# The role of territorial cohesion in regional development

2004/2256(INI) - 28/09/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Ambroise **GUELLEC** (EPP-ED, FR) on territorial cohesion in regional development. (Please see the document of 16 /06/2005.)

Parliament stated that territorial cohesion is becoming a new objective of the Union and enriches the objective of economic and social cohesion by giving it a transversal dimension applicable to the whole territory and all Community policies. A territorial cohesion policy at EU level is of crucial importance for the development of the Union by supplying a fundamental "Community Added Value," which is capable of enhancing sustainable development prospects. The ultimate aim of territorial cohesion is to ensure that the territory as a whole develops to the maximum extent, avoiding geographical concentrations of activities, and to improve the conditions of life for all those who live there. Parliament felt that territorial cohesion is a fundamental objective of regional planning in the Union and provides the raison d'être for regional development policy. It is based on the principle of equity between citizens, wherever they live in the Union.

Parliament called for regional development to be founded on programmes which guarantee equality of treatment between the EU's territories, while preserving their diversity, which implies appropriate accessibility of services of general interest (SGI) and services of general economic interest (SGEI). The harmonious development of the whole territory of the EU must be founded on the application of a polycentric spatial development model, parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge and wise management of the natural and cultural heritage. Initial priority should be given to combating distortions between the centre;

Parliament moved on to call for the measures advocated in the July 2001 White Paper on European Governance to be put into practice with a view to achieving genuine multi-level and multi-sectoral governance with enhanced cooperation between territorial actors at three levels: regional, national and European. This cooperation should be based on the principle of partnership with all appropriate parties. The Commission is asked to carry out a study, alongside GDP, on new territorial indicators, namely the decentralisation and accessibility index, infrastructure and transport provision, the level of activity in research and innovation, education and training, level of diversification of production in the area, and the unemployment rate.

The Commission is also asked to draw up before 2007 a White Paper on the objective of territorial cohesion, indicating, in particular, how this objective is to be incorporated in the national strategic plan of each Member State.