Machinery construction industry: strengthening the competitiveness

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The purpose of the Commission communication is to study the structures and situation of the European mechanical engineering industry in relation to its suppliers and customers, and to analyse the conditions for improving competition. It comes in response to the request by the Council and the European Parliament for a regular examination of the situation of the European advanced tooling industry and to the European industry's need for a coherent set of measures based on the Union's horizontal industrial policy instruments. The Commission considers that mechanical engineering, which provides over 2 million jobs in the Union, is one of the key sectors of the European economy. Given the serious structural problems facing it, this sector needs to step up its efforts to modernize if it wants to keep its place on the world market. The Commission therefore proposes a coherent set of measures to promote investment, the commercial environment, industrial cooperation, technical harmonization, RDT, vocational training, regional policy, commercial policy and environmental protection. None of the planned measures implies compulsory expenditure and most can be implemented using existing Community or national instruments. As most of the enterprises in this sector are SMEs, their access to and participation in EU programmes and measures needs to be improved. In order to facilitate the implementation of the proposed measures, the Commission calls for dialogue between the European authorities and representatives of the mechanical engineering sector to be strengthened. Finally, the Commission considers that, because of their horizontal nature, the proposed measures will have a positive impact on parts suppliers and machinery users and, in the final analysis, on the manufacturing industry as a whole.