Basic information

2008/2010(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Strategy for the outermost regions: achievements and future prospects **Subject** 4.70.06 Outlying and outermost regions, overseas countries and territories	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
REGI Regional Development	SUDRE Margie (PPE-DE)	20/11/2007

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
TRAN Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PECH Fisheries	GUERREIRO Pedro (GUE/NGL)	20/12/2007

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Regional and Urban Policy	HÜBNER Danuta

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
12/09/2007	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2007)0507	Summary

17/01/2008	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
08/04/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
17/04/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0158/2008	
19/05/2008	Debate in Parliament		
20/05/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0210/2008	Summary
20/05/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/05/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2008/2010(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/6/58018

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE400.398	11/01/2008	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE402.891	07/04/2008	
Committee opinion	PECH	PE400.669	14/04/2008	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0158/2008	17/04/2008	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0210/2008	20/05/2008	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2007)0507	12/09/2007	Summary

Strategy for the outermost regions: achievements and future prospects

2008/2010(INI) - 12/09/2007 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to pursue and extend the strategy for the outermost regions (OR).

CONTENT: article 299(2) of the EC Treaty and the two Communications adopted by the Commission in 2004 stress the need to recognise the special nature of the outermost regions (the "ORs") and to put in place a genuine European strategy to support them.

While giving a positive assessment of the first implementation phase of the OR strategy, the Communication stresses the need to intensify the aspects of the 2004 strategy by adopting additional measures for the period 2007-2013. It also considers the long term challenges, focusing on sensitive issues for ORs: climate change, demographic change, and the management of migration, agriculture and EU maritime policy.

The Commission intends to redouble each aspect of the strategy by taking complementary action:

Aspect 1 - Reduce the accessibility deficit and the effects of other constraints specific to the outermost regions: The following measures could help achieve this goal: i) exploiting the opportunities offered by the use of the specific allocation to offset the additional costs of transport and new information and communication technologies; ii) continuing the effort to fill the broadband gap, particularly via ERDF operational programmes; iii) exploiting the opportunities offered by implementing the TEN-T, TEN-E and Marco Polo II programmes; iv) assessing the specific needs of the ORs when the POSEI programme implementation report is drawn up.

Aspect 2 - Make the outermost regions more competitive: Several instruments may strengthen the competitiveness of the ORs: i) the cohesion policy, particularly through the operational programmes for the period 2007–2013 for both the ERDF and the ESF; ii) Community programmes (recognising the special nature of the ORs in the specific programmes of the 7th FPRTD); exploitation of the Framework Programme on Innovation and Competitiveness as well as of the Lifelong Learning Programme); iii) finally, in relation to the operation of services of general economic interest, the Commission will continue to take account of regional specificities as well as of a detailed analysis of the relevant markets.

Aspect 3 - Strengthen the Wider Neighbourhood Action Plan: Regional integration of the ORs in their vicinities needs to be strengthened by involving public and private local players as well as the Member States concerned. Dialogue between the regions and their neighbouring countries, particularly the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific) countries and the overseas countries and territories (OCTs) associated with the EU is the tool for pushing this process forward. There are already some potential measures for pursuing this priority: i) recognising the special nature of the ORs in Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs); ii) coordination of financial instruments; iii) strengthening sea connections between ORs and neighbouring non-member countries; iv) joint participation by ORs and non-member countries in research networks and Community framework programmes; v) recognising the special nature of the ORs in migration policy.

The Communication launches a debate with the European Institutions, the Member States and, within the outermost regions, the regional and local authorities, socio-economic players, the research sector and academic circles. It is suggested that the consultation phase will last until March 2008. During this period the Commission will organise, in partnership with the regions and Member States concerned, seminars and workshops to discuss the following questions:

- To what extent can the 2004 strategy be adapted to the new challenges facing the ORs?
- What would be the most appropriate ways to tackle the major demographic differences and migratory flows between the ORs and neighbouring regions or countries?
- Is climate change a special challenge to the ORs?
- What actions can the ORs pursue, under European maritime policy, in order to both benefit from it and to be able to contribute to Europe's sustainable development?

After the closure of the public consultation the Commission will prepare its proposal on the future of the partnership with the outermost regions.

Strategy for the outermost regions: achievements and future prospects

2008/2010(INI) - 20/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 592 votes to 70, with 22 abstentions, a resolution on the strategy for the outermost regions (ORs), in response to the Commission’s communication on this issue.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Margie **SUDRE** (EPP-ED, FR) on behalf of the Committee on Regional Development.

Achievements of the stronger partnership for the ORs: the Parliament notes that the communication offers a particularly favourable assessment of the action taken by the Commission, even though many of the measures it prides itself on only partly address the needs of the ORs (particularly in the fields of transport and accessibility, research, fisheries and regional cooperation), and no reference is made to the problems encountered and efforts made by the ORs, for example, in connection with the renewal of State aid schemes.

MEPs note that Structural Fund intervention continues to play a major role in the development of the ORs. Nevertheless, they would like to see indicators other than merely GDP as compared with the Community average being used to measure the degree of cohesion achieved in these regions. In addition, cohesion policy should be better coordinated with other Community policies across the board, so as to enhance synergies.

The resolution notes the satisfactory results obtained under the specific guidance programmes for remoteness and insularity (POSEI) (agriculture and fisheries) and in the sugar cane, rum and bananas sectors and wishes to see proper consideration given to the financial impact which the ongoing international negotiations may have on these agricultural sectors.

Given the role of ORs in the EU's integrated maritime policy, the Commission is called upon to include in its plan support measures for the fishing industries in these regions.

Fruition stage of the stronger partnership for the ORs: MEPs regret that the proposals put forward by the Commission for the fruition of the partnership mostly concern measures which already exist or are being finalised. They also regret the initial reluctance shown by DG Trade to take into account the specific characteristics of the outermost regions when negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and urge the Commission to continue to seek compromises that respect the interests of the ORs concerned, when it comes to reaching final agreements with the ACP countries.

The Parliament reiterates the need for the ORs to be given differential treatment in the area of transport, particularly as regards the inclusion of civil aviation in the European Emission Trading Scheme (ETS). Furthermore, MEPs consider that Community interventions should be a catalyst for a spirit of enterprise that will transform the ORs into centres of excellence, driven by sectors which fully exploit their advantages and know-how, such as waste management, renewable energies, energy self-sufficiency, biodiversity, student mobility, research into climate change and crisis management.

An amendment adopted in plenary calls for the efforts made to date concerning the ORs to be pursued in order both to step up the establishment of local research facilities that are equal to their potential and to encourage and help the development of attractive, successful universities, with genuine resources and with standards equal to those of universities in other parts of the Union's territory.

Debate on the future of the Union's strategy for the ORs: MEPs commend the Commission on its initiative in opening a debate on the future of the strategy to assist the outermost regions, the results of which will serve as the basis for drawing up a new proposal by 2009. They stress, nevertheless, that this debate should not be confined to the challenges mentioned (climate change, demographic change and migration management, agriculture, maritime policy).

The Parliament urges that the scope of Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty (in due course Articles 299 and 311(a) of the Lisbon Treaty), which is the cornerstone of the Union's policy to assist ORs, should be included on the agenda for the debates.

MEPs stress the importance of public services for economic, social and territorial cohesion in the outermost regions, and call for the urgent adoption of measures aimed at combating endemic unemployment, poverty and unequal income distribution. They also believe that the future common immigration policy should devote special attention to the position of ORs, which are all EU external borders. Moreover, the Community support for agriculture in the ORs should be the object of extensive debate with reference to identifying the real challenges, the need to move towards local self-sufficiency and farm income levels.

The Parliament recommends that ways of overcoming the narrowness of local markets, the increasingly open competitive environment, the difficulty of finding market outlets in mainland Europe markets, as well as of improving the coordination of the funding for cooperation projects with neighbouring countries, should also be priorities for debate, together with effective participation by the ORs in European policies to promote innovation and overcome the digital divide.

The Commission, the Council and the other EU institutions concerned are called upon to efficiently, adequately and effectively ensure future Community funding of the Union's strategy to assist ORs and the compensation of handicaps linked to their outermost status.