

P6_TA(2009)0120

Input to Spring 2009 European Council on the Lisbon Strategy

European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2009 on the input to the Spring 2009 European Council in relation to the Lisbon Strategy

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2008 entitled 'Implementation report for the Community Lisbon Programme 2008-2010' (COM(2008)0881) and the Commission Recommendation of 28 January 2009 for a Council recommendation on the 2009 up-date of the broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and the Community and on the implementation of Member States' employment policies (COM(2009)0034),
- having regard to the 27 National Lisbon Reform Programmes, as presented by the Member States,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 October 2007 entitled 'The European Interest: Succeeding in the age of globalisation - Contribution of the Commission to the October Meeting of Heads of State and Government' (COM(2007)0581),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 November 2007 a single market for 21st century Europe (COM(2007)0724),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2008 on the external dimension of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs - Reporting on market access and setting the framework for more effective international regulatory cooperation (COM(2008)0874),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2008 entitled 'An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training' (COM(2008)0865),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2008 entitled 'New Skills for New Jobs – Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs' (COM(2008)0868),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2008 entitled 'Cohesion policy: investing in the real economy' (COM(2008)0876),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 November 2008 entitled 'A European Economic Recovery Plan' (COM(2008)0800),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 December 2008 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1927/2006 on establishing the Globalisation Adjustment Fund (COM(2008)0867),
- having regard to the European Council's conclusions of 23 and 24 March 2000, 23 and 24

March 2001, 22 and 23 March 2005, 27 and 28 October 2005, 23 and 24 March 2006, 8 and 9 March 2007 and 13 and 14 March 2008,

- having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2007 on the European Interest: succeeding in the age of globalisation¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 February 2008 on the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (Part: broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and the Community): Launching the new cycle (2008-2010)²,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 November 2008 on the EMU@10: The first ten years of Economic and Monetary Union and future challenges³,
- having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

Financial crisis and economic and social impacts

1. Notes that the global financial crisis stemming from global macro-economic imbalances and a worldwide credit crisis has inflicted serious damage on financial systems all over the world, including the European Union; notes also that the global financial crisis has brought massive destruction of equity market capitalisation all over the world, that its negative effects on 'real economies' are profound and, in particular, that the implications for employment and the social situation are far-reaching; underlines that financial markets are of crucial importance to the 'real economy' and that one of the priorities – besides safeguarding employment – for growth and employment is to get capital flowing again, providing credits and financing to investments, which calls for renewed confidence and trust, through clear commitments and government guarantees, as well as better implemented supervision, covering all financial markets in a global perspective, and regulations supporting responsible provision of credits to the markets;
2. Recommends that the short-term measures applied to counterbalance the immediate direct consequences of the crisis and minimise the negative effects on the real economy, and the recovery packages must be followed by a coordinated short- and long-term action plan that would bring the EU economies to a stable growth path and protect against similar crises in the future;
3. Recalls that, in its resolution of 20 February 2008 on the input for the 2008 Spring Council as regards the Lisbon Strategy⁴, Parliament already pointed to the overriding importance of safeguarding the stability of financial markets, noted that the recent subprime crisis shows the need for the European Union to develop oversight measures in order to strengthen the transparency and stability of the financial markets and better protect customers, requested an evaluation of the current systems and instruments of prudential supervision in Europe and insisted on close consultation with Parliament, leading to clear recommendations on how to improve the stability of the financial system and its ability to provide secure long-term finance for European business;

¹ OJ C 282 E, 6.11.2008, p. 422.

² Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0058.

³ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0543.

⁴ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0057.

4. Stresses that financial markets are, and will remain, at the core of functioning social market economies, that they are meant to provide financing for the 'real economy' and also to infuse efficiency in resource allocation and that they are also meant to provide economies with the means to prosper, which in turn have made it possible for citizens to make sustained gains in their living standards in the past decades; stresses that fully reliable, efficient and transparent financial markets are prerequisites for a healthy and innovative growth-and-jobs-creating European economy;
5. Stresses that the financial crisis has created an opportunity where the need for innovation as a motor for the economy can no longer be ignored; the time is right to create the dynamic knowledge-based economy Europe set out to build some eight years ago; it is time to create the most energy-efficient economy that has the potential to transform the world and ensure European prosperity and international competitiveness for decades to come. It is time to stimulate innovative industries, with the capacity to bring new growth to Europe;
6. Recognises the positive results of rescue measures adopted to avoid additional damage to the fiscal system; calls, nevertheless, for a new financial architecture through the establishment of transparent and effective regulation which is in the best interest of consumers, enterprises and employees; calls for further legislative proposals as well as international agreements that can tackle excessive risk-taking, leveraging and economic short-termism as basic sources of the crisis; reminds the Commission of its obligation to respond to Parliament's requests concerning the regulation of hedge funds and private equity and expects legislative proposals in the short term;
7. Stresses the urgent need to ensure that the financial sector, which benefited from public support, provides companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and households with sufficient credit; insists that rescue plans must contain binding conditions with regard to dividend distribution as well as lending practices;
8. Warns against a vicious circle of lower investments and lower consumer spending, leading to job cuts, downsized business plans and less innovation, which is likely to push the EU into a deep and longer-lasting recession; stresses that a coordinated European response is crucial in this context to avoid the crisis leading to a sum of conflicting national plans for financial stability and economic recovery, with potential conflicts and costs, undermining the internal market, economic stability and the Economic and Monetary Union, as well as the European Union's role as global economic actor;
9. Expects joint action to overcome the effects of the financial crisis on the real economy; calls for the setting of benchmarks with regard to future employment and growth rates, which should then help to determine the size and components of the European Economic Recovery Plan; calls, in this context, for the development – in the framework of the growth and stability pact and its rules of flexibility – of a coherent European strategy for future investments (e.g. in qualified and skilled human capital to allow technological breakthroughs and development, innovation, energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructures, communication technologies, interconnection and services including health services, and opportunities for business life, not least for SMEs to invest in new products and markets), the safeguarding of jobs and income, as well as better coordination of economic and social policies;
10. Takes the view that energy from renewable sources, energy efficiency and the environment can act as a strategic focus for stimulus measures, which will create high quality green jobs

and give Europe's industry a first-mover advantage over other regions of the world that have yet to seize the initiative;

11. Takes the view that only a policy which combines the fight against growing unemployment and poverty in the short term with preparing the ground for the transition of our economy towards sustainability in the longer term can bring about a longer-lasting solution which takes its inspiration from the sustainability strategy agreed in Gothenburg, which has been declared part of the Lisbon Strategy;
12. Stresses that the European Union's top priority must be to protect its citizens from the effects of the financial crisis as they are most strongly affected whether as workers, members of households, or entrepreneurs; takes the view that many workers and their families are or will be hit by the crisis and that action needs to be taken to help stem the loss of jobs and to help people return rapidly to the labour market, rather than face long-term unemployment; expects the 2009 Spring European Council to agree on clear guidance and concrete measures to safeguard employment and create job opportunities;
13. Considers that among the impacts of the economic crisis the rise of poverty in the European Union is the greatest concern; considers it essential to halt the current rise in unemployment in the European Union; points out that the most efficient way of reducing and preventing poverty is through a strategy based on the goals of full employment, high-quality jobs, social inclusion, measures to encourage entrepreneurship, and activities to boost the role of SMEs and investments; recalls that a strategy to address exclusion from the labour market should be based on adequate living standards and income support, inclusive labour markets as well as access to high-quality services and education; considers, therefore, that employment must be supported by actions for entrepreneurs, SMEs and investments, as well as initiatives to help people in re-entering the labour market; considers that a special priority in this respect should be retraining the unemployed and providing education aimed at creating a skilled and specialised workforce; considers that the principle of solidarity is fundamental to the European construction process, that Community financing should be made available to Member States in respect of schemes aimed at preventing the excessive loss of jobs, retraining workers and endowing non-skilled people with skills; considers that labour regulation needs to be developed in order to achieve a higher degree of flexibility and security within the labour market as well as in getting a new job; considers that Community financial instruments, such as the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, must be revamped so that they can be deployed efficiently and in a timely manner, in relation to large sectors of the economy that are shedding jobs; welcomes the Commission's proposal to simplify the criteria for the European Social Fund and refocus activities towards the most vulnerable;
14. Points out that SMEs, which form the keystone of Europe's economy, are particularly hard hit by the current economic downturn; stresses that the credit squeeze has hit the SME sector hardest, since it is the part of the economy that relies most on short-term working capital, usually provided through credits; points out that lack of capital, coupled with a generalised slump in demand is forcing SMEs to retreat on all fronts; points out that the current hardships of SMEs, as the largest contributors to GDP and the largest employer in the European Union, have the furthest-reaching consequences as regards the European Union as a whole, and, in particular, as regards the most vulnerable and affected regions; stresses, furthermore, the importance of rapidly implementing the Small Business Act in general and, in particular, provisions for credits to SMEs through European Investment

Bank (EIB) action;

15. Stresses that sufficient, affordable and reasonably secure access to finance is a decisive precondition for investment and growth; believes that, in the current economic climate, the Small Business Act and its objectives are now more important than ever, as SMEs offer untapped potential for economic growth and for creating and sustaining jobs, and provide an opportunity for political leadership and the underpinning of confidence in Europe's enterprise sector;
16. Points out that, for sustained growth, Europe needs a healthy, dynamic and skilled labour force; and that this is unfortunately undermined, inter alia, by negative population growth in most Member States; considers that an effective childcare infrastructure, as agreed at the European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002, is an important catalyst for reconciling work and family life; considers that the development of child care, based on families, makes it easier for women as well as men to take part in working life and raise families; points out that increasing women's employment not only leads to the growth of the economy as a whole but also contributes to alleviating the demographic challenges that are facing Europe today; considers that solidarity between generations must be stimulated to gain more potential from existing labour force;
17. Insists nonetheless, that Member States must revamp their immigration policies, so as to aim to specifically attract, in a targeted manner, highly skilled immigrants who meet the demands of the European labour market, building on the United States' experience in this area, and taking care to cooperate with the countries of origin in order to avoid a brain drain; considers that education policy should be aimed more at attracting foreign researchers and students, who stay in the European Union for longer periods of time (e.g. the Erasmus Mundus programme, 2007-2012); considers that one of the crucial prerequisites for creating the world's leading knowledge-based economy is that all Member States guarantee and protect the basic rights of legal migrants and provide them access to common European values and respect for cultural diversity;

Citizens' needs and necessary responses

18. Notes that, owing to the current crisis, there are a number of key priorities of the Lisbon Strategy, the implementation of which should be pursued by the European institutions with increased urgency: promoting regional and local competitiveness and adhering to the competition rules, as well as promoting consumer policies to make markets more efficient and equitable, taking advantage of the internal market, particularly in retailing and services; frontloading the implementation of the Small Business Act, in particular the rapid implementation of Directive 2000/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 June 2000 on combating late payment in commercial transactions¹ and the rapid adoption and implementation of the Commission proposal of 25 June 2008 for a Council regulation on the Statute for a European private company (COM(2008)0396), moving forward quickly with the implementation of the European Research Area and the 'fifth freedom' proposals to improve the free circulation of knowledge and innovation by boosting knowledge transfer within the scope of education, research and development (R&D) and industrial production; the adoption of the cost-effective Community Patent and EU-wide Patent Court system, which would significantly improve the competitiveness of European businesses, facilitating companies' access to financing and stimulating innovation;

¹ OJ L 200, 8.8.2000, p. 35.

19. Takes the view that the European Union should pursue a common fundamental goal to create employment opportunities and thus prevent mass unemployment; considers that that goal should therefore determine the magnitude and components of the European Economic Recovery Plan; considers that solidarity is indispensable with a view to ensuring that the European Economic Recovery Plan and accompanying measures have the most positive impact on labour markets in Europe; stresses the need for additional efforts to support the most vulnerable groups in society;
20. Strongly advocates a labour market policy that encourages labour market access for all and promotes lifelong learning; calls on the Member States and the social partners to reach innovative agreements to keep people employed; supports, inter alia, the reduction of social charges on lower incomes to promote the employability of lower-skilled workers and the introduction of innovative solutions (e.g. service cheques for household and child care, hire subsidies for vulnerable groups), which have already been successfully pioneered in some Member States; expects exchanges of best practices in this respect;
21. Stresses the need to strengthen the effectiveness of consumer protection rules in order to respond to the strong expectations of citizens of the Union, in particular with regard to financial products; encourages Member States to establish policies which support the most severely hit victims of the financial crisis;
22. Stresses the importance of ensuring free movement and mobility on the labour market without delay, while insisting on the need to guarantee equal pay for equal work and full respect for collective bargaining and the role of trade unions, including their right to collective action; stresses that the removal of barriers to mobility on the European labour market allows greater protection for the European workforce; notes that the European Union must make an effort to explain to citizens the benefits of an approach that effectively combines enlargement, integration, solidarity and labour mobility;
23. Notes that some Member States have introduced the concept of a minimum wage; suggests that other Member States might benefit from studying their experience; calls on the Member States to safeguard the preconditions for social and economic participation for all and, in particular, to provide for regulations on such matters as minimum wages or other legal and generally binding arrangements or through collective agreements in accordance with national traditions that enable full-time workers to make a decent living from their earnings;
24. Believes the financial crisis provides the opportunity for necessary reforms, with an emphasis on sound economic fundamentals, ranging from appropriate investment in education and skills to quality in public finances and an environment that nurtures innovation and job creation; considers that sustainable growth and job creation in the European Union increasingly depends on excellence and innovation as the main drivers of European competitiveness;
25. Calls on the European Union and its Member States to take swift action to promote growth and jobs and to strengthen demand and consumer confidence; considers a smart growth initiative focusing on the Lisbon Strategy goals such as investments in the 'knowledge triangle' (comprising education, research and innovation), green technologies, energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructures and communication technologies to be essential in this context; underlines the synergy effects of such an initiative with regard to future competitiveness, the labour market and the protection of the environment and resources;

26. Stresses that Member States should continue the reform of labour markets to create more jobs and education systems in order to help raise skill levels, considers that Member States should also continue efforts to encourage productivity growth through more investment in education; stresses also that meeting the challenges of innovation and its dissemination as well as ensuring the labour force's employability and flexibility requires improved education and training, as well as lifelong learning; points out, however, that the current investment in human capital in Europe is still clearly inadequate for a 'knowledge-intensive' economy;
27. Stresses that the current crisis must not be used as a pretext to delay a much needed reorientation of spending towards 'green' investments, but should rather be understood as an extra incentive to press ahead with the much needed ecological conversion of the industry; is convinced that the economic case for tackling climate change is clear and every step to delay the necessary action will ultimately lead to greater costs;
28. Calls on the Member States to revise their budgets and to invest in smart growth projects, thereby making full use of the revised Stability and Growth Pact;
29. Stresses that Member States' economies are highly interdependent; stresses, therefore, the need for more effective coordination and improved governance, which is even more pressing in times of crisis; points out that the argument for more cooperation is strongest in the euro area; refers to its recommendations in the framework of the EMU@10 resolution in this context; expects from the Commission clear and strong guidance towards an improved coordinated approach amongst all Member States;
30. Believes that ditching the fight against climate change and putting environmental investments on hold would be a devastating mistake which would have both an immediate and an inter-generational impact;

Europe's scope for action

31. Stresses the need to strengthen the social dimension of the European and national recovery plans; calls on the Commission to monitor and make proposals on the social impact of the financial crisis, especially on social exclusion, poverty and pensions, up to the 2009 Spring European Council;
32. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the European Social Fund's main funding scheme is mainly directed towards retraining and increased employability as well as social inclusion activities in order to overcome the negative social effects of the crisis; recalls that the focus should be on those most remote from the labour market;
33. Points out that we need a Green New Deal for Europe, which tackles the economic, environmental and social crisis: job creation in the sector of manufacturing and industry-related need to be complemented by massive investment in social services, in particular education and health, by creating better conditions for teaching our children and students, and by massively increasing the number of teachers and improving the physical conditions for learning, all of which is an investment that will pay back in the future;
34. Points out that such a Green New Deal investment should also aim for efficiency gains and substitution for resources other than oil ('critical materials'), which are likely to become scarce in the short to medium term and will hamper the development of certain sectors, e.g.

the information, communication and entertainment industry; notes that, according to recent studies, huge efficiency gains can be made on such materials, which would reduce waste, costs and resource dependency;

35. Points out, with regard to energy, that Europe is currently dependent on fossil fuels as its main source of energy; considers that, while dependency on fossil fuels must be reduced, it is also imperative to achieve energy security for Europe; believes that this means diversifying its sources of fossil fuels, while trying to maintain energy at affordable prices; considers that energy sectors in Member States must be opened up and real competition must be achieved; considers that energy efficiency must be improved through R&D and the mainstreaming of 'best practices'; considers that, with high oil and gas prices in the long run, Europe must be able to reduce its exposure in this area; considers it of utmost importance that the European Union should consider moving towards an internal energy market, to distribute its energy more efficiently between Member States, and to counter its dependence on energy from third countries; considers that the European Union's share of energy from renewable sources must be increased in order to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels; considers that R&D in this area should be intensified and diverse local solutions should be favoured in order to make best use of available energy from renewable sources;
36. Notes that the European Union is still lagging behind the speed of innovations in the US economy; points out that innovation can ensure a speedy recovery of European economies by providing comparative advantage on global markets; points out that, in times of economic downturn, it is common practice to cut back on R&D spending, but that this is the wrong approach, since it is exactly the opposite that needs to be done; believes that increased investment in R&D and education enhances productivity and thus growth; calls for investments in research and science with a view to achieving the goal of 3 % of GDP; stresses that the EU budget must allow for a bigger share of spending for research; considers that Member States should increase, or at least meet, their R&D investment targets and should provide support for private-sector R&D investments, through fiscal measures, loan guarantees and regional clusters and centres of excellence, and any other instruments that can contribute to this objective; considers that adult education and lifelong learning should be priorities at all policy levels, as they increase productivity, while providing the necessary skills for entering the labour market and staying employable within a highly competitive working area;
37. Points out that, since the beginning of the 21st century, technology and telecommunications tools have unleashed the forces of globalisation on a previously unimagined scale, have 'flattened' communications and labour markets and have contributed to a period of unprecedented innovation, making economies more productive and also connecting global citizens; believes, therefore, that by maximising the power and impact of technology on the economy, further open up the internal market in telecommunications, energy and research and the industrial sector in particular, the European Union can emerge stronger from the current economic turmoil, strengthen the quality and affordability of its health care, advance climate-friendly energy development and deployment, improve education throughout its Member States and promote the prospects of the European Union becoming the world's leader in technology and applied technological innovation; points out that the knowledge-based economy needs the development of high-quality services and a broadband strategy able to accelerate the upgrading and extension of networks; takes the view that the Commission proposal within the European Economic Recovery Plan aiming to achieve full coverage with broadband communication networks by 2010 is a necessary step forward that

will allow the European Union to maintain its competitiveness;

38. Asks for more attention to be focused on the Commission's White Paper of 21 November 2001 on Youth (COM(2001)0681) and on the European Council's European Youth Pact adopted on 22 and 23 March 2005 as one of the instruments contributing to the Lisbon Strategy goals; is of the opinion that the Commission should consider and incorporate the impact on youth and the results of the structures dialogue with youth organisations when preparing legislative proposals and that Member States should focus on youth when implementing the Lisbon National Reform Programmes and take youth into account in the relevant policy fields; considers that an increase in student mobility and the quality of the different educational systems should be a priority in the context of redefining the major goals of the Bologna Process beyond 2010 and action must be taken across different policy areas; points out that various aspects of mobility go beyond the scope of higher education and concern the scope of social affairs, finance, and immigration and visa policies to develop a real European Area for Higher Education;
39. Considers a 'Europeanisation' of the financial supervision structure, effective competition rules, appropriate regulation and improved transparency of the financial markets to be essential in the medium term to avoid a repetition of the current crisis; takes the view that an integrated, comprehensive (covering all financial sectors) and coherent supervisory framework, starting with a balanced approach in regulating the cross-border spread of financial risk on the basis of harmonised legislation, would decrease compliance costs in the case of multi-jurisdiction activities; calls on the Commission to put forward proposals for revising the existing supervisory architecture along those principles; calls on the Member States, notwithstanding the measures set out in this paragraph, to return in the medium term to balanced public financing, and therefore calls on the Member States to clarify how they will be able to achieve that objective;
40. Supports the decision of the European members of the G20 at the end of February 2009 in Berlin to take 'definitive actions against tax havens and uncooperative jurisdictions', by agreeing on a toolbox of sanctions as soon as possible, which has to be endorsed at the London summit; recommends that the EU adopt at its own level the adequate legislative framework with appropriate incentives towards market players to refrain from doing business with these jurisdictions; underlines how convergent approaches globally are essential to tackle this issue;
41. Calls on the Member States and the European Union to amend the EU budget with a view to allowing for the use of unused financial resources in order to support the policy goals of the European Union;
42. Is concerned by the increasing regional differences with regard to the effects of the financial crisis, reflected, inter alia, in the increasing spread between the creditworthiness of Member States, leading to higher costs for loans for those with lower ratings; calls for the development of new innovative financial instruments in order to mitigate these effects and to attract fresh capital;
43. Underlines that the crisis is having extremely negative economic and social consequences in many of the new Member States, substantially slowing their convergence with the EU-15; expects, furthermore, spill-over effects, affecting the euro and the economies of the euro-zone; calls, therefore, for strong European solidarity measures to protect the eurozone and strengthen the internal consistency of the European Union, in particular with a view to

stronger support for the economies of Central and Eastern Europe, especially by adapting the structural funds and the Globalisation Fund for these countries, as well as special support from the EIB with regard to new innovative financial instruments; points to the importance of European unity in times of economic crisis when the economic downturn also threatens European common values; calls, therefore, for more attentive and careful action on the part of the Commission with regard to the new Member States;

44. Notes that EU funding instruments should be used to support public spending; points out that, in order to contribute to the economic recovery of the European Union, the implementation rate and speed of these funding instruments needs to be accelerated; considers that the European Union's cohesion policy is an excellent instrument of territorial solidarity, especially the trans-border components thereof; is very satisfied with the recent 'Lisbonisation' of the cohesion policy; considers that, through steps to direct regional funds more towards entrepreneurship, research, innovation, employment and new skills, considerable funds should become available at local level to enhance business potential and support the most vulnerable;
45. Points out that the programmes relating to the Trans-European Transport Network (TENs-T) and the Trans-European Energy Networks (TENs-E) should also make their full contribution both to the European Economic Recovery Plan and to the Lisbon Strategy goals; considers that the positive efforts of the coordinators as well as the setting-up of the Trans-European Transport Network Executive Agency, together with the implementing legislation to improve the efficiency of co-modality, have resulted in a substantial number of fully completed TEN-T projects all over the European Union to boost sustainable growth and better mobility;
46. Notes the essential role of the EIB with regard to the European Economic Recovery Plan; welcomes the increase in capital for the EIB from the Member States in order to issue more loans to SMEs; insists that loans are accessible to SMEs from all Member States, in a transparent and equitable manner; calls for a further strengthening of the role of the EIB with regard to new innovative financial instruments;
47. Considers, with regard to economic governance, that the current economic crisis requires firm, coordinated and timely government intervention by all Member States, as well as regulatory measures in order to shore up financial markets and restore confidence; considers that new legislative measures should be based on the principles of transparency and accountability and that effective monitoring needs to be implemented so as to safeguard consumer rights; considers that new regulation should include requirements against excessive leveraging and for higher capital reserves for banks; points, moreover, in this connection, to the present problems relating to valuation rules and risk assessment; considers that controls need to keep up with financial innovations and that the European Union should enhance the know-how of its regulatory bodies in this respect; considers that more regulation is not necessarily better regulation; considers that Member States must coordinate their regulatory actions; considers that stabilisation standards and regulation of the financial supervision in the euro area must be safeguarded;
48. Recalls that credit rating agencies bear their share of responsibility for the financial crisis; welcomes the call by the European Council to speed up the adoption of the Commission proposal of 12 November 2008 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Credit Rating Agencies (COM(2008)0704) to tighten up the rules on rating

agencies;

49. Calls on the Commission to bring forward a legislative proposal to exempt so-called micro-entities from the scope of the Fourth Council Directive 78/660/EEC of 25 July 1978 based on Article 54(3)(g) of the Treaty on the annual accounts of certain types of companies¹;
50. Believes that it is very urgent to enhance global regulation of the financial sector, which has to reach far beyond the classic banking sector, to undertake bold measures to establish binding rules for prudential supervision, transparency and good practices, and to apply sanctions to all states and territories which do not cooperate; calls on the Commission to put forward appropriate proposals in this regard and urges the Council to prepare the political field in international negotiations for a swift acceptance of such an approach; notes that global financial stability is a public good, and that responsibility for safeguarding this lies with political leaders;
51. Urges the Council to settle, by March 2009, the review of Council Directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax² in order to allow for reduced VAT levels on labour-intensive and staff-intensive services and other appropriate measures to stimulate domestic demand; calls for coordinated action and solidarity by the Member States in this respect by allowing for the differentiated options in sectoral VAT reduction provided for in the VAT Directive which Member States may or may not choose to implement, according to their respective priorities; considers that selective tax incentives should stimulate domestic demand as well as the economy;
52. Warmly welcomes the fact that the Commission has called for a High-Level Group on Debureaucratisation and asks that the proposals agreed by that Group be implemented as soon as possible; stresses that the Lisbon Strategy should provide for the reduction of regulatory burdens on companies, while furthering productivity and thus higher growth rates across the board; believes that the European Union must examine alternatives for regulation, consult with stakeholders on new regulation and focus on the ratios between the costs and benefits of regulation;

Lisbon Strategy evaluation, next steps and the way ahead

53. Welcomes the progress made under the Lisbon Strategy during recent years but notes that a number of important legislative initiatives are still pending and should be adopted as a matter of priority; underlines the unbalanced situation regarding the quality and quantity of initiatives under the different European guidelines; calls for a more balanced approach in the interests of a real multi-supportive EU policy mix reform programme; supports the strengthening of the external dimension of the European reform agenda, providing for high standards, appropriate regulatory framework and cooperative working methods in order to collaborate with other international economic players and to meet global challenges; welcomes, in this context, the work undertaken by various Commission directorates-general in developing new qualitative indicators; urges the Council to ask the Commission to ensure that such indicators be used in the upcoming evaluations of the NRPs and be incorporated in the Commission's monitoring, thereby creating a more comprehensive and adequate picture of the successes of the Lisbon-Gothenburg Strategy;

¹ OJ L 222, 14.8.1978, p. 11.

² OJ L 347, 11.12.2006, p. 1.

54. Emphasises that greater delivery within the Lisbon Strategy requires effective peer pressure on the part of the Council within the framework of multilateral surveillance;
55. Points out that the open method of coordination, on which the Lisbon Strategy has been based for nine years, has revealed these limitations in the face of new internal and external challenges confronting the European Union; urges, therefore, that the post-Lisbon Strategy period be based on a more proactive, more global policy, i.e. on the updating of existing common policies (for trade, internal market, economic and monetary union, etc.) and on new common external policies (energy, climate, development, migration, etc.);
56. Regrets that, with only one year left on the timescale of the Lisbon strategy, clearly defined goals have not been met and progress in programme areas has been insufficient; takes the view that Member States' efforts have been lacking in implementing measures to bring the goals of the Lisbon strategy closer; believes that the Lisbon Strategy must be seen as an important guideline for future-shaping policies, aimed at a strong, competitive and growth-fostering EU; considers, therefore, that it deserves to be taken more seriously by Member States and should not be seen merely as a set of distant goals, but as an action plan for the further development of Europe;
57. Proposes that further reflection on a 'Lisbon Plus-Agenda' (which must start in 2010) should be based on the general architecture of the present Lisbon Strategy (competitiveness and greening of European industries, more and better jobs, social inclusion, sustainability), but stresses the need to present a more homogenous and mutually supportive approach capable of decisively enlarging the European Lisbon governance capacity; *c.* asks the Commission for a thorough evaluation of the past nine years of the Lisbon Strategy and of the achievement of and commitment to the goals of the Lisbon strategy by the Member States to be presented before the end of 2009;
58. Asks the Commission to analyse the usefulness of a post-Lisbon strategy with new aims and goals, and especially to assess the readiness of Member States to implement such a new programme, and its viability; stresses the need to refocus the IPGs against the background of the economic downturn and urges the Council to agree on short-term measures to safeguard the 2008 employment rate, to invest in the fight against climate change and to ensure sufficient incomes, especially with regard to the most vulnerable groups of society; expects the Commission to launch initiatives and present proposals with respect to these goals in good time for the Spring Lisbon Council in 2010;
59. Stresses that the 'Lisbonisation' of public expenditure in all Member States and of the EU budget must become a reality, as it would mainstream the Lisbon Strategy itself and radically enhance effectiveness in the quest for achieving the goals of growth and job creation;
60. Notes that the tools needed by the European Union to foster the goals of the Lisbon Strategy are essentially the streamlining of all related policies, all financial instruments and funds, as well as the EU budget in such a way as to induce an acceleration and deepening of efforts for growth and job creation; considers that, in the short run, stronger fiscal stimuli are needed for swift recovery from the economic crisis provided that it reorientates private expenses and behaviour in consistency with the objectives set by the Lisbon-Gothenburg Strategy and the climate-energy package; warns, in this context, against indiscriminate tax cuts; takes the view that fiscal stimuli must be targeted towards social and environmental objectives; considers that possible means are reductions in value-added tax levels, for

labour-intensive services and locally supplied services, considers also that funding can be provided for green initiatives in, inter alia, the energy sector, as well as the automobile and the construction sector, especially since those sectors are experiencing a collapse in demand for their products; considers that consumers can, for example, be supported in buying greener cars and environmentally friendly housing through tax exemptions;

61. Regrets the still weak visibility of the Lisbon Strategy in the national policies of many Member States; takes the view that the mobilisation of all economic stakeholders is essential to ensure its effective implementation; believes, in particular, that the closer involvement of social partners, national parliaments, regional and local authorities as well as civil society will improve the achievements of the Lisbon Strategy and enhance the public debate on appropriate reforms; believes that the mobilisation of all stakeholders can be ensured through proper implementation of the principle of multi-level governance;
62. Regrets, once again, that a clear plan and code of practice has still not been agreed between Parliament, the Council and the Commission in consultation with the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, which would guarantee appropriate cooperation and the full involvement of all relevant EU institutions concerned in the appropriate further handling of the follow-up of the Lisbon Strategy; calls, in this connection, on the Council and the Commission to submit forthwith proposals for the close cooperation of the relevant EU institutions with a view to the impending revision of the integrated policy guidelines as well as the reflection and set-up of the forthcoming Lisbon II agenda;

o

o o

63. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.