

European Employment Strategy

Alakbarov Nurlan Arif

Department of International Private Law and European Law
Master student, Baku State University,

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ABSTRACT

The current article deals with the employment strategy of European Union.

The article takes a look The European Employment Strategy (EES) which is the European Union's main instrument to co-ordinate Member States' reform efforts in the area of labor market and social policies.

Açar sözlər: əmək hüququ, Avropa məşğulluq siyasəti, gənclərin məşğulluğu, iş hüquqları, Avropada məşğulluq vəziyyəti, işə qəbul olma, sahibkarlıq, uyğunlaşma qabiliyyəti və bərabər imkanlar.

Xülasə

Bu məqalə Avropa Birliyinin məşğulluq strategiyası ilə bağlıdır. Məqalədə Avropa İttifaqının əmək bazarının və sosial siyasət sahəsində üzv dövlətlərin islahat səylərini koordinasiya etdirməsi üçün əsas vasitə olan Avropa Məşğulluq Strategiyası (AMS) nəzərdən keçirilir.

Ключевые слова: трудовые права, европейская политика занятости, занятость молодежи, права на работе, состояние занятости в Европе, возможности трудоустройства, предпринимательство, адаптируемость и равные возможности.

Резюме

В настоящей статье рассматривается стратегия занятости Европейского союза. В статье рассматривается Европейская стратегия занятости (ЕСЗ), которая является основным инструментом Европейского союза для координации усилий государств-членов по реформированию в области рынка труда и социальной политики.

The European Employment Strategy (EES) is a soft law mechanism designed to coordinate the employment policies of the EU Member States. While the objectives, priorities and targets are agreed at EU level, the national governments are fully responsible for formulating and implementing the necessary policies. Its main aim is the creation of more and better jobs throughout the EU.

The Delors White Paper of 1993 on 'Growth, competitiveness, employment: the challenges and ways forward into the 21st century' declared that 'employment was one of the most important areas of concern of the EC' and proposed 'a thorough-going reform of the labor market'. The European Council of 9–10 December 1994 in Essen confirmed the EU's commitment to the promotion of employment and agreed on five key objectives:

- the development of resources through vocational training;
- the promotion of productive investment through moderate wage policies;
- the improvement of the efficiency of labor market institutions;
- the identification of new sources of jobs through local initiatives;
- the promotion of access to the world of work for specific target groups (young people,

long-term unemployed, women).

These objectives became known as the ‘Essen Strategy’ – a strategy of coordination of national employment policies aimed at achieving the specified objectives. The insertion of a new employment title into the EC Treaty, by the Treaty of Amsterdam, institutionalized the EES.

This step enshrined in the Treaty the Luxembourg process. Article 148 TFEU provides for the Council and Commission to draw up annual guidelines, which the Member States ‘shall take into account in their employment policies’, on the basis of which they are to make an annual report. The Council and Commission may make recommendations to Member States concerning their employment policies. In 2000, the mid-term review of the Luxembourg process concluded that a common, integrated framework for structural change was helping to promote a mutually supportive synergy effect between different actors at European and national levels [3].

The implementation of the EES through the Luxembourg process of the open method of coordination (OMC) has various strengths: it is an iterative process, carried out in a pluri-annual perspective, with a set of guidelines including targets and deadlines, as well as a review and evaluation procedure, which impacts on national administrations. It is underpinned by five key factors: subsidiarity, convergence, mutual learning, integrated approach and management by objectives.

In 2000, the Lisbon Presidency Conclusions called on the social partners to play a role in the implementation of the EES. This was reinforced at the Feira Council in 2000, which invited the social partners ‘to play a more prominent role in implementing and monitoring the guidelines’. Guidelines could emerge from an EU-level social dialogue between the European social partners with mandates from affiliated social partners drawing on experience of national employment pacts or following on from proposals by the Commission. Affiliated social partners at Member State level could produce National Action Plans to implement the guidelines embodied in EU framework agreements [9].

The Commission has invested a large amount of both time and resources in the development of the EES. The EES has resulted in annual sets

of employment guidelines, the Member States have undertaken National Reform Programmes on an annual basis, annual joint employment reports have been produced, and recommendations have emerged following the coming into force of the Amsterdam Treaty on 1 May 1999 [1]. The annual employment guidelines consistently posited four pillars: adaptability, entrepreneurship, equal opportunities and employability.

Since the 2003 guidelines, the four pillars have been replaced by three main objectives: full employment, improving quality and productivity at work, and strengthening social cohesion and inclusion – in the face of increased regional disparities after the enlargement of the EU, the last item was changed into ‘strengthening social and territorial cohesion in the 2005–2008 employment guidelines.

The European Employment Strategy serves to coordinate the employment policies of the EU Member States and is a key instrument for implementing the Europe 2020 strategy. It is based on Articles 145-150 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which obligates Member States to coordinate their employment policies and to specify the instruments available for this in order to create more and better jobs in Europe. This strategy is to raise the employment rate of the population aged 20–64 from 69% in 2010 to at least 75% in 2020. This requires: strengthening EU employment, education and training policies and social protection systems by increasing labor participation and reducing structural unemployment; raising corporate social responsibility among the business community; access to childcare facilities and care for other dependents; implementing flexicurity principles and enabling people to acquire new skills to adapt to new conditions and potential career shifts; combat poverty and social exclusion and reduce health inequalities; promoting a healthy and active ageing population to allow for social cohesion and higher productivity [7]. Implementation of the “Europe 2020” strategy involves: fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals in the short, medium and long terms; translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies; and periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review. The enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services aims to

contribute to 'Europe 2020' and to the implementation of relevant Union policies. In this context, EES priorities have been geared towards policies which contribute to increasing human capital and quality at work. Education and training are crucial for better employment opportunities, especially where young people are concerned [5]. It is also important to create tools that help match education and training with the jobs of the future, because that will lead to increased productivity and more stable employment. To support this, adequate national employment services must be in place, as well as cooperation between education providers and employers' bodies. Flexicurity remains the main tool for fighting long-term unemployment and segmented labor markets. Flexible and secure contractual arrangements, first rate employment services, effective social security systems, all sustained by high level and effective lifelong learning, should lead to smooth employment transitions, be they from education to work or from a non-working status to a job [2].

The EES has not only encouraged the member states to make gender equality a political priority: It has also provided them with methodological and statistical tools to achieve this goal. The common methodology promoted by the EU to solve "gender problems" is the OMC involving policy coordination, targets, evaluations and non-binding recommendations. The member states are encouraged to adopt a two-track strategy of gender mainstreaming and specific gender policy measures in the framework of the OMC. The main advantage of the gender mainstreaming strategy is that it pressures the EU and the member states to take a holistic view of gender equalities involving different actors, institutional levels and measures [6]. Special gender targets have been set as concerns women's employment and childcare coverage. Indicators, gender impact assessments and peer-reviews have been applied to assess policy results and to identify policy recommendations and best practices. For the year 2002, the Council made a number of non-binding recommendations to the individual member states concerning equal opportunities. Greece, Spain and Italy were, for example, asked to improve the gender gap in employment and unemployment; Belgium and Luxembourg were asked to increase the female

employment rate; Finland, Sweden and the UK were requested to find ways to reduce occupational and sectorial segregation; Austria, Germany, Finland and the UK needed to reduce the gender pay gap. Over the years, the EU has made incremental changes to the EES and the Social Inclusion Process. These changes have resulted in steady expansion in the scope, role and objectives of these policies. Hence, there has been a slow process of convergence towards a comprehensive gender equality strategy. This strategy can be criticized for not acknowledging tensions and contradictions between different policy objectives [8]. One of the main priorities of the EES (2003) is to eliminate gender gaps in employment, unemployment and in pay. However, evidence shows that the gender pay gap is smaller in countries with a low female employment rate. Also, the gender gap in employment may become smaller due to a growth in bad or low paid jobs. Finally, gender segregation is higher in countries with a high female employment rate gap; Germany was requested to address the impact of the tax and benefit system on women's employment.

The aim of the EES and the Social Inclusion Process has been to facilitate a policy learning process in the member states. The five years evaluation of the EES and peer reviews has shown that the inclusion of the equal opportunities dimension had significant effects. This policy learning process has resulted in greater awareness of gender issues, more ambitious and integrated equal opportunity agendas and policies, setting up of institutions and spreading of practices and statistical tools [4].

The European Employment Strategy is now a well established vehicle for the promotion of more and better jobs. At the Community level, through the employment guidelines, annual examination and peer review of Member States' performance, and recommendations to individual countries, the EES is providing an integrated framework to meet the Union's objectives in the field of employment and labor market reforms. At the Member State's level, through the NAPs and both community and national financial support, the Employment Guidelines are translated into a coherent employment strategy. At the regional and local levels, actors have been given the opportunity to work increasingly together, to interact with national and European institutions and pol-

icies, and to develop partnerships in support of the European Employment Strategy [10]. Local actors also have a key role to play in promoting gender equality and developing integrated approaches to social inclusion. The local dimension is playing a key role in Member States' implementation of the EES and the new focus on the four priorities first identified in the Employment Taskforce: increased adaptability for workers and enterprises; attracting more people into the workforce; investing more and better in human capital; improving governance. But the European Union and the Member States will have to do even more to involve regional and local actors, this is itself a key aspect of improved governance.



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