# Structural assistance: single programming document in France. Rapport

1995/2204(COS) - 18/07/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Bernard CASTAGNEDE (ARE, F) on development problems and structural operations in France, the European Parliament stressed that despite its positive aspects, Community structural policy had not succeeded throughout the country in substantially closing the gaps in regional development or in finding a sufficiently effective solution to the problems of unemployment and social exclusion. Corrections were therefore called for, particularly with regard to the use of the appropriations. Parliament took the view that the under-use of appropriations was attributable mainly to excessive centralization, the lack of clarity in the distribution of responsibility among different levels, the excessive inflexibility of the programming process, the slow presentation of projects and lack of information. The resulting delays compelled project operators to provide prior funding, which seriously compromised the success of programmes. Parliament therefore called: - on the Commission: .to clarify and simplify the conditions in which the Structural Funds are implemented, .to make the conditions of eligibility more flexible (particularly for SMEs/SMIs), .to improve practices for monitoring and evaluating programmes; - on France: .to speed up transfers of Community funds to the ultimate beneficiaries, .to respect the principle of additionality more fully. Parliament also called for real efforts to make European regional policy better known (plaques, brochures, etc.). The French authorities and the Commission were called upon to involve local and regional authorities more fully in the implementation of programmes, within the framework of clearer partnership. This should include cooperation among the different levels (State, regions, departments, towns or groups of communes) as well as consultation of private-sector operators involved in programmes and the two sides of industry. Community measures ought to be concentrated better on the regions which were in greatest need of them, and measures initiated in regions with permanent structural disadvantages should continue. In this connection, special efforts were called for in respect of the overseas departments, Corsica and Hainaut. Parliament also proposed a series of measures which would lead to a new approach to territorial cohesion by means of: - Community assistance being provided without reference to average regional GDP, - the establishment of a single planning unit, - the transformation of URBAN CIPs accessible to certain regions with high per capita GDP but serious social exclusion problems (the Ile de France region, for example) into Objective regions (2b, for example), - the redeployment of certain existing programmes, - territorialization of Objective 3 and 4 structural assistance. It considered that job creation should be a priority objective for the selection of programmes and that the Commission should support projects with an identifiable net benefit in the form of new jobs created. On this same subject of employment, Parliament suggested stepping up local employment initiatives. Finally, it was concerned about the renationalization of certain types of aid, and pointed out that the extension of structural policy to future members of the Union must not result in any reduction in the funds available for cohesion policy in France.