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Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2269(INI)	Procedure completed
Combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth		
Subject		
4.10.08 Equal treatment of persons, non-discrimination		
4.15.08 Work, employment, wages and salaries: equal opportunities women and men, and for all		

Key players				
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed	
	 EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		25/10/2016	
		 S&D LÓPEZ Javi		
		Shadow rapporteur		
		 epp KÓSA Ádám		
		 ECR STEVENS Helga		
		 ENF CALVET CHAMBON Enrique		
		 VANA VANA Monika		
		 EFD AGEA Laura		
		 ENF BIZZOTTO Mara		
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed	
	 ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs			
	 FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		11/10/2016	
		 epp KOZŁOWSKA Agnieszka		
European Commission	Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	Commissioner THYSSEN Marianne		

Key events

24/11/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
19/10/2017	Vote in committee		
31/10/2017	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0340/2017	Summary
15/11/2017	Debate in Parliament		
16/11/2017	Results of vote in Parliament		
16/11/2017	Decision by Parliament	T8-0451/2017	Summary
16/11/2017	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2269(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/8/07679

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE606.008	06/06/2017	EP	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE607.813	27/06/2017	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE607.984	07/07/2017	EP	
Committee opinion	ECON	PE605.945	26/09/2017	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0340/2017	31/10/2017	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0451/2017	16/11/2017	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2018)52	22/03/2018	EC	

Combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Javi LÓPEZ (S&D, ES) on combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth.

Equality and fairness are a cornerstone for the European social model, the EU and its Member States. The objectives of both the Member States and the EU include the promotion of employment, with a view to lasting high employment and combating exclusion.

Inequality and unemployment curtail effective demand, frustrate innovation, and can lead to increased financial fragility. Combating inequalities can be a lever to boost job creation and growth and at the same time reduce poverty.

European policy coordination to combat inequality: Members affirmed that inequalities threaten the future of the European project. They emphasised the reduction of inequalities must be one of the main priorities at the European level, not only in order to tackle poverty or promote convergence, but also as the precondition for economic recovery, decent job creation, social cohesion and shared prosperity.

The Commission and the Member States are asked to evaluate the performance and outcomes of economic policy coordination, taking into account the evolution of social progress and social justice in the EU. Members observed that the European Semester has not prioritised the achievement of these aims and the reduction of inequalities.

Against this background, Members urged the Commission to:

- improve the process of policy coordination in order to better monitor, prevent and correct negative trends that could increase inequalities and weaken social progress;
- present to Parliament and to the Council by mid-2018 an analysis and comparison of the impact and results achieved by the country specific recommendations and the measures taken within the scope of the European Semester and under different EU programmes for overcoming the inequalities resulting from the economic crisis;
- outline further policy recommendations for combating inequalities;
- establish an accurate and up-to-date picture of the differences in income and wealth, social cohesion and social inclusion between and within countries,
- promote ambitious investment in social protection, services and infrastructures by Member States through a more targeted and strategic use of the European Structural and Investment Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investments, in order to respond to the social and economic needs of Member States and regions;
- put forward a concrete 'Roadmap completing the Social Dimension of the EMU';
- work with Member States to develop comprehensive strategies for job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation, aiming for strategic investment in green jobs, in the social, health and care sectors, and in the social economy, whose employment potential is untapped;
- propose a higher funding level for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) for the period 2017-2020, to at least EUR 21 billion, including better reaching young people under 30;
- contribute to better implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Improving working and living conditions: the Commission and the Member States are called on to improve working and living conditions and to step up their efforts to fight the shadow economy and undeclared work. Members urged them to explore the possibility of establishing a European unemployment insurance scheme, complementing current national unemployment benefit systems and to promote fairer wage scales.

Strengthening the welfare state and social protection: the report encouraged the Member States to improve their welfare systems (education, health, housing, pensions and transfers) on a basis of high-level social safeguards, in order to achieve comprehensive protection of people, taking into account the new social risks and vulnerable groups that have appeared as a result of the financial, economic and then social crises with which the Member States have had to cope. Investment in quality and affordable early childhood education and care services should be strengthened as this is key for combating inequalities in the long term.

Members called for:

- a European framework in line with the related ILO recommendation, outlining a social protection floor guaranteeing universal access to healthcare, basic income security, access and support for education;
- universal access to affordable housing, protecting vulnerable households against eviction and over-indebtedness;
- swift action on the current migration and refugee crisis and guarantee that refugees have access to rapid language and culture learning processes, training, quality housing, healthcare, education, labour market and social protection and recognition of formal and non-formal skills and capabilities, and to ensure their inclusion in society;
- support in strengthening public and occupational pension systems to provide an adequate retirement income above the poverty threshold;
- care credits in pension systems to compensate for lost contributions of women and men due to childcare and long-term care responsibilities, as a tool to reduce the gender pension gap;
- the swift adoption of the [directive](#) on gender balance among non-executive directors of listed companies, as an important first step towards equal representation in both public and private sectors.

Lastly, as regards the modernisation of tax systems, objective taxation policies are crucial and that many Member States need a deep tax reform. Real actions against tax avoidance and tax fraud are needed, as an important means of reducing economic inequalities and improving the collection of tax revenues in Member States.

Reforms should also tackle corruption in public administration and tackle wealth inequality, including by redistributing the excessive concentration of wealth. Further coordination, approximation and harmonisation of tax policy, as well as measures against tax havens, tax fraud and evasion are called for.

Combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth

The European Parliament adopted by 386 votes to 102, with 51 abstentions, a resolution on combating inequalities as a lever to boost job creation and growth.

Equality and fairness are an integral part of European values and a cornerstone for the European social model. Combating inequalities can be a lever to boost job creation and growth and at the same time reduce poverty (47.5 % of all unemployed persons in the EU were at risk of poverty in 2015).

European policy coordination to combat inequality: Parliament affirmed that inequalities threaten the future of the European project. It emphasised the reduction of inequalities must be one of the main priorities at the European level, not only in order to tackle poverty or promote convergence, but also as the precondition for economic recovery, decent job creation, social cohesion and shared prosperity.

The European Semester has not prioritised the achievement of these aims and the reduction of inequalities. Therefore, it urged the Commission to:

- improve the process of policy coordination in order to better monitor, prevent and correct negative trends that could increase inequalities and weaken social progress;
- within the scope of the European Semester, better assess imbalances in terms of income and wealth distribution, and to justify its proposals and recommendations for political decisions with solid and detailed data;
- promote ambitious investment in social protection, services and infrastructures by Member States through a more targeted and strategic use of the European Structural and Investment Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investments, in order to respond to the social and economic needs of Member States and regions;
- continue, with the Member States, efforts to reduce inequalities between income groups and promote measures to ensure, inter alia,

- decent working conditions for all, public education and health, pensions, adequate public infrastructure and social services;
- work with Member States to develop comprehensive strategies for job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation, aiming for strategic investment in green jobs, in the social, health and care sectors, and in the social economy, whose employment potential is untapped;
- propose an upward revision of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) budget for the period 2017-2020, including better reaching young people under 30 and facilitate the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Parliament reiterated its call for the establishment of an authentic European Pillar of Social Rights which promotes upwards convergence, taking into consideration the share of competences laid down in the Treaties and the building of a deeper and fairer social dimension of the EMU.

Improving working and living conditions: given that undeclared work, atypical work contracts and other forms of non-standard employment may give rise to lower wages, Parliament urged the need for adequate social security and social protection to be provided to protect all workers and for increased efforts to fight the shadow economy and undeclared work.

Members called for an accurate common employment classification in order to reduce precariousness. Moreover, the new skills strategy must provide affordable access for all workers to lifelong learning and ensure adaptation to digitalisation and permanent technological change.

The resolution stressed the importance of social dialogue and collective bargaining for determining wages. It called on the Commission to improve the health and safety of workers at work and called for the implementation of a strong anti-discrimination policy.

Strengthening the welfare state and social protection: Parliament encouraged the Member States to improve their welfare systems (education, health, housing, pensions and transfers) on a basis of high-level social safeguards, in order to achieve comprehensive protection of people, taking into account the new social risks and vulnerable groups that have appeared as a result of the financial crisis. Investment in quality and affordable early childhood education and care services should be strengthened as this is key for combating inequalities in the long term.

Members called for:

- universal access to affordable housing, protecting vulnerable households against eviction and over-indebtedness;
- swift action on the current migration and refugee crisis and guarantee that refugees have access to rapid language and culture learning processes, training, quality housing, healthcare, education, labour market and social protection and recognition of formal and non-formal skills and capabilities, and to ensure their inclusion in society;
- support in strengthening public and occupational pension systems to provide an adequate retirement income above the poverty threshold;
- care credits in pension systems to compensate for lost contributions of women and men due to childcare and long-term care responsibilities;
- the right to decent and barrier-free work for people with disabilities;
- fairer international trade agreements that respect European labour market regulations and ILO core conventions, while also protecting quality employment and workers rights;
- active labour market policies, based on gender mainstreaming aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour market.

Modernising taxation: Members insisted that many Member States need a deep tax reform. Real actions against tax avoidance and fraud would be an important means of reducing economic inequalities and improving the collection of tax revenues in the Member States.

Reforms should also tackle corruption in public administration and address wealth inequality, including by redistributing the excessive concentration of wealth, since this is vital if inequality is not to be exacerbated in many Member States.