Computer problem: the Year 2000

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The Parliament adopted the report drafted by Alan DONNELLY (PES, UK) concerning the Commission's communication on the Year 2000 computer problem. It stated its serious concern about the degree of progress made by some Member States in tackling the millennium problem and the lack of cross-border co-operation in vital sectors, particularly energy, telecommunications and transport. It recommends that Member States and the Commission ensure the availability of information on known problems and best practices and the knowledge about the existence of such information, especially for SMEs. It urges the Commission and Member States to start awareness actions for consumers. It asks the Commission to draw up a contingency plan regarding the risks that could arise from the cross-border impact of disasters in Eastern Europe and Russia, which, in addition to promoting awareness of the seriousness of the situation, should provide for financial aid to the authorities concerned. In the context of its concern regarding the responsibility of public authorities to ensure the security of persons and goods and the continuity of public service and basic utilities, it also calls on the Commission to encourage Member States to take measures, and in particular : - step up preparations and devise contingency plans to ensure the continues functioning of essential government services; - establish special co-ordinating bodies and programmes to raise awareness, facilitate information exchange and to oversee progress; - encourage business to partake in international alliances in key sectors where cross-border operations are critical, such as aviation, telecommunications, energy and finance; - consider practical policy options for helping companies to tackle Year 2000 problems; - increase information transparency by reporting on their own preparations where this is not already being done, as well as by requesting disclosure by quoted companies of their projected Year 2000 costs and readiness; - participate in programmes for developing countries, such as those run by the World Bank and the United Nations; - improve international co-operation and exchanges of information in the nuclear sector, therby clarifying the situation in that sector in which connection with the WANO, OECD and IAEA, among others, could play an important role; - use influence to urge Member States which are not doing enough to tackle the problem more seriously. The EU should add value to its Year 2000 efforts, rather than duplicate or replace existing initiatives. Lastly, the Parliament calls on the Commission to keep it informed every three months until the turn of the century about progress inn tackling the millenium problem in the EU.