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**Romano Prodi**  
**President of the European Commission**  
**Investment in knowledge - The way forward**  
**European Parliament - Plenary session**  
**Strasbourg, 14 January 2003**

President Cox,  
Prime Minister,  
Honourable Members,

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We have closed the chapter on that remarkable year 2002, which began with the launch of the euro and ended with the decision on the largest enlargement in Europe's history. But this coming year will in many ways be equally crucial. Enlargement and institutional reform will require proper preparation.

And above all, we must make sure the new Europe must be built on sound economic and social foundations.

Prime Minister,

In setting its priorities for the next six months, the Greek Presidency has shown it is keenly aware of the issues at stake. I welcome its commitment to enhance coordination of the Lisbon strategy and to "invigorate Europe's economy, social cohesion and sustainable development".

The Greek Presidency wants to develop and push forward this process, and the Spring European Council is the pivotal occasion for setting the economic, social and environmental priorities for 2003.

Consultations between the Presidency and the Commission and Parliament are already under way and I am confident that we shall continue to work well together.

Honourable Members,

The Spring Report, the Commission's contribution to the work of the Spring Council, was adopted by the College today. We also adopted a number of related documents, most noteworthy being the report on the implementation of the economic policy guidelines and the general principles of a new European Employment Strategy.

Let me now tell you a little more about the key points of the report. Though, of course, the Commission is, as always, at Parliament's disposal if it should want to organise specific debates on these important issues.

The Lisbon strategy for economic, social and environmental renewal by the end of the decade remains the right course for an enlarged European Union.

It is the best way of delivering what concerns our citizens most -- prosperity, more and better jobs, greater social cohesion and a cleaner environment -- and making sure that they are achieved sustainably for future generations.

The Spring European Council must show that it is able to driving forward this process in the face of the twin challenges of enlargement and deteriorating economic conditions. These challenges are a further argument for pressing ahead, not slowing down. Lisbon is the best way to integrate the new Member States. It is the best way to improve economic performance.

For, as our spring report points out, the Lisbon process is delivering. In many areas reforms are already producing growth and creating jobs. But much potential remains untapped.

The Lisbon goals are still well within reach but without greater political will there is no firm guarantee of success.