Inter-regional cross-border cooperation

1996/2150(INI) - 16/05/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Riitta MYLLER (PSE, FIN) on cross-border cooperation, the European Parliament took the view that EU cross-border cooperation required additional resources and that the Community should attach greater importance to border regions. This cooperation should primarily be directed at, and prepare for, the accession of the associated countries. Noting that examples of real cross-border cooperation were still few in number as a result of administrative and operational difficulties, Parliament proposed setting up a single Community fund to promote the systematic development of cross-border cooperation between the EU and third countries. This fund would support inter-regional, multiannual cooperation based on strategic thinking and exchanges of knowledge and experience, and all regions would be eligible to participate in it. Parliament also considered that it was essential to set up operational programmes in conjunction with the funding programmes and that the financing of actions in the regions should be encouraged through national co-financing projects. Reiterating that procedures for access to programmes should be simplified, Parliament called for the management of the INTERREG II programme to be scaled down. At administrative level, the Commission should review its current system, which was too centralised, and should contemplate a system of internal collaboration, between its Directorates-General, in consideration of the cooperation programmes with third countries. As regards actions, Parliament called for steps to be taken towards the financing of measures in the shipping sector (setting up of a shipping information group, protection of the maritime environment, etc.). In addition, there should be an improvement in regional and local information and a single 'counter' should be set up to provide information to project promoters (rather than a proliferation of Community and national information). In the area of cooperation, all forms of synergy should be encouraged, including that with Community research projects. Furthermore, programmes such as MEDA should include a 'cross-border' category. More particularly, as regards PHARE and TACIS, Parliament called for greater cooperation with financing allocated under INTERREG IIC. Greater priority should be given to the judicious use of resources in respect of cross-border cooperation between the EU and third countries as well as to the harmonisation of the INTERREG II, TACIS and PHARE programmes. Lastly, Parliament advocated: - the establishment of the legal and fiscal conditions needed to make the most of cross-border activity zones, - the coordination of regional and economic aid instruments on both sides of the Community borders, - the promotion of cross-border social cooperation so as to make the best possible use of available facilities and therefore prevent duplication of effort. It called in particular on Member States to promote cooperation and to take steps to overcome national, bureaucratic and emotional obstacles to cross-border cooperation by setting up a common framework for cooperation, which would be compulsory in each Member State.