Competitiveness of the European textile and clothing industry, plan of action

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The Committee has adopted the report by Sergio RIBEIRO (EUL/NGL, P) which voices strong criticism over the Commission's proposed action plan to increase the competitiveness of the European textile and clothing industry. While agreeing with the need to draw up such a plan, the Committee felt that the Commission's proposal is not sufficiently concrete and lacks cohesion and specific commitments, both in terms of its funding and the timetable for implementation. The Committee therefore asked the Commission to come forward with a new proposal remedying these shortcomings, and laying particular emphasis on training, promoting innovation and the use of new technologies, as well as, strengthening the interaction between all the different levels in the production chain. The Commission is also called upon to have more regard for the recommendations contained in a joint report drawn up by the social partners. The Committee also stressed the need to ensure proper structural fund allocations for the textile industry and for regions heavily dependant on it. In particular, it calls on the Commission to study the financial mechanisms available to this industry - especially in the light of the Agenda 2000 proposal to end the RETEX initiative in 1999. Finally, the Committee welcomes the code of good conduct signed by the two sides of industry concerning the respect of four minimum social clauses: the banning of slave labour, child labour and social discrimination as well as encouraging the right to collective bargaining. The Committee hopes that these will be extended to all EU agreements with third countries in order to combat dumping. Also, the Committee calls on the Commission to defend the principle of reciprocity as regards the opening up of the EU market to third countries.