Resolution on addressing the specific needs of rural, mountainous and remote areas

2018/2720(RSP) - 03/10/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Regional Development on addressing the specific needs of rural, mountainous and remote areas.

It stressed the importance of rural, mountainous and remote areas for **balanced territorial development** in Europe and the need to strengthen them by addressing their specific needs through EU policies. Members noted that such areas constitute 80 % of EU territory, and are home to 57 % of its population but that GDP per capita in non-urbanised areas is 70 % of the EU average, while urban residents enjoy a GDP per capita as high as 123 % of the EU average. They also pointed out that the unemployment rate in non-urbanised areas increased from 7 % to 10.4 % between 2008 and 2012.

Parliament called for the **EU Agenda for Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas** to promote socioeconomic development, economic growth and diversification, social wellbeing, protection of nature, and cooperation and interconnection with urban areas in order to foster cohesion and prevent the risk of territorial fragmentation. This EU Agenda should incorporate a **strategic framework** for the development of rural, mountainous and remote areas, coordinated with strategies aimed at lagging and peripheral regions, in order to meet the objectives of rural proofing, smart villages, access to public services, digitalisation, training and innovation. Members noted that a quarter of the population of rural, mountainous and remote areas has no access to the internet.

Furthermore, Parliament encouraged rural areas to develop smart villages, developing new opportunities, such as decentralised services, energy solutions, and digital technologies and innovations, and urged the establishment of a **Smart Villages Pact**.

Members recommended that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) spending, which contributes significantly to economic and social cohesion, continue to be **linked with cohesion policy** so that regions can draw from different EU sources in order to optimise funding opportunities and invest in rural areas. Parliament also called on the Commission to include in the future legislative proposals provisions addressing the specificities of these areas and to provide for adequate funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds, for cohesion policy post 2020.

Lastly, the resolution stressed the need to support the further development of **rural tourism** and mountain agri-tourism while preserving the specificities of these areas, for example traditions and traditional local products.