Central and Eastern countries CEECs: industrial cooperation

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Parliament adopted the report by Mr Peter PEX (PPE, NL) on the communication on "Industrial cooperation with the countries of central/eastern Europe". The report begins by pointing out that the eventual enlargement of the Union to include central and eastern Europe is changing the locational parameters for European industry and calls on the Commission to take account of this in its growth and pre-accession strategy. It regards close cooperation between the industrial sectors of the EU and the CEECs as playing an important role in the process of economic reform and the preparation of the CEECs for eventual membership of the Union. Pointing out that it lies within the Commission's responsibilities to develop the framework conditions for rapprochement between the countries of central and eastern Europe, the report draws attention to the problematic situation of the infrastructure of environmental services in those countries, which do not provide a basis for environmentally-acceptable investment. It therefore supports the Commission's intention to make the modernization of industry in central and eastern European countries subject to an environmental impact assessment in line with European standards. It points out that cooperation between industrial undertakings and associations in the EU and the CEECs is primarily a task for industry itself and that the EU's main role is to create the necessary legal framework. It regards the creation of a favourable business climate and the promotion of the exchange of information between the industries of the EU and the CEECs as an important area for action by the Commission. It therefore calls on both sides to cooperate closely in strengthening industrial cooperation, harmonizing technical standards, quality controls and testing and licensing procedures, and to prevent social and environmental dumping. The report also stresses the need for the CEECs to continue with the privatization of previously state-owned undertakings. It also calls on the Commission to give greater support to promoting local trade (in particular on the basis of direct cross-border cooperation between regions) and to ensure that CEEC products have unrestricted access to the EU market. It also stresses the importance of comprehensive professional training and retraining, and hopes that exchange programmes for young people will be implemented with a view to encouraging industrial cooperation. Recalling that industrial cooperation must go hand in hand with a competition policy, the report regards the Europe Agreements as an appropriate basis for close cooperation between both sides. It notes that closer industrial cooperation with CIS states would be desirable in the context of the partnership agreements and the TACIS programme and should be coordinated with the EU's industrial cooperation with other CEECs. Close coordination with the other western industrialized nations, international organizations and the IMF should also be strengthened. Finally, underlining the urgent need to transform the energy sector, the report points out that it is the basis of the process of economic transformation and that existing traditional and centralized structures are not suited to the development of an environmentally sound industrial landscape in the CEECs. It therefore calls for the introduction of a new legal framework and swift investment.