Town and country planning and the European Spatial Development Perspective (EDSP)

1997/2253(INI) - 02/07/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Alfonso NOVO BELENGUER (ARE, E) on regional planning and the European Spatial Development Perspective, the European Parliament welcomed this first official draft and, while considering that it would be necessary to establish clearer guidelines, endorsed the basic objectives stated in it. It regretted that the Treaty did not at present provide for specific Community powers as regards regional planning, and regretted the Perspective's indicative and non-compulsory character. It took the view that cooperation and consensus must form the basis of the practical application of the ESDP and considered it essential to find ways in which regional and local authorities could participate actively in the various development stages of the ESDP. Parliament considered it essential to include regional planning in the Community sphere, as the intergovernmental dynamic had exhausted its opportunities for action. Accordingly, it urged the formalisation of the Council of Regional Planning Ministers. The Regional Development Committee should be established as a permanent body, and members of the European Parliament should be involved in it. The ESDP should provide the framework for giving more consistency to Community policies which had a regional impact, in order to promote social, economic and regional cohesion and a sustainable development model throughout the European regions. Parliament repeated its call for the establishment of a Regional Planning Observatory. It was willing to consider the creation of a special budget heading for its funding. This Observatory (ORATE), which would be of a Community nature, would consist of a network of research institutes. It expressed its concern at the inadequate consideration of the many regional realities of Europe (islands and archipelagos, coastal regions, areas of low population density, areas of outstanding ecological importance, etc.) and at the basically urban and continental nature of the concept of European regional development. It considered that the ESDP should above all contribute to the implementation of a genuine comprehensive policy to correct regional imbalances, particularly by promoting equal access to communications infrastructure and the harmonious growth of employment and business in the EU's various regions. The key function of the transport policy was not sufficiently reflected in the present draft Perspective; a transport policy directed towards improving the accessibility of the peripheral regions and aimed at greater sustainability could help to counteract the growing congestion facing the territory of the European Union. Parliament drew attention to the need to pursue policies for developing and reviving Europe's ports, and to incorporate in the draft ESDP a chapter on the regional perspectives of enlargement; it welcomed the proposal to continue the Interreg programme. It would also be worthwhile to develop transnational cooperation and cooperation with the Council of Europe. The ongoing reform of the Structural Funds should make it possible to incorporate the political options stated in the ESDP into regional policy, particularly by strengthening the pilot projects financed by the ERDF. Parliament wished to be actively involved in the organisation of the forum on regional planning to be held in Brussels in 1999.