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Alm. del - bilag 685 (offentligt)

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Til underretning for Folketingets Europaudvalg vedlægges statsministerens
brev til premierminister Costas Simitis vedrørende Det Europæiske Råds
møde i Bruxelles den 20.-21. marts 2003.

P. H. Olsen



THE PRIME MINISTER

Copenhagen, 6 March 2003

His Excellency
Mr Costas Simitis
Prime Minister of the
Hellenic Republic of Greece

Dear Costas,

The Spring European Council on 20-21 March comes at a crucial moment. The present sluggish growth situation demands a strengthening of the reform process in order to meet the European Union's ambitious goals for 2010. Political courage to make the necessary decisions will be needed. We do not need new goals or new procedures. Focus must be on realisation of already agreed targets.

We should also take into account the fact that on 16 April Heads of State and Government from 25 countries will gather to sign the Accession Treaty and next spring the new members will join the Union. Enlargement will create new opportunities for trade, increase productivity and foster higher growth in Europe. Enlargement constitutes a win-win situation for present and future members. I think that we should stress this point in the conclusions from our meeting.

In my view our discussions should focus on three issues.

Economic revitalisation of Europe

Sound public finances should go hand in hand with the implementation of structural reforms, thus creating the basis for growth and high employment. We should do more to ensure the long-term sustainability of fiscal policy. The EU internal market is the home market for European business. Continuous completion and improvement of a true internal market across all sectors must be at the centre of our endeavours. Inefficiencies must be reduced and obstacles to free competition in all sectors should be eliminated. Our goal must be to liberate and revitalise the European

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economies to the benefit of consumers and companies. In my opinion the following specific issues should be addressed:

- Creation of the best possible framework conditions for European business with a view to supporting competitiveness, entrepreneurship and increased commercialisation of research results.
- Action in order to monitor and remove barriers to the internal market in services.
- Maintaining momentum in the creation of a true internal financial market.
- Commitment by Member States to reduce state aid.
- Implementation of internal market directives into national legislation. Our two targets of 98,5 and 100 percent should be upheld and Member States should commit themselves to work harder in order to realise these goals.

Higher employment

Labour market reforms should continue to be in the forefront of the Lisbon strategy. Increasing employment is necessary to secure and maintain sound public finances and combat social exclusion. The overriding goal must be to increase labour supply and employment, including through later retirement. Our main focus should be:

- Making work pay. Changes in transfer systems should be promoted taking into account their interaction with tax systems.
- More flexible job protection rules.
- Integration of all groups in the labour market.
- Strengthening the efficiency of active labour market policies.

Protection of the environment

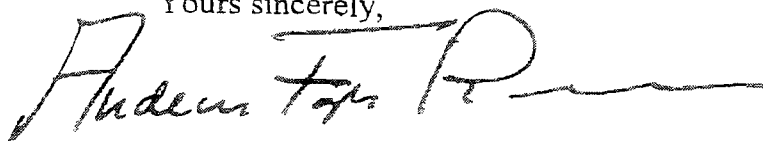
Securing sustainability and combating environmental degradation in the most cost-efficient way is an important responsibility for the Union and one of the important pillars of the Lisbon strategy. Main areas of action should be:

- Utilizing the growth potential of clean technologies, including environmental technologies
- Maintaining global leadership for sustainable development and focus on implementation of commitments from Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg.

I look forward to our discussions on the wide range of issues which form part of our common strategy. The Lisbon strategy offers a vision for a more dynamic Europe capable of creating more and better jobs for citizens.

I will copy this letter to our colleagues in present and acceding Member States.

Yours sincerely,



Anders Fogh Rasmussen