Resolution on the input for the 2008 Spring Council as regards the Lisbon Strategy

2007/2649(RSP) - 20/02/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate on 19 February, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the input for the 2008 Spring Council as regards the Lisbon Strategy. Parliament believes that, in order to guarantee the success of the renewed Lisbon Strategy, it is also necessary to strengthen Europe's growth and to overcome insufficient domestic demand. The Lisbon Strategy is developing positively, but there are still shortcomings in its implementation and no proper understanding of the fact that the European process of development towards more growth, job creation, adequate social security and appropriate environmental protection is still not immune to crises.

Parliament points to the overriding importance of safeguarding the stability of financial markets, in view of the recent subprime crisis which shows the need for the EU to develop oversight measures. It also discusses the importance of the following matters :

-cohesion policy as a tool for achieving the Lisbon Strategy objectives for growth and jobs;

-boosting research and development. Parliament notes the huge opportunities afforded to the European economy by the development and roll-out of new technologies and services that will further the decarbonisation of the global economy;

-the successful completion of transition to the digital era and truly achieving the knowledge-based society and economy called for in the Lisbon Strategy;

-the potential to help SMEs by reducing their regulatory burden, improving access to public contracts and developing a more favourable regime for funding and exploiting innovation;

-the need for a new, comprehensive external and trade policy approach that focuses on worldwide convergence of rules, standards and regulatory cooperation. All EU trade agreements under negotiation should include enforceable provisions on the implementation of core labour standards and other aspects of decent work, as well as of multilateral environmental standards;

-a high level of social protection is central to the Lisbon Strategy. Parliament supports further action to combat poverty and social exclusion, with a view to renewing the decisive momentum given to the elimination of poverty by 2010. It asks for a commitment by the Spring 2008 European Council for an ambitious social agenda with a concrete impact on the results of the Lisbon Strategy ;

-further integration of the transport sector into the Lisbon Strategy is necessary. Priority must be given under the new integrated policy guidelines to sustainable transport, logistics and the development of the trans-European networks.

The internal market and strategic responses to globalisation: Parliament feels that Member States must make the completion of the internal market a priority, particularly through appropriate implementation of internal market directives and the removal of unjustified barriers to national markets. It goes on to discuss the following :

-the need for an adequate level of protection of intellectual property rights and the initiative towards an affordable, secure and efficient patents system ;

-MBIs such as taxes, charges and emissions trading which can foster an efficient allocation of natural resources and can contribute to achieving the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy;

-the benefits of shifting the tax burden from labour to environmental degradation as an effective way to address both environmental and employment issues. The burden on labour must be diminished in order to create more jobs and fight the black economy;

-the importance of transport policy for fighting climate change and addressing a broader set of environmental concerns.

Parliament points out that a major task of the EU and other industrialised countries is to switch to a low-energy-intensive economy based on renewable sources of energy. This involves the application of technologies which are already at hand. However, bold policy action is needed in order to implement them, including incentives and multilaterally agreed sanctions applying to those countries which are not ready to bear their share of the burden.

The labour market: Parliament urges the Council to adopt the directives on the organisation of working time, working conditions for temporary workers and the portability of pension rights. The Council should revise Council Directive 94/45/EC on the establishment of a European Works Council without delay. Parliament notes that the European social model will not remain untouched by the upheavals that are happening worldwide. It must pursue reforms of the labour markets and welfare systems so as to strengthen the incentives to work and provide people with the skills to cope with change and facilitate their return to paid work. Parliament discusses the importance of the following:

-the adoption of a balanced set of common principles regarding flexicurity;

-education, qualification and training and childcare infrastructure;

-the need to raise the basic skills of young people, prevent early school leaving, reduce precarious jobs and enhance the social and labour integration of all;

It notes with concern the trend towards widening inequality of wealth in Member States. It calls on Member States to safeguard the preconditions for social and economic participation for all and to provide for regulations on such matters as minimum wages or other legal arrangements that enable full-time workers to make a decent living from their earnings. **Measuring progress:** Parliament welcomes the Commission's efforts to reduce bureaucracy and to improve legislative impact assessment, but deplores the fact that Parliament and the Commission have still not reached agreement on the type of impact assessment required. It goes on to state that a better involvement of social partners, national parliaments, regional and local authorities, and civil society would improve the results of the Lisbon Strategy and enhance the public debate on appropriate reforms. It discusses the integrated guidelines and proposes improvements to the country reports drawn up by the Commission. Parliament believes that it is not at all self-evident how to measure the success of the Lisbon Strategy or, more generally speaking, which indicators would be appropriate ways to measure "progress". Monitoring successes and failures cannot, however, be restricted to economic indicators such as GDP/GNI alone, since they are – at best –indicators of wealth creation over a given period, but do not even give reliable information about the level of wealth in a society, or any hint of the social and environmental costs at which such additional wealth creation comes. It welcomes the work undertaken by the Commission in developing new qualitative indicators, which should be incorporated in the Commission's monitoring.