



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Regional Development

2010/2095(INI)

6.12.2010

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on an Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era
(2010/2095(INI))

Rapporteur: Francesco De Angelis

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Recognises the contribution of EU industry to the vision of socio-economic and territorial cohesion and considers prosperous industry to be a crucial condition for economic growth and social stability in EU regions;
2. Considers that an 'EU industrial policy for the globalised era' can achieve its aims only if it deals with the extent to which Community policies are adapted to future challenges that European regions and their local industries are facing and will face in the coming years, insofar as the EU policies concerned lead to an increase in the efficiency and competitiveness of SMEs, the prime movers of European industry; in this regard, stresses that the impact of economic, demographic, climate and energy changes needs to be further analyzed with respect to their regional dimension, taking into consideration the potential regional disparities that these challenges will generate, thus affecting the homogeneous growth of EU industries; emphasises the leading role played by regions in promoting the greening of industry and the development of renewable energies;
3. Recognises the threefold challenge to be tackled by EU industrial policy as regards:
 - i) making central and eastern European economies market oriented,
 - ii) the recent economic downturn,
 - iii) ensuring future industrial production;is of the opinion therefore that future steps should aim to:
 - i) liberalise and improve the environment for industry and business inside the EU,
 - ii) remove non-essential regulations and interventions that undermine the position of EU industry vis-à-vis its competition on the global market,
 - iii) utilise the potential of research, development and innovation;
4. Notes that the vast majority of our industrial market is made up of small and medium-sized enterprises, and that the latter play a leading role in stimulating local economic growth and creating employment that is not vulnerable to relocation: any integrated strategy on the future of European industries should therefore focus primarily on an enhanced approach toward SMEs as the key to economic competitiveness and territorial cohesion and, at least to some extent, on the operating conditions for global players, who are important to the regions as well as being central to Europe's international competitiveness; calls for further simplification of the procedures for obtaining EU funding, and for SMEs to be direct beneficiaries of such funding;
5. Stresses the importance of the full implementation of the Small Business Act as a means

of reducing the administrative burden and fostering the role of SMEs in the internal market; welcomes the establishment of a permanent SME Forum on access to financing opportunities and calls for an integrated strategy that will genuinely make it easier for SMEs to obtain financing within the EU;

6. Emphasises that the global economic crisis is affecting employment rates all over Europe, thus worsening the socio-economic prospects of the EU and increasing regional disparities; in this respect, emphasises that the existence of a competitive, diversified, fair and sustainable industrial sector based above all on efficient and competitive SMEs is essential for the future of workers Europe-wide; advocates making good use of the experience and abilities of older workers in preparing the ground for younger generations;
7. Stresses that the expansion in times of crisis of the hidden economy and undeclared activities is an important factor in distortion of competition; calls on the competent authorities in the Member States to take the necessary action to combat this phenomenon;
8. Calls for a new approach to a sustainable industrial policy, as acknowledged by the EU 2020 Strategy, and highlights the need for an integrated industrial strategy to be developed by the Commission together with the European Parliament and the Council in regular consultation with industries themselves, in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Better Regulation strategy;
9. Points out that regional and local public authorities actively help to support industry by making grants to innovative firms and offering training and upskilling programmes for workers; notes that structural funding can be used to co-finance such programmes, and is of the opinion that their role in industrial policy at regional and local level should be further stepped up to help achieve the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy;
10. Is concerned about firms' limited uptake of structural funding for the purpose of financing innovative projects; takes the view that managing authorities should focus on raising firms' awareness of the operational programmes and providing them with whatever help they need to launch their projects;
11. Notes that the reinforcement of constructive dialogue with stakeholders is a key action for implementing good practices among European industries and for enhancing the joint monitoring and evaluation of anticipated measures, based on a regional approach;
12. Recognises that research and innovation is a need shared by the whole spectrum of industry, and is of the opinion that the EU's various instruments for cohesion, research and innovation should be implemented in an integrated manner to ensure their effectiveness; emphasises the need to seek synergies between these instruments;
13. Stresses the need to support SMEs engaged in innovative activities by means of policies and actions coordinated at national and European level and closely geared to the development requirements of industrial and economic stakeholders, with a view to implementing more widely the results of research and innovation so as to develop the competitive potential of EU industry;
14. Emphasises the relevance of the regional level in addressing research and innovation,

owing to the proximity of actors such as universities, public research organisations, SMEs and industries, promoting partnership in knowledge transfer and the exchange of good practices between regions; in this regard, calls on the Commission to invest in innovation clusters and networks, including small and medium-sized ones, through the full involvement of stakeholders and enhanced cooperation with the European Investment Bank and within the framework of a permanent industrial policy task force;

15. Calls, therefore, for concerted efforts to use and build on the scientific and technological skills which are already available in the regions, in particular in the area of key technologies, and for more emphasis to be placed on cluster policies;
16. Emphasises that regional structures make a significant contribution to strengthening industry in Europe; for this reason, more effective support should be given to innovative clusters and networks, in particular in the area of key technologies, with a view to promoting knowledge transfer and research, the improvement of skills and the development of infrastructure in a coordinated manner;
17. Points out that the increase in regional disparities in terms of research and development potential is a challenge that has to be addressed not only in the framework of cohesion policy but also through research and innovation policy; in this respect, calls, in addition to research funding, for a reallocation of funding within the same operational programmes in order to support innovation and to enhance the deployment of research into marketed solutions for society;
18. Points out that the roll-out of appropriate digital infrastructures and innovative technologies is a strategic element for increasing the competitiveness of EU regions and industries; that the ICT sector plays a key role in enhancing the productivity of other industrial sectors; that modern communication infrastructures with high transmission capacity should primarily be built in underserved regions; and that this could result in a favourable environment for public and private investment and, importantly, would help raise the digital literacy standard of business;
19. Stresses the importance of a well-balanced and sustainable resource efficiency plan alongside moves towards the creation of an integrated and liberalised EU energy market as the primary tools for driving EU industries towards a competitive industrial strategy; points out that the EU should view this as a challenge and consequently seek to develop a regional innovation policy based on the objective potential of each region, particularly in the sphere of sustainable industrial policy; emphasises that environmental standards on raw and auxiliary materials, as well as on security of energy supplies and transport, should lead to enhanced social, economic and territorial cohesion instead of increasing the distance between central and peripheral regions, taking special account of the outermost regions and the islands and their needs; calls, therefore, for the development in these regions of an industrial policy capable of promoting their sectors with the greatest potential, such as tourism, renewable energies and research and innovation activities relating to the maritime and agricultural sectors;
20. Stresses that the world business environment is continuously changing, necessitating suitable investment in the development and adaptation of transport, communications and energy infrastructures and services, so as to meet present and future challenges;

21. Notes that an integrated strategy for EU industries should focus on overcoming the skill shortages; in this respect, emphasises the need for coordinated initiatives to improve the dissemination of information and the teaching of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) at all levels, whilst promoting additional coordinated and targeted higher qualifications; stresses the need for a global approach aimed at improving professional skills in the fields of renewable energies, clean industrial processes and transport; calls on the Member States to include vocational qualifications for entrepreneurship in university programmes and other higher education courses; emphasises that the European Social Fund must adapt to the changing requirements of the industrial sector;
22. Emphasises that sustainable and fair development in the industrial sector can be better achieved by Member States through the principle of reciprocity of commercial policies; notes that regional network structures and competitive clusters should not be adversely affected by dissimilar commercial rules and provisions which have a particular impact on SMEs;
23. Highlights the regional differences in industrial development and calls for these too to be fully incorporated into the new sustainable industry policy; furthermore, calls on the Commission to adopt an integrated multi-level governance approach and reiterates the need to take account of the different social and economic circumstances in European regions, as well as variations in creative and innovative capacity and entrepreneurial spirit;
24. Stresses the importance of the tourism industry in the EU, which is the world's foremost tourist destination, and in certain regions where it is the mainstay of the economy; supports the Commission's strategy for boosting the competitiveness of the tourism industry by means of measures relating to quality, sustainability and the enhancement of Europe's image as a tourist destination;
25. Stresses that well-organised multi-level governance is essential for an effective European industrial policy in the era of globalisation.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	30.11.2010
Result of final vote	+: 40 -: 1 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Charalampos Angourakis, Sophie Auconie, Jean-Paul Besset, Victor Boștinăru, Zuzana Brzobohatá, Alain Cadec, Francesco De Angelis, Tamás Deutsch, Danuta Maria Hübner, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Juozas Imbrasas, María Irigoyen Pérez, Seán Kelly, Evgeni Kirilov, Constanze Angela Krehl, Jacek Olgierd Kurski, Petru Constantin Luhan, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Erminia Mazzoni, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Markus Pieper, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Monika Smolková, Georgios Stavrakakis, Csanád Szegedi, Nuno Teixeira, Michail Tremopoulos, Viktor Uspaskich, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Jens Geier, Andrey Kovatchev, Elisabeth Schroedter, Dimitar Stoyanov, László Surján, Evžen Tošenovský, Derek Vaughan, Sabine Verheyen