Internal market: strategy over the next five years

1999/2167(COS) - 24/11/1999 - Document attached to the procedure

The consultative communication adopted by the Commission on 05/10/1999 launched a short but highly focused debate in the Council, Parliament and Economic and Social Committee and among interested parties. The response was positive and clearly broadly-based support for combining longet-term strategic objectives with short-term, annually reviewed, target actions. This communication provides the Commission's strategy for the Internal Market over the next five years. It sets out four strategic objectives; the operational objectives that flow from them and, for the first time, the (annually reviewed) target actions the Commission recommends to deliver these objectives. The strategy has been conceived to reflect the characteristics of a more mature Internal Market: - the need to enhance the competitiveness of the European economy as well as to improve the quality of life of European citizens. Where the interests of business and the consumer diverge, they must be equitably reconciled. Community policies on the environment, economic and social cohesion, health and safety and consumer rights need not only to be co-ordinated with Internal Market policies, but integrated into them, as required by the Treaty; - the need to involve all stakeholders in the continuing development of the Internal Market, be they citizens or business and whatever their location and circumstances. The continuing development of the Internal Market should be at the heart of bringing the EU closer to its citizens through its impact on their daily lives as employees, employers, consumers, pensioners, students, borrowers, savers, investors and taxpayers; - the need to remove all unjustified barriers to the free movement of goods, services, persons and capital. The new legal framework, created by integrating national markets must function optimally in order to maximise the benefits to consumers, citizens, and business. A proper balance will be sought between legislative and non-legislative activity and between harmonisation and mutual recognition. Wherever appropriate, the Commission will support self-regulation and ensure that it achieves results in an open and transparent way; - the need to promote comprehensive structural reform and modernisation through the microeconomic strand of the process of multilateral economic surveillance, as established by the Cardiff European Council; - the need to monitor and review the effects of existing Internal Market measures by using and developing instruments such as the Scoreboard and the Cardiff report. The Dialogue with Citizens and Business should make full use of the opportunities created by information technology to enhance inclusive and interactive policy-shaping; - the need to provide an adequate framework to unleash the great potential for the development of the Internal Market for information and communication technologies, including e-commerce; - the need to prepare for the next enlargement of the Union. the accession of ten or more countries represents a major challenge to both current and future Member States. The operation of the existing rules needs to be improved and the candidate countries associated as soon as possible in their practical application; - the need to look beyond the borders of the Union. The Internet and e-commerce offer even the smallest of companies theopportunity to trade globally. The Union's experience in creating its Internal Market provides extensive experience on which discussions with its main trading partners can be based. Lastly, reference should be made to the separate but related Union objective of creating the area of Freedom, Security and Justice. The Treaty of Amsterdam offers new possibilities to ensure that the freedoms derived from the Internal Market can be enjoyed in conditions of security and justice accessible for all.