



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 20 February 2006

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NOTE

from: Presidency
to : Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject : European Council (23 and 24 March 2006)
– Annotated draft agenda

In accordance with Article 2(3) of the Council's Rules of Procedure, the General Affairs and External Relations Council, acting on a Presidency proposal, shall draw up an annotated draft agenda at least four weeks before the meeting of the European Council. The Presidency accordingly submits the following annotated draft agenda.

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The Presidency intends to focus the agenda of the Spring European Council on the need for implementation of the commitments on jobs and growth entered into last year. The Presidency's ambition is for the European Council to set a series of priority actions to be implemented by the end of 2007, thus providing a firm foundation for launching the second cycle of the growth and jobs strategy in the Spring 2008.

Although the Presidency does not intend that any other item should be discussed at the European Council, in the light of events some pressing foreign policy issues might also need to be addressed.

The meeting will be preceded by an exposé by the President of the European Parliament, Mr Josep Borrell, followed by an exchange of views.



I. THE CONTEXT / CHALLENGES

The European Council is expected to:

- note the general economic context and outlook ;*
- recall the decisions taken last year to relaunch the Lisbon Strategy, in particular the enhanced commitment to deliver on growth and jobs and the new governance cycle ;*
- and, in this context, refer to the impetus provided by Hampton Court.*

II. THE RELAUNCHED STRATEGY / NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES

The European Council will be invited to :

- stress that now the National Reform Programmes are in place, as is the Community Lisbon Programme;*

- *make an evaluation of the main features of the NRPs ;*
- *confirm that the Integrated Guidelines are still valid ;*
- *underline the importance of a broad ownership and stress the role of stakeholders, particularly the Social Partners;*
- *stress that the focus must be on implementation ; agree on means by which the above mentioned orientations will be followed up.*

III. MAINTAINING MOMENTUM ACROSS THE BOARD

The European Council is expected to stress the need for sustained, broad action across the Strategy's three dimensions, drawing on contributions from forthcoming sectoral Councils.

IV. PRIORITY ACTIONS

*Against the above background, the European Council will be invited to agree **priority actions** covering the following key areas :*

- *investing more in knowledge and innovation*
- *unlocking business potential, especially of SMEs*
- *increasing employment opportunities, with a particular focus on the young*
- *a new energy policy for Europe, which is needed to offer a real internal market, to maximise the benefits of energy efficiency and renewables, and to safeguard supply inside EU borders and beyond. This policy aims at coherence between Member States and consistency between actions in different policy areas.*