Pharmaceutical industry: outlines of an instrustrial policy for the pharmaceutical sector

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The report by Mrs Irene SOLTWEDEL-SCHÄFER (V, D) on the outlines of an industrial policy for the pharmaceutical sector was adopted by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs with a very small majority (26 in favour, 24 against). Given the very close vote and the extremely broad differences of opinion on most of the amendments, the chairman asked the rapporteur to try to reach a compromise before the vote in the House. Many amendments were tabled (66 in all); some of the main points adopted were as follows: - ensuring that governments cut back the cost of using medicines. A critical eye would need to be kept on this process of restructuring to ensure that monopoly situations did not arise; - monitoring mergers in this sector and increasing the cost-effectiveness of research rather than implementing a policy based on deregulation and subsidies; - putting an end to the industry's frenetic use of advertising; - encouraging real innovation; - protecting new medicinal products through intellectual property rights; - enabling pharmaceutical companies to begin, in advance of patent or protection certificate expiry, such laboratory experiments and regulatory preparations as may be required for the registration of generic products so that they may be available on the market after the expiry of the patent; - concentrating research on innovative therapies, diseases which could not yet be treated satisfactorily and rare diseases; - establishing dialogue between politicians, employers, unions and patients; - improving access for SMEs to research and technological development, particularly in the field of biotechnology; - developing the European Medicine Evaluation Agency (EMEA) as a Europe-wide licensing authority; - reducing the number of animal experiments; - improving the marketing of herbal and homeopathic medicines by adjusting the authorisation procedure and setting up a Traditional Medicines Evaluation Agency; - promoting responsible self-medication; - implementing a responsible export policy.