

Resolution on the European interest: succeeding in the age of globalisation

2007/2637(RSP) - 15/11/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Commission Communication entitled 'the European Interest: Succeeding in the age of globalisation' and noted that globalisation of the economy created new opportunities for EU economies that were bound to play a more important role in the decades to come and gain additional benefits from the exploitation of economies of scale, capacity, urbanisation, networks and a positive reputation. The resolution was adopted by 435 votes in favour to 86 against with 31 abstentions. Parliament pointed out that the enlarged EU is a unique mixture of advanced economies and converging low-cost economies, making it possible to cut costs, employ internal and external economies of scale and resist deflationary and inflationary pressures from developing economies.

Members welcomed the intention to develop a coherent external dimension to the Lisbon Strategy. A comprehensive external policy approach, focusing on regulatory cooperation, convergence of standards and equivalence of rules, must promote both fair competition and trade. Parliament warned, however, against underestimating the importance of further improvements in internal cooperation and reform processes. Without appropriate coordination in creating the EU supervisory framework and vigorous enforcement of EU competition rules, the advantages of the single market and the economies of scale which are achieved as a result of EU participation in a global market as a single entity could potentially be diminished. Whilst welcoming the Commission's intention further to develop regulatory cooperation, convergence of standards and equivalence of rules in its discussions with third countries, it called on the Commission to promote decent work and the quality of working life, combat social dumping, include a chapter on sustainable development in its trade agreements with third countries, requiring ratification and enforcement of core International Labour Organisation standards, and to apply social values when concluding agreements with third countries.

Internal policies

Bridge between Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Integrated Guidelines: Parliament stressed the need to improve the integration and visibility of the social dimension in the next cycle of the Lisbon Strategy, and, in particular, in the Integrated Guidelines. There was an urgent need to overcome perceived weaknesses in the Employment Guidelines, which failed to give sufficient weight to certain basic social objectives, such as those that aim at reducing the number of working poor and increasing access to high-quality employment, education, health care and other forms of social protection for all. The Commission and Member States must also adopt a systematic approach ensuring a high level of coherence between the NRP process geared to growth and more and better jobs on the one hand and the social protection and social inclusion process on the other.

Implementation of Employment Guidelines: the resolution asked the Commission to address the wide divergence among the Member States as regards the implementation of the Employment Guidelines by ensuring that Member States more comprehensively apply the EES indicators and targets, lifelong learning instruments and measures set out in the European Youth Pact, the European Pact for Gender Equality and the EU Disability Action Plan 2006-2007. It called on the Commission and Member States to pay particular attention in their coordination processes to the quality of jobs, the reconciliation of work, family and personal life, the quality and availability of education and training for all, the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation, the strengthening of equal opportunities policies for women and men,

and immigration issues. Members supported the adoption of a balanced set of common principles regarding flexicurity, combining flexibility and security for employees and employers on the labour market, and highlighted the central role of training and retraining, active labour market policies, adequate social protection and the breakdown of labour market segmentation by ensuring employment rights for all workers.

Economic policies: Parliament called for the development of an 'EU smart green growth initiative' bringing together all the main existing EU economic instruments. It urged the Commission not to disconnect environmental policies from economic and employment policies, stating that the fight against climate change must constitute the backbone of the EU's review of the 'three-year Lisbon cycle'. Parliament pointed out that one of the fundamental problems facing the European economy in some Member States had been insufficient domestic demand, and stressed that improved coordination of both sound fiscal policies and high-quality public finances, including essential 'Lisbon investments', was of crucial importance. It went on to stress the following :

- financial market issues must be elaborated into respective Europe-wide initiatives within the framework of the Community Lisbon Programme;
- slowdown in productivity growth differs throughout the EU, which, however, has an overall common pattern reflecting weaknesses in markets, distribution and financial services;
- structural rigidities prevent the efficient use of new technologies and impede accessibility to networks in industries which are lagging behind. Parliament felt that economic policy guidelines should include supply-side actions in order to create a favourable environment for cross-border operations by business and to speed up the emergence of a single financial market;
- support for the Commission's demand for a 'knowledge triangle' made up of research, education and innovation, and expected more effective investments in new skills, lifelong learning and modern education/training systems;
- new companies need better access to capital and both early-stage funding and ongoing finance within a sufficiently long time-scale, in order to allow products to be placed on the market, must be fostered;
- the Lisbon Strategy goals could be fully achieved only by further efforts to establish a common energy policy.

Parliament defended the independence of the ECB in setting monetary policy. It emphasised that the appreciation of the euro exchange rate was the result of mounting imbalances in third countries and sluggish demand in the euro area, and was concerned at the extent to which growth in the EU would be strong enough to offset the volatility in global financial markets and exchange rates. In addition, the surge in demand for natural resources, basic products and services driven by the growth of developing economies might bring about inflationary pressure in Member States, which until now, had been offset by their contribution to the increase in global supply. Anti-inflationary economic policy tools with strategies for technological growth and a framework for possible macroeconomic adjustment and improved coordination should be prepared by the EU Member States in order to address this problem.

Global governance: supranational action was urgently needed to mitigate the effects of climate change and internationally organised crime. Parliament saw the need for supranational institutions in meeting supranational challenges, and encouraged the Commission to participate fully in all international fora. It also felt that the transatlantic market could be an appropriate instrument to ensure the efficiency of EU trade defence, sustainable competitiveness and innovation, and reiterated its call for a new EU-US Partnership Agreement aimed at eliminating or significantly reducing all remaining barriers to trade and investment while respecting European standards. The pursuit of further trade liberalisation made it all the more necessary for the EU to preserve its ability to protect itself against unfair trading practices. Trade Defence Instruments were an indispensable component of the EU's strategy.

Migration: the EU urgently needed to have a common border and immigration policy encompassing not only integrated border controls but harmonised strategies, criteria and procedures for economic migration, while leaving it to individual Member States to decide on numbers to be admitted. Greater efforts must be made in seeking ways, through exchanges of experience, of making inward migration for all parties a success, from both a social and economic point of view.

Institutional arrangements: the influence of the economic setting on long-term growth was not an automatic one and the development of institutions responsive to markets determines whether the economy was able to realise its structural growth potential. Parliament urged the Commission therefore to present genuinely updated Integrated Guidelines for 2008-2010. Lastly, it regretted that a code of practice had still not been agreed between Parliament, the Council and the Commission which would guarantee appropriate cooperation and the full involvement of the three Community institutions concerned in the appropriate further handling of globalisation issues. Parliament called for proposals for close cooperation between the three Community institutions with a view to the impending revision of the Lisbon Strategy.