Enlargement and regional policy

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The European Parliament, having regard to the contributions of the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism, recalls that the European Union must respond appropriately to an elargement which will increase considerably the number of disadvantaged regions. Therefore, the Commission is called upon to revise the criteria governing the award of structural aid with the aim of ensuring that both the candidate countries and the current Member States receive appropriate support for their disadvantaged regions. As for the candidate countries, they are urged to press on with the process of decentralisation and regionalisation and to continue regional cooperation, with due account taken of the development and strengthening of local authorities. Consequently, the Commission is called upon to launch interregional and crossborder cooperation. Furthermore, candidate countries must therefore strengthen the administrative capacities with responsibility for regional policy implementation and to step up preparatory training and knowledge transfer. With regard to the financial perspective, the European Parliament expresses its concern that the existing financial perspective is not sufficient to meet the challenges of regional policy and economic and social cohesion arising from an enlarged Union. Therefore, the Parliament calls on the Commission to submit an annual progress report to the European Parliament and the Council, drawn up on a regional basis, outlining whether or to what extent funding has been properly used in the enlargement countries. Finally, the Parliament urges the Commission to scrutinise critically the implementation of the pre-accession programmes in particular ISPA. In addition, the Commisison should analyse the impact of enlargement on employment, cohesion and economic migration.