

Resolution of the ECSC Consultative Committee on the legacy of the ECSC (26 June 2002)

Caption: At its final session held on 26 June 2002, the Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) adopts a Resolution by which it expresses both its satisfaction at the efforts made to preserve the achievements of the ECSC after the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and also its concern about the means used to secure the benefit of the ECSC legacy, particularly with regard to welfare and employment.

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Resolution of the ECSC Consultative Committee on the occasion of its final session on the legacy of the European Coal and Steel Community (Adopted unanimously at the 361st session on 26 June 2002)

1. THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY,

1.1. with reference to the Preamble to the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, and, in particular, to the desire to help raise the standard of living, further the works of peace and, by establishing an economic community, create the basis for a deeper community among peoples;

1.2. recalling Jean Monnet's address at the first meeting of the Consultative Committee on 26 January 1953, and, in particular, his emphasis on improving production, on free access for all users to all sources of supply, at reduced prices and with no discrimination, and on improving living and working conditions, all key objectives of ECSC activities;

1.3. emphasising that the Consultative Committee is currently the only institution set up under the ECSC Treaty which is still in existence in its original form and that, for five decades, it has made possible concerted management of all issues relating to the development of the coal and steel industries;

1.4. referring to the Commission communication ⁽¹⁾ of 27 September 2000 on the future of structured dialogue after the expiry of the ECSC Treaty;

1.5. referring to its Resolution ⁽²⁾ of 25 January 2001 on the future of structured dialogue in the coal and steel industries;

1.6. referring to its Resolution ⁽³⁾ of 6 April 2000 on the state of the competitiveness of the steel industry in the EU;

1.7. referring to its declarations of 25 June 1999 on the role of coal in the Europe of the 21st century and of 5 April 2001 on the role of steel in Europe at the beginning of the 21st century;

1.8. referring to its opinion ⁽⁴⁾ of 25 January 2002 on the Commission communication 'A European Union strategy for sustainable development',

2. WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS SATISFACTION AT THE EFFORTS MADE TO PRESERVE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ECSC AFTER THE TREATY EXPIRES,

2.1. firstly, at the creation, under the Decision of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 27 February 2002 on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel ⁽⁵⁾, of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, to continue collaborative sectoral research on the basis of the guidelines annexed to that Decision; it is particularly important for the industry to continue to be involved in the distribution of the research funds generated by the ECSC levy and for the network of experts set up by the ECSC to continue in existence. The Consultative Committee is also gratified to note that their access to the EU's general framework programmes will not be restricted because of post-ECSC research which is outside the EU budget;

2.2. secondly, at the setting-up, within the Economic and Social Committee, of a Consultative Subcommittee for Coal, Steel and Industrial Conversion, in which, in addition to the members of the ESC representing the two sectors, 30 delegates from the three Consultative Committee categories who have the know-how gained from experience with the ECSC and first-hand knowledge of industrial and social reality will be responsible for ensuring that structured sectoral dialogue continues;

2.3. thirdly, at the adoption by the Commission on 19 March 2002 of a communication on the multisectoral framework on regional aid for large investment projects and on rescue, restructuring and closure aid for the steel industry, under which neither the expiry of the ECSC Treaty nor the enlargement expected for 2004

will lead to any relaxation of the strict aid regime applying in the EU steel sector. Those types of aid which are known to be damaging to healthy competition — investment aid, regional aid, rescue and restructuring aid — will continue to be banned in the steel sector;

2.4. fourthly, at the political agreement in the Council on 7 June 2002 on the proposal for a Council Regulation on State aid to the coal industry, which maintains the principles of the ECSC as regards flanking measures to go with restructuring, whilst placing this issue in the context of security of supply and sustainable development for the 21st century,

3. URGES THE EU INSTITUTIONS TO BEAR IN MIND THAT:

3.1. the ECSC sectors have substantially increased their efforts to protect the environment with a view to sustainable development. It is vitally important that the authorities — essentially at European level — take into account the progress made;

3.2. undertakings in the coal and steel industries are increasingly constrained by the rising tide of regulations and administrative provisions issued by European, national, regional and local authorities. Excessive bureaucratic regulation is stifling investment capacity, which is crucial for the maintenance and improvement of overall competitive capacity and the improvement of environmental protection. The authorities should endeavour to take a balanced view of economic, environmental and social constraints;

3.3. undertakings in the ECSC sector need young and highly qualified engineers and entrepreneurs to enable them to develop. Schools and universities should play their part in arousing greater interest in industry and technology. Society as it is today cannot survive without an effective industrial base;

3.4. international negotiations on sustainable and verifiable world-level reductions in the steel industry's excess capacity should be speeded up within the WTO and the OECD. In view of the Consultative Committee's experience in restructuring the ECSC sectors, the social partners should be involved in these negotiations;

3.5. to promote the competitiveness of their steel industries, the CEEC governments must reduce their controls and speed up the privatisation process, whilst complying with the ECSC Aid Code. Local undertakings must also cut capacity in line with a realistic estimate of foreseeable demand. The Consultative Committee considers that the Commission should take this point into account when negotiations on these important issues are concluded, ensuring that there is strict compliance with the relevant commitments,

4. NEVERTHELESS WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS CONCERN ABOUT THE MEANS USED TO SECURE THE BENEFIT OF THE ECSC LEGACY, NOTING IN PARTICULAR THAT:

4.1. the various ECSC social measures, more especially aid for retraining, have gradually been stopped without being replaced by equivalent measures under the EC Treaty, with the risk of serious restructuring problems in the future, notably in countries which will be joining the European Union;

4.2. the sectoral approach to the use of the Structural Funds, as illustrated in the Community's Resider and Rechar initiatives, has been abandoned instead of acting as a link with ECSC measures;

4.3. there is no guaranteed future for the Paul Finet Foundation, which was set up to award study grants to the orphans of workers in the coal and steel industries who had died as a result of industrial accidents or diseases, and which thus symbolises the ECSC's social conscience;

4.4. the merger of the Safety and Health Commission for the Mining and Other Extractive Industries with the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work raises a serious problem, in view of which the Committee recommends that the Commission continue to treat prevention in the mining industry as a special case, since the work involved is high risk,

5. WOULD LIKE, AS ITS WORK DRAWS TO A CLOSE, TO EXPRESS ITS FEELINGS OF GRATITUDE AND PRIDE BY:

5.1. paying solemn tribute to the workers in the two sectors whose efforts and devotion enabled the ECSC to be created and to operate, in particular the victims of serious industrial accidents and diseases;

5.2. paying tribute to all those involved in the two industries who, by their commitment and their willingness to engage in social dialogue and promote social peace, made it possible to develop what is today an efficient and competitive industrial tool;

5.3. recalling that the European Union came into being in the coal and iron ore mines and in the steelworks and that the process which began in 1952 with the ECSC has drawn to a conclusion in 2002 with the introduction of the single currency;

5.4. paying a sincere tribute to the citizens of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg — the first country to play host to the European institutions — whose hospitality has provided an especially calm backdrop, firstly to the work of the High Authority and the Consultative Committee and then for all the Community institutions.

(¹) COM(2000) 588 final.

(²) OJ C 87, 17.3.2001.

(³) OJ C 136, 16.5.2000, p. 7.

(⁴) OJ C 54, 1.3.2002, p. 5.

(⁵) OJ L 79, 22.3.2002.