Resolution on the future of the textile and clothing sector in the European Union

2004/2509(RSP) - 29/01/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Concepcio FERRER (EPP-ED, E) and voiced its concern at the situation of the textile and clothing sector, given its strategic importance to the EU in that it offers major potential for the future, and could make an enormous contribution to developing economic, social and territorial cohesion; It welcomed the Commission Communication, and supported the review of EU policies and instruments that it is proposing, with the aim of improving the industry's competitive position and securing its access to third countries' markets. Parliament asked the Commission to draw up a Community programme for the textile and clothing sector, particularly in the least-favoured regions which are dependent on the sector, covering support for research, innovation, vocational training and SMEs, as well as a Community programme to stimulate the development of brands and the promotion of the sector's products abroad, especially at international trade fairs. Parliament pointed out that that the textile and clothing sector in the EU accounts for more than 177,000 businesses and, with enlargement, will employ some 2.7 million persons, with a high percentage of female workers. Between 1990 and 2001, the sector lost some 850,000 jobs and thousands of companies. SMEs in the textile and clothing industry should be encouraged to invest in direct activities of R&D and non-technological innovation, by setting up specific incentives and aid programmes for the industry for this purpose. It might be appropriate to introduce measures to enable SMEs to make greater use of instruments to protect industrial property (particularly patents, trade marks and designs), as these are essential to support innovation and products with greater added value. Parliament pointed to the problem of piracy and counterfeiting and suggested measures to help eliminate the problem. The opening up of international trade in the textile and clothing industry should provide the European industry with a number of opportunities for growth. It is essential, however, to carry out a reform of commercial defence mechanisms to make them more flexible and effective. There is a need to set up a rapid and transparent procedure concerning the WTO general safeguard clauses and the special clauses applying to China under the Protocol on China's accession to the WTO. The Commission is asked to speed up the abolition of non-tariff barriers to trade, as well as additional taxes and duties and other import charges, customs validation practices not based on the price paid for the imported product, discriminatory labelling or marking requirements, import authorisation schemes, certification procedures for which fees and charges are payable, and so on. The Commission is requested to pay particular attention to, and devise formulae to protect, finished products in the event of massive imports of products from third countries threatening or seriously damaging the European textile and clothing industry. It should also set up a Textile and Clothing Industry Observatory, which could analyse the development of trade between China and the EU and monitoring compliance with the rules applying to the two regions. Finally, Parliament pointed to the value of finding solutions, for instance based on a voluntary labelling system, that will enable the consumer to identify products that have beenmanufactured in compliance with basic employment rights as defined by the WTO and with respect for the environment. Parliament welcomes the Commission proposal on the 'Made in Europe' label.