Steel industry: aid code (implementing dec. 2496 /96/ECSC). 1998 Report

1999/2107(COS) - 21/03/2001

This report covers all decisions in 2000 of the Steel Aid Code. Under the code, the Commission took decisions concerning 17 cases, five of which were approved wihtout opening the investigating procedure, eight were the object of final decisions and the other four of a decision to initiate proceedings. The cases that the Commission approved without raising any objections concerned research and development activities carried out by undertakings in Belgium and in Germany and two cases consisted of environmental tax schemes, in Germany and Sweden. The cases that proved to be more problematic were those of investment aid for environmental protection. In three of those cases, the Commission took an initial decision to initiate proceedings and in one case involving five companies it took a final negative decision. It also took two partially negative decisions in two other such cases. The Commission also took a new decision concerning the Spanish company Tubacex revising its initial decision taken in 1997, which had been annulled by the European Court of Justice. It now decided that the debt rescheduling made in favour of the company by public institutions was in line with the practice of a private creditor in similar circumstances and that no aid was involved. In the case of the French company, Myriad, the Commission decided to close proceedings taking note that, in the time since the opening of the procedure, the company has paid back credit unduly received aid and accrued with due interest. In two of the cases of tax credits for foreign investments made by steel companies, it took a negative decision concerning the Spanish law and initiated proceedings in the case of the French law. The Commission also took note of a final negative decision concerning the regional aid that Germany has granted to Salzgitter. In the case of Cockerill, it took a final negative decision, considering that the employment aid granted by Belgium was illegal and incompatible with the common market.