Cohesion policy and environment

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Community structural action could prove to be damaging to the environment: this was the main conclusion of the own initiative report by Mr Konstantinos HATZIDAKIS which was adopted by the Committee on Regional Policy. Consequently, the committee strongly recommended that greater importance should be attached to the environmental dimension at each stage of the implementation of the European Union's cohesion policy. Parliament should abide by the principle that the action implemented should be the most beneficial or, at least, the least damaging to the environment. Hence its call for an environmental impact study for each project. In order to ensure that these studies were really useful in protecting the environment, Mr HATZIDAKIS considered that it was essential that they be carried out by independent experts and that their conclusions have legal force. In order to ensure that environmental requirements are complied with during the implementation stage, the committee also called for a group of environmental inspectors to be created at both Community and international level. However, this approach was not enough: it was important to increase funding and the number of purely environmental actions by creating a "Community initiative" specially for the environment within the framework of the Structural Funds. Similarly, the European Union should also respect the requirement to allocate 50% of the funding eligible for each action financed in the transport and environment sectors. For investments in the transport sector, special support should be given to the means of transport least harmful to the environment.