Regional planning: Europe 2000 plus. Report

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The Commission "Europe 2000+" report summarizes studies made of the transnational and Community dimension of regional planning and lists the areas in which better use can be made of European territory by strengthening cooperation with the Member States. According to the Commission, the response to the advent of a more complicated and diversified European territory should be stronger cooperation on regional planning, especially by: - implementing large trans-European transport, energy, telecommunications and information networks; - finding a suitable response to economic disparities, marginalisation and urban social exclusion; - taking account of the prospects for sustainable development, by guaranteeing optimal exploitation of natural resources, preserving the environment and organizing a qualify of life framework (combined transport networks, reduction of adverse impact of transport in towns, transnational environmental projects); - cooperating on regional planning in transnational regions (e.g. the Alps) and rivers and seas. As far as changes to the key factors for organizing the European territory are concerned, the report distinguishes five variables which determine where people settle and businesses open: the housing density, the mobility of the population and jobs, investment flows, the quality of infrastructures, the environment and the quality of life. The report also identifies a trend towards dual purpose territories and a discrepancy between the low level of inter-regional mobility of the population and the high level of mobility of jobs, which follow capital as it moves, giving rise to the risk of serious economic and social distortions in the future. Finally, the report analyses changes in three types of specific zone: a) urban areas: social exclusion can only be combated by adopting inner city regeneration policies (e.g. Urban programme). The report also highlights the importance of small and medium-sized towns to the future equilibrium of the Community territory and the need for specific action in this area to counteract the mass exodus towards large cities; b) rural areas: the report stresses that small and medium-sized towns are instrumental to the viability of the countryside because they provide jobs and access to an extended range of public services (e.g. Leader programme); c) border regions: the report notes that cross-border cooperation should be stepped up over coming years: . in internal border regions, cooperation was initiated by the prospect of the single market and initiatives have been sustained by the Interreg programme. However, cross-border projects have not resulted in integrated regional planning programmes, which should be encouraged; . in external border regions, the report distinguishes between candidate countries, which have already started cooperating with the Community countries, and the eastern European countries, in which cooperation is being developed through support under the Phare programme.