The role of "Euroregions" in the development of regional policy

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Kyriacos TRIANTAPHYLLIDES (GUE/NGL, CY) on the role of "Euroregions" in the development of regional policy. It began by pointing out that EU enlargement had resulted in greater disparities between European regions, which needed to be addressed by means of an effective cohesion policy. One way of achieving this was through the development of cross-border cooperation, which provided a suitable approach to solving daily problems on both sides of the border, especially in the economic, social, cultural and environmental fields. Such cooperation could also contribute to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, through joint innovation and research, R&D networks across borders and the exchange of best practice and experience.

The report noted that Euroregions (as proposed in the framework of the European grouping of cross-border cooperation - EGCC) were a "turntable" for all cross-border relationships, contacts, knowledge transfers, operational programmes and projects. They should be promoted as one of the tools of cross-border cooperation and be given "certain legal status" in order to be able to perform their tasks. The concept of Euroregions and similar structures should be extended, for example to include cooperation in promoting culture, education, tourism and economic issues as well as, where applicable, fighting organised crime, drug trafficking and fraud in partnership with relevant national institutions. They should also be enabled to devise, implement and manage cross-border programmes in the EU as well as programmes under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance from 2007 onwards.

MEPs stressed the importance of Euroregions for Member States with natural handicaps, including small island states. Lastly, they called for support for cross-border cooperation and the establishment of Euroregions involving regions from the sensitive area of the Middle East , in a bid to promote friendly relations, stability, security and economic interests of mutual benefit.