Horizontal cooperation agreements: application of competition rules

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The committee adopted the report by Jonathan EVANS (EPP-ED, UK) which broadly endorsed the proposals set out in the Commission communication on reforming competition rules applicable to horizontal cooperation agreements. The report did, however, express concern at the Commission's desire to use market share thresholds as the main indicator of market power and called for the maximum duration of exemptions for joint ventures in the R&D area to be increased from 5 to 10 years. The committee also wanted the Commission to take a more flexible approach to joint R&D projects and to raise the market share threshold for exemption for general horizontal agreements from 15%, as proposed, to 20%. The Commission was proposing that the new rules should come into force in 2001 but the committee would like to see a transitional period of two years. It was also anxious to ensure that the Commission's powers in this area were not challenged by national competition authorities.