

Commission Consultation on the Future “EU 2020” Strategy

OPINION

of the Bulgarian Association of Electrical Engineering and Electronics*

We are convinced that industry is the main drive of the development and a generator of welfare. That is why we ardently welcome the EC’s line in increasing the competitiveness of the European industry. At the same time, we consider the submission of the objectives of energy efficiency (the ELECTRA report) as strategically the right thing, which on the other hand imposes other priorities upon the electrical engineering equipment market.

Electrical engineering is facing the major challenge to create in short terms a new generation of products for production, transmission, distribution, control, measurement and utilization of electrical energy.

As a follow up, the main priorities of the European industrial policy in the next period should be:

1. Stimulation of industrial education and vocational training.

Education plays a crucial role in development and innovation. Now we are in the present situation of low interest in young people which imposes a fatal impact on industry. If we want Europe to be competitive, the first issue to work upon will be to attract young people towards technical disciplines and carriers in the manufacturing sector. State administration could offer a strong contribution through co-funding respective education (see also the ELECTRA report).

2. Increase investments in R&D and innovation

It is essential that the Commission’s future Communication should focus more on how to improve the framework conditions for ensuring that European co-funding in the area of R&D and innovation really acts as a multiplier of the funding provided by the private sector for financing projects in which companies are prepared to invest. We believe that, at the present time, European Research Framework Programme rules are ill adapted to the needs of the largely SME industry. We call on the Commission to review the existing access to SME programmes by raising the employment limit to 800-1000 persons.

3. Access to credits

The present crisis has significantly raised the price of money and has drastically limited credit opportunities, particularly for SME. Emerging from the crisis could not be stimulated effectively without improving access to funding. The necessity of setting up new common European solutions for the banking sector seems imperious.

4. Green industry

Green industry could and should give advantages to European manufacturers to open new markets and niches. The European producers have to be encouraged to maintain their global leadership in energy efficiency and green industry.

5. Market Surveillance

The integration philosophy of the European market is based on market surveillance as a main regulation tool. It is necessary to take good care of harmonization of the Market Surveillance activities in all Member States to strengthen the resources and the activities of this institution. This is crucial for protecting the European market from unfair competition which often is de-motivating the producers to invest in quality and progress.

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* The Bulgarian Association of Electrical Engineering and Electronics is the national representative of the sector.