

Resolution on the outcome of the European Council in Brussels on 22 and 23 March 2005

2004/2603(RSP) - 13/04/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Spring meeting of the European Council on 22 and 23 March 2005.

Stability and Growth Pact: Parliament welcomed the agreement reached on a reform of the Stability and Growth Pact, particularly the moves to strengthen the Pact's preventive arm, the increased attention given to debt levels and the agreement to link the Pact to the Lisbon objectives and policies. It is, however, concerned by the lack of clarity in the rules of the coercive arm of the Pact. The Commission should make full use of its right of initiative and the procedures at its disposal in order to ensure the proper implementation of the Pact and to play an active role in macroeconomic coordination. Parliament expressed doubts about this aspect of the reform, in which an opportunity was missed to strengthen the role of the Commission.

Relaunching the Lisbon Process: Parliament welcomed the new dynamism given to the Strategy with a new focused approach based on a three-year cycle, and its endorsement of many of the positions adopted by Parliament before the meeting of the European Council, such as the restatement of the interdependence of the Strategy's economic, social and environmental dimensions. The Commission needs to consult with Parliament on presenting a Community Lisbon programme which sets out a clear roadmap for action by the Community institutions. Whilst Parliament supported the idea of 'national reform programmes' it regretted that the recommendation of the high-level group on annual reporting of which Member States perform best on the Lisbon goals was not endorsed by the European Council.

Parliament repeated that the Lisbon Strategy should be a means to reinforce the European social model through greater social cohesion, to raise the rate and quality of employment, to improve adaptability of workers, to invest in human capital, to modernise and secure social protection, to promote equal opportunities and gender balance, and to facilitate the balance between work and family life.

National and European budgets, including the future Financial Perspective 2007-2013 should be an expression of the goals pursued in the framework of the Lisbon Process.

Parliament also confirmed that the REACH proposals on chemicals regulation should reconcile environmental and health concerns with the need to promote the competitiveness of European industry.

Sustainable development: Parliament is disappointed by the timetable agreed upon for reviewing the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy, because it believes that environmental policy could offer substantial economic opportunities, especially considering its effects on industrial innovation.

Climate change: Parliament welcomed the will to explore options for a post-2012 arrangement in the UN climate change process together with the development of a long-term EU strategy, and the consideration of emission reduction pathways in the order of 15-30% by 2020 as a target for developed countries. It insisted that the EU should retain its leading role in international efforts to tackle climate change and present concrete proposals for an ambitious programme beyond 2012. The objectives of the Kyoto Protocol are an essential condition for a global strategy on climate change, but further targets need to be set for the period after 2012. Global emissions should be reduced by half by 2050 in order to contain global warming so that it peaks below 2°C above pre-industrialisation levels.

Preparing for the UN Summit: Parliament strongly supported the European Council's assertion that the Union's support for Africa should be reinforced. It must be accompanied by a large increase in aid from both the Union and the Member States. Developed countries must establish clear timetables for achieving the target of 0.7% of GNI for official development assistance.

External relations: Parliament has repeatedly insisted that the arms embargo on China should not be lifted under current conditions and noted with satisfaction that the European Council did not take any further steps towards lifting the embargo. It welcomed the decision to create a task force to report on Croatia's progress in meeting the conditions for the opening of enlargement negotiations. Parliament welcomed the Syrian Foreign Minister's announcement of complete withdrawal of his country's forces from Lebanon, and hoped free, fair and transparent elections can be organised there. Finally, Parliament endorses the Council's call for the new leaders of Kyrgyzstan to start a dialogue to guarantee the democratic process and full respect for the rule of law and minority rights.