Competition policy. 31st report 2001

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The committee adopted the report by Alain LIPIETZ (Greens/EFA, F) on the Commission's 31st report on competition policy (2001). It called for a review of the current system of appeal to the Court of Justice and asked the Commission to study the possibility of an independent body, such as a new judicial panel, so that cases could be dealt with quickly and effectively by judges with special knowledge of competition and state aid. It also suggested that the final decision in merger cases could be subject to a preview by such an independent body in a fast-track procedure, giving greater legal security for the companies concerned and their competitors. The committee also shared the concerns that had been expressed about the need for separation of the powers of the Commission in the area of competition policy, and wanted to see a review of its role. It also called for an enhanced role for Parliament in the competition policy area through the application of the codecision procedure, in the context of the revision of the Treaty in 2004. While welcoming the Commission·s publication of the state-aid "scoreboard", in the interests of transparency and democracy, the committee nevertheless felt that more needed to be done to crack down on state aid in general and to ensure that EU rules applied to the candidate countries. It added, however, that the rules on state aid must be applied to those countries in a non-discriminatory manner. The report stressed the need to strengthen international cooperation in view of the increasing number of worldwide mergers. It was also critical of the slow progress in liberalising the gas and electricity markets and urged the Commission to investigate the acquisition activities of firms in the electricity sector and the setting of electricity tariffs. Finally, the committee urged the Commission to lodge a complaint against South Korea, under WTO procedures, in respect of its state aid to shipyards.