Forest-based and related industries: state of competitiveness

2000/2159(COS) - 18/01/2001 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, with only a few amendments, the report by Mr Esko SEPPÄNEN (EUL /NGL, Fin) which takes a broad-based approach to ways for forestry and related industries to cope with globalisation and the need to observe higher environmental standards. The Parliament stresses that the forest-based industry can and should become a model sector in the field of sustainable development because its activities are based on renewable natural resources. The Commission is urged to strengthen its internal coordination in dealing with matters relating to the forestry sector without delay. Coordination and coherence within the sectoral Community policies having an impact on the forestry sector should be strengthened also. The Parliament recommends that, on the whole, the Community should work towards ensuring that the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is launched as soon as possible and works efficiently to ensure that global minimum criteria for sustainable forests managament are established, in order to prevent actors within competing regions from taking unfair advantage of inferior standards. The Commission is also encouraged to examine the possibility of supporting EU and Member States' research projects which aim to use forest raw materials in a variety of new ways, in particular in the production of extremely valuable raw materials, e.g for medical purposes. Moreover, resources should be allocated to research into new ways of using wood as a renewable and environmentally friendly resource and material. The Community is called upon, in its negotiations at global level and in its own policy-making, to pay attention to the significant role of forests and wooden products in binding and storing carbon. Therefore, it urges the Community to promote sustainable forest management in the negotiations on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. With regard to Central and Eastern Europe, countries applying for EU membership must develop sustainable forestry and forest-based industries and that any EU aid must not lead to a distortion in the conditions of competition in foresty and the timber market. The Parliament considers the applicant countries have a great deal of potential in the timber-processing and related industries. Lastly, it was suggested by the MEPs that peat industries should also be included in the Forest Industries Cluster (FIC) as peatlands are afforested to produce timber. Other sectors included in the FIC are woodworking, pulp and paper production, paper and board pressing, packaging and, for the time being, printing and publishing.