Industrial competitiveness policy for the European chemical industry: a model

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The committee (chairman: Karl von WOGAU (PPE, D)) today adopted a report by Mr Werner LANGEN (PPE, D) (consultation procedure) on a Commission communication on an industrial competitiveness policy for the European chemical industry. Concerned at the loss of competitiveness in this sector and by the growing trend for these undertakings to move their production to third countries, it insisted that everything possible should be done to maintain the maximum number of jobs in Europe and at least to keep R&D activities in the European Union. It therefore proposed to introduce a specific European R&D programme in the chemical sector which highlighted environmental innovations and actions which aimed to stimulate cooperation between companies and universities. While reaffirming that the single currency would have clear advantages for this industry, which was highly geared towards exports, the committee recommended a series of measures to improve its overall competitiveness: reduction in administrative formalities, supply of low-cost energy, investment in human resources. The committee considered that the lack of infrastructure was yet another factor which impeded the competitiveness of the European chemical industry and proposed to remedy this by implementing a network for transporting energy and raw materials between the main production sites within the framework of the trans-European networks. Finally, the committee emphasized that a policy for the chemical industry should also contribute towards sustainable development by guaranteeing a high level of environmental protection. It therefore called on industrialists to take greater account, on a voluntary basis, of the environmental dimension of products and manufacturing processes and on the Commission and the Member States to implement an industrial and environmental policy which combined legislative and regulatory provisions, initiatives and incentives. However, if voluntary agreements were not adhered to, legislative measures would need to be introduced.