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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 Brian Crowley

on behalf of the UEN Group

on the outcome of the European Council (Brussels, 20/21 March 2003)

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European Parliament resolution on the outcome of the European Council (Brussels, 20/21 March 2003)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council meeting held in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000,
- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council meeting held in Gothenburg in 2001,
- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council meeting held in Barcelona in 2002,
- having regard to the SMEs' Charter,
- having regard to the Green Paper on Entrepreneurship,
- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council meeting held on 20 and 21 March 2003,

European knowledge-based economy

- A. whereas as new strategic objective for the Union was established in Lisbon which sought to create the conditions for the establishment of the most competitive and most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world,
- B. whereas the purpose of the Spring 2003 meeting of the European Council was to set the agenda for the Union's economic, social and environmental action with a view to attaining the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy,
- C. whereas the knowledge-based economy, based on innovation and creativity, presupposes by definition the existence of a market economy based on free competition and respect for individual enterprise,
- D. whereas, however, the strengthening of the market economy in the European Union must not be made incompatible with the existence of general interest services in the Member States,
- E. whereas the slowdown in economic growth makes it more than ever necessary for conditions to be created which are conducive to research and development and to the flowering of creativity,
- F. whereas the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society presupposes the introduction of more effective policies on the information society, the strengthening of the

sectoral reform procedures involving competitiveness and innovation, and the integration of the internal market,

- G. having regard, more particularly, to the need to encourage the development of research in advanced technology (such as biotechnology and space research), which automatically entails an increase in financial investment,
- H. having regard to the progress already made with regard to the coordination of economic policies,
- I. having regard to the stage reached in the structural reforms undertaken in and by the Member States,
- J. having regard to the deficit in Europe with regard to entrepreneurship, particularly in advanced-knowledge sectors,
- K. whereas the recent catastrophe involving the 'Prestige' has emphasised the need to implement the measures included in the Erika I and Erika II packages and to adopt additional measures to enhance maritime safety in the European Union,
- L. whereas the principle of cohesion within the EU should remain a fundamental policy of the European Union, including of the new, enlarged Union,
 1. Welcomes the fact that, three years after its adoption and one third of the way along the path towards the 2010 objective, a large number of the objectives have been attained, with particular regard to mobilisation and support for, or European efforts to achieve, economic and social reform;
 2. Welcomes the fact that five million jobs have been created since the introduction of the Lisbon Strategy but points out that further structural reform, higher productivity and better quality at work will be required if the EU is to reach the 70% employment rate set out in the Lisbon Strategy by 2010;
 3. Deems it essential, in the light of the international slowdown in growth and job creation, economic uncertainties, global political risks and the future enlargement of the Union, that the Union should deliver the economic, social and environmental reforms set out in the Lisbon Strategy and points out that improvements in the employment situation made on the basis of an inclusive labour market must be central to this strategy;
 4. Emphasises the importance of cohesion and of ensuring that the labour-market targets are inclusive and involve a determined effort by the Member States to extend employment opportunities to all;
 5. Calls for special efforts to be made during the European Year of the Disabled so as to ensure that they are better integrated into society and secure better access to the labour market;
 6. Believes that the new three-year employment guidelines which are to be approved at the June European Council should provide a stable basis for a more effective strategy and

agrees with the March European Council on the issues to be addressed and that the guidelines which have been too prescriptive in the past should be limited in number and geared towards results and that they should allow the Member States to take appropriate action, taking into account national traditions and practices;

7. Calls for full account to be taken in the Employment Strategy of demographic issues;
8. Believes that the Employment Strategy must anticipate future employment trends and related skills requirements for men, women and young people and ensure that they are constantly improved, including through lifelong learning measures;
9. Considers that maintaining and improving the incentive to work must be viewed as a central part of the overall Employment Strategy;
10. Emphasises the important role of the social partners in the delivery of the European Employment Strategy, including, for example, in-company training;
11. Welcomes the formation of the new Competitiveness Council which must actively assume its horizontal role in promoting competitiveness and growth as part of an integrated strategy for competitiveness;
12. Takes the view that, while greater coordination of national economic policies, especially budgetary policies, is a necessary objective, it should not be entrusted to a Community body but must, on the contrary, remain solely within the remit of the Member States and function in accordance with the principle of intergovernmental cooperation;
13. Emphasises that, given their strategic aspect, the liberalisation of the transport and energy sectors must not be integrally imposed on the Member States, since such liberalisation would require them to terminate the delivery of a public service or would deprive them of the power to safeguard a national interest deemed vital;
14. Emphasises the primordial importance of SMEs in the economic fabric of the Member States and therefore encourages every initiative designed to promote entrepreneurship in the European Union, particularly by alleviating the administrative burden on undertakings, by lowering tax pressure and by improving the services provided by public administrations;
15. Welcomes, in that connection, the efforts undertaken by some Member States to make the service provided by public administrations and services more user-friendly through the introduction and development of information and communications technologies;
16. Takes the view, with particular regard to the investment required, that the objectives laid down in Lisbon concerning the transition to a knowledge-based economy cannot be attained solely by private operators and that, therefore, the decisive role of the national public authorities in this process must be acknowledged;
17. Calls on the Member States to implement the measures designed to reduce the obstacles to undertakings entering the market by simplifying administrative procedures, improving

access to capital and strengthening the creation of networks, the level of qualifications and the specific qualitative features of jobs in small firms, thereby encouraging entrepreneurship;

18. Supports the Council's request to the Commission that, before the Spring 2004 European Council, it propose, as a follow-up to its Green Paper on Entrepreneurship, a European entrepreneurship action plan, making every effort, in so doing, to facilitate and accelerate the creation of undertakings, to facilitate access to low-cost finance, in particular venture capital and micro-loans, and to improve legislation governing bankruptcy;
19. Also supports the Council's call to the Member States to participate actively in the consultation process following the presentation by the Commission of its Green Paper on Entrepreneurship;
20. Joins with the European Council in encouraging the Member States to accelerate the implementation, in an innovative fashion, of the SMEs' Charter in order to guarantee more effective participation by and consultation of small firms in the policy-definition process, to confer more importance thereon by making the fullest use of all the opportunities offered by the appropriate national objectives and peer-group evaluation, for example by speeding up the procedures for the creation and registration of new undertakings;
21. Reiterates its support for the modernisation of Community competition law, of which the priority objectives should be to strengthen the competition culture in the Member States and to make economic operators more aware of their responsibilities;
22. Welcomes the decision to speed up the implementation of the Erika I and Erika II packages and to adopt a system of criminal penalties based on the European Commission's proposal relating to maritime pollution offences;
23. Welcomes the reaffirmation of the determination to strengthen cohesion within the EU, a policy in which the EU can play a leading role by promoting sustainable development;
24. Also welcomes, with particular regard to enlargement, better use of and improvements in existing infrastructure, by the filling in of the missing links and the reduction of bottlenecks in regions which have natural barriers to transfrontier movements, by means of investment in basic infrastructure which uses the EU funds available and joint public-private initiatives;
25. Welcomes the invitation issued to major international financial organisations to review, together with the Commission, initiatives relating to transport infrastructure projects in South-eastern Europe and, in particular, in the countries in the western Balkans;
26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States.