Structural Funds. 6th annual 1994 Report

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Adopting Mr Teverson's report unanimously on 18 June, the Committee of the Regions welcomed the sixth annual report (1994) which, as a whole, was well documented and detailed, but regretted the delay in its publication (1 year after the closure of the period audited) and the exclusion of Parliament from the implementation of the Funds after the Maastricht Treaty as a result of the Edinburgh summit. It considered that Parliament should be involved in the adoption of future regulations on the Structural Funds under the codecision and assent procedures. While deploring the proliferation of data in the sixth report at the expense of analysis and recommendation, the draft resolution adopted considered that the implementation and administration procedures of the Funds were too complex and that this rendered them incomprehensible to the majority of Union citizens and potential beneficiaries. It therefore called for future programmes to be simplified and recommended, mainly to the Commission, that any short-term measures to improve current programmes should be taken. Noting that very little structural funding had a trans-national element, the draft resolution encouraged regional actions with a strong European character and a better return as the result of synergies. Furthermore, it hoped for a close link between the programmes of the various Structural Funds and between the Structural Funds and other Community intervention policies covering the same areas, with a view to multiplying effects on the ground. As far as statistics were concerned, the report found that there was a lack of detailed data on when Funds were actually received in the regions and projects implemented, together with ample evidence of considerable delay in the payment of appropriations by Member States, thereby justifying the demand for controls to be extended to payments to final beneficiaries and for a Commission report on all projects, coupled with increased regional powers. The committee also deplored the lack of an overall method for comparing the results obtained within the various Member States, the fact that structural funding took little account of environmental policy, especially the obligation to implement projects on the basis of an environmental impact study and the fact that disseminating experience gained in the use of Structural Funds across the regions of Europe and encouraging the use of best practices did not appear to be a priority. Having commented on these matters and the ill-defined role of the private sector in funding regional development, the draft resolution called on the Commission for a final report on the 1989-93 programme so that it could undertake a thorough examination of the programming period.