Commission legislative and work programme for 2006

European Parliament resolution on the Commission legislative and work programme for 2006

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Communication of the Commission on its legislative and work programme 2006 — ‘Unlocking Europe's full potential’ (COM(2005)0531),

— having regard to Rules 33 and 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the annual legislative and work programme is an indispensable tool allowing the European Union to focus on achieving its key strategic objectives of fostering prosperity, solidarity and security within Europe and of reinforcing its role on the international stage,

B. whereas closer coordination and cooperation between the institutions of the Union and the strengthening of the European Council's ability to provide more credible political leadership of the affairs of the Union are prerequisites for the EU successfully to fulfil its strategic objectives and to be closer to its citizens,

C. considering the critical importance of 2006 for the institutional future of the European project and also for achieving the Lisbon objectives,

D. having regard to the need to improve the quality of the EU's legislative, regulatory and administrative work and to this end to consider effectively the compatibility of all the Commission's existing or planned legislative proposals in the light of the cost of the planned measures, their impact on competitiveness and the need to respect the principle of subsidiarity and to reduce bureaucracy,

Political priorities

1. Approves the Commission's general orientations for its legislative and work programme for 2006, as it firmly agrees that the best way for Europe to respond to the challenge of globalisation and to achieve its strategic objectives is by unlocking its full potential and by promoting its common values at home and worldwide; calls on the EU institutions and the Member States' authorities, according to their competencies and responsibilities, to fully contribute to the fulfilment of this programme;

Growth, employment and competitiveness

2. Welcomes the crucial importance accorded to stimulating growth and employment among the Commission's priorities and the emphasis on modernising the European economy; emphasises the central importance of implementing the revised Lisbon strategy both at national and at Community level, as well as the necessary development of human resources, knowledge, innovation and research;

Reconnecting Europe with its citizens: debate on the future of Europe

3. Insists on the urgent need to communicate Europe more effectively to its citizens and calls on the Commission to be more active in addressing the existing ‘communication gap’ and to increase citizens' confidence in the European project, particularly by showing them Europe's added value in their everyday lives;

4. Welcomes the Commission's Plan 'D' for democracy, dialogue and debate (COM(2005)0494), but calls for a properly coordinated interinstitutional campaign and strategy facilitating the rapid adoption of the European Constitution based on the existing draft Constitutional Treaty, which has already been ratified by more than half of the Member States, representing more than 50% of the EU's population;
Financial perspective

5. Insists that the financial perspective 2007-2013 should provide the basis for the further development of a strong European Union and expects the Commission to defend its position, namely that the financial perspective must be set at a level sufficient to finance the EU's political priorities;

6. Emphasises that 2006 will be a year when more than 40 multiannual programmes will be concluded, and these must be able to start by the beginning of 2007 so that the new political priorities that are linked to the new generation of multiannual programmes can be implemented; calls on the Commission, independently of an agreement on the financial perspective, to be more resolute in its cooperation with Parliament (particularly in the area of external policy programmes) and to do everything possible to enable the necessary legislative procedures to be concluded;

For a visible, coherent and interinstitutional Annual Programme

7. Welcomes its own involvement in the preparation of the legislative and work programme; requests, nevertheless, that the Commission improve the coherence of the presentation and content of the Annual Programme, in particular by including the legal basis for every proposal, as well as improve the visibility of the Union's action; hopes that in the very near future the Annual Programme will become a real interinstitutional action programme through which interested citizens can be informed and can follow how the EU plans to address their problems;

A more competitive Europe, enjoying greater cohesion

Research, knowledge and qualifications

8. Urges the Member States, as well the European Union, to intensify their respective efforts in the field of knowledge and research in accordance with the Lisbon strategy and, in this respect, urgently calls for the new framework programmes on research and competitiveness and innovation, and the i2010 initiative, to be given sufficient resources and for the Council fully to reflect their importance in budgetary terms as well;

9. Welcomes the planned proposals for the creation of a European Institute of Technology and for the establishment, on a voluntary basis, of a European Qualifications Framework, but regrets the lack of more ambitious proposals to address the shortcomings in EU education systems; reiterates the call from both Parliament and the Council to promote excellence in European universities and higher education, and also better knowledge of languages;

Single market

10. Reaffirms the need, in order to improve the competitiveness of the European economy, to give a preeminent position to completing the internal market, in the interests of both consumers and businesses;

11. Urgently calls for measures to reduce bureaucracy for small and medium-sized enterprises, which generate two-thirds of jobs, and for simple, clear legislation which does not place obstacles in the path of business growth and innovation;

12. Requests that the Commission not withdraw its proposals on a European mutual society and on a European association, and calls on the Commission to submit as soon as possible a proposal for a 14th directive on cross-border transfer of registered offices and to complete the feasibility study on assessing the specific need for a European private company and the problems that its creation would pose;

13. Calls on the Commission to ensure proper protection of intellectual property rights and to present as soon as possible a proposal for a single Community patent, which would offer more legal certainty and would promote innovation;

14. Reiterates that the successful integration of financial services markets will certainly depend on timely transposition and effective implementation of existing legislation and on further convergence of supervisory practices;
15. Urgently calls on the Commission to ensure that the Lamfalussy process functions effectively at all levels and in particular that Parliament’s competences as co-legislator are preserved;

16. Applauds the Commission’s commitment to improving the proper functioning of the taxation system, as well as its intention to launch a debate on an EU anti-tax fraud strategy;

17. Welcomes the civil justice proposals, which will directly benefit citizens, in particular children, in cross-border issues such as divorce and matrimonial property regimes, but points out the need for more action in the area of civil justice as the only way to guarantee security and access to justice for citizens throughout Europe;

**Transport and Trans-European Networks**

18. Underlines the need to plan very rapid implementation of the major trans-European transport network projects, which should be financed both by the EU budget and, as far as possible, by public-private partnerships;

19. Calls on the Commission to present a legislative proposal establishing minimum environmental and health requirements for the recycling of end-of-life vessels; requests the Commission to present legislative proposals on transport logistics to facilitate inter-modal transport and on the protection of critical transport and energy infrastructure;

20. Welcomes the new maritime strategy, aimed at building a more cohesive Europe in terms of integrating the development of different public policies in this area;

**Cohesion policy**

21. Notes that the Lisbon strategy and cohesion policy are fundamentally linked, and considers that more effort to coordinate these two policies would result in greater coherence and better results for disadvantaged regions;

22. Calls on the Commission to do everything possible to ensure that the regulations on the Structural Funds for the period 2007 to 2013 and the strategic orientations are adopted in 2006;

**Enlarging the euro zone**

23. Considers that the euro helps to maintain a stable macroeconomic climate; suggests that preparations be made with a view to introducing the euro in countries moving most rapidly towards fulfilling the convergence criteria for accession to the euro zone, but urges the Commission to be rigorous in its evaluation of progress made by these countries;

**Improving the quality of life**

**Environment**

24. Requests the Commission to maintain a leading role in the fight against climate change and to develop strategies aimed at the inclusion of aviation in the EU emissions trading schemes; calls on the Commission to establish a framework paving the way for further commitments on emission reductions in the post-Kyoto period after 2012, thereby providing further incentives for the use of market-driven instruments to meet these goals;

25. Is in favour of pursuing a coordinated approach to tackle the continent’s environmental challenges (such as floods, droughts and urban air quality); appreciates the reference to the importance of safeguarding biodiversity at European and international level;
Sustainable and innovative energy sources

26. Welcomes the impetus given to energy policy, and particularly the envisaged Green Paper aimed at ensuring secure, competitive and sustainable energy sources, which will be of major importance in defining a global strategy to respond to the challenges in the energy sector (such as energy efficiency, development of an integrated network and promoting sources of renewable energy); considers that a legislative proposal on heating and cooling by renewable energy sources should be an integral part of the strategy:

Agriculture, rural development, fisheries and tourism

27. Stresses the importance of the reform of the Common Agriculture Policy and of fully implementing the reforms already agreed, as well as investing more in research and technology in these sectors;

28. Notes that reforms in the area of agriculture and fisheries have already signposted the way towards sustainability and increased competitiveness, and in this context welcomes the sectoral reforms (wine, fruit and vegetables, and bananas) envisaged for 2006;

29. Welcomes the launch of work to simplify the Common Agricultural Policy and awaits with great interest the relevant action plan, so that the administrative constraints currently imposed on farmers can be drastically and rapidly reduced;

30. Notes with regret the absence of initiatives in the field of fisheries and calls therefore on the Commission to, in particular, set up specific programmes to promote applied and fundamental research and to ensure that those programmes are allocated sufficient budgetary resources;

31. Calls on the Commission to make a contribution additional to the action of the Member States in the field of tourism, an area which plays an important role in the European economy and helps to create jobs;

Social policy

32. Welcomes the follow-up to the 2005 Green Paper on demographic trends in the EU and expects the Commission's proposals for concrete actions to contribute to tackling Europe's demographic ageing problem, given that the working population will fall by nearly 21 million within the next 20 years: attaches particular importance to increasing active participation in the job market by people of working age, with a view to achieving the Lisbon objective of a participation rate of 70% in 2010;

33. Underlines the need for a family support policy and for the promotion of a suitable environment for children, in order to make it easier to combine work and family life; proposes, in particular, revising Council Directive 96/34/EC (1) on parental leave with a view to making it more relevant and effective;

34. Welcomes the plans for a communication on the rights of the child which would offer an important opportunity for the Commission to address the so-called 'invisibility' of children's rights at EU level;

35. Welcomes the fact that 2006 has been declared European Year of Mobility for Workers and calls on the Commission to be more active in safeguarding and promoting the right of free movement for workers from all Member States;

36. Calls on the Commission to propose and commit itself to more long-term solutions to the challenges of globalisation; stresses the importance of education and training as the best way to enhance opportunities for people to find jobs in new areas of employment;

37. Stresses the need to adjust and modernise the European social model in order for it to remain a core element of our European society;

Gender equality

38. Notes the forthcoming presentation of a communication setting out a road map for gender equality and underlines the fact that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was introduced thirty years ago by Council Directive 75/117/EEC (1); recalls the Lisbon objective of achieving a female employment rate of 60% by 2010;

39. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with Eurostat, the Fundamental Rights Agency and the future Gender Institute, to establish harmonised methodologies, definitions and criteria in order to gather comparable and compatible data throughout the European Union on violence against women, especially comprehensive studies of its prevalence;

Culture

40. Regrets the absence of a reference to Europe’s cultural dimension, and calls on the Commission to work with the governments of the new Member States and with the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe to promote cultural diversity and increase public awareness across the EU;

41. Urges ratification of the Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions by the EU and its Member States and requests the Commission, by the end of 2006, to submit the proposals and undertake the initiatives needed to implement the Convention at EU level;

Health

42. Stresses that the Commission must ensure a proper follow-up to its communications on the fight against obesity, heart diseases, diabetes, cancer, mental disorders and HIV/AIDS;

43. Calls on the Commission to increase its commitment to developing a coherent policy on health emergencies, disability, patient mobility and patient information;

A Europe with greater security and freedom

Area of freedom, security and justice

44. Reaffirms, in the context of the deadly terrorist attacks in London and Madrid, the importance of implementing the Hague Programme; eagerly awaits the interim progress report on implementing the Hague Action Plan, and calls for this evaluation to highlight the major shortcomings in applying EU law in the area of justice and home affairs; stresses that the reasons for the lack of progress in implementing the Hague Action Plan lie with the Council, which has regularly blocked the objectives set by the European Council;

45. stresses that increased security for citizens must never compromise the protection of their fundamental rights;

46. Calls on the Commission to continue prioritising measures to combat terrorism and organised crime, particularly measures relating to the financing of terrorism, while also tackling the problem of radicalisation;

47. Calls on the Commission to continue, as a matter of urgency, its work on legally clear and better drafted common definitions of certain serious crimes with a cross-border dimension, notably terrorism, trafficking in drugs and human beings, money laundering and cyber crime;

48. Deems it essential to fight against terrorism with improved intelligence exchange, effective operational cooperation and reinforced counteraction against terrorist financing;

49. Calls on the Commission to propose a proper EU legal basis for Europol, which would strengthen its future role and ensure its effectiveness;

50. Notes with regret that only a few initiatives concern issues of freedom or easier access to justice for citizens in matters concerning their daily lives; calls on the Commission to take into account Parliament's opinions and proposals in this area and to be more active in promoting the protection and exercise of fundamental rights;

Borders and immigration

51. Is aware that the management of immigration flows constitutes a key issue for the immediate and long-term future of our peoples; considers that the fight against illegal immigration, conducted in accordance with the humanitarian traditions of our continent, and the integration of legal immigrants should be two linked aspects of the same issue; calls, therefore, on the Commission to take all appropriate measures which could contribute to a sound management of this crucial issue;

52. Believes in the need for a common EU visa policy, and considers that the Visa Information System (VIS) and Schengen Information System (SIS II) are two key elements of this policy;

53. Stresses the need for a joint effort to reduce illegal immigration, particularly by strengthening border control capacities, improving computer systems and increasing use of biometric data, through systems such as VIS and SIS II;

54. Welcomes the establishment and official start of the activities of the European External Borders Agency (the Frontex Agency) and believes that it will substantially contribute to strengthening the security of external borders and help successfully to combat international organised crime;

55. Calls on the Commission to draw up a comprehensive action plan to combat people trafficking and to strengthen measures against drugs;

Europe as a world partner

56. Believes that the process of enlargement should proceed in accordance with the commitments already made, but calls on the Commission to launch a process of reflection and analysis on the external limits of the EU, bearing in mind the Union's capacity for absorption, and to present its conclusions to Parliament;

Stability and democracy in south-east Europe

57. Reiterates its call for the Commission to give a more political orientation to the pre-accession road map for the Western Balkans by focusing on the incentive aspect and on the specific needs of each of the countries in question, while emphasising the prospect of accession for countries pursuing reforms and fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria, including cooperation with the ICTY and regional cooperation; stresses that the EU must also fulfil the Copenhagen criterion relating to its own absorption capacity;

58. Strongly supports the Neighbourhood Policy launched some years ago as a key priority in the external relations of the European Union; stresses its importance in developing and strengthening the sphere of democracy, stability and prosperity in the countries bordering the Union, and therefore calls for adequate financial resources for this policy;

59. Fully supports the new impetus given to the Barcelona Process, ten years after the 1995 conference, with a view to the creation of a free trade and security area in the Mediterranean region, as well as of more prosperity for all countries involved in the process;
Bilateral relations

60. Recalls its other priorities as regards foreign policy, in particular the strengthening of transatlantic relations by an updating of the existing New Transatlantic Agenda and its replacement with a genuine partnership, the intensification of relations with Latin America and the Caribbean with a view to establishing a biregional association, in which Parliament should be fully involved, the strengthening of the Union's role in the Middle East peace process and a continued economic, military and political commitment on the part of the EU towards Iraq and Afghanistan;

61. Calls on the Commission constantly and carefully to monitor the trend and flow of its trade relations with China in order to ensure that China respects the principle of fair competition and social and environmental obligations, as well as WTO property right principles;

Human rights protection

62. Urges the Commission to take into account Parliament's political will with regard to the details of the policy programme for the promotion of democracy and human rights and to ensure that policy objectives and the financing and management of projects in this field are coherent;

Development policy

63. Welcomes the New Strategy for Africa, in particular the principle of African ownership, and the identification of priority issues linked to governance, which is a key element in achieving sustainable development, and investment in infrastructure, including water, energy and information and communication technologies; considers that all investments in these areas should be preceded by an assessment of their contribution to economic development and poverty reduction;

64. Calls for a dual approach to Africa targeted on the one hand at better-performing states, by giving them the means to maximise their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and on the other hand at vulnerable states, by making use of various policy instruments adapted to a more difficult context;

Trade policy and negotiations in the WTO

65. Considers international trade policy to be a key element in promoting competitiveness and growth, both in the Union and in developing countries, and underlines the importance of a multilateral approach and, in particular, of concluding the WTO negotiations in Hong Kong in December 2005;

66. Emphasises the importance, with regard to market access for industrial products, of reducing and eliminating high tariffs; considers, moreover, that trade in services is also a key element in the Doha negotiations and that there is substantial potential in opening up services markets;

67. Emphasises the paramount need for global sustainable development; calls for urgent European action on deforestation, including further measures against illegal logging;

Security and defence

68. Welcomes the inclusion of a communication on defence industries and markets in the list of priorities for 2006, and encourages the Commission to bring forward corresponding legislative proposals which will make it possible to boost the competitiveness of the European defence sector;

69. Eagerly awaits the communication on the interpretation of Article 296 of the EC Treaty concerning defence procurement contracts, which will clarify the criteria for applying the derogation from competition rules for the procurement of military equipment;
A Europe that works better — closer to the citizen

Better, simpler legislation

70. Stresses the need to accelerate the simplification and consolidation of EU legislation and to put more efforts into better regulation, prompt transposition and correct implementation of EU legislation; calls on the Commission to consider the effective implementation of the Interinstitutional agreement on better law-making (1), including the development of appropriate mechanisms for stakeholder consultation, to be a matter of priority;

71. Calls on the Commission to work with Parliament in monitoring and improving existing legislation, including by choosing priorities for simplification, in order to maintain Parliament's own prerogatives as co-legislator, and calls for improved ex post evaluation of adopted and implemented measures;

72. Calls on the Commission to make more consistent use of impact assessments, which must take into account the cost of an absence of measures and the possible alternatives to public regulation; to this end, calls for an independent European agency to be set up to carry out impact assessments;

73. Urges the Commission, in the context of the comitology procedure, to stand by its commitments to transmit all the measures concerned in due course and not to exceed the competences vested in it by virtue of the basic instruments; is convinced, moreover, of the need for the Commission and Parliament to examine ways of revising the current framework for applying comitology measures and ensuring the effective protection of Parliament's prerogatives;

Transparency, the budget and budgetary accountability

74. Calls, with a view to increasing transparency in the decision-making of the EU institutions, for Council legislative meetings to be public;

75. Urgently calls on the Commission to come forward with a revised proposal for an Interinstitutional agreement on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure, incorporating Parliament's proposals concerning the reserves and flexibility as well as other qualitative elements as set out in its resolution of 8 June 2005 (2);

76. Calls on the Member States fully to support the Commission's efforts to develop a secure and comprehensive internal control framework for the EU budget, which could finally lead to the creation of a long-overdue mechanism for accountability, particularly on the question of shared management;

77. Stresses the importance of pursuing the idea, as proposed in its resolution of 12 April 2005 (3), that a declaration of assurance as regards the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions be provided from each Member State's highest political and managing authority;

78. Reiterates its request for Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 (4) on OLAF to be revised in such a way as to guarantee its independence, especially in relation to the recruitment procedure for the post of its director;

79. Underlines the need for the Commission to continue the ongoing internal reform process to achieve full transparency and accountability in the use of public money; recalls Parliament's resolution of 6 September 2001 (5) urging the Commission to begin drawing up a Code of Good Administrative Behaviour for all Community bodies and organisations;

*     *     *

80. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the parliaments of the Member States.