

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mr PININFARINA

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the revision of the criteria for the use
of the European Social Fund in the vocational
training sector

The European Parliament,

- A Whereas the funds granted by the European Social Fund should be designed to support the Community's economic policy measures with an employment policy, adjust supply and demand on the labour market between and within Member States and contribute to combating unemployment and underemployment which has arisen - to a greater or lesser extent - in almost all the States of the Community;
- B Noting that in practice there has been abuse of this instrument since contributions from the European Social Fund are often used to finance normal courses of vocational training designed for school leavers,
- C Recalling that an improper use of the European Social Fund is particularly serious in the present time of crisis and that the fact that funds are spread thinly often makes it impossible to implement specific projects in vocational training and job creation,
- D Noting that the economic crisis which has arisen in recent years in Europe and particularly in Italy has highlighted the difficulty for companies of maintaining the level of employment and that the progressive reduction in the numbers in employment has had more serious effects on young people, both those who have had university training and further education and - albeit in a different manner - school leavers,
- E Stressing that in this context an important feature of the present difficulties is the disparity between demand and supply on the labour market, arising in the first place from the wide qualitative gap between formal schooling and employment prospects,
- F Noting furthermore that one of the most obvious results of the crisis as it affects youth employment is a questioning of the structure of education, particularly of upper secondary education, as it has been conceived so far in many European countries and in particular in Italy since on the one hand the existing school system provides primarily an educational and cultural training while on the other hand we have a fast moving manufacturing sector which requires specific professional training adapted to constant technological innovations,

- 1 Affirms therefore that the management of the fund should be designed to create a new approach to the relationship between education, training and work and that vocational training represents the point of departure for this,
- 2 Calls therefore, within the Community's field of responsibility, for the integration of the various funds and the implementation of projects to assist firms not only in quantitative or financial terms but also in a qualitative manner; that is to say the Community must first carefully evaluate what types of firm are best suited to protecting jobs through retraining measures and changes in the production and organizational structure,
- 3 Points to the need to carry out a review of the sectors in which the Fund operates. The Fund must identify not only priority geographical areas but above all priority production sectors. At the present time the only production sector considered by the fund is textiles but it is felt that it is essential to assess ways of extending and reviewing this sector, considering it as the 'textile and clothing' sector with particular regard to medium and high level production, and at the same time defining areas of intervention in production sectors which an analysis of the economic situation of the Member States and of the Community shows to be priority sectors, either because of the technologies they use or, here too, because of the level of the product,
- 4 Suggests, as an example, the possibility of creating an intervention sector to lay down specific priorities for the financing of training of management in small and medium-sized undertakings, aimed at achieving better and more efficient organization of production and human resources, as well as a detailed programme for the energy, electronics and engineering sectors, bearing in mind that steel is already covered by the ECSC,
- 5 Expresses the need for greater flexibility in the 'guidelines' laid down annually for the management of the ESF, guidelines which are essential for identifying priorities but which should not be rigidly applied to the acceptance or rejection of certain financing programmes. While noting that some selection of projects submitted is necessary if available funds are to be used properly it must be stressed that the assessment of each application for aid should not be made on purely formal or bureaucratic grounds,

6 Bearing in mind the importance of the guidelines for the management of the Social Fund and for the analysis of the situation of individual firms when applications are being submitted, stresses the need for Community definition of certain types of intervention. More specifically, as regards 'technical progress', more precise definitions of 'technological innovation' should be drawn up both to avoid excessive growth in the number of projects in this sector and to ensure that the management of funds corresponds more closely the economic situation in each country. Furthermore, as regards young people, the age band of those eligible to participate in training programmes financed by the Social Fund should be extended. This is necessary because further training and qualifications are necessary not only for workers, but for management and technicians. In particular, with regard to the problem of youth employment, attention has already been drawn to the need, at these educational levels, for specific and up-to-date industrial training.

As regards the 'regional' sector there must be a redefinition at Community level of priority intervention areas in the light of economic and social changes over recent years in many areas of Italy outside of the area of the 'Mezzogiorno',

7 Account should be taken of the fact that the problem of employment is not separate from the general economic context of individual firms, and therefore the financial instruments available to the countries of the European Community should form part of a policy for stimulating growth and recovery in industry. The European Parliament therefore believes that the Social Fund in particular should not merely provide a fallback for critical employment situations where no adequate solutions appear in the immediate future, but should be used as an instrument of renewal (in production, technology and organization) and support (for training and employment of young people) for all firms. It is therefore clear that technological innovation is not the only qualitative advance in production: innovation and training of skilled workers should be pursued at the same time and be continuously linked within the production structure;

8 Believes that priority should be given to all operations directed towards:

- (a) the creation and continuation of 'active' training, through alternating theoretical study and practical application, providing for the direct involvement of existing know-how in the firms concerned;
- (b) the setting up of new firms in areas where financial incentives or facilities are offered at national or local level;
- (c) the training of middle management and more generally training at further education and even post-graduate levels;
- (d) career guidance for young school leavers to determine on the one hand their individual aptitude and abilities and on the other the professional areas where openings exist and the sectors with greatest potential for growth;
- (e) the introduction and use in small and medium-sized undertakings of new technology which will simultaneously improve their competitive position and raise the professional level of those employed there;
- (f) the maintenance of employment in areas (Mezzogiorno and other regions to be determined) where industrial restructuring and reconversion is under way;
- (g) maintenance of employment levels through mobility between firms in areas marked by serious employment problems.