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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 Verts/ALE Group

on preparation for the Spring European Council on 21 March 2003 in Brussels

European Parliament resolution on preparation for the Spring European Council on 21 March 2003 in Brussels

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Commission's synthesis report to the 2003 Spring European Council (COM(2003) 0004),
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission: Choosing to grow: Knowledge, innovation and jobs in a cohesive society, report to the Spring European Council, 21 March 2003, on the Lisbon strategy of economic, social and environmental renewal (COM(2003) 0005),
 - having regard to the Commission staff working paper 'Progress on the Lisbon strategy' (SEC(2003) 0025),
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission on the European Employment Strategy (COM(2003) 0006),
 - having regard to the Göteborg European Council conclusions of 15 and 16 June 2001, and to its resolutions of 31 May 2001 on the environment and sustainable development (Hulthén report), 16 May 2002 (Papayannakis and Lannoye reports) and 16 September 2002 on the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development,
 - having regard to the overall aims of the Union enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty, which provides for a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment and social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States,
- A. whereas it should be recognised that pursuing environmental objectives will also have a dynamic impact on growth, development and social well-being; far from being in contradiction with the objective of full employment, an ambitious environmental policy based on sound legislation and promotion of new environmentally-friendly technologies can create a large number of jobs,
- B. whereas EU citizens are increasingly calling for a new growth and economic development approach based on high standards of environmental protection, jobs and working conditions, education and training, as well as public health and food safety as part of a modernised European economic and social model,
- C. whereas monetary policy has an impact on investment and growth, and whereas interest rates are necessarily homogeneous for the whole of the euro zone, whilst inflation rates, growth perspectives, public deficits and debt levels and are varying considerably,

- D. whereas there is widespread concern that the inflexible application of the Stability and Growth Pact could prove to be a major obstacle to overcoming the current crises and to improving the economic prospects of the Union,
1. Reaffirms the importance of sustainable development being included as the leading principle behind all EU policies;
 2. Underlines that the environmental pillar of sustainable development is equally as important as the economic and social pillars; believes that the environmental indicators developed by the Commission and included in the list of structural indicators are a good basis for future assessments of sustainable development, but that this list needs to be further refined and developed, notably in the field of biodiversity and resource use;
 3. Calls on the European Council to make sure that sustainable development becomes a major and regular aspect of forthcoming Spring Councils by asking the Commission to prepare an annual stocktaking of the Cardiff, Göteborg and Johannesburg processes, to be presented together with the synthesis report before the end of the year preceding the Spring Council;
 4. Emphasises the fact that the Cardiff process on integrating the environment into Community policies needs to regain momentum by means of the adoption of quantified sectoral targets, complementary to the existing indicators, which will help with the implementation of the various Cardiff Council strategies;
 5. Commits itself to developing detailed and permanent mechanisms to evaluate the implementation of the outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit as well as progress on the internal sustainable development strategy and the Cardiff process, in order to fulfil its continuing commitment to monitoring progress towards sustainable development; similarly, the Commission should set up appropriate infrastructure to make recommendations to the Spring Council;
 6. Considers that the 'extended impact assessments' introduced in the Commission's 2003 work programme have little in common with the sustainability impact assessments called for by the Göteborg Council;
 7. Welcomes the Council's and the Commission's commitment to full employment and their determination to create more and better jobs; underlines that full employment and improving the quality of employment will make an important contribution to sustainable development; stresses that job creation measures are not an end in themselves, but must lead to real employment; insists on the need to promote a good working environment for all, including equal opportunities for people with disabilities;
 8. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to incorporate quantified targets into the revised European Employment Strategy; calls for measurable objectives and more binding targets with a view to better assessment on the basis of common indicators; calls for an impact assessment on the potential changes to society as a result of the proposals aiming to increase participation by women and older people in the labour market, especially in

relation to the unpaid work currently performed by them;

9. Calls for a new strategy to fully develop an emancipatory model of full employment, based on equality between men and women, shorter working hours, quality of employment and new ways of reconciling work and personal life, lifelong learning, and a skills offensive for the knowledge-based society; calls for environmental restructuring and for environmentally-efficient and people-centred services; calls for new jobs to be created by renewing public service provision and services of general interest, by boosting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and through publicly supported job creation initiatives and measures to develop the social economy;
10. Welcomes the Presidency's intention to promote policies for the integration of groups suffering from social exclusion, especially as 2003 is the European Year of People with Disabilities; points out that the fight against poverty and social exclusion is a vital component of the integrated strategy; insists that it is essential to build an increasingly broad common and coordinated basis in Europe to safeguard social protection systems organised and financed in accordance with high social principles and standards;
11. Calls for a social inclusion strategy underpinned by targets, funding and legislative action on minimum standards, reshaping coordination of pension reforms and healthcare/care for the elderly in order to strengthen solidarity-based systems, broadening their contributory base and eliminating inequality by means of strengthened redistributive elements;
12. Takes note of the joint report by the Council and Commission on adequate and sustainable pensions; calls on the Presidency to follow the Social Protection Committee in its declared objectives for the EU as regards pension systems: 'to ensure that older people are not placed at risk of poverty and can enjoy a decent standard of living, that they actively share in the economic well-being of their country and can accordingly participate actively in public, social and cultural life';
13. Reaffirms the important role of the social partners in implementing the Lisbon sustainability strategy; points out the importance of institutionalising and thus streamlining the involvement of the social partners in the proceedings of the Spring Summit; urges the Council to give high priority to the adoption of the decision on the tripartite Concertation Committee for growth and employment to be convened on the basis of this new formula on the eve of the Spring European Council in March;
14. Calls on the Presidency to take an initiative to start the revision of the European Works Council Directive; underlines that one of the key objectives should be to extend its scope and strengthen information and consultation rights in the event of restructuring;
15. Calls for the adoption of measures to overcome the current economic crisis, including unacceptably high unemployment and ailing economic progress; emphasises that an economic policy based on a purely supply-side approach will not solve the current problems of our economy, nor those of the labour market; calls for an appropriate policy mix to be incorporated into the broad economic policy guidelines (BEPG), including

measures to strengthen the demand side of the economy;

16. Points out that a recent report on the BEPG, presented to Parliament in January 2003, identified no fewer than eight distinct coordination mechanisms, and admits to a certain degree of confusion about which does what and how all the coordination machinery fits together;
17. Welcomes, however, the intention of streamlining the various economic and social policy coordination processes; at the same time, calls for more clarity and for the inclusion of the budgetary surveillance procedure in this exercise;
18. Emphasises that the BEPG must not develop into a 'coordination of coordination processes' unless it properly reflects all inputs into this coordination exercise; urges that other Council formations should be involved in the adoption of the BEPG on an equal footing and proposes that the 'Spring Council' should be transformed into a 'Sustainability Council';
19. Reiterates its calls to be more closely involved - and at an earlier stage - in the preparation of the BEPG; calls for the BEPG to be adopted by the Council and Parliament together;
20. Regrets that the Commission did not come forward with any concrete proposals on how to improve the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) with a view to transforming that Pact into a 'Stability, Investment and Employment Pact' which is respectful of the environment;
21. Calls on the Council to agree on the adjustments required for the intelligent and flexible application of the Pact and the introduction of more sophisticated criteria; is convinced that a 'golden rule' approach to public deficits should be applied in the excessive deficit procedure; calls for investment contributing to the goals of the Lisbon strategy to be excluded from the nominal restrictions of the SGP;
22. Judges that the positive economic effects of further market liberalisation, as set out in the Commission's policy recommendations, have been overestimated; asks the Commission to come forward with an evaluation of the impact of liberalisation on the basis of a pluralist external assessment in the various areas of the EU economy;
23. Draws attention to the Commission's statement that shifting taxation from labour to environmental taxes has contributed to job creation in several Member States; invites, therefore, Member States to undertake a coordinated effort to progressively replace taxation of labour by green taxes; asks the Commission to come forward with additional proposals to support and speed up this process by means of appropriate coordination mechanisms;
24. Fully supports the Commission's criticism of Member States for not having made progress in reducing environmentally damaging subsidies and tax exemptions and calls on the Commission to propose appropriate measures, including infringement proceedings

before the Court where possible, to swiftly put an end to such subsidies;

25. Congratulates the Council on the progress made concerning the 'tax package'; calls for the swift adoption of the whole package, including the code of conduct on business taxation; hopes for positive results on the energy taxation issues; invites the Commission and the Council alike to take all necessary steps to put an end to harmful tax competition, tax evasion and tax avoidance practices, all of which threaten Member State budgets and citizens' confidence;
26. Points to the crucial importance of services of general interest (SIG) for the European social model; calls for a clear undertaking from the Council and Commission alike that internal market rules will not hinder the establishment and further development of such services; calls on the Presidency to invite the Commission to speed up work on a framework Directive for SIG which strengthens the principles underlying Article 16 of the current Treaty;
27. Agrees with the Commission's view that during the years of transition and 'catching up', the applicant countries should not be required to gear their economic policies to the Maastricht nominal convergence criteria;
28. Agrees with the need to finance education, and basic education in particular, more effectively, to make science teaching more dynamic and interactive, whilst maintaining high standards, and to improve and expand the training of ICT specialists;
29. Welcomes the fact that 90% of schools have access to the Internet and draws attention to the importance of introducing freeware into education with a view to training a generation of intelligent and active ICT users, quite apart from the obvious cost benefits;
30. Calls on the Council not to adopt the directive on the patenting of computer inventions in its current form, a step which would clear the way for the unlimited patenting of software and would seriously hamper innovation and growth in the software sector, which is at the very heart of the knowledge and ICT economy;
31. Applauds the Council's determination to lend fresh impetus to European research and to establish a European research area provided that a fair balance is struck between basic research and applied research, without which the Union will quickly forfeit all creativity and momentum in the sphere of scientific research;
32. Welcomes the objectives laid down in Barcelona of ensuring that 3% of GNP is devoted to R&D, with two-thirds of that funding to be provided by the private sector, and calls on the latter to shoulder its responsibilities; points out that EU money for research should not be used in the field of military and/or defence research;
33. Emphasises the need to establish a clear legal framework governing the ownership of research findings so as not to damage the interests of public research institutes or hamper the dissemination of knowledge;

34. Is convinced that a fully-fledged sustainable Lisbon strategy would have to highlight the important role that energy efficiency has to play when it comes to the competitiveness of the European economy; calls, therefore, for the inclusion of an indicator for energy use in the list of indicators on the general economic background (category 1) - as used to be the case at the very beginning - and for the inclusion of a goal on energy intensity in the list of headline Lisbon targets;
35. Regrets the fact that the Council of Energy Ministers again postponed a decision on an EU-wide energy tax vital to the establishment of a level playing field in the sphere of energy and transport; urges, therefore, the Council of Energy Ministers to take a decision at its next meeting;
36. Expresses its disappointment at the Council of Energy Ministers' decision on energy market liberalisation, under which the opening-up of markets for commercial clients is not matched by simultaneous unbundling as regards distribution;
37. Expresses its dissatisfaction that the target of a worldwide share of 15% for renewable energy sources as proposed by the European Union could not be agreed upon at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and calls, therefore, on the EU to make every effort to maintain pressure on forthcoming international conferences to adopt such a target; urges that all agreements and investments involving the EU budget in developing countries should be consistent with the Marrakech criteria and reflect the EU's responsibility when it comes to the external dimension of sustainable development;
38. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Council, the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and applicant countries.