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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Jean-Maurice Dehousse, Martin Schulz, Véronique De Keyser, Olga Zrihen
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on behalf of the PSE Group

on the crisis in the steel sector

European Parliament resolution on the crisis in the steel sector

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular the provisions on social rights, and the provisions of the EC Treaty, in particular Article 136 thereof, according to which the Member States have as their objectives the promotion of employment, improvement of living and working conditions, proper social protection and dialogue between management and labour with a view to lasting high employment and the combating of exclusion,
 - having regard to Directive 75/129/EC, as amended by Directive 92/56/EC, on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to collective redundancies,
 - having regard to Directive 94/45/EC on the establishment of a European Works Council,
 - having regard to Directive 2002/14/EC establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the high-level group on the social and economic consequences of industrial change, and the creation of an observatory on industrial change,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the restructuring, transfer and closure of companies in the EU,
- A. whereas the steel company Arcelor, formed as a result of the merger of Arbed and Usinor, announced in January that it intended to close hot rolling lines in all the group's continental sites by 2006,
- B. whereas the effect of this decision in Belgium may be the planned laying off of 6000 to 10 000 workers in Cockerill in 2006,
- C. whereas this restructuring measure also concerns other Arcelor sites in Lorraine, Luxembourg and Spain, and whereas, given the fact that Arcelor is the world's leading steel industry group, this may eventually lead to restructuring throughout the European steel sector,
- D. whereas such decisions not only reduce employment but very often undermine the economic and social cohesion of the regions concerned and increase discontent among workers and the general public,
1. Emphasises the urgent need to create a regulatory legal framework to prevent ultraliberal excesses by multinational companies from having disastrous social consequences;

2. Reminds the Commission that, since the disappearance of the ECSC, it is responsible for dealing with the economic and social consequences which Europe's enlargement to include new Member States will have for the steel industry;
3. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the local authorities concerned, to look into ways of ensuring effective and targeted use of Community funds, particularly the ESF, for professional training and retraining of the workers concerned;
4. Calls on the Commission to consider, as a matter of urgency, ways of initiating with immediate effect a process of gradually reducing state aids to the steel industry in the applicant countries prior to accession, so as to obviate the present risk of unfair competition and social dumping;
5. Calls on the Commission to continue to pursue vigorously, through both the OECD and the WTO, stricter multilateral rules against unfair competition from third countries, whether through subsidies, abuse of trade remedies or other measures;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote innovation, develop new operations aimed at specialisation and quality also in this sector and/or provide for appropriate plans for retraining;
7. Believes that all subsidies granted from public funds should be subject to long-term agreements on the part of the administrators of the various companies, particularly multinationals, with regard to employment, local development and investment aimed at modernising production;
8. Calls on the Member States to promote and strengthen dialogue between management and labour and cooperation within companies and regions so as to implement a consultation method and prior dialogue on the main decisions regarding economic and social policy, in compliance with national and European legislation on informing and consulting workers, and to adopt effective measures to protect trade union representatives;
9. Reminds Arcelor of its ethical commitments as a socially responsible company and demands that all its continental sites be treated equally and without discrimination;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and both sides of industry.