Competition policy. 33rd report 2003

2004/2139(INI) - 22/02/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 540 votes in favour, 70 against, with 30 abstentions, an own-initiative report on the Commission's 33rd Report on Competition Policy - 2003.

The Parliament welcomes the adoption of a series of acts included in the modernisation package, namely the initiatives in the field of cooperation between the various enforcers of EU competition rules - the Commission, national competition authorities and national courts. In this connection, Parliament considers that it is also worth mentioning the appointment of a Chief Competition Economist, the strengthening of the role of the Hearing Officer and the reinforcement of the cartel unit, which will reduce the time required to conclude cartel cases.

On the other hand, it regrets the need for renewal of the "temporary defensive mechanism" by the Council justifying the granting of aid of up to EUR 100 million to shipyards in Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and Denmark as a response to unfair competition from shipyards in South Korea, and looks to an early resolution of the dispute in the World Trade Organisation, before the date of expiry of the current mechanism in March 2005.

It insists that the limited number of cases in which the Commission's decisions have been reviewed by the Court of Justice and set aside should not be seen as undermining confidence in the overall system of analysis and enforcement.

The Commission is urged to continue to review the operation of the judicial system in relation to competition cases, in order to consider improvements to the speed of access to justice, and in order to maximise the experience and skills of the judiciary dealing with competition cases.

Parliament continues to support a more proactive role for the European Parliament in the development of competition policy through promoting co-decision powers for the Parliament, and regrets that the Commission and Council were not able to support this in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. Parliament equally welcomes the revision of state aid rules reorientating the Commission's interest towards cases and issues of significance for the further development of the internal market, which has streamlined and simplified notification and the filing of complaints, and clarified further the 'de minimis' and R&D principles.

On the other hand, the Parliament expresses its concern at the continued failure to achieve full liberalisation in the EU gas and electricity markets.

Lastly, as regards the Commission’s new rules on motor vehicle distribution, Parliament looks for greater progress in reducing the major variations between Member States in prices of new motor vehicles, and regrets the current evidence that these disparities remain significant.