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39. Realises that climate change will hit hardest the communities that already face significant social and economic problems; understands that especially women are a particularly vulnerable group; encourages efforts to adapt at local level through relevant financial and technical international support;

40. Is concerned that China does not allow foreign companies to have a majority stake in sectors such as steel and has introduced a variety of mechanisms that restrict the export of metals raw materials or provide governmental support for buying them from external sources; recognises that such practices create serious difficulties for EU industry interests in respecting climate change goals and exporting energy-saving, renewable and resource-efficient technologies, and that this must be tackled using all available instruments, including through the facilitation of technology transfer both politically and financially;

41. Points out that the new trading policy of some emerging countries, especially China, for raw materials worldwide, in particular in Africa, is having a major and negative impact on global security of access to commodities; stresses the need to overcome the current approach based on one-to-one relations between states and neglecting references to human rights, corporate social responsibility and environmental and social standards, in favour of a multilateral approach based on the criteria of sufficiency and sustainability of resource use;

42. Welcomes the Commission's initiative to continue to use all existing instruments to address trade practices in violation of international trade agreements as announced in its abovementioned Communication on the Competitiveness of the Metals Industries;

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43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and relevant international organisations such as UNCTAD, the WTO, the World Bank, the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) and the FAO.

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## **Outermost regions**

P6\_TA(2008)0210

**European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2008 on the strategy for the outermost regions: achievements and future prospects (2008/2010(INI))**

(2009/C 279 E/03)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the communication from the Commission of 12 September 2007, 'Strategy for the outermost regions: achievements and future prospects' (COM(2007)0507) and the communications of 12 May 2004 (COM(2004)0343) and 23 August 2004 (COM(2004)0543) on a stronger partnership for the outermost regions,
- having regard to Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty, which will be replaced by Articles 349 and 355 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, concerning the special characteristics of the outermost regions, and Article 107(3)(a) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to paragraph 60 of the Presidency conclusions of the European Council in Brussels on 14 December 2007,

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- having regard to the final declaration of the Thirteenth Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions in Madeira on 5 October 2007,
  - having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2000 on the measures to implement Article 299(2): the outermost regions of the European Union <sup>(1)</sup>, its resolution of 7 July 2005 on the proposal for a Council regulation laying down specific measures for agriculture in the outermost regions of the Union <sup>(2)</sup> and its resolution of 28 September 2005 on a stronger partnership for the outermost regions <sup>(3)</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on Fisheries (A6-0158/2008),
- A. whereas the Azores, the Canaries, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Madeira, Martinique and Reunion are characterised by a combination of permanent and severe handicaps, including their remoteness from the European mainland, their insularity or inaccessibility, their difficult topography and climate and the smallness of their markets,
- B. whereas Saint-Martin and Saint Barthélemy, which are administratively and politically separate from Guadeloupe, are named as new outermost regions (ORs) in Articles 349 and 355 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (EC Treaty, as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon),
- C. having regard to the structure of the economies of the outermost regions, marked by close links with agriculture and fisheries, which, together with services (particularly tourism), are economic activities which account for a very large number of jobs in these regions,
- D. having regard to the ORs' dependent situation, in social and economic terms, with regard to the fish stocks in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and to the biological vulnerability of their fishing zones,
- E. whereas the immediate geographical environment of the outermost regions offers very limited market opportunities, while the markets of these regions are highly attractive to all neighbouring third countries,
- F. whereas the ORs are totally dependent on transport links and whereas the additional costs relating to the transport of persons and goods, inadequate services in terms of frequency or coverage, high fares, and the difficulties in setting up or maintaining regional transport services are major obstacles in the way of the economic development and accessibility of ORs,
- G. whereas, during the last three years, the ORs have been directly affected by major Community reforms, including the financial perspective, regional policy 2007-2013, the European Fisheries Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, State aids, the Common Organisation of the Markets in sugar and bananas and the Specific Options for Remoteness and Insularity Programme, and whereas these changes have frequently had serious effects on these regions,
- H. whereas the Union's political priorities, which must remain consistent with the ever more binding international commitments dictated by globalisation, particularly within the WTO, frequently run counter to the specific measures taken to assist the ORs,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 197, 12.7.2001, p. 197.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 157 E, 6.7.2006, p. 497.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ C 227 E, 21.9.2006, p. 512.

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- I. whereas the relative influence of the ORs has declined substantially in a Union that has grown from 12 to 27 Member States,
- J. whereas the image of ORs, often seen as regions subsidised by Community or regional funds, without consideration for the positive impact of such funding, is hardly offset by the genuine added value they contribute to the Union in environmental, cultural and geostrategic terms and as regards space research, which is not immediately visible,
- K. whereas the ORs are vital footholds for Europe in the heart of the Caribbean, in the neighbourhood of the Mercosur countries, and off the coast of Africa in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, making the Union one of the world's largest maritime areas, with EEZs totalling 25 million km<sup>2</sup>, containing a wealth of resources of all kinds,

### ***Achievements of the stronger partnership for the ORs***

1. Welcomes the fact that, three years after the publication of the highly ambitious political positions contained in the aforementioned communications on a 'stronger partnership for the outermost regions', the Commission is now submitting a fresh communication on this subject;
2. Calls for the ORs unit in DG Regional Policy at the Commission to be maintained and its staff considerably strengthened in order to provide it with the resources necessary to fulfil its tasks, given the wide range of sectors involved and the complexity of the policies concerned;
3. 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;
4. Notes that Structural Fund intervention continues to play a major role in the development of the ORs; nevertheless, would like to see indicators other than merely GDP as compared with the Community average being used to measure the degree of cohesion achieved and cohesion policy being better coordinated with other Community policies across the board, so as to enhance synergies; calls on the Commission to display greater flexibility and adapt its current and future policies more effectively to the realities of the situation of the ORs, on the basis of Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty;
5. Notes the satisfactory results obtained under the POSEI programme (agriculture and fisheries) and in the sugar cane, rum and bananas sectors; wishes to see proper consideration given to the financial impact which the ongoing international negotiations and the measures undertaken at the WTO may have on these agricultural sectors; will closely monitor the forthcoming mid-term review of POSEI and the assessment of differentiated tax regimes;
6. Maintains that the specific characteristics of the outermost regions call for a strategy based on policies and measures that are not dependent on transitional criteria or circumstantial wealth trends, are adapted to the different needs of each of those regions and contribute to offering solutions for the permanent constraints to which they are subject;
7. Calls on the Commission, recognising the specific characteristics of and differences between ORs, on the one hand, and considering their role in the EU's integrated maritime policy, on the other, to include in its plan support measures for the fishing industries in these regions; considers that the Commission must ensure positive discrimination for the ORs' fleets in terms of access to their own fish stocks, and also, specifically, safeguard the sustainability of traditional fisheries;

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***Fruition stage of the stronger partnership for the ORs***

8. Regrets that the proposals put forward by the Commission for the fruition of the partnership mostly concern measures which already exist or are being finalised (the European Transport Network, the European Energy Network, the Seventh Framework Programme for research, development and demonstration activities, the Framework Programme on Innovation and Competitiveness, regional policy); awaits clarification of the specific operational resources to be given to the ORs to develop these opportunities;
9. Is concerned at the ever-increasing importance placed by the Commission on tools for assessing Community policies and instruments to assist the ORs, and to estimating the quantitative effects of the handicaps faced by these regions with a view to devising a methodology for offsetting the additional costs linked to their outermost status;
10. Hopes that this tendency to take into account increasingly mathematical justifications for the measures taken will not serve as a pretext for calling into question part of the Union's policy to assist the ORs nor deter institutional and economic actors in the outermost regions by imposing conditions on them which are too difficult to meet;
11. Regrets 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 urges 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;
12. Calls on the Commission to provide evidence that it genuinely intends to promote the regional integration of the ORs so as to give real substance to the Wider Neighbourhood Action Plan it promised in 2004;
13. Is concerned at some of the measures proposed by the Commission in the transport sector, particularly the assessment of specific needs and the taking into account of environmental externalities; reiterates the need for the ORs to be given differential treatment in this area, particularly as regards the inclusion of civil aviation in the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) system, so as not to jeopardise the efforts made to overcome their accessibility deficit;
14. Considers that Community actions should be a catalyst for a spirit of enterprise that will, including on the basis of public/private partnerships, 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;
15. Points out that many actions and programmes to be pursued and initiated for the ORs can make significant contributions to established Community and international priorities, in particular as regards climate change, the protection of biodiversity, renewable energies, health in developing countries, food supplies and diversification of economic and productive activities; welcomes the implementation of the NET-BIOME programme (NETworking tropical and subtropical Biodiversity research in OuterMost regions and territories of Europe) in particular, which is a significant example of the ORs' potential in the field of scientific research; wonders, however, about the fact that, despite the quantity of projects conducted and the extent of the OR's potential, the ORs' integration in the European Research Area is still limited;
16. 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***

17. Commends the Commission on its initiative in opening a debate on the future of the strategy to assist the outermost regions, in the form of a public consultation, the results of which will serve as the basis for drawing up a new proposal by 2009;

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18. Stresses, nevertheless, that this debate should not be confined to the challenges mentioned (climate change, demographic change and migration management, agriculture, maritime policy) even though these topics clearly cannot be ignored, and considers that the debate should necessarily include Lisbon strategy implementation as regards the ORs;

19. Urges that the scope of Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty (in due course Articles 349 and 355 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), which is the cornerstone of the Union's policy to assist ORs and the basis for the approach taken to these regions by the Commission's services, should be included on the agenda for the debates so as to give them the legal, institutional and political substance they merit;

20. Stresses the importance of public services for economic, social and territorial cohesion in the outermost regions, in such areas as air and sea transport, postal services, energy and communications;

21. Believes there is an urgent need to adopt measures aimed at combating endemic unemployment, poverty and unequal income distribution in the ORs, which have some of the worst rates in the Union;

22. Calls on the Commission to assist any Member States planning to implement the 'passerelle' clause in Article 355(6) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

23. Believes that the ORs provide the Union with an opportunity in its current reflection on climate distortion with regard to trend observation, damage prevention, disaster response and the protection of ecosystems; calls, in this connection, on the Council to adopt without delay the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund, which is specifically aimed at the special position of outermost regions; believes also that the Commission's proposals to strengthen the Union's disaster response capacity should make full use of expertise relating to the geographical location of these regions;

24. Believes that the future common immigration policy should devote special attention to the position of ORs, which are all EU external borders, are surrounded by less-favoured third countries and are subject to very strong migratory pressure which, added to a population growth rate which in many cases is still far higher than the Community average, is causing worrying levels of economic and social tension in these regions;

25. Requests that Community support for agriculture in the ORs, which is given less emphasis than other sectors, should be the object of extensive debate with reference to identifying the real challenges, the need to move towards local self-sufficiency, farm income levels, support for producers' organisations in connection with the marketing of their products, the importance of the environmental dimension and the need to take into account the effects of the opening up of trade introduced by the EPAs and the free-trade agreements currently being negotiated with several Latin American regions;

26. Believes that ORs should be placed at the heart of EU maritime policy, and stresses that the debate on this issue should focus on the role they can play as regards sustainable use of seas, oceans and coastal areas, and international maritime governance;

27. Requests the Commission, the Council and the other EU institutions concerned to efficiently and 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;

28. Recommends that ways of overcoming the narrowness of local markets, the increasingly open competitive environment and the difficulty of finding market outlets in mainland Europe markets, as well as of improving the coordination of the European Regional Development Fund/European Development Fund (ERDF/EDF) and European Regional Development Fund/Development Cooperation Instrument (ERDF/DCI) funding for cooperation projects with neighbouring countries, should also be priorities for debate, together

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with effective participation by the ORs in European policies to promote innovation and overcome the digital divide in order to ensure full access for the inhabitants of these regions to the means of information and communication offered by the new technologies, including broadband Internet access;

29. Stresses that the partnership, which is essential to the success of the debate, should not be limited solely to European, national and local public institutions, but should provide an opportunity, as in the past, to involve in discussions the entire economic fabric of the outermost regions, represented by structured organisations which have day-to-day experience of the impact of Community policies on the ground; calls on the Commission to submit, following the Partners' Conference, organised by the Commission, on the European strategy in relation to ORs, which is due to be held in Brussels on 14 and 15 May 2008, a new communication taking due account of the progress made at the conference;

30. Considers that the best strategy for ensuring the endogenous and sustainable development of the outermost regions is to make the most of their particular attributes, as outposts of the Union outside continental Europe, especially through a form of tourism that fully reflects the wealth of their history and cultural, artistic and architectural heritage, which the Union has a duty to preserve;

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31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, the national, regional and local authorities of the ORs, and the President-in-Office of the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions.

## EU consumer policy strategy 2007-2013

P6\_TA(2008)0211

### European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2008 on EU consumer policy strategy 2007-2013 (2007/2189(INI))

(2009/C 279 E/04)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee entitled 'EU Consumer Policy strategy 2007-2013 — Empowering consumers, enhancing their welfare, effectively protecting them' (COM(2007)0099),
- having regard to the Council Resolution on the Consumer Policy Strategy of the EU (2007-2013), adopted at its meeting held on 30 and 31 May 2007,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2007 on the obligations of cross-border service providers <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2007 on the Green Paper on the Review of the Consumer Acquis <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 September 2007 on the Single Market Review: tackling barriers and inefficiencies through better implementation and enforcement <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 June 2007 on consumer confidence in the digital environment <sup>(4)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> Texts Adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0421.

<sup>(2)</sup> Texts Adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0383.

<sup>(3)</sup> Texts Adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0367.

<sup>(4)</sup> Texts Adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0287.