Environment and employment: building a sustainable Europe

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A call for tax changes to penalize activities which use up natural resources or damage the environment, while rewarding sustainable development and creating "green jobs", was made by the Committee. Adopting a non-legislative report by Anneli HULTHÉN (PES, Sw) on the Commission's strategy for employment and environment, the committee also thought that tax revenue from environmentally harmful activities could be invested to protect the environment and stimulate employment. In a resolution contained in the report, the committee endorsed the broad outlines of the Commission strategy but wanted more specifics. In particular, it called on the Commission to draw up a more detailed definition of environmentally-driven growth and assess the job-creation capacity of the environmental sector. However, noting the over-use of environmental resources and the under-use of labour already identified by the Commission, the committee took the view that ecological modernization of the economy would in fact benefit employment, eco-industry being expected to grow by 5.5% per annum over the next few years. Hence, it wanted Member States to integrate the environment into their national labour and industrial policies. Further "greening" of the Community budget would also be helpful and the EU's public procurement rules should also be revised in this connection. The resolution also called for the establishment of a European Environmental Technology forum and a Partnership for Sustainable Growth. It also commended environment-related training, the employment-intensive use of renewable energy and aid for innovative environment-related SMEs.