

Brussels, 14 July 2003

**OPINION**

of the  
Committee of the Regions  
of 3 July 2003

on the

**Commission proposal for a Council Decision**

**on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States**

(COM(2003) 176 final – 2003/0068 (CNS))

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THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

Having regard to the *Proposal for a Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States* (COM(2003) 176 final – 2003/0068 (CNS)),

Having regard to the decision of the Council of 22 April 2003 to consult it on this subject, under the second paragraph of Article 128 of the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to the decision of its President of 19 March 2003 to instruct its Commission for Economic and Social Policy to draw up an opinion on this subject,

Having regard to its opinion on the Review of the European Employment Strategy and the

Employment Guidelines for 2003 based on the *Communication on Taking stock of five years of the European Employment Strategy* and the *Communication on The future of the European Employment Strategy (EES): A strategy for full employment and better jobs for all*, CdR 15/2003 fin,

Having regard to its draft opinion (CdR 137/2003 rev 1) adopted on 13 June 2003 by the Commission for Economic and Social Policy (rapporteur: **Ms Pauliina Haijanen**, Member of the Board, Regional Council of Southwest Finland (FIN/EPP)),

**adopted the following opinion unanimously at its 50th plenary session, held on 2 and 3 July 2003 (meeting of 3 July)**

1. **The Committee of the Regions' views**

**The Committee of the Regions**

1. **welcomes** the fact that the Commission proposal stresses the need to improve the governance and delivery of the Employment Strategy and that, in the light of this, the Commission calls on the Member States to ensure that the guidelines are also implemented at local and regional level. The new strategic approach opens the way to strengthening the local and regional dimension in the implementation of all the guidelines. The Committee of the Regions nevertheless feels that, for this objective to be achieved in preparatory work at national level, strong political support is needed from the Union as well as gearing EU funding instruments towards enhancing the regional and local dimension;
2. **considers** it a **shortcoming** of the Commission proposal that the approach adopted assesses the role of the various local and regional levels primarily from the viewpoint of the process, i.e. the effectiveness and legitimacy of the strategy. This approach does not pay adequate attention to the direct role played by local and regional actors in the implementation of the Employment Strategy and in improving its effectiveness;
3. **takes the view** that the ability of policies determined at macro level to respond to local and regional problems is diminishing. The devolution of the decision-making process in the implementation of employment policy to the local and regional level should be regarded as the starting-point for drawing up national employment action plans. National action plans should include an assessment of the implementation of the guidelines at local and regional level;
4. **considers it essential** that addressing regional unemployment disparities be made a priority for action in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council, as already proposed in Commission Communication COM(2003) 6 final. Measurable targets should be set for reducing regional disparities. In

addition to occupational and geographical mobility, wide-ranging measures supporting regional employment and competitiveness are needed in order to reduce regional employment disparities;

5. **feels** that the guidelines should contain practical information on local and regional employment strategies as instruments linking the local and regional level to the implementation of the European Employment Strategy. The planning of these strategies should be effectively integrated into the preparation of national action plans. The role of local partnerships and the social economy in the implementation of the Employment Strategy should be further clarified and strengthened;
6. **reiterates** its earlier view that the role of Member States' parliaments in the implementation of the Employment Strategy should be further clarified and strengthened. The importance of national employment action plans should be enhanced by adopting them in national parliamentary bodies. In addition, the link between national action plans and national budgets should be reinforced.

Brussels, 3 July 2003.

The President  
of the  
Committee of the Regions

The Secretary-General  
of the  
Committee of the Regions

**Albert Bore**

**Vincenzo Falcone**

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