Policy framework to strengthen the European Union manufacturing: towards a more integrated approach for industrial policy

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The Council adopted the conclusions on EU manufacturing: towards a more integrated approach for industrial policy.

In particular, it

- underlined the importance of a rapid and well coordinated follow-up to the Commission's Communication and a successful implementation of the seven horizontal and seven sectoral initiatives announced therein as an important contribution to achieve the goals of the Lisbon Strategy on growth and jobs; Community initiatives should take into account measures at national level reflecting the specific situation in individual Member States;

- stressed the importance of combining the horizontal and sectoral dimensions of EU industrial policy and welcomes the well balanced working programme outlined in the Commission's Communication;

- emphasised the need to benefit on a larger scale from potential synergies between different Community policy areas. Consequently, initiatives and proposals with major impact on the competitiveness of European industry should be identified so that they can be effectively and coherently dealt with in the Competitiveness Council together with other relevant Council configurations;

- welcomed the setting up of the High Level Group (HLG) on competitiveness, energy and environment with a view to further enhancing the coherence of these policy areas which are crucial for sustainable growth and employment in Europe, and looks forward to the recommendations of the HLG on key issues such as the functioning of energy markets and the EU emission trading scheme;

- reaffirmed its view that an improved regulatory framework, both at EU level and in the Member States, is essential to enhance competitiveness by eliminating unnecessary administrative burdens and to address other burdens on European enterprises, especially on SMEs. Simplification of legislation, while respecting the acquis communautaire, and effective use of impact assessments in accordance with the Interinstitutional Common Approach agreed in 2005are particularly important instruments for achieving the objectives of better regulation and thereby competitiveness and growth;

- underlined that industrial policy in the EU is horizontal in nature and focuses on creating the right framework conditions for successful industrial development. At the same time, industrial policy shall address concrete problems, challenges and deficiencies facing specific industrial sectors. The Council looks forward, therefore, to receiving detailed and timely reports from the Commission on both existing and new sectoral initiatives set out in its communication;

- stressed the need, in this context, to improve the pool of transferable and sectoral skills across European industry, thereby helping it to adapt to structural change now and in the future.

The Council welcomes the Commission's initiation of a broad debate on the external aspects of competitiveness and their interface with the Lisbon Strategy. Aspects such as market access, intellectual property, regulatory issues, investment and public procurement are of particular importance in helping the EU address the challenges of globalisation.

The indicative roadmap is as follows:

2006:

First half 2006 :

- Launch of individual industrial policy initiatives;
- Council conclusions on industrial policy.

Second half 2006 :

- Competitiveness report;
- Communication on external aspects of competitiveness;
- Communication on market access;
- Communication on the competitiveness of the automotive industry.

2007 :

- Midterm review of life sciences and biotechnology strategy and action plan;
- Report on the competitiveness of the ICT industry;
- Report on shipbuilding;
- Communication on space;
- Communication on defence;
- Mid-term review: Communication on Industrial Policy.