Competition policy. 26th report 1996

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The ESC commends the Commission on the expeditious publication of the Report on Competition Policy (1996) and the Fifth Survey of State Aids . Because of the growing significance of global trading, the ESC has noted with particular interest the recommendation that the World Trade Organization should set up a working group to do initial work on the development of an international framework for competition rules. The ESC hopes that the Commission will further develop its approach, policies and methodology on these global aspects of competition questions . The ESC notes that the suggestions made in this opinion will have relevance in the debate on Agenda 2000, published in July 1997, which has implications for competition, regional, industrial and agricultural policies in the next millennium. In view of the evolution of several critical aspects of competition policy in recent years, this may be an appropriate time to reconsider the application of competition policy. The general principles might be reviewed and then used as a basis for a reallocation of responsibilities for enforcement which allows for both decentralization and the application of subsidiarity. In this way, openness and transparency could be enhanced and a sharper focus on the needs of consumers and the role of SMEs might be developed. As globalization increasingly affects competition, the ESC suggests that the Commission should amplify its annual report on competition with a review of the state of competition policies in major competitor countries, particularly where their actions may affect the business of EU firms.