

Regional branding: towards best practice in rural economies

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The European Parliament adopted by 532 votes to 66 with 31 abstentions on regional branding: towards best practice in rural economies.

Parliament emphasised that agricultural regions played a multifunctional role involving not only agricultural development but also other economic and social activities revolving around local skills, know-how and investment in the pinpointing and harnessing of all local assets and resources. 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 called on Member States to implement the concept of 'community-led local development'. 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.

Parliament stressed the need for **more dynamic forms of participatory governance as a way of implementing common territorial development projects** able to cover all economic sectors, including tourism. Parliament 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.

Parliament went on to call on the Commission to **include various forms of tourism** involving rural activities in related 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 for an inventory of brands with specific regional features, in order to avoid any possible negative effects on the quality schemes. Parliament 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.

Lastly, Parliament invited the Commission to support Member States' efforts in promoting new forms of cooperation for rural areas, around the territorial excellence branding, with the aid of tools included in the CAP reform such as the Union's LEADER initiative, and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP).