Development problems in the Community's most outlying regions

1996/2138(INI) - 24/04/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Fernando FERNANDEZ MARTIN (PPE, E) the European Parliament took the view that the recognition in the Treaty of the concept of remoteness, in legal terms, gave concrete expression to the principle of economic and social cohesion, which was enshrined in the Treaty as a basic objective. It therefore called on the IGC to incorporate in the Treaty on European Union a specific Article on the most outlying regions which stated that: - the provisions of the Treaty and of the law deriving from it apply to these regions (French overseas departments, the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands), - the conditions for application of the provisions of the Treaty and those for implementing joint policies are determined by the Council and the European Parliament at the instigation of the Commission to take account of the economic and socio-structural backwardness of these regions, a situation which is aggravated by persistent and cumulative factors such as their remoteness, insularity, small surface area, relief and climate, and dependence on a small number of products, - the Community institutions shall ensure that these regions are allowed to develop economically and socially so that they are freed of their dependence on monocultures. Parliament also called for a protocol to be appended to the Treaty, which specified that: - the new Article of the Treaty shall establish the legal basis for determining the special conditions for its application in the most outlying regions and for adopting particular legal measures deriving from it, - however, given the economic and social backwardness of these regions, the Council and European Parliament shall determine the conditions for the application of the provisions of the Treaty and other specific conditions of implementation to promote these regions; - in addition to structural interventions, support must be provided by adapting common policies to regional realities; - actions already undertaken within the framework of the POSEI programmes must be strengthened and intensified; - the provisions of the new Article shall refer in particular to customs and commercial policies (free zones), fiscal policy (harmonious development based on local produce and the promotion of investment), environmental protection (conservation, restoration, coastal rehabilitation, waste water treatment, waste treatment policy, use of renewable energies), agricultural and fisheries policies (support for production and promotion of diversification, preventing small-scale production from being destabilized by pressure from multinationals) and the supply of raw materials and essential consumer goods; - the special features of each region shall be taken into account (including State aid schemes); - the conditions of access to EU horizontal programmes shall be taken into consideration, particularly in areas such as the information society, energy, the environment, professional training, tourism, business policy (particularly access to financing) and R&D. At the same time Parliament called on the Commission to draw up a communication identifying those areas likely to be of interest to external markets, together with the adaptation and reconversion measures needed to exploit the opportunities offered by these markets. Finally, Parliament advocated that, given their specific character, the most outlying regions of the EU should continue to benefit from priority assistance when the Structural Funds was being revised.