



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

2011/2146(INI)

28.9.2011

OPINION

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

on the Reform of EU State aid rules on Services of General Economic Interest
(2011/2146(INI))

Rapporteur: Gunnar Hökmark

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SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Welcomes the Commission's plans to review the SGEI State aid rules with the objective of unlocking the potential of such services for social cohesion, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity; recalls the potential of the industries that are defined in Member States as SGEIs, and their importance not only for the competitiveness of Europe and its sustainable economic growth in accordance with the EU 2020 terms and targets, but also as potentially emerging, globally competitive industries, as proven, for example, by the telecom sector;
2. Emphasises the role of local, regional and national authorities in ensuring the provision of certain services that are affordable to the citizens; welcomes Commission proposals to further clarify State aid procedures for the benefit of the authorities; recommends that the Commission give due consideration to improving the processes and mechanisms defined within the State aid rules, with a view to achieving simplification and legal certainty and ensuring access to clear advice and decisions regarding compliance in a timely manner;
3. Recalls that undistorted competition and the transparent application of State aid rules to SGEIs are key to avoiding protectionism, to reinvigorating the single market and to providing better public services; notes that the way compensation for the provision of SGEIs is granted affects public finances and the efficient use of public resources; believes that a high level of transparency, achieved through strict reporting obligations and the availability of information on all SGEI State aid allocations, is vital in preventing distortions of competition;
4. Emphasises from this perspective, in the interests of consumers, the importance of competition, including cross-border competition, new actors and investments, as well as innovation, new business and entrepreneurial ideas; recalls, however, that the rules of competition applicable to undertakings entrusted with the operation of SGEIs must be in line with the Treaties, and should not, therefore, obstruct the performance of the particular tasks assigned to such undertakings, nor the realisation of the internal market;
5. Recalls that the reform's overriding ambition should be to secure high-quality services, in a resource-efficient way and at affordable prices for citizens, but without losing sight of the need for sustainable and high-quality employment; is convinced that this ambition can be achieved, without limiting the opportunities for growth and competition, by State aid financing such services when appropriate, and not the providers;
6. Recalls the substantial investment needed to upgrade infrastructure, especially in the regions where it is most lacking and in particular in the areas of energy, telecommunications and public transport, in order to enable the provision of future smart energy or broadband services; believes that future State aid rules must be designed in a way that promotes job creation and incentivises private investment (e.g. from pension funds) in new infrastructure, without limiting competition and access to such

infrastructure;

7. Believes that State aid should help stimulate local entrepreneurship and the local economy, create local jobs and promote competition in the telecom market and elsewhere;
8. Acknowledges the need for a clearer distinction between economic and non-economic activities under the State aid rules but warns against the introduction of an EU-harmonised framework or definition, as this would not only restrict the autonomy of local entities but would also hinder innovation and new business models, which are often introduced by SMEs.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	26.9.2011
Result of final vote	+: 33 -: 6 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Bendt Bendtsen, Maria Da Graça Carvalho, Giles Chichester, Christian Ehler, Vicky Ford, Gaston Franco, Adam Gierek, Norbert Glante, Fiona Hall, Jacky Hélin, Romana Jordan Cizelj, Krišjānis Kariņš, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, Philippe Lamberts, Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, Marisa Matias, Judith A. Merkies, Jaroslav Paška, Miloslav Ransdorf, Herbert Reul, Michèle Rivasi, Jens Rohde, Paul Rübig, Amalia Sartori, Francisco Sosa Wagner, Patrizia Toia, Ioannis A. Tsoukalas, Marita Ulvskog, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Henri Weber
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Francesco De Angelis, Satu Hassi, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Gunnar Hökmark, Bernd Lange, Alajos Mészáros, Algirdas Saudargas, Silvia-Adriana Țicău