



Conference European Foreign Policy ASSESSING EU'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

Alberto Heimler, Italian Antitrust Authority and Italia representative in OECD - *Competition policy as a tool of EU Foreign Policy: multilateralism, bilateralism and soft convergence*

Abstract

Within the group of existing and prospective EU members, competition policy has been the driver of EC integration. Furthermore, the EC approach represents the standard by which prospective members are evaluated. Required institutional changes are negotiated bilaterally country by country. Technical assistance is provided to help compliance and the system has proved to be quite effective. With respect to developing countries a multilateral approach on competition was launched in 1996 at the Singapore WTO intergovernmental meeting, following a proposal by the EC Commission. A WTO working group was created. After five years of study, there was no consensus for starting negotiations on an international agreement on competition. The issue is now suspended. A softer approach is now providing good results in terms of convergence. Best practice recommendations are more and more adopted by the international competition network, the virtual network of competition authorities funded in 2001 by a group of leading jurisdictions, including of course the Commission. These are influencing legislation and enforcement practices worldwide. However it is clear that for many relevant issues, like international cartels and multi-jurisdictional mergers, some binding multilateral instrument will be needed.