

Competitiveness of European industry, benchmarking

1996/2215(COS) - 09/04/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr José Manuel GARCIA-Margallo Y Marfil (EPP, Esp), Parliament called for improvements in the use of 'benchmarking', a technique adopted by the Commission to identify shortcomings under a system of comparison. The report highlights aspects such as: (a) benchmarking and competitiveness: the report stresses that an overall benchmark of the performance of the EU is the rate of net job creation; (b) infrastructure and services: Parliament urges that benchmarking be used as a means to compare levels of public investment in the EU with those in the US and Japan and advocates reducing the discrepancies in development among the various regions of the EU by means of infrastructure investment; it calls for the liberalizations pending in the services sector to be continued and for markets to be opened up more quickly in sectors such as professional services, financial services, energy, transport and telecommunications; (c) labour market and social legislation: Parliament believes that to preserve the social protection systems in Europe priority should be given to active employment measures (retraining of workers, training, mobility, etc.); it considers job stability and flexibility to be compatible objectives and calls on the social partners, including SMEs, to be involved in their attainment; (d) research and development: the report calls for imaginative ways to be found to enable greater economic resources to be devoted to research and development. On the subject of future action, Parliament calls on the Commission: - to draw up pilot projects as soon as possible in close cooperation with the Member States and representatives from industry and the trade unions, in order to map out the problems posed in the area of benchmarking and to find standardized processes to identify and characterize best practice; - to arrange for the exchange and collection of information about existing work concerning benchmarking at different levels: worldwide, within the OECD, and at European, national and company level, in order to take advantage of existing experience; - propose a work programme for the forthcoming work on benchmarking, after consulting Parliament. As soon as the results of the pilot projects are available, the Commission should submit an annual progress report for benchmarking. This report could be included in the annual competitiveness report and would be discussed in Council in an annual discussion on competitiveness after Parliament has been consulted.