Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 981 (1984)[1]

Employment in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Gravely concerned at the level of unemployment, which affected almost 19 million persons in the member states of the Council of Europe and 32,5 million in the OECD area at the end of 1983 ;

2. Recalling its Recommendation 948 (1982), on the fight against unemployment, and affirming its conviction that the economic aspects and the social aspects of employment policy are inseparable ;

3. Observing that, since the adoption of this recommendation in September 1982, there has been no significant improvement in the situation in Europe and even a deterioration in certain sectors, whilst general awareness of the phenomenon of unemployment and its increasingly serious consequences has been heightened ;

4. Considering that the very serious employment situation was caused inter alia by the consequences of the oil price crises, the ageing of the industrial structures in Europe and the emergence on world markets of new producers among the developing and the newly industrialising countries ;

5. Noting with interest that a series of important meetings was recently organised by the Council of Europe, in particular the Conference of European Ministers of Labour (3-5 May 1983) and the 18th Session of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, which adopted Resolution 145 on local and regional authorities and the challenge of unemployment ;

6. Considering that two truths are becoming increasingly clear, namely that it would be insidious, indeed dangerous, for democratic institutions to resign themselves to a situation in which an important part of the population is inactive, and that it is futile simply to make lasting improvement of the employment situation conditional on economic growth ;

7. Believing that, while striving to contribute towards a general economic recovery, the governments of the member states have a duty to give the highest priority in their economic and social policies to combating unemployment by measures such as those advocated in Assembly Resolution 809 (1983), in reply to the report on the activities of OECD in 1982, which called upon governments "to encourage productive investment- not only by re-establishing a more stable and predictable macro-economic environment- but also by such measures as investment grants, tax and financial incentives, and measures designed to improve the profitability of investment" ;

8. Repeating its congratulations to OECD for its Employment Outlook publication, and inviting OECD to continue publishing it on a regular basis and to stress achievements in the various member countries in the field of innovation in job creation ;

9. Appealing to governments, and also to management and labour, to co-operate more closely at European level, and keeping in mind the conclusions of the 2nd Conference of European Ministers of Labour, organised by the Council of Europe from 3 to 5 May 1983 in Paris ;

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1. Assembly debate on 8 May 1984 (2nd and 3rd Sittings) (see Docs. 5197Docs. 5197 and Doc. 5201, reports of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development and the Committee on Social and Health Questions). Text adopted by the Assembly on 8 May 1984 (3rd Sitting).

10. Considering also that employment problems cannot nowadays be tackled without taking account of technological developments and their consequences for qualifications and work organisation, which implies a need to reform education and vocational training systems ;

11. Welcoming the recent decision of the Committee of Ministers to "set up a system of liaison between the Council of Europe and management and labour", and appealing to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industries of the European Community (UNICE) to take an active part in such a system, in accordance with their allotted responsibilities ;

12. Believing that the hostility which some would like to stir up against foreign workers on the alleged ground that they aggravate unemployment is not justified, as the jobs taken by such workers are often unattractive to locally born workers, and that what should be done, therefore, is to enhance the status of certain types of jobs which are regarded as soul-destroying or distasteful because of social rigidities ;

13. Having noted with interest Resolution 145 (1983), on local and regional authorities and the challenge of unemployment, adopted by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) in October 1983, and supporting the initiative taken by the CLRAE to organise, in 1984 and 1985, a "conference enabling local and regional authorities to compare their strategies in combating unemployment" and a "campaign among local and regional authorities on the serious problem of youth unemployment" ;

14. Believing, with regard to the catastrophic situation of youth unemployment, that it is also important to organise a hearing or colloquy at the earliest opportunity on this particular aspect of unemployment, with the participation of the appropriate governmental authorities, employers' and trade union organisations at European level, and international organisations such as the ILO, OECD, the European Community and EFTA ;

15. Being of the view that the boosting of employment in the industrialised countries is linked to the development of the Third World countries, and that the current state of these countries' indebtedness is an obstacle to such development,

16. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the governments of member states and the European Community :

16.1. to bear in mind the guiding principle that in employment- as in other spheres- no substantial widespread improvement can be achieved without establishing an overall policy arrived at both domestically and by agreement between states and based on clearly expressed political resolve ;

16.2. to give highest priority and urgency in their economic and social policies to combating unemployment, and to ensure greater convergence between the aims of economic policy and those of employment and labour market policy, particularly as regards, on the one hand, public and private investment in job-creating branches of industry and, on the other, vocational training which should be geared to the aims of industrial restructuring and to the development of branches of industry using the new technologies ;

16.3. to ensure that efforts to secure full employment do not involve measures with secondary effects liable to endanger social achievements, such as the rights of the handicapped, and achievements in the field of migrant workers' rights, the emancipation of women and the provision of social protection for all, even though arrangements of a more dynamic kind may be envisaged with regard to the administration of certain advantages such as unemployment benefit ;

16.4. to implement selective budgetary and fiscal policies conducive to economic growth which creates jobs, and labour market policies designed to help the population of working age to adjust to rapid structural and technical changes in the production system ;

16.5. when publishing each of their major economic, social and industrial plans, particularly those relating to investment in the public sector and aid to sectors in difficulty, to issue also a quantified estimate of their impact on employment and, to that end, pool their employment analysis and research efforts in order to improve employment forecasting machinery and methods for analysing the cost/ effectiveness of employment policies ;

16.6. to embark, while taking care to preserve economic balance, upon a policy of public investment, particularly with a view to creating employment of benefit tc the community, especially in favour of long-term and young unemployed, and of incentives (financial, fiscal, risk guarantees, etc.) to private investment in sectors which offer prospects for the creation of wealth or more flexible structures or cost

cutting, taking due account of the possibilities offered by local and regional initiative in this context, especially through the creation of jobs aimed at improving the quality of life, such as those concerned with environment protection, social service and energy saving ;

16.7. to examine the possibility of facilitating the creation of co-operatives, a type of firm which, in spite of its advantages, is often unappreciated by the public and in certain member countries is not accorded the same borrowing facilities as other firms by financial circles ;

16.8. to be guided, in their policy towards small and medium-sized businesses, whose capacity for adjustment to technological change and for job creation must be given further support, by the proposals detailed in its Resolution 798 (1983) on "1983, European Year of small and medium-sized enterprises and craft trades", which, among other things, urged the governments of member states "to make a special effort to eliminate administrative and technical barriers to trade which place SMEs at a particular disadvantage" and to improve the conditions for the creation and operation of SMEs, particularly by abolishing "excessive paperwork and red tape" ;

16.9. to implement the proposals contained in CLRAE Resolution 145 (1983) "to reinforce and extend, where it is still necessary, the powers of local authorities to enable them to overcome the problems facing them on account of unemployment, in respect of the unemployed and of firms requiring aid", and to provide them with the necessary resources ;

16.10. to improve the machinery for social dialogue among all the participants and decision-makers in the economy and society at international and national level and within local employment areas, industrial sectors and firms, in order to achieve :

a. the implementation of new arrangements capable of improving the employment situation, such as the reduction and reorganisation of working hours including part-time work and flexible retirement, it being understood that these arrangements ought to be considered as measures to stabilise employment in a given economic context, hence subject to alterations ;

b. a fairer distribution of opportunities for work, for example through a concerted reduction of global working time offset by a system of recruitment, possibly subsidised, favouring the hardest-hit categories of the population, particularly the long-term adult unemployed and young people below the age of 25 ;

c. a reorganisation of working time within firms without jeopardising firms' profitability or the financial equilibrium of social security systems, but by a more effective utilisation of equipment, for example ;

16.11. to establish adequate programmes of vocational training and practical courses to be attended in principle by every unemployed person receiving benefit, in order to make the period of unemployment a period of activity and to restrict the opportunities for undeclared work, that training being oriented if possible towards the new technologies ;

16.12. to encourage better contacts between school, university and the business world in their education policies so as to prepare young people more effectively for working life, in respect both of skills and of the range of potential careers, and to involve trade unions and employers' organisations in that endeavour ;

16.13. to make greater use of the Council of Europe both in improving co-operation among the European countries, the other industrialised countries and the developing countries in order to avoid the situation of certain states or groups of states attempting to solve their own problems at the expense of other countries, particularly those of the Third World, and in reactivating co-operation between the countries of Northern and Southern Europe for the purpose of solving the problems facing migrant workers :

a. by intensifying co-operation in the social and legal fields, in particular by the signature and ratification of the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers by those states which have not yet done so ;

b. by extending the possibilities of intervention by the Resettlement Fund, so as to enable it to finance more job-creating projects in those European regions most affected by the economic crisis, particularly in the countries of origin of migrant workers ;

c. by increasing the Fund's capacity to grant loans at advantageous rates of interest which, at present, account for only a small proportion of all loans, most of which are made at market rates ;

d. by increasing the means of the existing programmes of vocational training grants for training and further training of instructors from the least developed member countries ;

16.14. to promote economic co-operation and trade with the developing countries in accordance with the proposals contained in Assembly Resolution 796 (1983), on developments in international trading, and to steer their official development aid towards job-creating projects in order to improve the employment situation in the developing countries and thus curb the influx of migrant workers from those countries ;

16.15. to co-ordinate their efforts to get international financial bodies, in particular IMF, to show more flexibility in their attitude towards the debts of the developing countries ;

17. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

17.1. try to involve management and labour more fully at the European level in certain intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe and encourage them to play an active part in the system of liaison it has recently decided to establish ;

17.2. set up machinery for the discussion of the possibility of reaching an outline agreement at European level, on various aspects of employment - such as the length of the working week and conditions of work- which could be applied on a broader scale in each member country within occupational sectors, industrial sectors or firms ;

17.3. instruct its competent steering committee to make a detailed study of the impact of recurring or long-term unemployment on the health and social behaviour of those concerned, in order to ascertain more clearly what changes are liable to take place in the social fabric in the long run ;

17.4. instruct its competent steering committee to collect and diffuse all information on the various industrialised countries' experiments in creating jobs and in fighting against the black economy ;

17.5. intensify co-operation among the member states in order to combat the movement of illicit labour on their territories, and also to enter into the necessary consultations with the non-European countries of emigration concerned ;

17.6. envisage convening the next Conference of European Ministers of Labour in conjunction with Ministers responsible for economic affairs, so that economic policies and manpower policies may be better related to one another ;

17.7. place on the agenda for the next Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education the theme: improvement of contacts between school, university and the business world ;

17.8. instruct the organising committee responsible for preparing the 3rd Conference of European Ministers of Labour to include among the main themes of the conference the issue of youth employment and to examine with the greatest attention the proposals contained in this recommendation.