

Latest European employment guidelines based on failed policies

Written by Neoklis Sylikiotis on 17 June 2015 in Opinion
Opinion

The economic priorities set by the new commission are doing nothing to solve Europe's unemployment problems, argues Neoklis Sylikiotis.



Since April, parliament's employment and social affairs committee has been discussing an own-initiative report on employment guidelines for 2015. It is the committee's common belief that the European commission's text is of poor quality.

For those political groupings to the left, aligning employment guidelines with European economic policy, structural reforms and fiscal responsibility is a contradiction in itself, since the EU's neoliberal austerity measures only promote unemployment and instability.

There is no need to remind ourselves that unemployment - especially among young people - has skyrocketed in member states that have undertaken structural reforms, with or without a troika.

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At the same time, according to Eurostat's latest indicators, the area in which Europeans are least satisfied is their financial situation, with an average score of six out of ten. This specific indicator also revealed the biggest gap between member states, with a 3.9 point difference between the highest and lowest average.

In this context it is clear for the left in general - and for my group, the European united left/Nordic green left in particular - that the economic priorities set by the commission are doing nothing to solve problems related to economic and social development, unemployment and quality employment.

The constant deregulation of the market has had a direct impact on quality and long-term employment, making room for so-called mini jobs and zero hour contracts and abandoning social dialogue.

The targets set out by the EU 2020 jobs and growth strategy cannot be reached by continuing to apply the same policies that led to the deepening of the economic crisis and destroyed both the welfare state and any vision of social cohesion.

This is why we are very concerned about the commission's integrated economic and employment guidelines. In this respect, parliament's rapporteur on the guidelines Laura Agea and the different political groups have carried out very constructive work.

Although we could not agree with many of the suggestions from the other groups, we think that our considerations for the need to safeguard collective bargaining and collective agreements, as well as the quality and decency of employment - as defined by the international labour organisation - were acknowledged in the discussions.

Our group has clearly and repeatedly said that economic and, most importantly, social development can only be achieved if the neoliberal austerity policies that are impoverishing people and destroying the welfare state are dropped and if public investments - along with reindustrialisation planning for areas hit hardest by the crisis - are taken on board.

This way, there would be a solid basis to solve the problems that the commission's guidelines set out to deal with, like equal opportunities in employment and tackling poverty - even among workers.

Of course other aspects, such as educational systems and taxation, still play a significant role, but that is not what this article is about.

The commission's integrated guidelines do not provide a real, sustainable solution to the EU's employment and economic problems. Their economic components are based on commission president Jean-Claude Juncker's investment plan as well as the employment guidelines' economic governance.

We have already seen these policies fail - and this is why we will continue to oppose them.

About the author

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