TACIS: cross-border cooperation

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The Committee has unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution on the inclusion of cross-border cooperation in the Tacis programme. While acknowledging that the Tacis CBC programme (which is designed to support viable cross-border programmes) can be considered a successful initiative, the rapporteur, Anna KARAMANOU (PES, Gr), believes there is still plenty of room for improvement.Where there are considerable differences between the living standards on either side of a frontier (e.g. the Russo-Finnish border), one of the main aims of the CBC programme must be to promote development of these regions, which are underdeveloped because of their peripheral location in the national economy. Cooperation with international economic organisations is also needed, so as to make joint funding of programmes more viable and stimulate synergy with other EU programmes such as Interreg. As regards cooperation on the environment, the rapporteur stresses the need to combat the chief sources of pollution from the regions directly bordering on Finland, by taking action on the most sensitive problems such as the dumping of toxic waste in the Baltic Sea, the contamination of drinking water and the nuclear safety problems in Russia. In more general terms, Ms Karamanou notes that the Commission, in its communication, merely charts out a general policy on cross-border cooperation up to 1999 under the Tacis programme and that, in the absence of clear practical proposals on implementation measures, the effectiveness of the Tacis-CBC programme is unlikely to be improved. In this connection, the Tacis machinery needs to be made more transparent in future, the size of the bureaucracy reduced and responsibilities within the Commission better allocated, so as to make the measures adopted more effective. As regards monitoring of the implementation of the programmes, cross-border cooperation committees need to be set up at regional level to enhance the role of regional administrations as the sole decision-taking bodies. The motion for a resolution therefore states that the training and development of local and regional administrations must be among the priorities of the CBC programme. In budgetary terms, the committee calls for increased funding for the programme, which is to be found by steadily increasing the appropriations earmarked for it and ensuring that they are used efficiently.