Resolution on the European Strategy for the Atlantic Region

2011/2513(RSP) - 09/03/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 7 March 2011, the European Parliament adopted by 589 votes to 26 with 54 abstentions a resolution tabled by the Committee on Regional Development on the European Strategy for the Atlantic Region.

It notes that in June 2010 the Council asked the Commission to develop a strategy for the Atlantic region by June 2011, and it asks the Commission to shape as soon as possible the EU strategy for the Atlantic region as **an integrated strategy dealing with maritime and territorial issues**. The publication of a Commission communication is scheduled for 2011. The resolution recalls that five EU Member States have Atlantic coasts: France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. Members feel that the strategy should be set **within the cohesion policy objective of territorial cooperation (Objective 3**), and be based on an integrated, cross-domain and territorial approach, aiming at better coordinating policies between the various levels of governance on a given territory. They are convinced that European territorial cooperation can contribute widely to the intensification of the integration process within the Atlantic region through a greater participation by civil society in the decision-making process and the implementation of concrete actions. Parliament calls for this strategy to be well-connected to EU regional policy and integrated maritime policy and is of the opinion that it should also facilitate synergies with other EU policies such as trans-European transport networks, the common fisheries policy, climate and environment actions, the research and development framework programme, and energy policy. It states that the strategy should be implemented from 2014 onwards and be coordinated with the next multiannual financial framework, and that it should go together with an action plan defined at European level and including a list of structuring projects.

Parliament stresses the following:

- the major added value of EU macro-regional strategies is seen in **multi-level cooperation, and better strategic investment of available funding**, not in additional allocation of resources. The strategy should implement a better coordination of goals and means, with strong links to the EU 2020 strategy and EU policies for beyond 2013, and aim at better spending of EU money, not increasing expenditure;
- the external dimension of the strategy may be reinforced due to the geo-strategic position of Atlantic regions, in particular in the fields of maritime safety and surveillance and in the sphere of international trade relations. International cooperation and triangular cooperation initiatives also need to be addressed;
- the territorial dimension of this strategy is essential and will contribute to EU territorial cohesion, which will have to address especially the interconnection of transport and energy networks and development of marine energy, development of urban and rural areas and intensification of land-sea ties and of sea-interior waters ties;

Members want the strategy to work **following a bottom-up approach, starting from local authorities and involving all stakeholders**. They stress the need to associate regional and local public authorities, Member States, the European Union, private stakeholders and civil society organisations (including interregional networks and organisations concerned) in the design and the implementation of this strategy. Cooperation within the framework of this strategy should first and foremost be based on the needs of the stakeholders concerned and thus, the political priorities addressed have to be decided through a consensus.

Parliament strongly commends the promotion by the European Commission of the planning and setting up of maritime roads in the Atlantic region, such as the Gijon-Nantes maritime road, as an innovative way to improve and diversify the trans-European transport networks, to influence international trade relations, to stimulate the harbours' economic activity and strengthen tourism, and to contribute to the reduction in CO2 emissions.

Lastly, Members call on the Commission to work closely with the European Parliament in defining the priorities for the development of the EU strategy for the Atlantic region, and call on the Commission to inform and consult Parliament on the status of the implementation of this strategy.