Development problems in the Community's most outlying regions

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OBJECTIVE: to report on the progress achieved in implementing the POSEIMA programme in 1992 and 1993, the first full years of application of the measures provided for in the programme. CONTENT: under its Decision 91/315/EEC of 26 June 1991, the Council set up a programme of options specific to the remote and insular nature of Madeira and the Azores (POSEIMA). This programme endeavours to take account, in the application of Community policies, of the specificities and handicaps of these archipelagos as the result both of their insular and remote nature and their small surface area, difficult topography and climate, economic dependence on certain products and limited markets. According to the report, significant progress has been achieved as regards the Community's contribution to the economic and social development of the Azores and Madeira using the dual approach of ensuring that these regions benefit from the dynamics of the internal market to the maximum and recognising their real regional situation. This first period has demonstrated that this approach is well suited to the specific needs of these two regions. The Commission considers that this approach should be continued and strengthened, given the final objective of enabling these regions to catch up economically and socially. In fact, over these two years, POSEIMA has basically taken the form of special agricultural arrangements to supply and support local production and specific measures for the benefit of other sensitive sectors of the local economy (energy supply, customs measures, fisheries, handicrafts etc.) which are coherent with and complement interventions by the Structural Funds. Taking stock of these two years of application and the economic and social situation since 1991, the Commission lists the changes and additional measures now needed in order to achieve the objectives of the POSEIMA programme, especially in agriculture and fisheries. The report contains proposals along these lines and proposed job creation measures, taking account of the specific difficulties of these regions. The report lists the Community policies and instruments which need to be implemented in order to help meet the challenges faced by enterprises in these two regions, alongside national and regional measures. According to the report, Community initiatives are needed in a whole series of sectors, especially customs, and it identifies two main intervention priorities which need to be developed in order to respond to local demand: - improving the competitiveness and productivity of local enterprises, especially SMEs/SMIs (training, access to capital and Community funding and preferential EIB loans, access to new technologies and reduction in the cost of supplying and transporting capital and consumer goods); - identifying outlets on both local and external markets (better positioning of local products on the markets of the Azores and Madeira and support in promoting and marketing local products in the Member States by defining quality standards).