

P7_TA(2012)0509

EU steel industry

European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2012 on the EU steel industry (2012/2833(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which has its roots in the ECSC Treaty,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the steel industry and the restructuring, transfer and closure of companies in the EU,
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and to the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 2 February 2011 entitled ‘Tackling the challenges in commodity markets and on raw materials’ (COM(2011)0025),
 - having regard to the Europe 2020 strategy,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 10 October 2012 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘A Stronger European Industry for Growth and Economic Recovery’ (COM(2012)0582),
 - Having regard to the question to the Commission on the EU steel industry (O-000184/2012 – B7-0368/2012),
 - having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, following the expiration of the ECSC Treaty, the coal and steel sectors are governed by the provisions of the EU Treaty;
- B. whereas one of the European Union’s objectives is to support the manufacturing industry and to make it competitive, sustainable and responsive to changing European and non-European market conditions, since it is essential for growth and prosperity in Europe;
- C. whereas the European steel industry is suffering from a substantial drop in demand, which is causing a progressive loss of jobs and competitiveness;
- D. whereas the steel industry is of strategic importance for the EU economy, and whereas it is in the interest of the whole European Union to preserve the activities that make up its industrial fabric and to ensure security of supply through domestic production;
- E. whereas a competitive European steel industry forms the backbone of development and value creation for many major industrial sectors, such as the automotive, construction and mechanical engineering sectors;

- F. whereas the steel industry is facing significant challenges such as a substantial drop in demand, strong competition from imports from third countries with different regulations and standards, difficult access to raw materials, and higher costs which have led to restructuring, industrial mergers and job losses;
- G. whereas employment in the steel sector has contracted from 1 million jobs in 1970 to around 369 000 in 2012, and whereas the number of workers in downstream industries is in the range of millions;
- H. whereas, according to data published by the Commission, EU steel exports in 2010 reached 33,7 million tonnes (EUR 32 billion), the biggest markets for EU steel exports being Turkey, the USA, Algeria, Switzerland, Russia and India, while EU steel imports in 2010 reached 26,8 million tonnes (EUR 18 billion), the biggest import sources being Russia, Ukraine, China, Turkey, South Korea, Switzerland and Serbia;
- I. whereas the current crisis is creating enormous social hardship for the workers and regions affected, and whereas those companies involved in restructuring should act in a socially responsible manner, as experience has shown us that successful restructuring has not been achieved without sufficient social dialogue;
- J. whereas high-technology industries – as exemplified by the steel sector – have been taken as a model of technological know-how, and must therefore be retained by taking immediate action to avoid their relocation outside of EU territory;
1. Requests that the Commission provide, in the short term, a clear picture of the situation as regards the major changes occurring in the steel industry in Europe; stresses that it is important for the Commission to monitor ongoing developments carefully in order to safeguard Europe's industrial heritage and the workforce involved;
 2. Recalls that the Commission is entitled, following the expiration of the ECSC Treaty, to address the economic and social impact of developments in the European steel industry, and calls on the Commission to take into account the positive experience of the ECSC and to establish a tripartite body (trade unions, industry and the Commission) to work towards further development of the European steel industry, to ensure anticipation, consultation and the provision of information to workers and to secure full compliance with the legal requirements of the European Works Council Directive¹;
 3. Calls on the Commission to reflect carefully on strategic medium- and long-term initiatives to support and preserve the steel industry and its downstream sectors;
 4. Urges the Commission to give greater importance to industrial policy in order to revive the competitiveness of European industry vis-à-vis the global market with a view to guaranteeing an effective level playing field while ensuring high social and environmental standards in the EU and working towards reciprocity in third countries;
 5. Believes that European economic recovery also depends on a stronger manufacturing industry; points out that steel plays a key role in ensuring the competitiveness of strategic downstream industries, which would suffer from a reduced European steel industry and become dependent on third-country imports, making them vulnerable;

¹ OJ L 254, 30.9.1994, p. 64.

6. Welcomes the Commission's initiative of developing a European Action Plan for the steel sector by June 2013, but stresses the need to have it presented as soon as possible;
7. Calls on the Commission to reconsider its decision not to extend beyond 31 December 2012 the prior surveillance system for imports of steel products and steel pipes, as established by Commission Regulation (EU) No 1241/2009¹, and to include that system in the Action Plan;
8. Urges the Commission to include in its Action Plan the mobilisation of all available EU tools, such as increased R&D&I, in particular in the areas of energy efficiency and resource efficiency, targeted investment by the European Investment Bank, an active policy for skills, requalification and retraining of workers, the potential use of EU financial instruments such as the European Social Fund and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund where necessary, and other incentives to help the industry invest and modernise;
9. Takes the view that such an Action Plan should also consider ways of addressing and mitigating the high costs of energy and raw materials, which are a threat to the steel industry's competitiveness; emphasises, in this connection, that energy efficiency and resource efficiency can generate substantial cost savings, and welcomes in this regard the European public-private partnership SPIRE, but nonetheless urges the Commission and the steel sector itself to continue to examine the opportunities available, to encourage the establishment of business consortia and to promote a closed-loop production system aimed at recovery and re-use of scrap, given the present and future limitation of raw material supply;
10. Calls on the Commission to take the steel industry into account in its ongoing review of existing state aid rules, and to assess the feasibility of introducing quality certification for steel-related products;
11. Calls on the Commission to monitor restructuring or relocation activities and ensure, on a case-by-case basis, that they are carried out in strict compliance with Union competition law; takes the view that potential abuses of dominant market position should also be monitored;
12. Welcomes projects such as the ULCOS (Ultra-Low Carbon Dioxide Steelmaking) consortium, which serves as an example of an innovative research and development initiative to help the steel industry further reduce its CO₂ emissions, and stresses the need for ongoing investment in research and innovation activities, which are crucial for the re-launch and renewal of this sector;
13. Calls on the Commission to monitor closely future developments in the establishments located in Florange, Liège, Terni, Galați, Schiffflange, Piombino, Câmpia Turzii, Rodange, Oțelu Roșu, Trieste, Silesia, Reșița, Targoviste, Călărași, Hunedoara, Buzău, Braila, Borlänge, Luleå, Oxelösund and elsewhere, whose integrity is at risk, in order to be sure that the competitiveness of the European steel sector and its importance as a sector of employment are not threatened;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

¹ OJ L 332, 17.12.2009, p. 54.

