

EUROCHAMBRES disappointed by 'Agenda for new skills and jobs'

EUROCHAMBRES today expressed its scepticism about the contribution of the European Commission's "Agenda for new skills and jobs" to the EU's 75% employment target for 2020.

While the text rightly defines areas where member states need to act quickly (reform of social security systems, validation of competences gained outside formal education, incentives for job creation), it falls short in addressing the root causes of unemployment and in some areas risks exacerbating the problem.

Flexicurity

EUROCHAMBRES is highly sceptical about the notion of exploring a 'single open-ended contract with a gradual increase of employment protection until the level of protection of currently existing permanent contracts is reached'. In countries with overly-restrictive provisions for permanent employees, this would simply reinforce the rigidity of the labour market.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"Almost 90% of entrepreneurs* agree that inflexible labour laws are a significant source of unemployment in the EU. We thought the purpose of the communication was to help sustain the economic recovery by easing labour markets, yet what the Commission is considering would make things worse."*

EUROCHAMBRES also regrets the Commission's continuing negative stance on so-called atypical work – temporary work, freelancing, short-term contracts etc. *"What the Commission still terms atypical is becoming increasingly typical. Europe needs diverse work patterns and contracts if we are to increase labour market participation rates, entrepreneurial activity and growth,"* said Mr Abruzzini.

Skills

The communication emphasises new structures and tools to get more people into the labour market and relies on forecasting tools to resolve the skills mismatches. EUROCHAMBRES believes that the Commission should focus more on examining why the many tools already in place are not delivering the desired results.

"We need member states to involve businesses more systematically in the development of curricula and the governance of educational institutes. We also need initiatives to promote sectors suffering from skills gaps and a strong focus on the thorough implementation of the national qualification frameworks," concluded Mr Abruzzini.

* This vote was expressed by over 750 entrepreneurs, gathered in the European Parliament of Enterprises.

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