Community regions: social and economic situation and development. 5th ERDF Report

1994/2113(COS) - 29/06/1995 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The report by Mrs Arlene McCarthy (PSE, UK), which was adopted by the European Parliament, noted that several of the recommendations put forward by the EP with regard to the Fourth Periodic Report had been taken over by the Commission in the Fifth Periodic Report. It emphasised that investment in education in the less-favoured regions was a vital requirement for the improvement of employment prospects and to boost competitiveness. As a result, a larger proportion of public budgets should be earmarked for human resources, to provide support for teaching, training and research, whilst incentives should be provided for SMEs. The report regretted that the positive moves towards nominal convergence at national level were not paralleled by real convergence at regional level, that important aspects (e.g. state subsidies and the informal economy) had still not been included in the report, that there were significant disparities in research and technological development, and that economic and social disparities between the richest and poorest regions remained wide. With regard to this last point, the EP called on the Commission and the Member States to coordinate macroeconomic and Community policies more effectively in order to tackle unemployment in the regions and called on the Commission to put forward proposals for policies to support regional convergence. In particular, the report called on the Commission to: - analyse in greater detail the factors which supported competitiveness in the less-favoured regions, with a view to better targeting of structural actions; - draw up a report assessing the job creation impact of structural fund actions; - undertake a comparative analysis of the performance rates of the regions in comparable situations; - involve both sides of industry and local and regional authorities in planning activities; - undertake an assessment of Member States' structural interventions in beneficiary regions and strengthen controls and penalties for the improper use of funds by Member States; - anticipate the future reform of the Structural Funds and undertake a study of the eligibility criteria of the Funds with a view to ensuring a higher degree of effectiveness and a noticeable concentration of funds; - examine the impact of a future enlargement of the Union on structural fund policies. Finally, the EP called on the Member States to prevent any misuse or misappropriation of Structural Funds.