Community regions: social and economic situation and development. 5th ERDF Report

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In adopting the report by Mrs Arlene McCarthy, the Committee on Regional Policy congratulated the Commission on completing the Fifth Periodic Report and noted that several recommendations put forward by the EP with regard to the Fourth Report had been taken over by the Commission (detailed description of the demographic situation, immigration patterns, investment flows and Member States' regional policies). It asked that, in future, aspects such as state subsidies and the informal economy be given equal consideration. The report called on the Commission and the Member States to coordinate macroeconomic and Community policies more effectively in order to tackle unemployment in the regions and called on the Commission to put forward proposals for policies to support regional convergence. A larger proportion of public budgets should be earmarked for human resources, to provide support for teaching, training and research, whilst incentives should be provided for SMEs. The report also called on the Commission to: - analyse in greater detail the factors which supported competitiveness in the less-favoured regions, with a view to better targeting of structural actions; - draw up a report assessing the job creation impact of structural fund actions; - analyse those factors which widened the disparities in certain regions of the Community and undertake a more detailed analysis of the comparative performance rates of the regions in comparable situations; - consider in the future the specific problems of those in peripheral locations and the impact of the crisis in the maritime industries; - involve both sides of industry and local and regional authorities in planning activities; - undertake an assessment of Member States' structural interventions in beneficiary regions and strengthen controls and penalties; - explore the possibilities of defining more comparable "socio-economic regions"; - anticipate the future reform of the Structural Funds (higher degree of effectiveness and a noticeable concentration of funds); - examine the impact of a future enlargement of the Union on structural fund policies.