Development of European territory: trans-European cooperation Community initiative, INTERREG

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The committee adopted the report by Francis DECOURRIERE (EPP/ED, F) on the Commission's draft guidelines for the Community INTERREG initiative on trans-European cooperation. The report was especially critical of the lateness with which the Commission had submitted its draft and expressed concern about the loss of financing in the period between the end of the second programme and the start of INTERREG III. It also regretted the fact that regional authorities had not been involved in drawing up the guidelines and that no precise assessment had first been made of the second programme, from which lessons could have been drawn. The report also deplored the fact that very remote and island regions were not taken sufficiently into account in one of the INTERREG funding "strands" even though it had been acknowledged that those areas required special attention. Other points raised in the report included the need for better coordination between INTERREG and the various instruments used for cooperation projects in third countries and the need for INTERREG funds to be made available to supplement national measures to promote employment. The report also pointed out that cooperation at the internal frontiers must result in ordinary people being able to conduct their everyday business without any difficulties and that the projects should therefore also focus on areas such as workers' rights, social and health protection and freedom of movement.