Rural development : guidelines for the the Community LEADER+ initiative

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The committee adopted the report by Giovanni PROCACCI (ELDR, I) on the Commission's guidelines for LEADER +, the Community Initiative for rural development established in the general regulation on the Structural Funds adopted last year. The report endorsed the more ambitious, innovative approach compared to LEADER I (launched in 1991) and LEADER II (which expired last year). However, the committee doubted that the budget of EUR 2.02 bn for seven years (2000-6) would be adequate. It called for red tape to be kept to a minimum, so that the money reached the beneficiaries quickly, and for the programme to contribute to the diversification of the rural economy. It also wanted the Commission to provide for certain exceptions so that densely or sparsely populated rural areas, which otherwise might not qualify for funding under the criteria relating to population, should not lose out.