Internal market: strategy, priorities 2003-2006

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Bill MILLER (PES, UK) in response to the Commission's Internal Market Strategy for 2003-06. The report was strongly critical of the Member States for their continuing failure to live up to their internal market obligations. MEPs said that this was compounding the present economic difficulties and making for disillusionment with the EU among business people and citizens. They called for the Commission to come up with new plans for dealing with Member States' failures to transpose internal market legislation into national law, including a more systematic approach to the imposition of fines and a fast-track procedure at the Court of First Instance. The report stressed that deregulation and the reduction of the administrative burden of EU legislation was a key condition for meeting the Lisbon objectives. It called for the setting up of an independent advisory group to assess the business impact of EU regulation. MEPs also called for the Commission to accelerate its work on simplifying the VAT system, which was particularly burdensome. The committee called for a greater involvement of national parliaments, to address the problem of 'gold plating' - i.e. Member States implementing European directives in an unnecessarily complex and bureaucratic way. It also called on the Commission to evaluate the impact of Public Private Partnerships on the democratic accountability of public authorities for providing public services, and to assess their social consequences for both workers and users