Preparation of the European Council meeting, 18-19 June 2009

2008/2594(RSP) - 05/05/2009

MEPs discussed the upcoming EU summit to be held on 18 and 19 June 2009, two weeks after the announcement of results of European elections.

The Czech Deputy Prime Minister, Alexandr Vondra, outlined the main items on the agenda:

- institutional issues and the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland;
- economic and financial crisis, examining the situation in the financial markets and measures taken by the EU on better supervision and regulation of financial institutions and support to the real economy and employment;
- climate change, with the preparations for the Copenhagen summit.

On the eve of the European elections, **the President of the Commission** stressed the importance of understanding that Europe has practical implications for citizens in key areas such as climate change, energy security, justice and freedom and the internal market. He stressed that Parliament had voted on all of these subjects in the last five years.

President Barroso also stressed the benefits of the Lisbon Treaty and that of maintaining European leadership on climate change during the summit in Copenhagen. Regarding the economic crisis, he identified two key areas: (i) the overhaul of the regulatory and supervisory regime for financial services; (ii) employment.

The positions expressed by the different political groups may be summarised as follows:

- **EPP**: given the unknown timeframe for the application of the Lisbon Treaty, the Group's president asked the Council to decide on the Presidency of the European Commission on the basis of the Nice Treaty, and to take into account the European election results. He also welcomed the latest proposals from the European Commission, in particular on "golden parachutes"; bonuses paid to traders and on hedge funds.
- **PES**: expressing opposition to the policy of deregulation, the President of the Group asked the Commission and Council to focus further on the social dimension of Europe. Recognizing that the lack of economic policy coordination was partly responsible for the weakness in dealing with the crisis, he also criticized the lack of legislation on hedge funds. On the other hand, he advocated training and employment opportunities to prevent mass youth employment.
- **ALDE**: the leader of the Group called on the European Council to clarify the procedure for appointing the next President of the European Commission and the Commissioners, this procedure should be based on either the Treaty of Lisbon or Nice. However, in the context of European elections, he said that the debates should focus on practical solutions to citizens' concerns as opposed to constitutional issues.
- **UEN**: the Group advocated the rapid adoption of measures to improve the economic situation and employment.
- **Greens/EFA**: the representative of the Group felt that the ratification process by unanimity was inadequate and that the appointment of the President of the Commission following the European Council should not have taken place in the absence of a clear legal basis. She criticised the fact that José Manuel Barroso was the only candidate for this position.

- **GUE/NGL**: citing a number of statistics showing the decline in GDP and the rise in unemployment, the representative of the Group called for a break with neo-liberalism in favour of a solidarity policy to help the poor, improve employment and support small businesses. She slammed tax havens and deregulation.
- **IND/DEM**: the representative of the Group encouraged the EU to show more interest in employment. She also hoped that Europe would give more freedom to Member States to adopt measures to promote employment.

Responding to MEPs: on behalf of the Council, Alexandr Vondra reassured MEPs on the European Council's commitment and the near certainty of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the Czech Senate. He said he agreed with the MEPs who considered employment as the first challenge to be met by Europe.

Referring to the delicate challenge posed by the Lisbon Treaty, the President of the European Commission called on the Member States to overcome political divisions in order to reach a consensus on the main issues.