Problems of the European Union's island regions

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The Committee unanimously adopted an own-initiative report by Vincenzo VIOLA (EPP, I) on the problems of island regions in the EU. The report is a response to the new provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty (Articles 129b and 130a), which recognise for the first time the special problems faced by the EU's island regions. There are over 400 islands - with 14 million inhabitants - in the European Union. The report also looks ahead to the forthcoming reform of the Structural Funds and calls on the Commission to take account of the special needs of the islands in any changes to these Funds. To help the islands cope with the inbuilt disadvantages and additional costs inherent in their situation, the committee recommends a number of measures, in particular in the areas of transport, energy (by using the island regions as laboratories for the alternative energy sector), tourism (avoiding excessive and aggressively marketed tourism), the environment (with protection for coastal areas) and agriculture and fisheries (by introducing "island quality labels"). The report also argues that island regions should enjoy appropriate financial and tax incentives to encourage their development.