Contributions of the future regional policy to the innovative capacity of the European Union

2006/2104(INI) - 10/05/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Mieczysaw Edmund **JANOWSKI** (UEN, PL) on the contribution of the future regional policy to the innovative capacity of the EU. It stated that regional policy plays a part in EU innovation capacity building, which involves a range of complementary scientific and technological, legal, economic and commercial, administrative, environmental, educational, and cultural measures aimed at securing genuine cohesion within the Community. Innovation within the EU should be understood as a dynamic and interactive process involving various stakeholders including, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, regional and local stakeholders. 60% to 70% of Community legislation is implemented at regional and local level.

Recognising that innovation is essential for creating employment in Europe, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to ensure in the EU regions equal opportunities for all citizens to access education at every level, which would boost people's ability to think in an innovative, creative way and ensure balanced personal development (both intellectual and physical). It advocated the development of regional academic and scientific-research centres, as well as centres of excellence with closer cooperation among such centres. In view of the current demographic situation in the EU, particular notice should be taken of the fact that European society is ageing and that elderly persons should be encouraged to be more closely involved in innovation measures, thus putting their knowledge to good use. An essential precondition for innovation capacity building in the EU is unhindered and free – or extremely cheap – broadband access to: administrative information; scientific, economic, legal and cultural information, subject to proper respect for intellectual property principles (wider availability of e-libraries). All relevant parties must ensure universal access to such information and to maximise access to information and communication technology (ICT) based working.

With a view to boosting innovation throughout the EU, Parliament considered that it was essential for broad support to be given to invention-related activities and, by extension, to patent- and licence-related activities. It called on the Council, Commission and Member States to step up efforts to introduce a European patent and ensure respect for copyright (intellectual property rights strategy), and to combat plagiarism and counterfeiting and work towards global solutions in this area, based predominantly on European models. In addition, the development of innovation clusters should be fostered as a means of establishing links between scientific research centres, education centres, business and local communities.

Parliament then urged Member States to foster cooperation by setting up European technological platforms providing an opportunity to concentrate innovation activities by forging cross-border and cross-regional links between industry and business and scientific-research and financial circles. It moved on to stress that the current level of spending on research and development was still dangerously low and that the Community budget appropriations earmarked for this purpose are far from satisfactory. Member States must considerably increase the percentage of GDP they spend on R&D at both national and regional levels.

The European Institute of Technology (EIT) was a new opportunity that would prevent the 'brain drain' and give talented European researchers a unique chance to perform scientific research, and Parliament called on the Council, Commission and Member States to speed up establishing the EIT.

Parliament recommended comprehensive support to SMEs (including measures to streamline administrative procedures and the tax system and measures concerning public supply procedures), since

they are the most creative and dynamic vehicles for technological and organisational innovation. SME access to financing from the Structural Funds must be improved and greater diversification of financing should be promoted. Particular efforts should be made to develop more fully the potential of risk capital, and to reduce red tape. Member States and regions should make greater use of solutions involving public-private partnerships (PPPs) and at the same time to employ best practice developed in other countries and regions. Parliament stressed the need for an extensive system of PPPs to supplement the public financing, noting that the success of such activities will depend essentially on interlinking the potential actors. Information on the EIB/EIF financing initiatives (JASPER, JEREMIE and JESSICA) should be disseminated as widely as possible at regional level.

Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States, with a view to countering the depopulation of certain areas brought about by their structural disadvantages (such as economic deprivation and unemployment), to conduct inter-regional compensation policy in a more effective manner.