Single Market: report 1994

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The ESC welcomed the Community institutions' recognition of the role of the economic and social interest groups - and particularly the Single Market Observatory set up by the ESC - contributing to the analysis of, and providing a direction for, work to complete the single market. It invited all European socio-economic interest groups to participate directly in the evaluation of the single market and to convey to the ESC any information that could be of use in helping to improve it. In spite of the considerable progress made since the publication of the 1985 White Paper, the ESC noted that the Commission report also made it clear that the single market was still incomplete. Concerned about the growing difficulties associated with the adoption of the final pieces of single market legislation, in contrast to the general speeding-up of issues affecting the Union, the ESC urged the Member States and the Community institutions to agree to make every effort to round off the necessary outstanding legislation - about thirty separate instruments - between now and the 1999 deadline for economic and monetary union. A list of the principal measures to complete the single market was attached to the Opinion. The 1996 Intergovernmental Conference should examine how qualified majority voting on questions vital to the single market could be extended, particularly in respect of free movement of persons, customs cooperation, environmental protection and intra-Community taxation. The ESC also pointed to the need to bolster the application of measures by introducing better monitoring, underpinned, at all levels, by effective sanctions. The correct application of single market rules also required the provision of a tighter framework for national exemptions from the principle of free movement, the extension of mutual recognition and the introduction of harmonisation in respect of national customs services. Finally, the ESC stressed the importance of the need to create, apart from provisions to loosen up trade and to ensure that they were correctly applied, a true force for convergence to relieve the pressures and imbalances that were caused both by the incomplete single market and the remoteness of economic and monetary union. Among other things, this would require increased economic and social convergence, better use of the Structural Funds, adjusting competition policy in line with the new realities of the opening-up of international markets, while at the same time actively preparing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for their participation in the single market.