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Θέμα: Call for Europe to be upbeat on the economy

NEWS FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SOCIALIST GROUP**16 November 2005: Contact Tony Robinson****CALL FOR EUROPE TO BE UPBEAT ON THE ECONOMY**

Europe must be more upbeat about its economic prospects and seize the opportunities of globalisation, a former economic affairs minister told the European Parliament today.

Luxembourg's Robert Goebbels, speaking in a debate on last month's EU Summit at Hampton Court, said: "The promises made at the summit risk being as short-lived as the marriages made by Henry the Eighth in the same palace.

"Seen from abroad, the EU is an example to the rest of the world. But to read the statements of the Commission, it will be a hospice by 2050. Yes, Europe will be faced with an ageing population. But Japan and Russia will see population decline. Who knows what other major demographic problems there will be by 2020?"

Mr Goebbels added: "For many people, the word 'reform' means job loss and cuts in social standards. Reform will be accepted if it leads to an improvement in people's general well-being. For that to happen, Europe must put an end to its over-pessimistic statements.

"If there is an area in which Europe could imitate the USA, it is in a more generous immigration policy. Much of the surplus growth in the US over the last decade comes from the contribution of 10 million Latin Americans and hundreds of thousands of scientists from Europe and Asia."

He added: "Europe's competitiveness is a permanent worry. But the truth is that we are beating the USA in most economic sectors. We are always the first destination and the first point of origin for world investments. In 2003, the investment of our 15 countries was four times greater in our 10 new countries than in China, which attracted only 3.8 per cent of European investment.

"We must stop running scared of China. In absolute terms, Europe's share of world trade is growing – even if times are tough in some sectors. Nine-tenths of our trade is with highly developed countries, not with low-salary countries."

Mr Goebbels continued: "The EU is still the world's major exporting country, led by Germany, France and Italy, but these three countries have an internal growth problem. For renewed growth, we must give Europeans confidence again".

Calling for more resources for the EU, Mr Goebbels said the Socialist Group will judge the British Presidency on its ability to agree on realistic but more generous financial perspectives. "A strong commitment by the 25 in favour of coordinated re-launch and greater national and trans-European infrastructure investments will allow Europe to find growth again – the essential condition if difficult structural reforms are to be accepted.

"It is growth that will lead to stability and not the other way round."

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