



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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REPORT

from: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I)
to: Council (EPSCO)

No. Cion prop.: 17736/11 SOC 1045 ECOFIN 835 EDUC 278

Subject: Proposal for a Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States
- General approach

I. INTRODUCTION

On 25 November 2011, the Commission submitted a proposal for a Decision of the Council on Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, based on Article 148(2) TFEU, considering that the guidelines for Member States' employment policies as set out in the Annex to Council Decision of 21 October 2010¹ should be maintained for 2012.

The Employment Committee finalised its opinion in the meeting of 31 January 2012 (doc. 5730/12), agreeing with the Commission's proposal to maintain the 2010 Employment Guidelines.

¹ Council Decision 2010/707/UE of 21 October 2010 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (OJ L 308, 24.11.2010, p. 46).

The European Parliament's opinion is expected to be adopted in its plenary session of the week 13-16 February 2012.

The Committee of the Regions has decided not to issue an opinion.

The opinion of the Economic and Social Committee is still awaited.

On 3 February 2012, the Social Questions Working Party examined the proposal and agreed on the general approach to maintain the 2010 guidelines. The text of the draft Decision following the Working Party's discussions is annexed to this Report. On 9 February 2012 the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I) agreed to submit the text of the general approach to the Council EPSCO of 17 February 2012.

II. CONCLUSION

The Permanent Representatives Committee invites the Council EPSCO to confirm the agreement on a general approach.

The general approach will need to be reconsidered once all the opinions required under Article 148(2) of the Treaty have been received and when the conclusions of the March European Council can also be taken into account.

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION
on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 148(2) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament²,

Having regard to the opinion of the Employment Committee,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee³,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions⁴,

Whereas:

- (1) The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) stipulates in Article 145 that Member States and the Union shall work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce as well as labour markets that are responsive to economic change and with a view to achieving the objectives defined in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).

² OJ C , , p. .

³ OJ C , , p. .

⁴ OJ C , , p. .

- (2) The "Europe 2020 Strategy" proposed by the Commission enables the Union to turn its economy towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, accompanied by high level employment, productivity and social cohesion. Five headline targets, listed under the relevant guidelines, constitute shared objectives which guide the action of the Member States, and take into account their relative starting positions and national circumstances as well as the positions and circumstances of the Union. The European Employment Strategy has the leading role in the implementation of the employment and labour market objectives of the new strategy.

- (3) The integrated guidelines are in line with the conclusions of the European Council. They give precise guidance to the Member States on defining their National Reform Programmes and implementing reforms, reflecting interdependence and in line with the Stability and Growth Pact. The employment guidelines should form the basis for any country-specific recommendations that the Council may address to the Member States under Article 148(4) of the TFEU, in parallel with the country-specific recommendations addressed to the Member States under Article 121(2) of that Treaty. The employment guidelines should also form the basis for the establishment of the Joint Employment Report sent annually by the Council and the European Commission to the European Council.

- (4) The examination of the Member States' draft National Reform Programmes contained in the draft Joint Employment Report shows that Member States should continue to make every effort to address the priority areas of increasing labour market participation and reducing structural unemployment, developing a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs and promoting job quality and lifelong learning, improve the performance of education and training systems at all levels and increasing participation in tertiary education, promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.

- (5) The Employment Guidelines adopted in 2010 should remain stable until 2014 to ensure a focus on implementation. In the intermediate years until the end of 2014 their updating should remain strictly limited.
- (6) Member States should explore the use of the European Social Fund when implementing the Employment Guidelines.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The guidelines for Member States' employment policies as set out in the Annex to Council Decision of 21 October 2010 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States⁵ are *maintained for 2012 and shall be taken into account by the Member States in their employment policies.*

Article 2

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at [...],

For the Council

The President

⁵ Council Decision 2010/707/UE of 21 October 2010 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (OJ L 308, 24.11.2010, p. 46).