

Mid-term review of industrial policy: a contribution to the EU's growth and jobs strategy

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The European Parliament adopted, by 443 votes to 62 and 21 abstentions, a resolution on the mid-term review of industrial policy, in response to the Commission's Communication on this subject. The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Romana **JORDAN CIZELJ** (EPP-ED, SI) on behalf of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

The resolution welcomes the Commission's communication and stresses that a prosperous industrial sector is essential for the achievement of the Lisbon goals. However, it regrets the weakness of the link between EU and national industrial policy and supports the Commission's and Member States' initiatives to strengthen this link.

MEPs believe that the main role of EU industrial policy is to put in place the right framework conditions for enterprise development, industrial investment, innovation and job creation, paying particular attention to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). They argue in favour of an open and competitive internal market in services and industry and stress the crucial role of competition policy in this respect. They also underline the importance of an efficient public procurement regime for the competitiveness of European industry.

The Commission is called upon to step up its efforts to eliminate unnecessary administrative barriers that make access to the internal market difficult, to simplify and to improve the regulatory environment and to reduce the administrative burden on enterprises. Parliament encourages the Commission to use a coherent approach to SMEs in all EU policies by properly applying the 'think small first' principle. It strongly supports the initiative for a 'Small Business Act for Europe' It also stresses the urgency of establishing an EU-wide market for venture capital by removing existing regulatory and tax obstacles to venture capital investments in Europe's most innovative small firms.

Parliament is of the opinion that the EU's environmental goals should not be seen as a threat to industry, but as an opportunity to gain a first mover advantage and make industry in the EU a world leader in environmentally friendly and socially acceptable technologies, products and services. It points out that the impact of environmental legislation on the international competitiveness of energy intensive industries in the EU should be taken into consideration urgently in order to avoid carbon leakage and unemployment. In this connection, the Commission is urged actively to promote the setting up of global sectoral agreements that can reduce the environmental impact of specific industries worldwide while ensuring a level playing field.

MEPs welcome the significant contribution of cohesion policy to ensuring competition in the industrial sector. They encourage Member States to focus their investments within the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund on fields which promote the growth of human capital, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and on assistance for SMEs. More generally, they draw attention to the need for ongoing priority investment in education, training and research.

Parliament recalls that innovative products (representing 73% of EU exports) significantly strengthen the EU's competitive advantage. It notes, however, that the EU still lags behind the United States and Japan in innovation. Therefore, it believes that Community funding programmes, such as the Seventh Framework

Programme for research activities or the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, and the European Institute for Innovation and Technology, should be exploited to their fullest. In this respect, Parliament welcomes the 'lead market' initiative and the Standards Action Programme.

Lastly, Parliament highlights that, in order to boost innovation throughout the EU, it is essential to support invention-related activities and protect the products of those activities. MEPs call on the Council to take action to introduce a Community patent as soon as possible and call on the Commission to continue to combat counterfeiting and to work towards global solutions in this area, based predominantly on European models.