Industrial competitiveness policy for the European chemical industry: a model

1996/2087(COS) - 30/04/1996 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: The Commission communication is entitled 'an industrial competitiveness policy for the European chemical industry: an example'. Its aim is to identify the main challenges and needs facing the industry and to define a set of actions to enhance its competitiveness. SUBSTANCE: The Commission considers that, although the European chemical industry is among the most modern and most successful in the world, it faces a major challenge - to strengthen its long term international competitiveness by supplying its clients in Europe and abroad with high-quality, environmentally sound and competitively priced products. The actions to be taken by the Commission, the industry and the Member States are divided into four headings: 1) Actions to improve the regulatory framework. These actions should focus on: - consolidating, updating and simplifying the existing regulatory framework for chemical preparations and substances (e.g. consolidation of directives on fertilizers and detergents, simplification of the directive on protection of the health and safety of workers from the risks posed by chemical agents, simplification of notification procedures for new chemical products); - scientific assessment of the risk posed to health, safety and the environment by the substance, preparation or type of installation, - an appropriate cost-benefit analysis of the options available; - a comparative analysis of similar provisions in force or being drawn up in the most competitive third countries. If a new initiative is needed at Union level, the instrument chosen should be the simplest and least expensive, capable of ensuring a high level of health and environmental protection. 2) Actions to ensure effective competition. The Commission will take account of the global dimension of the chemical industry and the need to continually adjust its structures, when applying the competition rules both within and outside the Union. This will require solutions to the problems of structural over-capacity in some basic chemical industries, further liberalization of the electricity and gas markets, elimination of non-tariff barriers such as dual price systems and import registers, and bilateral and multilateral efforts to conclude new agreements on competition and international trade. 3) Actions to strengthen intangible investment. The growing need for innovative, high-quality chemical products will lead the industry, the Commission and the Member States to concentrate their efforts in the field of RDT, education and scientific training. This will involve collaborative research programmes, greater involvement of the chemical industry in the task forces, improved patent protection, chemistry teaching for young people and scientific training of workers, and training in workers' health and safety. 4) Actions to develop industrial cooperation. The aim is to make it easier for SMU in the chemical industry to gain access to non-confidential technical, economic and legislative information and to promote Community programmes to encourage partnerships and subcontracting. In addition, international cooperation projects should be set up by the industry, with the support of the Commission, to reduce the risks and expand potential outlets offered by markets in third countries (including the countries of central and eastern Europe, some newly independent states, the Mediterranean countries, China, south-east Asia, Latin America, Russia and the Gulf States). Working together with representatives of the European chemical industry, the Commission will pursue a structured monitoring programme, overseeing the development of international competitiveness in the sector.