

Regional branding: towards best practice in rural economies

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The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted the own-initiative report by Eric Andrieu (ALDE, FR) on regional branding: towards best practice in rural economies. It welcomed the integrated approach to territorial development outlined in the [future framework regulation on regional policy](#), noting the need for coordination and consistency between the various European funds as a way of guaranteeing harmonious, sustainable and balanced territorial development. It also welcomed the concept of 'community-led local development' and called on Member States to implement this concept and to remove any hindrances to managing this innovative new approach. Although territorial quality branding was intended to drive a territorial value creation process seeking to encompass products and services within a perspective of identity and social responsibility and to complement the existing origin-related agri-foodstuff quality labelling schemes, **branding of this kind goes further in that it applies across the board to all products, goods, and services in a given territory** and to the management model used by businesses, institutions, and local actors in that territory.

Member States and their regional authorities were asked to promote **more dynamic forms of participatory governance as a way of implementing common territorial development projects** able to cover all economic sectors, including tourism. The report noted that **closer coordination of local actors** could help strengthen rural economies, and that the purpose of strategic coordination was to tap resources by incorporating and going beyond a sectoral or single- industry approach and instead calling for the employment of territorial approaches which generated new revenue through the marketing of sets of complementary goods and services which reflected the specific characteristics of each territory. Members called for greater attention to be paid to regional branding initiatives as a possible common theme in European territorial cooperation and European funding initiatives.

The report went on to call on the Commission to include various forms of tourism involving rural activities in related measures and programmes such as European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) and Calypso, and stressed the need for **targeted initiatives and programmes to promote rural tourism activities**. The Commission and Member States were also asked to ensure that future rural development programmes provided for appropriate measures and sufficient resources to facilitate good governance by strengthening the measures based on collective operations: measures concerning cooperation, coordination, exchanges, networks, innovation, training, producer groups, promotion, information and investment, provided for in the new rural development regulations.

Taking account of the proliferation of multiple labels and regional brandings regarding food products in Europe Members called on the Commission to draw up an inventory of brands with specific regional features, in order to avoid any possible negative effects on the quality schemes. They maintained that the **concept of regional branding should be clearly defined**, taking into account the favourable experience with existing quality labels (PDO, AOC, PGI), and that coordinated strategies should be drawn up to avoid duplication and overlapping, proceeding from a shared common approach based on a framework to be laid down at EU level.