

# EPP RESOLVES DEBACLE OVER AUSTRIAN PARTY

**Brussels, June 6, 2000**

Today's meeting of the EPP Political Bureau finally broke the deadlock over proposals in April by the Belgian Christian Democrats (*PSC*), the Nouvelle Union pour la Démocratie Française (*Nouvelle UDF*), and the Italian Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI), to eject the Austrian People's Party (*OeVP*) because of its government coalition with the right-wing Austrian Freedom Party (*FPOe*). The Political Bureau voted overwhelmingly - with only two votes against - for a resolution based on the *report on the political situation in Austria* by a three-man observer committee of MEPs - Wim VAN VELZEN (right) , Gerardo GALEOTE QUECEDO, and Hartmut NASSAUER.

Apart from reintegrating the *OeVP* as a full member of the party, the measures agreed by the Political Bureau are a call for a rapid conclusion to the bilateral sanctions currently being taken by the other 14 EU governments against the Austrian government, and at the same time the formation of a standing committee to exercise vigilance on human rights and the fight against racism and xenophobia throughout EU and applicant countries.

The MEPs' report on the political situation in Austria found a wide consensus among the c. 60 members of the EPP Political Bureau who attended the meeting. There were only two dissenting voices on the resolution proposed by President Wilfried MARTENS: Belgian *PSC* leader Joëlle MILQUET, and the party's international secretary Michèle BRIBOSIA.



The report found that, although Freedom Party (*FPOe*) ministers had issued declarations conflicting with government policy, there was no sign of deterioration in Austrian democracy during the first 120 days of the coalition government. Nor had there been any deviation from the declared programme.

The MEPs also welcomed concrete actions including the imminent ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on regional and minority languages, measures taken to integrate immigrants - of whom it noted there were more, in percentage terms, than anywhere else in Europe apart from Luxembourg - and compensation measures for forced labourers during World War II, as well as restitution of goods stolen from Jews during the Nazi period.

The Austrian Socialists (*SPOe*) are criticised in the report for the hypocrisy of calling, within the Socialist International, for the maintenance of sanctions by the other 14 EU Member States against Austria, while demanding firmer action from the Austrian government to stop them.

## **Text of Political Bureau Resolution on political situation in Austria**

"The Political Bureau has had an in-depth debate on the June 5, 2000 Observation Committee report, which was to be presented to the Bureau as quickly as possible. The Bureau thanks the three rapporteurs, Messrs. van VELZEN, GALEOTE, and NASSAUER, for their excellent work, in which they have shown both talent skill and complete integrity.

The Political Bureau has arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Since it was formed on February 4, 2000, the new Austrian government has adopted a series of important legislative and executive measures which clearly indicate the positive direction of its policies in the key areas covered by the Observation Committee's mandate.
2. On the basis of points 2 and 3 in the Observation Committee report, the Political Bureau has concluded that the ÖVP will tolerate nothing less than the full implementation of the government programme, its preamble, and other government Declarations, notably that of March 21 on the fight against discrimination. In this context, we appreciate the readiness of the President of the ÖVP, Wolfgang SCHÜSSEL to supply regular information to the Political Bureau on all developments in Austria.
3. The Political Bureau expects and is confident that Chancellor Schüssel, if and when the need would arise, will correct or rebuke any public statement made by Ministers that is not in line with the Government's policy in matters related to the observer committee's mandate.
4. The Political Bureau denounces the attitude of the SPÖ, which, while demanding in the Austrian Parliament a much tougher attitude of the Government against the sanctions imposed by the other 14 Member States, is at the same time keeping pressure on member parties of the Socialist International in Europe, to maintain these sanctions.
5. The Political Bureau recommends a further clarification of the methods of implementation of Article 7 of the Treaty of the EU in the framework of the current Intergovernmental Conference, so as to include and foresee detailed mechanisms at EU level designed to prevent and penalize any breach by a Member state of the fundamental principles enumerated in Article 6 TEU. We suggest furthermore that the European Commission on its own initiative or at the request of the European Council evaluates the respect of human rights throughout the EU. In anticipation of a clarification of the methods of implementation of Article 7 TEU, the Commission should present proposals to this end.
6. . The Political Bureau notes that the Austrian Government on 5 May 2000 adopted an action plan which includes a series of measures better to inform European citizens on the political situation in Austria and for bringing the sanctions imposed on Austria to an end. The Political Bureau hopes that, within the EU, a procedure will be adopted leading to a solution acceptable to all parties concerned.
7. The Political Bureau recommends the creation within the EPP of a permanent committee in charge of the respect of human rights and the fight against racism and xenophobia throughout the European Union and the applicant countries. The Committee will fulfil its tasks on the basis of Article 130 of the party's Basic Programme, adopted at Athens in 1992. The Political Bureau reiterates that rejection of political alliances with extremes is one of the fundamental principles of the EPP.
8. The Political Bureau furthermore recommends that the EPP Political Bureau asks the EPP Member parties' Scientific Institutes/Party Foundations to investigate, on the one hand, the phenomena "right wing populist movement" including its relationship with extreme right wing parties, and "protest vote" including its motives and what the response of the EPP and its Member parties could be, and on the other hand, the relationship between mainstream left-wing parties and extreme left wing parties, taking into consideration that in several Member states extreme left-wing parties participate in national or regional Governments.

9. . The Political Bureau has decided that the conclusions reached by the Permanent EPP Committee on human rights, and by EPP institutes and foundations, will serve as the basis of the texts to be adopted at the next EPP Congress in January 2001.

10. For these reasons, the Political Bureau invites the ÖVP to resume its full part, as of now, in all EPP bodies; and that the mandate of the Observation Committee has been completed and its activities are now at an end."