Resolution on the preparation of the 2004 European spring summit, follow-up to Lisbon

2004/2518(RSP) - 26/02/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution of the EPP-ED, PES and ELDR groups on the forthcoming Spring Summit. On economic and monetary aspects Parliament urged Member States to include in their fiscal policies an overall strategy based on increased investments in human resources, innovation, research and development, with a special focus on education, skills, lifelong learning, renewable energy and environmentally friendly technology. This strategy should be undertaken in a context of sustainable public finance. Parliament welcomed the European Growth Initiative as a catalyst to speed up the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, and as a long-awaited signal aimed at boosting confidence. Also on economic matters, Parliament pointed to the need for massive investment in renewable energies, energy saving and energy-efficiency measures, which will pay off in the mid-term by reducing Europe's energy bill, increasing security of supply and, not least, producing a 'double dividend' of job creation and a better environment with a particular view to combating climate change. It expressed its concern about the serious democratic deficit found in the current procedures in place for economic and social policy coordination, and as a remedy to this, invited all national parliaments actively to support the Lisbon strategy. On industrial aspects, Parliament stated that the European Council must put a twin emphasis on employment and on global competitiveness, stressing that competitiveness is not only a matter of cost-cutting by companies but also of ensuring that European industries operate in framework conditions, including better company law and corporate governance, that favour enterprise and adaptability. It called on Member States (1%) and the private sector (2%) to increase their investment for the future so as to raise R&D spending to 3% of GNP by 2010. Member States should also submit credible national implementation plans, together with initial results by mid-2004. On employment aspects, Parliament pointed out that reforms have to result in better jobs, in order to create a knowledge-based economy, and must be achieved in close cooperation with the social partners, without reducing the individual and collective rights of employees. Reforms must also ensure a better balance between flexibility and security, for example by a better matching of labour supply and demand and by making work pay. It emphasised the need for more public and private investment in human capital, such as higher education, skills and vocational training. The political consensus on the economic and social need for life-long learning must be turned into practical measures. Parliament went on to state that it regretted the lack of commitment and political will by Member States and urged the Commission and the Member States to implement the Social Policy Agenda in full, using all the available instruments and respecting the parties responsible and the time frames envisaged. There need to be specific national targets to implement and monitor Member States' performances in transposing the European strategy, with parliaments within Member States, the social partners being involved. On environmental aspects, Parliament opposed the reduction in the number of indicators by comparison with the list adopted for the purposes of the 2003 Spring European Council, which are drastically reduced in the Commission's Communication onStructural Indicators; It urged the Council to take into account biodiversity indicators in order to be able to assess the attainment of EU commitments made in Decision 1600/2002/EC laying down the Sixth Environmental Action Programme to halt biodiversity loss by the year 2010 in the EU, and in the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development by 2015 globally. Parliament was also concerned that the plan to establish the indicators for a period of three years does not guarantee sufficient flexibility to take into account new facts, policy revisions (e.g. Sustainable Development Strategy in 2004) or the time that new policies take before an impact can be observed. Finally, Parliament emphasised the need to involve it fully so that the open coordination method has greater democratic legitimacy and so that the Lisbon follow-up is not purely intergovernmental.