

Competition policy. 34th 2004 report

2005/2209(INI) - 13/03/2006

The committee adopted the own-initiative report originally drawn up by Alain LIPIETZ (Greens/EFA, FR) in response to the Commission's 2004 annual report on competition policy. The committee amended every substantive paragraph of the rapporteur's original draft, changing it so much that he voted against the final version. The report as finally adopted gave a generally positive assessment of the Commission's competition policy, and also made a number of specific recommendations.

The committee urged the Commission to promote the correct application of the competition rules in all Member States and to intervene in good time where the competition rules are being applied unsatisfactorily or in a discriminatory manner. It called for clarity on the "sometimes obscure relationships" among national competition authorities and 'national champions' to remove any suspicion of complicity.

The report expressed concern at the continued failure to achieve full liberalisation in the EU gas and electric markets and welcomed the Commission's inquiry into the sector as well as the inquiry into bank payment systems and the business insurance market, although in these two cases it urged that adequate time be allowed for full and thorough responses to the Commission. It suggested that in the case of major networked services, competition must be guided by strong public service obligations.

MEPs called on the Commission to issue a "clear and precise interpretative communication on the fourth criterion set out in the Altmark judgement" on state aid for public services. They also called for a detailed analysis of the problems associated with collective bargaining sensitive economic sectors, such as agriculture, particularly the relationship between small producers and major processors and marketing firms.

Highlighting the importance of consumer information in ensuring a genuine competition culture, the committee said that there was a need to "consider at Community level private compensation in cases of anti-competitive conduct".

Lastly, the report reaffirmed the call for Parliament to gain a more active role in the development of competition policy through enhancement of its codecision powers in this field.