

Tuesday 15 February 2000

24. Asks the Commission and the Member States to ensure an extensive publicity and communication campaign for the new URBAN initiative,
25. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide full and transparent information on the selection procedures and the methodology for the URBAN initiative, and to inform Parliament regularly on the implementation of URBAN,
26. Welcomes the creation of a horizontal mechanism in the fund to enable the exchange of good practice and highlight innovative approaches to urban regeneration,
27. Asks the Commission to inform it under the Code of Conduct which agencies will be engaged in this work,
28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the governments of the Member States.

4. Harmonious and balanced development of the European territory (Interreg)

A5-0028/2000

European Parliament resolution on the draft communication from the Commission to the Member States laying down guidelines for a Community Initiative concerning trans-European cooperation intended to encourage harmonious and balanced development of the European territory (Interreg) (COM(1999) 479 – C5-0243/1999 – 1999/2178(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft communication from the Commission to the Member States (COM(1999) 479 – C5-0243/1999),
- having regard to Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999 of 12 July 1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Code of Conduct of 6 May 1999 agreed between the European Parliament and the Commission on the implementation of Structural Policies by the Commission ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 3 May 1994 on the Community initiative concerning cross-border cooperation and selected energy networks (Interreg II) ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 28 March 1996 on the Community initiative concerning transnational cooperation on spatial planning (Interreg II C) ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 May 1997 on cross-border and inter-regional cooperation ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 July 1998 on regional planning and the European Spatial Development Perspective ⁽⁷⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 161, 26.6.1999, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 213, 13.8.1999, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 279, 1.10.1999, p. 488.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 205, 25.7.1994, p. 116.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 117, 22.4.1996, p. 70.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 167, 2.6.1997, p. 245.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 226, 20.7.1998, p. 42.

Tuesday 15 February 2000

- having regard to the conclusions of the Berlin European Council of 24 and 25 March 1999, according to which at least 50 % of commitment appropriations foreseen for Community Initiatives are to be allocated to the Interreg initiative, in which connection particular attention should be devoted to cross-border activities, especially with a view to enlargement and for Member States which have long common borders with applicant countries and countries sharing a common border with the Union, and to better coordination with the PHARE, TACIS and MEDA programmes,
 - having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999 on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure⁽¹⁾ and the Financial Perspective which forms an integral part thereof,
 - having regard to the agreements reached by the Ministers responsible for Regional Planning and Urban and Regional Policy at Tampere on 4 and 5 October 1999,
 - having regard to the annual report of the Court of Auditors concerning the 1998 financial year⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 160 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism and the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (A5-0028/2000),
- A. having regard to the difficulties experienced in the past by maritime and landlocked border regions which have been cut off economically, socially and culturally because of the existence of borders and turned into peripheral areas within the States to which they belong,
- B. whereas national frontiers should not be a barrier to the balanced development, territorial cohesion and integration of the European territory,
- C. whereas border regions have encountered difficulties in establishing a joint environmental policy, which has been an obstacle to consistent management of ecosystems,
- D. whereas cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation is important for European integration from the institutional, economic and social, including migrations, points of view and promotes peace, security, stability, territorial cohesion and respect for the rights of minorities,
- E. whereas the completion of the internal market, Economic and Monetary Union and the forthcoming enlargement of the Union to include the countries of central and eastern Europe, Malta and Cyprus create a new situation for border regions; whereas, therefore, the map of regions eligible for cross-border cooperation should be updated to take account of this new situation,
- F. whereas the enlargement of the European Union to include new countries must entail a process of integration of societies, economies and territories,
- G. whereas the territory of Europe should be considered as a whole in the interests of harmonious development of the Union and whereas the integration of border regions is an essential element in the development of a future European regional development policy based on the implementation of the polycentrism envisaged by the European Spatial Development Perspective,
- H. whereas interregional cooperation makes an important contribution to involving local and regional authorities in the process of European integration,
- I. whereas more active participation by local and regional authorities in Community initiatives should be promoted and, in general, their role in them should be upgraded, bearing in mind that in many cases the local and regional authorities have a very limited capacity for cooperation because of the different legal frameworks and different levels of development on either side of the border,
- J. whereas Community initiatives should only finance measures which entail added value at Community level or which are designed to remedy problems targeted by Community Support Frameworks (CSFs),

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 172, 18.6.1999, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 349, 3.12.1999, p. 1.

Tuesday 15 February 2000

- K. whereas the harmful effects caused by the parallel development of different infrastructure projects on either side of the border must be prevented and whereas it is important to ensure common development strategies with an innovatory approach with regard to management bodies,
- L. whereas the Community initiative Interreg II has been well supported and its acknowledged success could contribute to the establishment of a genuine Community regional planning policy,
1. Welcomes the continuation of Interreg; notes with satisfaction that, in the draft guidelines under consideration, the Commission has incorporated important recommendations formulated in previous reports by Parliament on Interreg; endorses the priority assigned to Interreg III and endorses the funding consequently allocated to it;
 2. Regrets the fact that the Commission submitted its draft late and that neither the regions nor representative regional organisations were involved in the drafting of the guidelines; in this context, calls on the Commission in future to ensure greater participation by regional authorities, particularly within the framework of programming and implementing the three strands of Interreg;
 3. Notes with concern that it is not possible to establish a direct link between Interreg II and Interreg III because of the delay in the Commission's submission of the draft; deplores the fact that as a result there are uncertainties regarding planning and a lack of continuity of financing; calls, in future, for programming schedules to coincide strictly with the entry into force of Community initiatives in order to ensure greater continuity of programming;
 4. Considers it necessary to continue to support the initiatives already launched under Interreg II in order to capitalise on the results achieved in the first Interreg programmes and complete the cooperation projects between businesses and administrations already begun;
 5. Regrets and deplores the fact that the Commission referred to guidelines for Interreg III to Parliament without first making a precise assessment of Interreg II, from which lessons could have been drawn for the new generation of the programme;
 6. Hopes that Parliament will receive an assessment of Interreg II in time for its examination of the mid-term review of Interreg III;
 7. Is concerned about the consequences of the late entry into force of Interreg III for the beneficiary regions and particularly the risk of loss of financing during the period between the end of the application of Interreg II and the beginning of the practical implementation of Interreg III, and calls on the Commission to alleviate the impact of its own omissions;
 8. Expresses the hope that Parliament will be notified without delay of the utilisation rate of appropriations allocated to the Interreg II programme;
 9. Considers it vital, with a view to using Interreg as an instrument for strengthening cooperation with the Adriatic and Balkan regions and with the aim of consolidating the economic, social and political stability of these regions, to extend the area eligible for cross-border cooperation to all regions of the Adriatic;
 10. With a view to the enlargement of the European Union to include Malta and in the context of the Barcelona process, calls for the Sicilian provinces which have a maritime frontier with the abovementioned applicant country to be included in the map of regions eligible for cross-border cooperation;
 11. Agrees with the Commission that it is important to step up cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation further; observes that the experience acquired should be sufficient guarantee that genuine cross-border cooperation can be achieved under Interreg III;
 12. Welcomes the fact that Interreg-PHARE (CBC) cooperation has been developed on a regional and multiannual basis, in which local authorities play a significant role, and hopes that similar cooperation will be developed in Interreg-TACIS (CBC) programmes;

Tuesday 15 February 2000

13. Welcomes the fact that monitoring committees, steering committees, managing authorities and paying authorities are required to be of a genuinely cross-border or transnational character;
14. Notes that the decisions of the Member States on improving the climatic situation and reducing CO₂ must be reflected in the cross-border and transnational cooperation subsidised by Interreg III;
15. Welcomes the approach adopted, which is based on three strands subsuming the respective priorities for the current programming period; reserves its opinion, however, until it has seen the assessment of the results of Interreg II;
16. Welcomes the setting of financial quotas for the various strands and the indicative breakdown by state, and considers it wise to allow an adjustable margin for strands IIIA and IIIB; calls however on the Commission to ensure that the Member States do not use Interreg funds strictly for the implementation of their national policies but will seek to promote the development of the beneficiary regions fairly by breaking down their quotas in such a way as to allocate the funds equitably to the eligible regions in the light, in particular, of the regions' needs and their capacity to organise projects;
17. Considers that the indicative list of fields of cooperation for strand IIIA comprises sufficient elements for cross-border projects of high quality; is aware that the list of eligible areas is derived from the current areas of cooperation; deplores the fact that very remote and island regions are not sufficiently taken into account in strand IIIA even though it has been acknowledged that these areas require special attention; calls on the Commission, therefore, to define clear and inviolable eligibility principles but allow Member States more flexibility, within existing budget allocations, to designate areas of cooperation under strand IIIA;
18. Takes the view that, in cross-border cooperation, greater emphasis must be placed on improving the conditions for the economic activity of small and medium-sized undertakings, including micro-undertakings and craft businesses, since it is those undertakings which create the largest number of jobs and act as a factor of stability in times of economic uncertainty;
19. Welcomes the possibility of supporting networks of local services and development and employment initiatives through strand A and expects these to be given due consideration;
20. Stresses the crucial importance of promoting regional transport links and energy supply projects in border regions within the Union and at its frontiers;
21. Fears that the scope of strand IIIB and the funds allocated to it may be too limited, and proposes that a non-exhaustive list of measures eligible for Community cofinancing should be drawn up; hopes that the areas for cooperation under strand IIIB will be the same as those under the current IIC, in order not to jeopardise the cooperation which now exists between regions, particularly the outermost regions; calls on the Commission to clarify the extent to which strand IIIA type activities can be carried out in order to enhance cooperation between island and maritime regions;
22. Agrees with the Commission that operations selected under strand IIIB must demonstrate concrete, visible and innovative results;
23. Attaches great importance to strand C, in view of the added value which the Community initiative should entail; regrets the inadequacy of the budget for strand IIIC; calls on the Commission to detail and forward to it the procedures for implementing this strand; calls on the Commission to involve regional authorities in planning, managing and implementing this strand, and in particular to permit cooperation between regions from different cooperation areas within the framework of regional cooperation;
24. Welcomes the Commission's approach of supporting networks for cooperation among regional and local authorities; draws attention here once again to the consistency between Interreg IIIC and the EU programmes for decentralised cooperation in the area of external policy and the opportunities for European local authorities to develop an integrated international exchange of experience and cooperation;

Tuesday 15 February 2000

25. Takes the view that cooperation at the internal frontiers must result in ordinary people being able to conduct their everyday business without any difficulties; expects, therefore, that the programmes' projects will also promote the establishment of the fundamental rights of workers, social and health protection, and freedom of movement;
26. Calls on the Commission to coordinate better with Interreg the various instruments used for cooperation projects in third countries, namely ISPA, MEDA, PHARE, SAPARD, TACIS and EDF; stresses that this coordination of instruments is a *sine qua non* for genuine cooperation; again calls on the Commission to consider the establishment of a single Common Fund; calls on the Commission to forward to the European Parliament its report on the measures for improving coordination between Interreg and the various abovementioned Community instruments before 1 June 2000 at the latest;
27. Stresses that greater flexibility is needed given the different legal and political situations in the Union as regards the powers of regions and local authorities; calls therefore on the Commission to support the setting up of joint management bodies on a transnational and cross-border basis in the interests of effective cooperation;
28. Takes the view that, in order to ensure that the guidelines of the general regulation are implemented, the Commission must see to it that the Member States and local authorities genuinely involve the economic and social partners and check that they really are involved, above and beyond statements of principle, in the whole process of designing and implementing the programme;
29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the role and responsibility of the regions at the EU's borders, not only in devising regional development programmes but also in exercising their powers; this also means that some technical assistance should be made available to the regions for this purpose;
30. Notes that transnational projects with non-member countries under Interreg often fail because of inadequate funding possibilities in those countries;
31. Urges the Commission to ensure that procedural incompatibilities — for example between the PHARE-CBC regulation and the Interreg guidelines — do not result in projects cofinanced by the ERDF being blocked;
32. Recalls that structural unemployment is responsible for 50 % of all unemployment and therefore expects that the Interreg funds made available will supplement national measures to promote employment; stresses the importance of this Community initiative for promoting employment in thinly populated areas;
33. Calls on the Commission to study carefully the measures carried out in the Member States to which Interreg resources are allocated, to enforce strict complementarity with other Structural Fund measures and to apply monitoring measures;
34. Calls on the Commission to take the greatest care to ensure that the implementation of projects under Interreg does not violate general Community legislation;
35. Draws attention to the fact that, by virtue of the new aspects which Interreg could tackle, the ERDF should demonstrate its management capacity in fields where to date it has no experience, such as human resources, equal opportunities, tourism, rural development or employment promotion;
36. Rejects categorically the Commission proposal to use outside service providers in the form of a Technical Assistance Office;
37. Calls on the Commission to comply with the provisions laid down in Article 23 of Regulation (EC) 1260/1999 as regards the funding of assistance;
38. Welcomes the setting up of a European Observatory for cross-border transnational and interregional cooperation responsible for monitoring the development of territorial cohesion, regional development and relations between the centre and the periphery, so as to identify existing imbalances;

Tuesday 15 February 2000

39. Considers that the financial involvement of regional and local players or greater participation by local associations and the private sector is essential;
40. Calls on the Commission and Member States to involve their local and regional authorities, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions in the drafting of a working programme for the Observatory;
41. Regrets that the Commission document contains no recommendations to the Member States designed to simplify procedures and national legal provisions concerning the submission and examination of projects by the national authorities or financing implementation and control;
42. Calls on the national and local authorities to make payments to final beneficiaries as speedily as possible;
43. Calls on the Commission to inform Parliament regularly about the implementation of Interreg; a requirement more justified than ever given the incomplete nature of its proposal;
44. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the governments of the Member States.
-

5. Rural development (Leader+)

A5-0024/2000

**European Parliament resolution on the draft communication from the Commission to the Member States laying down guidelines for the Community initiative for rural development (Leader+)
(COM(1999) 475 – C5-0259/1999 – 1999/2185(COS))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft communication from the Commission (COM(1999) 475 – C5-0259/1999),
- having regard to its resolution of 5 May 1994⁽¹⁾ on the future of Community initiatives under the Structural Funds (Leader II programme),
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds⁽²⁾ from 2000,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 November 1998⁽³⁾ and its decision of 6 May 1999⁽⁴⁾ on the general provisions on the Structural Funds,
- having regard to the Code of Conduct⁽⁵⁾ on the implementation of structural policies by the Commission,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Berlin European Council of 24 and 25 March 1999,
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999 on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure⁽⁶⁾ and the financial perspective which forms an integral part thereof,
- having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the opinion of the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism (A5-0024/2000),

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 205, 25.7.1994, p. 412.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 161, 26.6.1999, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 379, 7.12.1998, p. 164.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 279, 1.10.1999, p. 292.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 279, 1.10.1999, p. 488.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 172, 18.6.1999, p. 1.