



European Economic and Social Committee

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EESC "Quality jobs for all ages must be a priority"

The EU should strive to enhance job prospects and working conditions across the whole population to counter many of the difficulties we are currently experiencing. This was the message today from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) plenary session. Dealing with the challenges of an aging population and creating an agenda for new skills and jobs, particularly for young people were the subjects of two opinions, both aiming at contributing to a more expedient European labour market.

Demographic changes and the subsequent effect on the labour market were evaluated in an exploratory opinion drawn up by rapporteur **Mr Greif (Austria, Employees' Group)** by request of the Polish Presidency. The opinion not only analyses the risks and consequences of the aging population, but also the opportunities that can be realized through effective labour market policies.

Fully utilising all available employment potential is the key to improving the labour market integration of working age people and consequently to contain the economic dependency of an aging population. The EESC argues against changes to pension systems that result in less favourable terms for accessing schemes and for entitlements. In particular, proposals to raise the statutory retirement age are considered undesirable.

Supporting job creation is the subject of the second opinion, prepared by rapporteur **Ms Drbalová (Czech Republic, Employers' Group)** and co-rapporteur **Mr Zufiaur Narvaiza (Spain, Employees' Group)**. This opinion scrutinises the European Commission's agenda for new skills and jobs initiative. The EESC welcomes the Commission's efforts to increase employment and make labour markets more efficient, and calls upon Member States to make good use of social and civil dialogue to spur efforts to improve the current situation.

However, concerns are raised that the proposed initiative fails to encapsulate the urgent need to create good quality jobs, and does not contain a sufficient stimulus to encourage Member States to set ambitious policies, for securing real growth and new job opportunities. Whilst seeking a more effective labour market, a balance must be struck which preserves the protection of workers. Therefore, the Commission must ensure that EU-level legislation supports Member States' efforts to implement beneficial labour market reforms and promote social investment.

For further information, please contact:

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