Competition policy. 27th report 1997

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Reporting on behalf of the committee on the Annual Competition Policy Report (1997) Ms. Karin RIIS-JØRGENSEN gives an overall positive appraisal of the Commission's work in this field. While applauding the current "excellent co-operation" between the Commission and Parliament, the rapporteur nonetheless calls for a further strengthening of the democratic control of competition policy. To that end, the rapporteur calls on the Commission to submit all draft implementing proposals in this filed, such as draft block exemptions, to Parliament, as well as, to formalise current practices where the Commissioner responsible appears before the relevant Committee at least four times per year. The Committee also expressed deep concern over the last few years developments in the field of State Aids. While supporting state aid deemed to be in the common interest, such as for R%D, training and environmental measures, the Committee notes with concern that such aid has been deceasing. Instead, the Committee notes, the amount of aid granted to individual enterprises has been rising steadily. In conclusion, the Committee feels that the volume of overall aid in the EC is too massive, which distorts fair competition and undermines the EU: s commitment to a free world market. As one remedy to this problem, the Committee calls for the introduction of a "peer review system", based on the Single Market Scoreboard, in order to highlight which Member States provide the highest and lowest levels of State Aids. Given the increasing globalization of the economy, the Committee also considers it necessary to reach agreement on basic competition rules at the international level. The Committee therefore asks the Council to mandate the Commission to pursue negotiations within the framework of the WTO on a multilateral agreement on international competition law. Such an agreement should include, inter alia, uniform minimum standards to prevent anti-competitive behaviour (cartels, abuse of dominant position vertical and horizontal restraints etc) and a mechanism for dispute settlement.