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Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

2010/2010(INI)

24.6.2010

OPINION

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on developing the job potential of a new sustainable economy
(2010/2010(INI))

Rapporteur: Ilda Figueiredo

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SUGGESTIONS

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

- having regard to the Commission Communication of 14 December 2007 on pre-commercial procurement (COM(2007) 799),
 - having regard to Directive 2010/31/EU¹ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 on the energy performance of buildings (recast version),
 - having regard to the Council Conclusions of 22 and 23 November 2007 on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation,
- A. whereas the economic and financial crisis has seriously affected national public budgets,
- B. whereas figures in the Green Paper on Demographic Change (COM(2005) 94) show that the working age population of the EU will fall by 20.8 million (6.8%) between 2005 and 2030 and whereas the number of people aged over 60 is now increasing twice as fast as it did before 2007 – by about two million every year compared to one million previously,
1. Believes that a new sustainable economy for the EU must ensure balanced economic and social development; calls for an ambitious sustainable industrial policy, with an emphasis on resource efficiency; stresses that the green economy needs to offer prospects for decent, well-paid jobs, with the focus on the protection of the environment;
 2. Considers it vital to implement ambitious, credible, predictable and stable policies – particularly on energy and climate; thus calls on the Commission and Member States to mobilise resources towards the dual goals of tackling climate change and generating jobs and sustainable growth, all the while living up to the principles of sound budgetary management; underlines therefore the importance of making the European objective of a 20% reduction in energy consumption by 2020 binding, and reiterates its support for the Council's commitment to an 80-95% reduction in European greenhouse gas emissions by 2050;
 3. Considers that it has, however, been overlooked that the EU Member States face a number of common challenges where only common European initiatives make sense;
 4. Stresses that the need to develop the potential for quality jobs offered by a new sustainable economy means that innovation must be targeted on finding solutions to the major challenges facing society, including unemployment and poverty, climate change, the ageing of the population and scarcity of resources; draws attention to the relevance of industrial and research policies based on open innovation and clusters, in order to promote the pooling of knowledge by the different public and private economic operators and to stimulate innovation;

¹ OJ L 153, 18.6.2010, p. 13.

5. Stresses the importance of putting in place a coherent EU strategy that encompasses eco-innovation and is focused both on pollution reduction and efficient use of resources in production processes; to this end, calls on the Commission to develop a European Technology Platform for resource-light industries;
6. Calls on the Commission and Member States to make progress in reforming financial instruments to make them greener and more long-term-oriented in order to attract private investment and create more and better jobs with a view to the future;
7. Stresses that a judicious use of funding mechanisms and instruments as well as public policy guidance can help mobilise substantial additional funds from the private sector in order to support investments and create new jobs;
8. Believes it is vital to ensure Community frameworks for research and development with a suitable and sufficient budget in order to support public and private research and make its results available in an accessible and non-bureaucratic form with a view to innovation by microbusinesses and SMEs, especially in the areas of energy efficiency, energy infrastructure, use of new and renewable energy sources and low-carbon production processes, recycling and efficient use of resources and in the context of creating decent, well-paid jobs with rights; reiterates the need to achieve the 3% target for investment in R&D, ensuring that research creates added value in the European economy, which can have a positive impact on keeping high-skilled workers in the EU;
9. Stresses that SMEs and microbusinesses have a key role to play in the development of the sustainable economy; regrets that they may face problems in anticipating new economic trends; calls on the Commission and Member States to help these companies identify areas of potential development associated with the sustainable economy, particularly in the fields of renewable energies and energy savings, to provide easier access to microcredit, e.g. from the 'European Progress Microfinance Facility', and to give them proper information on how to apply for this facility;
10. Points out that the necessary economic growth and resulting employment gains in an innovation-based economy cannot be achieved unless European researchers and businesses are able to convert their research results into commercial products; refers to the Commission's Innovation Scoreboard, which shows an innovation gap of 30% with the USA and 40% with Japan;
11. Calls on the Commission to work more closely with the Member States in order to draw up medium- and long-term forecasts regarding the skills required by the employment market and to encourage partnerships between universities and the business sector in order to foster the transition of young people to the employment market while helping to create a knowledge-based society, develop applied research and create better employment-market prospects for graduates;
12. Is aware of the fact that EU, national and regional funding schemes remain highly uncoordinated, and therefore underlines the need for better multilevel coordination between the programmes and support for more synergy between different common policies using structural, agricultural and rural development funds, the research framework programme and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme

(CIP) to be devised to achieve a sustainable, resource-efficient economy; believes, as regards funding under the Common Agricultural Policy, that further consideration should be given to a greater shift from direct support mechanisms to rural development and the development of environmentally sustainable agriculture;

13. Points out that the transition to a new sustainable economy is a complex phenomenon, which calls for particular attention to be paid to those affected by deindustrialisation by introducing appropriate financial support and mechanisms and integrated interventions, geared to sustainable development and a more innovation-based economy, which is capable of creating decent, well-paid jobs with rights and reducing social inequalities and regional asymmetries; attaches importance to the social partners in achieving those goals;
14. Believes that the demographic challenges require a broader strategy combining job creation and meeting new and emerging needs on the European labour market; considers that, in this respect, further progress must be made in improving the mobility of EU workers, including researchers and other professionals, with a view to achieving a Europe without barriers within the EU internal market;
15. Calls on the Commission to ask the Member States to review the transitional provisions regulating access to their labour markets as a means of maintaining employment in the EU during the global economic crisis;
16. Points out that energy and resource efficiency will give a decisive competitive edge in the future; stresses that opting for energy efficiency not only helps boost industrial diversification and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions but can also provide social benefits and create jobs with rights on a large scale that will help Member States overcome the present economic crisis and embark upon sustainable economic growth; calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider the labour-intensity of sectors when drawing up their energy strategies;
17. Considers that the transition to a new sustainable economy and changes in companies' or sectors' production processes should be accompanied by adequate training, especially vocational training for young people, and lifelong learning programmes, particularly for the more vulnerable group of the over-50s, and that this will also generate new jobs; thus calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the provision of such training and programmes; stresses the importance of an enhanced dialogue, where social changes are required, to adapt to the new sustainable economy, particularly within companies whose activities are based on fossil fuels; calls on the Commission, the Member States and the social partners to ensure that this dialogue is held in order to make the ecological transformation fair;
18. Calls for cooperation among Member States in the fight against undeclared employment, as the underground economy is a matter of concern throughout Europe; considers that measures against undeclared work should be intensified at Member-State and EU level;
19. Calls on the Commission to formulate Employment Guidelines which actively support the increased employment of workers aged below 25 and above 50 and pay due attention to the specific challenges faced by young and elderly people;

20. Urges the Commission and the Member States to address the skills gap that already exists between the available workforce and the needs of new sustainable industries; in this sense emphasises the importance of subsidising apprenticeships for young people as a form of transition from education to professional life; furthermore, calls on Member States to provide incentives to employers who offer low-skilled or unskilled people training and opportunities to acquire practical experience directly in the workplace; finally, stresses that digital literacy and competence for all EU citizens should be strongly supported in EU and national policies as being essential skills that enhance social integration and improve the competitive advantage of the European labour force;
21. Stresses the importance of the public sector leading by example, adopting progressive procurement standards and providing incentives and information, especially in the areas of energy, construction of infrastructure and facilities, transport and communications, for creating jobs with rights; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote, particularly in pre-commercial procurement, the inclusion of environmental and social standards, in addition to promoting local content clauses and enterprises operating in a sustainable and inclusive economy, especially SMEs;
22. Insists also on the importance of private investment, stressing that financing needs can only be met through private investment; points out the large differences in how much is invested in R&D by private companies, ranging from 5-7% of profits in the ICT and pharmaceutical industries to approximately 1% for energy companies; calls on the EU to create the right framework conditions to provide incentives for businesses to invest;
23. Calls again upon the Commission and Member States to capitalise on the success of the Reconstruction Fund and to set up a new Community initiative, including pilot projects, for reconstruction towards a new sustainable economy;
24. Notes that further efforts need to be undertaken in order to ensure the effective EU harmonisation of minimum requirements for the organisation of working time connected with workers' health and safety;
25. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop a specific support instrument for those who have worked in the public sector and lost their jobs due to the economic and financial crisis, similar to the EGF, in the case of EU enterprises affected by globalisation or the economic crisis.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	24.6.2010
Result of final vote	+: 49 -: 4 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Zigmantas Balčytis, Ivo Belet, Bendt Bendtsen, Jan Březina, Reinhard Bütikofer, Maria Da Graça Carvalho, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Giles Chichester, Pilar del Castillo Vera, Christian Ehler, Ioan Enciu, Adam Gierek, Norbert Glante, Fiona Hall, Edit Herczog, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, Béla Kovács, Philippe Lamberts, Judith A. Merkies, Angelika Niebler, Jaroslav Paška, Anni Podimata, Miloslav Ransdorf, Herbert Reul, Teresa Riera Madurell, Paul Rübig, Amalia Sartori, Francisco Sosa Wagner, Konrad Szymański, Britta Thomsen, Patrizia Toia, Ioannis A. Tsoukalas, Claude Turmes, Niki Tzavela, Marita Ulvskog, Vladimir Urutchev, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Henri Weber
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Ilda Figueiredo, Andrzej Grzyb, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Yannick Jadot, Werner Langen, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Vladko Todorov Panayotov, Markus Pieper, Mario Pirillo, Vladimír Remek, Frédérique Ries, Hermann Winkler
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Jan Zahradil