



Barroso and Van Rompuy urged to put growth and jobs first in summit debate

MEPs singled out employment and the relaunch of the economy as being vital to the EU's future in a debate about the results of Monday's European Council meeting. Commission President José Manuel Barroso and EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy came under fire from MEPs across the political spectrum for failing to do enough to kick-start Europe's economy and help create jobs.

Van Rompuy defended the measures that had been taken so far: "Over the last two years we have taken difficult sometimes painful measures. This was necessary. We are now starting to see it was worth the effort."

The Council President said financial stability would not be enough to solve the crisis: "We must do more, in particular on economic growth and employment." He outlined three priorities to promote growth and jobs: 1) creating jobs especially for young people; 2) helping SME getting access to credits; 3) strengthening the single market.

Commission President **Barroso** praised the initiatives that were announced earlier this week: "By bringing to the table concrete proposals to tackle youth unemployment and financing small and medium sized enterprises, the Commission broadened the perspective towards the issues that are of greatest concerns to our citizens: jobs and sustainable growth."

"We also need to unleash the potential of single market, Europe's crown jewel," he said.

However, MEPs were quick to suggest improvements for boosting the economy, with some strongly criticising the approach taken so far.

Christian Democrat leader **Joseph Daul** said he hopes the fiscal pact is implemented as soon as possible and that it will be realised as the EP wants it. The EU has to fight the crisis by becoming a more competitive economy through an effective internal market, he added.

Hannes Swoboda, for the Socialists, criticised the fiscal compact calling it "wrong in terms of objective". Why are countries with high deficits punished, while countries that have high youth unemployment are not, he asked, going on to criticise the German government. Germany's leadership role should be about "rallying EU round, not dividing it".

The summit "mainly produced words" but "what we need now are acts", Liberal leader **Guy Verhofstadt** said. €1 trillion of taxpayers' money has been invested in the crisis, without achieving anything as "we are always taking half measures" he said calling for a "structural solution" as well as a mutualisation of debt.

For the Greens **Rebecca Harms** said she felt ashamed by the summit: "This charade of summits is just deceiving them (citizens), pulling the wool over their eyes." She asked Van Rompuy where the money promised for jobs and growth was. "We need infrastructure investment in transport and energy."

Meanwhile, leader of the ECR group **Martin Callanan** said that even if the fiscal pact was implemented it would not change things. "My group makes no apologies for being single-minded about the single market and we will continue to pursue this agenda of creating a digital single market".

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Lothar Bisky of the GUE/NGL group said that the fiscal pact would only exacerbate the financial situation in Europe. Its provisions are "unfair, unjust and undemocratic" leading to indebted countries "losing their fiscal sovereignty" he said, calling for a "U-turn" and "a pact for sustainable growth and employment".

EFD group leader **Nigel Farage** said what we now have for Greece is "diplomacy at gun-point". He continued: "Greece is not a failing subsidiary company where head office needs to come in and take control." Greece "has youth unemployment around 50% because they are in the euro." He also warned Barroso: "It is going to be Portugal next."

Next steps

The treaty agreed on 30 January will be a legally binding international agreement, and will be signed in the margins of the European Council meeting on 1 and 2 March. It will enter into force following ratification by at least 12 euro zone countries and is open to EU countries not currently members of the euro area.