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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

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on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

on preparations for the Stockholm European Council of 23/24 March 2001

European Parliament resolution on preparations for the Stockholm European Council of 23/24 March 2001

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of 23-24 March 2000, which set out the strategic goal for the European Union *'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'*,
 - having regard to the subsequent legislative proposals, and to various documents submitted by the Commission and Council to the European Council, and in particular to the Commission synthesis paper 'Realising the European Union's potential: consolidating and extending the Lisbon strategy',
- A. whereas the Lisbon European Council's guidelines are based on strengthening the social market economy,
- B. whereas the Stockholm European Council will be the first of the annual meetings for ensuring overall coherence and the effective monitoring of progress towards the strategic goal, and will therefore set important precedents in this ten-year exercise,

GENERAL CONSIDERATION OF THE STRATEGY AND AIMS AGREED AT LISBON

1. Commends to the European Council the Commission's synthesis paper, and endorses the political message of the Commission that Member States must bridge the gap between the commitments entered into in Lisbon and their implementation on the ground;
2. Expects, therefore, that the European Council will adopt a self-critical stance at Stockholm;
3. In the light of their assessment, calls upon the European Council to focus on achieving tangible results in further liberalisation and an improved business climate, more and better-quality jobs, improved education and training, and greater social cohesion;
4. Advises against setting too many targets, which may prove not only to be contradictory or produce perverse effects, but may also serve to reduce the margin of manoeuvre of Member States in achieving the strategic goal;
5. Considers that statistical indicators and benchmarking can be useful tools in the effort to make Europe more dynamic, but warns that the statistical burden on business must be reduced;

ECONOMIC REFORM

6. Underlines the importance of the stability and growth pact in sustaining steady growth, low inflation and sound public finances in all Member States; reform is more readily achievable when economies are doing well;
7. Calls upon the European Council to give special attention to the Final Report of the Committee of Wise Men on European Securities Regulation, chaired by Mr Alexandre Lamfalussy, on which it is adopting a separate resolution;
8. Asks the European Council to bring a sense of urgency into the internal market dossiers lying in Council; the European Council should instruct the Council of Ministers immediately to arrive at a common position for the gradual and achievable liberalisation of postal services, and also set a deadline for completing the internal market for electricity and gas;
9. Stresses that all hindrances to doing business throughout the single market must be removed; enterprise must be encouraged, not hindered through over-regulation, over-taxation and over-legislation; against the background of the Commission Interim Report on reducing regulatory burdens (via business impact assessment etc.), reminds the European Council of the commitments contained in the European Charter for Small Enterprises which it endorsed in June 2000;

MODERNISING LABOUR MARKETS

10. Welcomes the creation of an estimated 2.6 million new jobs in the last three years, but points out that the level of unemployment, especially in most of the larger Member States, remains unacceptably high;
11. Endorses the Commission's proposal for a high-level task force to look at cross-frontier mobility; membership of this task force must be broadly-based, so that it can propose feasible ways of tackling the main barriers to mobility which have already been identified by the Parliament and Commission;
12. Recognises that improving the quality of employment will assist, in particular, in keeping both women and people approaching the end of the traditional working life in the labour market, thereby making a significant contribution to economic growth;
13. Asks the European Council, when considering the implications of demographic trends for, inter alia, Member States' pensions, social security and education systems, to clearly state that the ageing of the population is a positive benefit resulting from better health care; the advantages of this change by far outweigh the disadvantages;
14. Underlines that an innovative and knowledge-based economy, based on equal opportunities and individuals being able to develop their lives according to their own ambitions, requires labour markets to be organised much more flexibly;

INNOVATION AND TRAINING

15. Joins with the Commission in deploring the slow progress in areas such as the Community patent and the life-long learning strategy; also, calls on the European Council to break the deadlock over the second phase of development of Galileo (the European satellite navigation system), and to address the issue of state aids designed to promote risk capital;
16. Agrees that in the field of information technology, all elements of the telecommunications package, including the eEurope Action Plan, must be adopted this year; urges progress in the field of biotechnology, while the European Council must recognise that there are moral and ethical issues arising from the application of some of those technologies, on which a temporary committee of the Parliament will be reporting;
17. As regards the future objectives of education systems, regrets that no opportunity was given to it to comment on the Commission and Council reports; advocates strengthening education systems by making them more responsive to individual needs; it is desirable for there to be a wide range of public and private establishments competing with each other in order to facilitate the access of all to the education and training systems;

COHESION

18. Calls on the European Council to regain the momentum lost for modernising the European social model in ways that are less reliant on publicly-financed collective solutions for achieving social cohesion;
19. As regards the fight against social exclusion and poverty, which must remain primarily a matter for Member States, stresses that the Community programmes to facilitate open co-ordination must not be for the benefit of bureaucrats and certain NGOs but must lead to improved policies and structures to resolve the difficulties experienced by young people and by the less privileged such as the disabled, the elderly and legally-resident immigrants;
20. Calls on the European Council to initiate appraisals by national and regional authorities of the present system of Structural Funds, so that discussions can begin with Parliament and Commission on laying the foundations for a policy on cohesion in an enlarged Union;

CONCLUSIONS

21. Considers that the Stockholm European Council and subsequent Spring European Councils must continue on the path laid down in Lisbon and extend the project to the applicant countries; these occasions should not be used primarily to pursue national political agendas, while letting the project slip into a bureaucratic, statistics-gathering 'Lisbon process';

22. Calls on the European Council to follow the lead in the Commission's synthesis paper by adopting a more structured working method for better co-operation between the Community institutions, with a full role for the European Parliament, in order to create the conditions for the successful achievement of the strategic goal;
23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Council, the Commission, the Council and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the applicant States.