

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

13 March 2000

B5-0236/2000}
B5-0239/2000}
B5-0240/2000}RC1/corr.

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 37(4) of the Rules of Procedure

by the following Members:

Suominen, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

Murphy, on behalf of the PSE Group

Jensen, on behalf of the ELDR Group

replacing motions by :

- the PSE Group (B5-0236/2000)
- the PPE-DE Group (B5-0239/2000)
- the ELDR Group (B5-0240/2000)

on the Special European Council to be held in Lisbon on 23/24 March 2000

The European Parliament,

1. Welcomes the Portuguese Presidency's intention to use the Special Lisbon Council to set new strategic objectives to make the European Union the world's most competitive and sustainable dynamic knowledge-based economy with the aim of the return to full employment, high economic growth and greater social cohesion;
2. Considers that only a strong economy can effectively tackle poverty, social exclusion and unemployment. Economic dynamism is essential for a healthy and enabling society that is the cornerstone of a strong democracy. Globalisation, technological change and demographic developments are common European challenges demanding common answers by Europe;

Increasing employment

3. Welcomes the Presidency's and Commission's proposals that more common European targets and indicators should be established within the economic, employment and social

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PE 288.727}
PE 288.730}
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strategy; underlines that not only quantified targets but also qualitative benchmarks and annual peer reviews are of importance in many areas of policy, for example in investment, employment, research and development and social cohesion;

4. Considers that, in general, Member States should reduce the overall tax burden on labour where it has a diminishing effect on the employment rate, and develop policies to shift taxation away from jobs and incomes;
5. 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 business; favours the creation of a Charter for Small Firms, as well as an early agreement on the single European company statute;
6. Believes that employability must be enhanced by a greater and more innovative investment in education, training and life-long learning, by intensified language learning and by the full and mutual recognition of academic and vocational qualifications, and calls on the Member States to transform their education and vocational training systems so as to meet the demand for skilled staff in sectors with a promising future;
7. Considers that labour mobility in Europe must be increased through the establishment of appropriate rules of employment and social benefits including for example portability of pensions and social insurance;

Social solidarity and inclusiveness

8. Underlines the fact that the EU and its Member States must intensify their activities directed towards modernising social protection as a matter of common concern; therefore calls for a European social protection strategy along the lines of the proposed open method of co-ordination;
9. Supports efforts to modernise fiscal and parafiscal rules so that work is worthwhile for all citizens, and expects practical guidelines to be laid down on the modernisation of social protection;
10. Agrees that in relation to social exclusion Member States should be sharing best practices and the exchange of information based on the four pillars of the modernisation of social protection agreed by the European Council in Helsinki and in anticipation of the work of the High-Level Group;
11. Stresses also that precise knowledge of the social situation in all the Member States is necessary to implement these policies and demands therefore that an effort be made to produce comparable statistics for the Member States on health, the labour market and the financial aspects (costs and resources) of all the elements of social protection systems, whether related to state policies, local authorities or to the activities of private institutions;

Pursuing economic reform to prepare the knowledge economy

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12. Stresses that the internal market programme must be modernised, and quickly, to allow e-commerce to flourish within an appropriate 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;
13. 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;
14. Calls on the European Council to ensure that agreed single market measures in the telecoms markets are fully implemented, and to take the political steps to develop further single markets in utilities such as electricity, gas and telecoms;
15. Believes that the European basic R&D effort should be more sensitive to market requirements; welcomes the Commission initiative to create a European Research Area to end the current fragmentation in European innovative research;
16. Expresses its support for the E-Europe initiative, which must aim for universal and low-cost access to the Internet, and to the work on universal access and modernised public services, which must give special attention to the social impact of the information society; emphasises that the development of e-commerce to consumers depends on the existence of consumer confidence and quick dispute resolution systems; calls on the European Council to give a lead to all the institutions of the EU in taking the fullest advantage of the Internet to ensure inclusion and participation for everybody, to create a new transparency in work, and new means of communication with Europe's citizens;

Towards a policy mix

17. Cautions the European Council, however, 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;
18. Supports the new approach concerning streamlining of existing procedures and processes with an open method of coordination; proposes in this respect:
 - bringing together, in a single and concise annual report on the economic and social state of the European Union, the Commission's analyses currently published in different reports, such as the Annual Economic Report and the Employment Report, as well as reports on Europe's competitive situation, economic reform and support for small and medium-sized enterprises,

- grouping recommendations derived from these analyses into a set of annual “European policy guidelines for growth and employment”, to be debated every year at the highest political level, i.e. the June European Council, following due participation of all relevant Council formations, Parliament, and other EU institutions in the preparatory discussions;
19. Considers that the prime responsibility of the EU to create new jobs lies in the improvement of the European macroeconomic framework. The main responsibilities of national governments and social partners for employment must not be shifted to the European Union. Welcomes therefore the explicit respect for the principle of subsidiarity embedded in the Luxembourg Process;
 20. Supports therefore the Presidency proposal to call for policy contributions from a range of Councils, in particular from the Labour and Social Affairs Councils, but also from the Internal Market and Industry Councils, as an input into the overall policy guidelines; considers however that the European Council, as the body responsible (with support from the European Parliament and the Commission) for the economic governance of the Union, should ensure a balanced approach between all Councils involved and should be charged with integrating these contributions into a coherent overall position on growth, employment and social cohesion in Europe;

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21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Governments of the Member States, the Council and the Commission.