Resolution on indication of the country of origin of certain products imported from third countries or origin marking

2006/2597(RSP) - 06/07/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on indication of the country of origin of certain products imported from third countries or origin marking. The resolution was adopted by 63 votes in favour, none against and one abstention.

At present, the EU does not have any harmonised provisions or uniform practices on origin marking in the EU. Disparities between regulations in force in the Member States as well as the absence of clear Community rules in this area result in a fragmentary legal framework. National measures imposing compulsory origin marking on goods imported from other Member States are prohibited, while there is no such limitation on compulsory origin marking on goods imported from third countries. Parliament pointed out that, for certain categories of consumer goods, competitiveness may lie in the fact that their production in the EU is associated with a reputation for quality and high production standards. An origin-marking scheme would have the aim of allowing EU consumers to be fully aware of the country of origin of the products they purchase. Consumers would thus be able to identify those products with the social, environmental and safety standards generally associated with that country. The current proposal introducing a mandatory country of origin marking system in the EU is restricted to a limited number of imported products such as textiles, jewellery, apparel, footwear, leather, lamps and light fittings, glassware, ceramics and handbags. Parliament also pointed out that a number of the EU's major trading partners, such as the United States, China, Japan and Canada, have enacted mandatory origin-marking requirements, and that it was crucial to ensure that a level playing-field is restored with such trade partners.

Parliament deplored the fact that, despite the Commission and the Council's being fully aware of the importance that Parliament attaches to origin marking, the Commission did not formally send the proposed regulation to Parliament for information. It insisted that Parliament should always be given the opportunity to express its views on any relevant initiative taken by other Community institutions in a timely manner, even if Parliament is not legally obliged to be consulted on this proposal. The Commission has an obligation to ensure the involvement of Parliament, in accordance with the Framework Agreement of 26 May 2005 on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission.

Parliament called on the Commission and Council to do the following:

- to inform Parliament about the results of any further impact assessment and legal analysis carried out, in particular with respect to the alleged inconsistencies of the proposed regulation with existing Community legislation and WTO rules;

- to place special emphasis on promoting the image of EU industry inside and outside the Community, safeguarding its identity and specificity, and ensuring that the overall good reputation of the Community's industry and the image and attractiveness of high value EU products is not tarnished by inaccurate or misleading indications of origin;

- to take all necessary steps to ensure a level playing-field with trading partners which have implemented origin-marking requirements;

- to set up proper customs surveillance and enforcement mechanisms;

Member States were urged to maintain a consistent Community approach to this issue to enable EU consumers to receive more complete and accurate information.

Finally, Parliament encouraged the Commission to strongly intervene, together with the Member States, to defend consumers' legitimate rights and expectations whenever there is evidence of counterfeiting and/or use of fraudulent or misleading origin markings by non-EU producers and importers.