minodora Cliveti, Emer Costello, Frédéric Daerden, Sari Essayah, Richard Falbr, Nadja Hirsch, Stephen Hughes, Ádám Kósa, Jean Lambert, Patrick Le Hyaric, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Olle Ludvigsson, Csaba Óry, Konstantinos Poupakis, Elisabeth Schroedter, Jutta Steinruck, Traian Ungureanu
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Georges Bach, Jürgen Creutzmann, Jelko Kacin, Antigoni Papadopoulou, Evelyn Regner, Birgit Sippel, Csaba Sógor
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Sławomir Nitrás