Resolution on the Commission's legislative and work programme for 2004

2003/2587(RSP) - 17/12/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution taking note of the Commission's work and legislative programme and the political priorities outlined, namely the absorption of the accession of ten new Member States, stability and sustainable growth. Whilst the proposals to be put forward match the political priorities, Parliament feels nevertheless, that the Commission has taken too little action in response to the calls made by the parliamentary committees. It noted that the programme contains a total of 275 legislative proposals and non-legislative acts, 128 of which directly correspond to the political priorities for 2004 but only 57 of which are legislative acts. A substantial part of the programme for 2004 consists of proposals postponed from previous programmes. In view of the forthcoming European elections, Parliament asked the Commission to comply with the timetables indicated in its work programme for the presentation of new proposals. It insisted that the Commission consult the relevant parliamentary committee beforehand, should it deviate from the timetables. Parliament stated that application of the interinstitutional agreement on better law-making will clear the way for wider-ranging coordination of legislative work among the three institutions, and that the Council should be involved in an interinstitutional legislative programme. The links between the Commission's programme and the Council's multiannual strategic programme drawn up in December 2003 are as yet far from clear, and the Commission and Council need explain precisely how these two planning processes go together. Whilst the current debate in the Commission on the subject of future priorities for a revised financial framework for post-2006 is relevant, no decision should be taken at this stage, in view of the imminence of the enlargement of the Union (1 May 2004) and the European elections (June 2004). The decision should be taken by the future Commission and the final decision must be taken by the budgetary authority. On the matter of enlargement, Parliament pointed to the importance of economic cohesion within the Union, and deplored the fact that the Commission has not yet presented Parliament with an Action Plan for after May 2004 concerning the efforts needed for the new Member States to catch up economically and converge with the EU 15. Parliament also insisted that the Commission inform the competent European Parliament committee regularly during the budget year about the ongoing implementation of the budget dedicated to external actions. The Commission should also provide information about specific problems of implementation, in order to avoid a repetition of the 2003 global transfer situation, which showed that political priorities set by Parliament in the budgetary procedure have not been implemented. Parliament went on to welcome the budgetisation of the European Development Fund (EDF and gave the ACP countries an assurance that it will prevent the diversion of funds from previous EDFs to other areas of the EU budget, by means of ring fencing and other appropriate measures. It also welcomed the Peace Facility set up by the EU to finance peacekeeping operations by the African Union. Parliament also supported the Commission's proposals aimed at achieving a balance between measures to counteract illegal immigration and measures designed to ensurefair treatment and integration of legal immigrants. It took note of the Commission's determination to set up new cooperation programmes with third countries in the area of immigration. Moving on to sustainable development and social policy, Parliament agreed that the latter should be one of the major work priorities of the Commission, but felt that more focus must be given to concrete actions developing this policy towards employment, investment in human resources, prosperity and quality of life for European citizens. It welcomed the support for innovation, research and development, which are fundamental to European growth and the Lisbon strategy, particularly the action plan which aims to increase investment in research and development in line with the target of 3% of GDP. Consideration should indeed be given to the idea of establishing a European Research Council, endowed with adequate resources, with a view to strengthening fundamental research in Europe. Parliament deplored the absence of any reference to the European economic and social model, and felt that one consequence of the specificity of the European economic and social model should be that the Commission considers more carefully possible social and environmental consequences of its proposals, in particular

when putting forward initiatives to liberalise economic activities further. Finally, on the matter of Eurostat, Parliament called on the Commission to address the case and all its aspects with the utmost seriousness. It deplored the fact that the action plan provides no proper explanation for the Commission's failure to react for so long to the crisis in Eurostat, despite the evidence which mounted up over the years. Parliament called on its responsible committees to hold hearings or similar meetings to scrutinise developments concerning the Commission's accounting system. That step should be accompanied by an assessment of the overall stage reached in implementing the financial control instruments forming part of the reform package, in the light of the Eurostat affair.