Industry and international industrial competitiveness: Community action programme

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The draft decision seeks to draw up an action programme with a view to improving the competitiveness of European industry, which will provide the basis for economic growth and employment creation and will contribute to economic and social cohesion. The four objectives of the programme were as follows: 1) To promote intangible investments: vocational training; more intensive research; promotion of quality; better integration of vocational training actions in other policies; development of clean technologies and financial incentives; new ways of organizing work and improving the fiscal environment of SMEs; improving the dialogue between the two sides of industry; rational use of statistics. 2) To develop industrial cooperation. - at horizontal level: removal of legal and fiscal obstacles; development of new tools; support for the development of transnational initiatives focused on the key markets by using the structural funds; enlisting the support of the directors-general group to facilitate commercial operations and the search for information and suitable business partners; joint approach to European investment abroad; greater technological cooperation; - central and eastern European countries and the CIS: examination of solutions based on the concept of partial investment guarantees; support for private-sector investment; support for standardization and certification; expertise in international financial engineering and compensation schemes; support for energy potential; - Latin America and the Mediterranean countries: participation in the Fourth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development and in the development of the information society; creation of business networks; - Asia: cooperation programmes; projects for scientific and technological cooperation; actions to promote training and the dissemination of techniques; 3) To ensure fair competition. - external markets: solving the outstanding problems left by the GATT negotiations; combatting fraud; the application of international rules on competition; setting-up an Industrial Assessment Mechanism; improving the structure of the Common Customs Tariff; creation of a database on the obstacles to the smooth operation of the markets; improvement of trade-policy instruments; application of trade-policy and trade-protection instruments to the services sector; - the single market: reduction in public aid; adjustment of the aid control mechanism; re-examination of the acceptance criteria for aid; strengthening of the single market (gas, electricity and telecommunications); 4) To modernize public intervention measures: further deregulation; redefinition of public-service objectives; development of partnerships between big business and SMEs; simplification of legislation and administrative procedures; more intensive use of data communications networks to link-up the public services; support for industrial cooperation projects of interest to the Community; reducing the cost of applying the regulations.