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Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

2004/2154(INI)

21.4.2005

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

‘Strengthening European competitiveness: the impact of industrial change on the policy and role of SMEs’
(2004/2154(INI))

Draftsman: Bernard Lehideux

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs 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. Welcomes the Commission's decision to make industrial policy a priority of the EU agenda;
2. Highlights the Commission's key conclusion that regulatory simplification is necessary to maintain the still fragile competitiveness of the new Member States, and considers that this requirement for a lighter legislative touch should apply to all EU Member States if overall competitiveness is to be enhanced and real employment growth secured;
3. Appreciates the distinction drawn between deindustrialisation and structural change and agrees with the Commission's assessment that 'European industry is having to face up to a process of structural change which is beneficial overall, and which should be encouraged'; notes, however, that the analysis of industrial change is incomplete and that there is no indisputable data on delocalisation; considers, therefore, that the Commission should ask a group of experts, which should work closely with and draw heavily on the existing knowledge and expertise of the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC), to draw up a report on the subject for the European Council;
4. Considers that increasing competition from the emerging economies should encourage the public authorities to create favourable conditions for the emergence of new areas of production or productive combinations that generate added value and high-quality jobs and secure a comparative advantage for the EU;
5. Considers that in the context of full and effective international competition an increasingly well-qualified and competitive workforce is needed;
6. Takes the view that education and training should be given priority, in particular as regards new technologies, with a view to promoting competitiveness and employment; to that end, the Member States could carry out an objective evaluation of their education and training systems;
7. Regrets that the Commission has failed to make the efforts needed to help the sectors and regions particularly affected by industrial change, as the public authorities have the task of implementing short-term policies specifically targeted at the employees, regions and sectors concerned; the structural funds, in particular the European Social Fund, could be channelled in this direction;
8. Considers that, where markets are incomplete, the public authorities should encourage the development of activities in areas where the risks would be considered too great by economic actors; in that context, there is also an urgent need to identify high-value-added sectors, in particular in new technologies, which the public authorities could promote with a view to securing high-quality jobs; also considers it their duty to develop research and innovation activities as a source of positive external effects;

9. Considers that the social dialogue should help to identify the best-performing sectors and the most threatened sectors; to that end, a European industrial development conference bringing together the partners involved in the social dialogue, in particular the Dublin Foundation, which has an expertise in social dialogue and exchange of best practices and produces sectoral studies, could provide a forum for regular meetings between these players and the Commission;
10. Believes that a policy to promote 'European champions' as the driving force of the economy and a source of competitiveness is essential but that it should not be applied to the detriment of SMEs, which are the principal source of employment and innovation;
11. Calls on the Commission to evaluate regularly, in particular in terms of jobs created, the results of policies to encourage research and development activities, since the financial level is not the only level to be analysed.

PROCEDURE

Title	Strengthening European competitiveness: the impact of industrial change on the policy and role of SMEs
Procedure number	2004/2154(INI)
Committee responsible	ITRE
Committee asked for its opinion Date announced in plenary	EMPL 28.10.2004
Enhanced cooperation	no
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Bernard Lehideux 7.10.2004
Discussed in committee	16.3.2005 20.4.2005
Date suggestions adopted	20.4.2005
Result of final vote	for: 28 against: 3 abstentions: 0
Members present for the final vote	Jan Andersson, Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, Philip Bushill-Matthews, Milan Cabrnach, Mogens N.J. Camre, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Luigi Cocilovo, Jean Louis Cottigny, Harald Ettl, Carlo Fatuzzo, Joel Hasse Ferreira, Ilda Figueiredo, Stephen Hughes, Ona Juknevičienė, Jan Jerzy Kułakowski, Sepp Kusstatscher, Jean Lambert, Raymond Langendries, Bernard Lehideux, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Ana Mato Adrover, Maria Matsouka, Jacek Protasiewicz, Jean Spautz, Struan Stevenson, Anne Van Lancker, Gabriele Zimmer
Substitutes present for the final vote	Jamila Madeira, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Elisabeth Schroedter