Basic information

2004/2253(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Stronger partnership for the outermost regions **Subject** 4.70.06 Outlying and outermost regions, overseas countries and territories	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
REGI Regional Development	MARQUES Sérgio (PPE-DE)	19/01/2005

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	CAPOULAS SANTOS Luis Manuel (PSE)	20/01/2005
PECH Fisheries	FREITAS Duarte (PPE-DE)	13/04/2005

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
26/05/2004	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2004)0343	Summary
13/01/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
12/07/2005	Vote in committee		Summary
19/07/2005	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0246/2005	
27/09/2005	Debate in Parliament		
28/09/2005	Decision by Parliament	T6-0359/2005	Summary
28/09/2005	Results of vote in Parliament		
28/09/2005	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2004/2253(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/6/25230

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee opinion	AGRI	PE353.552	24/05/2005	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE359.908	06/06/2005	
Committee opinion	PECH	PE357.757	11/07/2005	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0246/2005	19/07/2005	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0359/2005 OJ C 227 21.09.2006, p. 0088-0512 E	28/09/2005	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2004)0343	26/05/2004	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0847/2005 OJ C 294 25.11.2005, p. 0021-0024	13/07/2005	

Stronger partnership for the outermost regions

2004/2253(INI) - 28/09/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Sérgio **MARQUES** (EPP-ED, PT) on a stronger partnership for the outermost regions. (Please see the summary of 12/07/2005.) Parliament called on the Commission to carry out an assessment of the impact of the Community legislation liable to have implications for the outermost regions, and also called for the special situation of the outermost regions to be properly taken into account at all levels of implementation of Community policies and actions.

Financial perspective and cohesion policy: Parliament asked the Commission to ensure, whether under the specific programme to compensate for additional costs or under the wider neighbourhood action plan, or where access in general to Structural Funds is concerned, that equal treatment continues in measures concerning the outermost regions. It strongly supported the special action of EUR 1 100 million for the outermost regions

proposed by the Commission, as well as the possibility of financing operating aid. There must be full practical expression given to the requirement laid down in the EC Treaty for the outermost regions to be treated as a special case as regards their access to the Structural Funds, including those regions whose GDP has already risen above 75% of the Community average.

Agriculture and fisheries: In the context of the future rules of the EAFRD, the Commission must take account of the specific circumstances of the outermost regions, allocating them sufficient financial resources to attain the rural development policy objectives and preserving uniform treatment for those regions when setting the Fund's contribution rates, on lines similar to those of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). Parliament deplored the abolition of sales aid for the sugar sector. This must be restored and there should be full compensation for loss of income in order genuinely to take account of the specific handicaps suffered by the outermost regions. Moreover, it is essential to ensure that sugar production and refining in the Azores are given access to the national market under conditions equivalent to those in force before the incorporation of this region in the EU, in the same way as has been the case with the Canary islands, without compromising the pursuit of this activity in the region.

In view of the particular circumstances of the exclusive economic zones of the outermost regions (absence of a continental shelf in certain cases) and the limitations of their fisheries zones (often confined to submarine hills), the Commission is asked to apply the precautionary principle and the principle of relative stability, thereby helping ensure not only biological and ecological balance for the species concerned, but also the protection of the socio-economic fabric related to the fisheries sector in those regions.

Competition and state aids: Parliament hoped, as regards state aid for regional purposes, that the outermost regions can continue to receive non-degressive operating aid, not limited in time, and that the aid can be extended to cover the transport sector, provided that the public procurement rules guarantee fair price-setting by the undertakings concerned. It also hoped that the outermost regions can continue to benefit from a higher rate over and above the amount of initial investment aid. Movable transport assets should be included among eligible costs as regards initial investment. Parliament hoped also that it will be permitted to compensate outermost regions for the additional costs incurred in transporting goods within the EU market.

Services of general economic interest: The Commission should act on its promise for a working party to study the operation of services of general economic interest in the outermost regions and draw up proposals geared to the special features and needs of those regions where the market in public services is concerned.

Taxation and customs measures: Parliament called on the Commission to show willingness to consider requests from outermost regions for temporary suspension of Common Customs Tariff duties levied on supplies of non-agricultural commodities for production uses and of fishery products, and on imported capital goods for business and industrial use.

Environment: This area must not be neglected in future measures in support of the outermost regions, since resources are insufficient to meet continuing needs regarding the environment, specifically as regards the protection of biodiversity, implementation of the Natura 2000 network, and waste management. This makes it more difficult to pursue an environmental policy in the outermost regions which is consistent with the fundamental principles of Community environmental policy. Parliament called on the Commission to implement measures along the lines of the environment component of the Programme of options specific to the remote and insular nature of Madeira and the Azores (POSEIMA).

Transport: Transport projects financed by the Community in the outermost regions must bring about improvements first and foremost to the quality of life of the inhabitants and the self-contained development of those regions. Projects developed in breach of Community environmental law must be halted. Parliament recommended that all transport projects developed for the outermost regions must have a precise and clearly-defined analysis of the benefits for the diversification of the local economy, social cohesion and the sustainability of the regional job market.

Stronger partnership for the outermost regions

2004/2253(INI) - 26/05/2004 - Non-legislative basic document

The European Commission is proposing a stronger partnership with the outermost regions of the Union. The new strategy focuses on three main strands - competitiveness, accessibility and regional integration - and forms part of the reform of the EU’s cohesion policy for 2007-13.

The Communication also makes recommendations for implementing other Community policies in these regions.

These proposals are a response to the instruction given to the Commission by the European Council in Seville in June 2002 to deepen the implementation of Article 299(2) of the Treaty concerning the outermost regions, in particular in the fields of transport and cohesion policy reform. The proposals also constitute a reaction to the Memorandum tabled on 2 June 2003 by the Spanish, French and Portuguese authorities and the seven outermost regions.

The Communication identifies three priorities:

- Competitiveness: improve the competitiveness of the outermost regions by creating and developing a business environment which will attract new companies.

- Accessibility: step up cohesion efforts in the outermost regions in order to reduce the difficulties connected with their remoteness, such as fragmentation among a group of islands or enclosure in areas with poor access. The reduction of these handicaps and of the additional costs of production in the

outermost regions is one of the main priorities of the Union’s activities to help these regions.

- Regional integration: the outermost regions and neighbouring non-member countries exist in a common regional environment which should facilitate trade among them in goods and services. This is why it is important to encourage their integration into their surrounding geographical area.

The Communication provides an outline of the future development strategy for the outermost regions which will be presented in greater detail in a report soon to be submitted to the Commission.

This report, commissioned by the European Council in Seville in June 2002, will also assess the success of the measures currently applying to these regions.

As regards the cohesion policy, the main proposals in the Communication come within the general framework of the reform of that policy as set out in the Third Report on economic and social cohesion. That report provides for all the outermost regions to be eligible for all the regional policy objectives, depending on their level of relative development: either the "Convergence" Objective, provided their GDP per head (measured in purchasing power parities) does not exceed the threshold of 75% of the Community average; or alternatively the "Competitiveness and employment" Objective. They will also be eligible under the "European Territorial Cooperation" Objective. Within this general framework, the Commission proposes two specific solutions aimed at helping the outermost regions to develop their full potential:

A specific programme to compensate for handicaps: This programme would be financed by the ERDF over the period 2007-13. It would be dedicated to reducing the specific handicaps faced by the economies of the most remote regions which are listed in Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty: remoteness, insularity, small size, difficult topography and climate and economic dependence on a few products.

An action plan for a wider neighbourhood: the aim would be to enlarge the natural sphere of influence of the outermost regions in socio-economic terms (including issues of migration) as well as in terms of culture. This includes reducing barriers which limit the scope for trade within the geographical area of these regions, which are far from the European mainland but very close to the regional markets of the Caribbean, America and Africa. The action plan for a wider neighbourhood will consist of measures concerning both trade and customs matters and also transnational and cross-border cooperation.

Additional schemes will operate under other Community policies.

Among these proposals, the Commission plans in particular to launch studies to evaluate the additional costs faced by the outermost regions and the constraints on their access to telecommunication services. Adjustments to the rules on state aid will allow a ten-point increase in percentage ceilings on the intensity of investment aid. Operating aid will also continue to be neither progressively reduced nor limited in time. In the field of agriculture and fisheries, the Commission intends to maintain the support granted to the outermost regions (support specific to local products and structural measures) on the basis of the handicaps listed in Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty. In the transport sector, the outermost regions will also benefit from procedures for introducing public service obligations and from the de minimis rules.