An industrial competitiveness policy for the European Union

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1. Further to its Resolution of 21 November 1994, the Council examined: - the Commission communication on the work programme and timetable for implementing the initiatives announced in the Commission communication on an industrial competitiveness policy for the European Union; - the report on the implementation of Council Resolutions and conclusions on industrial policy. 2. The Council welcomes the follow-up to its work on industrial policy in most areas and the implementation of a number of operational national programmes in the context of the structural funds and associated Community initiatives, aimed at enhancing industrial competitiveness. At the same time it stresses the importance of an integrated approach that could speed up the implementation of earlier Resolutions and conclusions, whether on industrial competitiveness in general, on SMEs or on particular sectors. 3. The Council notes with interest the programme of action presented by the Commission following its Resolution of 21 November 1994 and its communication on an industrial competitiveness policy for the European Union and the proposal for a decision implementing that programme. 4. The Council notes with interest that this Commission action covers the following points in particular:(i) Promotion of intangible investment: Bearing in mind the growing complementarity of tangible and intangible investment, emphasis to be placed on the following approaches: - Stepping-up of research by: = seeking to take fuller account of the needs of the market in RTD policy, *inter alia* in information society-related applications; = modernising approaches in order to produce more effective industrial spin--offs from research; = facilitating the establishment of consortia of European companies, without infringing competition rules. - Looking at the creation of a legal environment conducive to research, taking into account - amongst other aspects of the international context - the entry into force of the new rules resulting from the Uruguay Round. - Drive to promote quality that is in keeping with the European Union’s approach on standardisation and is mindful of the powers of the Member States. - Fuller integration of vocational training schemes into other policies. (ii) Industrial cooperation: - Organisation of industrial round tables, particularly involving countries with which the Community traditionally maintains close relations for historical and cultural reasons. - Promotion of industrial cooperation by the creation of a database listing opportunities for cooperation. - Support for industrial cooperation projects of Community interest through the implementation and utilisation of existing Community instruments. (iii) Competition without distortion on foreign markets and on the internal market: - Establishment of a database and presentation of an annual report on obstacles to the smooth operation of foreign markets, incorporating in particular the results of the centralised information body on electronics and information and communication technologies; on the basis of that information, in particular that provided by the abovementioned body’s initial results, formulation and implementation of specific measures to remove those obstacles, and extension of that approach to other industrial activities. - Preparation, in due course, of a dialogue with the Member States on commercial policy instruments. - Early examination and, if appropriate, improvement of the mechanism for monitoring aid. (iv) Modernisation of the industrial role of public authorities: - Examination of the possibility of streamlining procedures and increasing transparency, further to the analysis of the impact of Community and national regulations on competitiveness and employment carried out by the Group of independent experts on legislative and administrative simplification (Molitor Group). - Use of the contributions made by the consultative group on competitiveness, in particular its reports to the European Council. 5. The Council asks the Permanent Representatives Committee to begin examining the proposal for a decision implementing the programme of action to strengthen the competitiveness of European industry as soon as the European Parliament’s opinion has been received. The Council calls upon the Commission to associate the Working Party of Heads of Industrial Policy Departments in the implementation of the relevant measures under the programme and to report back in 1996 on progress and on any adjustments to the programme of action for subsequent years.