

EPP PREPARES NEXT CONGRESS IN ROME

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The European People's Party (EPP) is preparing its next **Congress** (30 and 31 March in Rome) with the goal, among others, of giving new impetus to the European Union (EU).

The EPP Political Bureau met in Brussels and prepared the debate to be held at its Rome Congress on the main concerns of the European citizens.

*"The European leaders agreed in December on the financial perspectives 2007 - 2013 with the decisive participation of German Chancellor **Angela MERKEL** and other EPP leaders. One of the next challenges is to rejuvenate the European Constitution project", EPP President **Wilfried MARTENS** said.*

President Martens is convinced that Austrian Chancellor and current EU President, **Wolfgang SCHÜSSEL**, "will give fresh impetus to the European project and the EPP will support him fully".

As a first step to inform the press and the public opinion on the next Congress, the EPP has launched a website - <http://www.eppcongress2006.org> - where relevant documents and information is available.

RESOLUTION ON THE SERVICES DIRECTIVE

In addition, the EPP Political Bureau adopted a Resolution on the Services Directive, which calls the Austrian Presidency to continue with active discussions towards an early political agreement in the Council of the EU using the Parliament's amendments as the basis to reach such compromise:

- 1) *"The opening of the EU's vast services market, and the removal of unnecessary administrative barriers, is an important factor in the completion of the Single Market and crucial to a strong European economy and to long term job creation. Cutting red tape and making business establishment easier is vital for entrepreneurial small enterprises.*
- 2) *The EPP endorses the work of EPP-ED Members in various European Parliament Committees - in particular of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee as the Lead Committee - in alliance with other political groups. This work has delivered important amendments to the Directive that enshrine the freedom to provide cross-border services, while ensuring that public authorities can continue to safeguard the legitimate interests of their citizens, particularly in the areas of health, safety and the environment and labour. Therefore, this directive will be without prejudice to labour law and social security legislation.*
- 3) *The EPP also endorses the Committee's support for the inclusion of public services open to competition within the scope of the proposal. This is a very large economic area, where innovative companies, especially SMEs, should enjoy the freedom that the Directive provides.*
- 4) *The EPP calls on the Plenary Session of the Parliament and the Council to adopt a final text that retains the core principles adopted by the Internal Market Committee. The EPP supports the group of Ms. Thyssen, Mr. Karas and Mr. Harbour in their attempts to negotiate a compromise based on the points above and discussions in the plenary.*
- 5) *We also call upon the Austrian Presidency to continue with active discussions towards an early political agreement in Council, using the Parliament's amendments as the basis that will lead to an effective compromise."*

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