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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Council and Commission statements

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

by Mr Suominen, Mr von Wogau, Mr Pronk and Mr Chichester

on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

on the preparation for the Lisbon Extraordinary European Council of 23/24 March on "Employment, economic reforms and social cohesion - towards a Europe based on innovation and knowledge"

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Resolution on the preparation for the Lisbon Extraordinary European Council of 23/24 March on "Employment, economic reforms and social cohesion - towards a Europe based on innovation and knowledge"

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the contribution of the Commission, to the Presidency background document, and to the various other contributions of the Commission on the different aspects of the processes for employment policies (Luxembourg), structural reform (Cardiff) and macro-economic dialogue (Cologne),
- A. whereas the European Council in June 1999 in Cologne decided to hold this special meeting with the stated objective of examining the existing processes and instruments aimed at strengthening employment, economic reform and social cohesion in the framework of a knowledge-based economy,
- B. whereas the European Council also decided that a forum of representatives of the governments of the Member States, the Commission, the European Parliament, the social partners and of the European Central Bank will evaluate the results,
- C. whereas this European Council is taking place at a time when changes are already under way in the European economy, driven by worldwide competition, shifting consumer preferences and new technologies,
- D. whereas the growth forecast for the European Union of about 3% for 2000 and 2001 is based on sound fundamentals, and unemployment is on a downward trend, but remains unacceptably high,
- E. whereas the fact of being unemployed or economically inactive considerably increases the risk of belonging to a low-income group, and whereas children and those in large families are over-represented among the sector of the population living below the poverty threshold in the European Union as whole,
- F. whereas the launch of the Euro combined with the formation of the internal market makes this a crucial moment for the European economy,

General considerations

1. Commends the European Council for holding this special meeting, which should aim to create the political and economic conditions for the European Union to transform itself into the most dynamic and competitive area in the world;
2. Calls upon the European Council to set out clearly the philosophy underlying this endeavour, which should be based on the values of the European social model while

recognising that, in a changing world, economic policies have to be adapted accordingly, with emphasis on self-reliance rather than on state intervention;

3. Calls on the European Council, when setting out its political guidelines to
 - i) strengthen the European social market economy
 - ii) focus on both improving incentives to work, and the conditions for doing business in Europe especially in the field of the Information Society;
4. Points out that while the agenda for the meeting is a complex combination of many topics, the common denominator must be the delivery of a better quality of life for people in the European Union;

Pursuing economic reform to prepare the knowledge economy

5. Points out that the internal market still consists of 15 different home markets, and that it remains necessary to transform it into a real European home market for the citizens and companies of Europe;
6. Stresses that the internal market programme must be modernised, and quickly, to allow e-commerce to flourish within a light regulatory framework; at the same time recognises that the wider information society concerns the organisation and values of our society, and could pose new challenges to social cohesion which must be anticipated and tackled in good time;
7. Therefore calls for practical measures, as the Commission has also proposed, to make available to every citizen of Europe – whether young or old – and every business, an infrastructure which gives them the opportunity and ability to participate in the European information society, and to establish the EU as a world leader in new information products and services;
8. Since the early extension of the programme is central to progress, calls upon the European Council to endorse the internal market deadlines proposed by the Commission, such as new public procurement rules by 2002, and fully integrated financial markets by 2005;
9. Reiterates its call for practical measures to reduce the burden of red tape and taxation on small and medium-sized businesses, and for easier access to venture capital and complementary technological capacities, particularly for such businesses;
10. Calls on the European Council to ensure that agreed liberalisation measures in the telecoms markets are fully implemented, and to take the political steps to develop further liberalisation in utilities such as electricity, gas and telecoms; experience has shown that liberalisation means new jobs, more competition and lower prices for both industrial and domestic consumers;
11. Points out the important role of research as a key factor for economic growth and for society; emphasises to the European Council the need to avoid the pitfalls of compartmentalisation and of overlapping between Member States, the importance of the

development of closer links between universities and companies, and of the sharing of results;

12. Calls for further improvement of the protection of intellectual property at the level of the European Union and specially for a reduction of the cost of the European patent;
13. Calls for a stronger involvement of the Union in the large research and development projects linked to space, satellites and Transeuropean networks;

Strengthening the European social model by investing in people

14. Welcomes the proposal by the Portuguese Presidency to relate employment policy to economic reform and innovation, since the improvement of economic performance leading to sustainable growth of the economy is the best way to preserve social cohesion;
15. However, cautions the European Council against bringing the procedures for macro-economic policies, structural reforms and employment under the single umbrella of the Broad Economic Guidelines; in integrating these, due regard must be had towards both the economic and the social perspectives;
16. Urges the extraordinary European Council in Lisbon in particular to initiate a European strategy to combat social exclusion, based on common indicators, the adoption of European guidelines and the implementation of national action programmes accompanied by public verification procedures;
17. Cautions the European Council against setting precise targets for employment and unemployment rates, as proposed by the Commission;
18. Given that industrial restructuring decisions can have serious social repercussions, calls upon the European Council to give attention to the propagation across the EU of best practices by management for the alleviation of the adverse effects of change;
19. Expects the Council to adopt practical measures and quantifiable objectives for the realisation of lifelong learning and promote the mobility of pupils and trainees, particularly by means of mutual recognition of diplomas and of the duration of courses;
20. Calls on the Member States to transform their education systems and vocational training and further training systems so as to meet the demand for skilled staff in sectors with a promising future (information technology, e-commerce, tourism and innovative services); solutions have to be found at national level where quality and diversity can be better guaranteed under the principle of subsidiarity and in respect of national competences in education;
21. Supports efforts to modernise fiscal and parafiscal rules so that, taking account of family life, work is worthwhile for all citizens, and expects practical guidelines to be laid down on the modernisation of social protection to bring it into line with changes in the need for

self-provision for risk, and in terms and conditions of employment;

22. As regards saving for old age, points out the relevance of the Financial Services Action Plan which covers private pensions, and more generally the opening up of the market to enable the best return available to be obtained, with the same level of investor protection throughout the EU;
23. Calls on the European Council to give an impulse for a positive decision on the European Company Statute;

Follow-up

24. Stresses the importance of keeping up the momentum of this new strategy for the European Union; therefore calls for a framework for action setting out the roles of the Council in its various formations, the Commission and for the Member States, always respecting the principle of subsidiarity;
25. Underlines that the objectives will best be achieved by close co-operation between the Council, Commission and Parliament, and with the Member States, in monitoring progress and in exerting pressure in areas where progress is lagging behind; therefore doubts the value or necessity of the proposed new Forum;
26. Stresses the need to involve the citizens of Europe in this endeavour, and therefore proposes the creation of a Europa website where the Lisbon objectives are laid out and citizens can suggest what might be done to achieve them;

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27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the applicant States, the European Central Bank, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.