Resolution on the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2009

2007/2654(RSP) - 24/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 11 March 2008, the European Parliament adopted by 304 votes to 240 with 23 abstentions, a resolution tabled on behalf of the EPP-ED, UEN, ALE groups on the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2009.

Growth and jobs: Parliament underlines, once again, on the importance of the rigorous implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, emphasising the interdependence of economic, social and environmental progress in creating a dynamic and innovative sustainable economy. It welcomes the overdue support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), building on the forthcoming European Small Business Act and also welcomes a more systematic and integrated monitoring of key goods and services markets with a view to identify existing problems, noting it might include competition sector enquiries. However, this should not be to the detriment of either SMEs or the variety of products and services in the internal market. The Commission is urged, once again, to put forward a legislative proposal on the European Private Company Statute. Members point to the overriding importance of safeguarding the stability of financial markets and reassuring consumers in the light of the current financial crisis. The current crisis shows the need for the EU to develop oversight measures in order to increase investor transparency, establish better valuation standards, improve prudential supervision, and rate the role of rating agencies.

With regard to employment, Parliament encourages the Commission to develop a common approach to flexicurity, which should promote, on the one hand, greater flexibility on the labour market and, on the other, security for workers, accompanied by a balanced implementation of the four pillars of flexicurity. Members regret the low priority given by the Commission to culture and education in its Annual Policy Strategy for 2009, and ask the Commission to consolidate the European Educational Area for all, notably by improving the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of EU education and training systems. They welcome the Commission's announcement of a future communication on university-business dialogue. Parliament also supports the Commission's initiative of a Green Paper on cultural and creative industries and stresses the need further to develop EU action in that sector, which significantly contributes to job creation and growth.

Climate change and sustainable Europe: Parliament strongly supports the Commission in further developing an energy policy for Europe, with the aim of achieving energy independence and strengthening the solidarity among Member States. It notes that the EU needs to continue to demonstrate that economic growth and development can be reconciled in a low-carbon economy. Members are aware that the success of this strategy also depends on the capacity of the EU to convince its world partners, and underlines, therefore, that that the EU should speak with one voice and display solidarity in this field.

Parliament welcomes the Commission's wish to reduce emissions related to the transport of goods and calls on the Commission to submit a legislative proposal on the inclusion of maritime and inland waterway transport in the emissions trading scheme. The Commission is asked to add to the key actions envisaged for 2009 under "sustainable Europe" a new chapter on the reform of the COM in fishery and aquaculture products. Parliament notes that 2009 will see the implementation of the legislative changes agreed upon in the context of the CAP Health Check and expects Parliament's position to be fully respected.

Common immigration policy: Parliament welcomes the Commission's commitment to the development of this policy, and emphasises that a European pact on migration policy should cover issues linked both to

tackling illegal immigration and managing legal immigration and a more ambitious policy on integration of areas falling within the EU's competence, as well as launching a European asylum policy. Parliament also considers it a priority that Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 (Dublin II Regulation) be revisited, and underlines the need to speed up the full implementation of the Schengen Information System (SIS II) and the Visa Information System (VIS), as well as strengthen Frontex, which is dependent on a commitment by Member States to provide personnel and equipment.

Putting the citizen first: Parliament reiterates its request for a review of the eight sector-specific directives that were to be analysed within the framework of the review of consumer protection rules. It calls for more initiatives in the field of civil justice in order to deliver the balancing legal framework that would give certainty and access to justice. Believing that it does not make sense to outlaw discrimination in one area whilst allowing it in another, Members await the Commission's proposal for a comprehensive directive to combat discrimination under Article 13 of the EC Treaty, as provided in its 2008 work programme, whilst underlining that the Member States" competences in this area must be respected. They also await the Commission's proposal on cross-border health, and the pact on mental health. Parliament deplores the fact that the policy strategy remains vague in the area of public health and encourages the Commission to step up its efforts to tackle health inequalities linked to social, economic and environmental factors.

Parliament goes on to call for more work to be undertaken as regards tackling organised crime, addressing cyber-crime in particular, and the scourge of trafficking in human beings. It also calls for counter-terrorism policies to be defined comprehensively, and urges the Commission to submit a proposal that safeguards and promotes the interests of the victims of terrorism, and to develop proposals to ensure a greater degree of bio-preparedness.

Europe as a world partner: Parliament underlines the importance of adequate preparations for the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, in particular as regards the establishment of a European External Action Service in cooperation with Parliament. Members stress the importance of concluding the accession negotiations with Croatia, as a signal to the wider Western Balkans region that its future lies within the EU, provided that it can meet the necessary requirements. The Commission is asked to monitor the full implementation of the conditions laid down in the Kosovo comprehensive settlement plan and to insist on the foundations for a multiethnic Kosovo. The resolution deplores the absence of specific proposals by the Commission on new avenues for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals with a view to achieving the commitments by 2015. It urges the Commission to ensure that humanitarian aid provided by the EU, in particular its food aid in developing countries, is maintained and, if possible, extended in 2009. Members believe that a successful Doha Development Agenda remains the EU's trade priority, but regret that the policy strategy has not yet started a reflection on the WTO's post-Doha Development Agenda. An ambitious sustainable development chapter should form an essential part of any free trade agreement, including the ratification and implementation of core ILO conventions, as well as essential environmental norms.

Better regulation: Members affirm that independent impact assessment and the correct implementation, monitoring and reporting of Community law should be a priority. They stress that the European Parliament should get more closely involved in the monitoring of the application of Community legislation, and underline the need for closer inter-institutional co-operation with regard to comitology procedures. Parliament recalls its support for reaching the goal of a 25 % reduction in administrative burdens by 2012, and urges tangible results sooner rather than later. It emphasises that political priorities should be supported by new budgetary priorities in order for the EU to play a concrete role.

Lastly, the Commission is urged to focus its efforts further on the development of an effective **communication policy** in order to provide citizens with the means to understand the EU better, especially in the year of the European elections.