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REPORT

on preparing for the assent procedure for the Community's strategic guidelines for the period 2007-2013 (Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs) (2006/2086(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

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DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on preparing for the assent procedure for the Community's strategic guidelines for the period 2007-2013 (Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs) (2006/2086(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission on ‘Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community strategic guidelines, 2007-2013’ (COM(2005)0299),
- having regard to Articles 23 and 24 of the proposal for a Council regulation laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2005¹,
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and having regard to the position it took at first reading on 6 July 2005²,
- having regard to the proposal for a Council regulation establishing a Cohesion Fund and having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2005³,
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund and having regard to the position it took at first reading on 6 July 2005⁴,
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European grouping of cross-border cooperation and having regard to the position it took at first reading on 6 July 2005⁵,
- having regard to Articles 158 and 161 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of March 2005,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000, of Göteborg of 15 and 16 June 2001 and of Brussels of 22 and 23 March 2005,
- having regard to the Commission communication to the Spring European Council on Working together for growth and jobs: A new start for the Lisbon Strategy (COM(2005)0024),

¹ P6_TA(2005)0277.

² P6_TA(2005)0279.

³ P6_TA(2005)0278.

⁴ P6_TA(2005)0281.

⁵ P6_TA(2005)0280.

- having regard to the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs of 12 April 2005 (COM(2005)0141),
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission of 17 May 2005: 'Third progress report on cohesion: Towards a new partnership for growth, jobs and cohesion' (COM(2005)0192),
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 15 and 16 December 2005 on the financial perspective,
 - having regard to the European Charter for small enterprises approved by the Santa Maria Da Feira European Council of 19 and 20 June 2000,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2003 on Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament¹,
 - having regard to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) (COM(2000)0335), the Commission's working programme for 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 (COM(2001)0179, COM(2001)0773, COM(2003)0098) and the annual reports on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union for 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 (COM(2001)0179, COM(2002)0258, COM(2003)0098, COM(2004)0115 and COM(2005)0044),
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A6-0175/2006)],
- A. whereas the cohesion policy guidelines are an important component of a European policy seeking to address global challenges,
 - B. mindful that the nature of the challenges facing Europe's cohesion policy has completely changed with EU enlargement to include 10 (12) new Member States,
 - C. pointing out that such a process makes it substantially more difficult to include the social partners, NGOs, municipalities and regions in drawing up the programme, but that Parliament wishes to promote their participation,
 - D. whereas in view of the depopulation affecting given European regions, new economic and social development strategies need to be drawn up in order to avert the danger that rural areas might be deprived of inhabitants,
 - E. whereas the reform of the structural policy for the next programming period 2007-2013 seeks to give it a greater strategic focus in order to avoid a situation in which specific actions are at odds with each other,

¹ OJ C 61 E, 10.3.2004, p. 384.

- F. whereas more emphasis must be given to the urban dimension of European structural policy in order to ensure both that conurbations are able to play their pivotal role in boosting European competitiveness and employment more effectively and that specific urban problems such as poverty and social marginalisation, including marginalisation in small and medium-sized towns, can be addressed more effectively,
- G. whereas urban areas and the surrounding countryside should be seen as an integrated economic area part of the regional context and need more integrated and symbiotic development strategy to fasten the process of regional competitiveness,
- H. whereas the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union must not be weakened by efforts to implement the Lisbon Strategy,
- I. whereas owing to disparities in prosperity which have become much more pronounced through enlargement, the resources set aside for structural policy are limited and they must therefore be concentrated even more than hitherto on sustainable development concepts and the most necessary and effective measures,
- J. welcoming the fact that cohesion and regional policy are being treated as a unity,
- K. pointing to the importance of reducing disparities between Member States, on the one hand, and between European regions, on the other,
- L. whereas territorial cohesion is an important component of cohesion policy and must be endowed with an appropriate level of financial resources and included in overall strategic planning,
 - 1. Stresses that the Commission's proposal on the strategic guidelines sets the Community's priorities with a view to promoting balanced, harmonious and sustained development and thereby pursues the Lisbon and Göteborg objectives;
 - 2. Maintains, however, that future cohesion policy must serve to meet the challenges posed by the most recent enlargement of the Union by helping to reduce regional disparities and fostering a society based on full employment, equal opportunities, inclusion, and social cohesion;
 - 3. Takes the view that the strategic guidelines should not restrict the scope of the regulations on the individual funds, but only clarify the EU's strategic priorities and points in this connection to the need to ensure that the regions have sufficient flexibility to be able to react specifically to requirements in the regions, since there are many ways and means of achieving successful sustainable development, particularly where the regions' and local authorities' experiences concerning their own development potential are fully incorporated into regional strategies;
 - 4. Refers in this connection to the differing needs of industrial regions, rural areas, cities and urban areas, sparsely inhabited and very outermost regions and island, mountain and border regions;
 - 5. Calls also for aid to be channelled towards areas suffering structural disadvantages such

as depopulation, population ageing, or inaccessibility and for the economic and social development of those areas to be boosted;

6. Stresses, however, that the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy is primarily a matter for the Member States and that cohesion policy has to form a unified whole with the Lisbon and Göteborg objectives and become a key factor in their attainment through national and regional development programmes;
7. Welcomes the evidence of linkage between job growth and an increase in productivity and notes that the essential purpose underlying it is to create high-quality permanent jobs.
8. Considers it necessary to concentrate the scant financial resources available in an intelligent and efficient manner in order to achieve maximum European added value instead of applying the 'watering can principle';
9. Stresses once again the importance of a sound partnership between all the parties concerned and demands that this partnership be clearly enshrined in the regulations and guidelines and thus supports the strengthening of civil society;
10. Calls on the Commission proactively to support public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a funding instrument and not to treat the Member States differently; supports specifically the possibilities offered by JESSICA, JEREMY and JASPER in this connection; endorses the Commission proposal regarding the role of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in helping to finance the implementation of cohesion policy;
11. Points to the importance of laying down rules to govern the formation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and of simplifying programme management and monitoring procedures so as to ensure that projects can be and are implemented rapidly;
12. Stresses the importance for regions to share information and best practice gained from previous programmes to take forward for use in future programming periods;
13. Welcomes the fact that the guidelines focus on three priorities and specifically demands that active attention be given to equality of opportunities between men and women in all three priorities;

Making Europe and its regions more attractive for investors and labour

14. Supports the decision to establish a durable transport infrastructure, including the promotion of a railway infrastructure and public local passenger services together with sea transport, which also ensures the access to these means of transport; and asks for support measures to optimise traffic management taking into account road safety; considers it essential to complete the trans-European transport network so as to enable the advantages of the internal market to be exploited to the full;
15. Calls for an explicit requirement and recognition of the principle and practice of accessibility for disabled persons in the strategic guidelines and in the evaluation

process required by the strategic guidelines;

16. Believes that transport infrastructures should be developed, particularly at the EU's previous external borders with the new Member States and between Member States where they are not yet adequately developed; refers in this respect to particular regional problems and requests that intelligent and sustainable transport concepts be put forward;
17. Calls for a specific reference to the secondary road networks to be included in the Community Strategic Guidelines given that support for the construction of regional roads can be of importance for increasing mobility of labour and thereby for providing accessibility to employment opportunities;
18. Stresses that sustainable development in all Member States means respecting environmental legislation on water, waste, air, and protection of the environment and biodiversity and calls for a sustainable use of natural resources, in particular water; further calls for a specific support for the implementation of environmental priorities such as Natura 2000, the Water Framework Directive and the sustainable prevention of natural disasters;
19. Also believes that smaller scale infrastructure projects in all areas should be taken into consideration and strongly supports investment in secondary connections to major networks;
20. Specifically supports the possibility of the Funds intervening in the sphere of sustainable energy policy and specifically welcomes the use of all renewable energy in electricity, heating, cooling and transport; calls for a support for energy saving and efficiency; stresses the importance and the potential, especially for SME's of the use and generation of renewable energy and the development of energy efficiency technologies with their special role for local and regional development potential;
21. Refers in this connection to the need to adopt an integrated approach to urban development and to the development of urban areas in order to achieve greater energy efficiency; in this context especially important are investments improving energy efficiency of large-panel prefabricated housing estates in the new Member States;
22. Notes that housing makes a major contribution to the production of greenhouse gases and that an effort must consequently be made in this sector too in order to attain the Kyoto objectives and encourage the process of sustainable urban development; recalls in this connection the above-mentioned positions and resolutions it adopted on 6 July 2005 in connection with the reform of the Structural Funds;
23. Demands that sustainable urban development and the specific links between towns and cities and their surroundings be strengthened taking into account existing partnerships. Further supports the implementation of strategies aimed at complementary development at every level;
24. Notes that there are great opportunities for rural areas in particular to boost their prosperity by stepping up the use of renewable bio-resources both for energy and as materials, and that agriculture too stands to benefit greatly from reinforcing sustainable

structures;

Promoting knowledge and innovation for growth

25. Welcomes the specific focus on research and development (R&D), in particular support for the formation of high technology clusters, innovative industrial regions and SMEs in the ICT sector; points, however, to the need to reduce the technology divide within and between regions and Member States by strengthening technological cooperation networks;
26. Urges, firstly, that measures and investments to promote innovation should not be confined to technological innovation but should apply to all types of innovation enabling businesses to carry out economic and social modernisation, and secondly, that specific efforts should be made to develop the innovation potential of small and micro-businesses, particularly in traditional sectors;
27. Urges the Commission to accord special importance to programmes to promote ICT, given that these have far-reaching social, territorial, and cultural implications, and make them fully accessible to citizens;
28. Points to the close ties existing between R&D and training, and calls on the Commission to make provision for simple and transparent means of joint financing through the Funds in the case of integrated projects for instance by making joint financing more attractive for private investments by fostering cooperation between universities and companies, and calls on the Member States to use instruments such as risk funds and micro-credits to this purpose;
29. Stresses the decisive contribution which will be made by the improved access to funding being proposed in terms of promoting research, innovation and entrepreneurship, and establishing new and expanding existing European companies;
30. Repeats its demand that all regions should be able to carry out PPP projects under the same conditions in the R & D and ICT fields, since this would help to reduce the technology divide;
31. Notes that rural areas must not be cut off from the development of the information society;
32. Supports the principle of developing business support services; considers that information, advice and assistance activities carried out by intermediary organisations, particularly for small and micro-businesses and craft businesses, are essential if these businesses are to achieve the objectives of the cohesion policy; calls, therefore, for support to such activities to be treated as a priority at regional level;
33. Calls for regions to build their research and innovation capacities by ensuring complementarity and synergy between FP7, CIP and the structural and cohesion funds;

More and better jobs

34. Emphasises the importance of investing in human capital, particularly in view of the demographic change facing our society over the next few years, and of focusing particular attention on the full integration of immigrants;
35. Demands that the ESF support those Member States policies which are in line with the integrated guidelines and recommendations within the framework of the European employment strategy and with the relevant Community objectives as regards social inclusion, anti-discrimination, the promotion of equality and general and professional training;
36. Calls for accompanying and support measures seeking to prevent the social exclusion of disadvantaged groups to be incorporated in support measures, with a view to enhancing their employability;
37. Welcomes the three action priorities of the employment policy guidelines and stresses that they must not under any circumstances be accompanied by a deterioration in the situation of workers;
38. Calls on the Commission to explain what it means by 'an employment policy approach that is geared towards the entire life-cycle'; assumes that it means projects specifically intended to support young people, women and elderly workers;
39. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to active policies, especially for the purpose of fostering entrepreneurship at every level of education and continuing training; demands in this connection greater support for 'lifelong learning' projects involving support both for improvements in educational infrastructures and staff qualifications, and support for new options starting as early as the school and preschool stage;
40. Points out that qualified workers are not the product of vocational training alone, but that the foundations are already laid in childhood and adolescence, and expects therefore that access to preschool facilities and school education be improved;
41. Expects further training and lifelong learning to be viewed as an investment in people and not therefore considered and registered as a form of assistance to be notified, where appropriate; supports the Commission's approach, as in the past under the Equal programme, of giving all migrants, including asylum seekers, greater access to the labour market, e.g. through the recognition of qualifications or through language acquisition;
42. Emphasises the need to improve the matching of training and education actions to labour market needs;
43. Calls on the Commission, particularly as regards the development of human capital, to support the cooperation of Member States and to notify cohesion policy players of the most innovative projects in an appropriate manner; points to the special importance of exchanges of information between the old and new Member States;
44. Welcomes the possibility of investing in health infrastructures and in averting health

risks;

45. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the strategic guidelines only contain items which can be supported through Structural Fund investments;
46. Calls on the Commission, in the event of a general failure to meet the criteria of:
 - sustainable development,
 - gender mainstreaming,
 - the rights set out in Article 13 of the EU Treaty (prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities or on the grounds of race, gender, religion or sexual orientation),
 - environmental law,to demand improvements or the repayment of monies already disbursed;

The territorial aspect of Cohesion Policy

47. Supports, as a matter of principle, the importance of the objective of territorial cohesion as an essential and integral supplement to the objective of economic and social cohesion;
48. Reiterates its demand for an increase in aid for urban areas; supports particularly, in this connection, the need for the flexibility of regions in developing projects since it is not necessarily clear at the beginning of a subsidy period which urban areas will need support for their projects during that period; stresses the important role cities and their surrounding area play in realising the objectives of the European Union's regional policy, including their function as motors of economic development in Europe; calls on member states to foster multi-level governance by including cities, their functional urban areas and rural peripheral areas in both the development and the implementation of the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and the operational programmes;
49. Points to the need to recognise the diverse nature of European local players; notes that Europe is distinguished by a unique multicentric structure consisting of large, medium-sized, and small towns and cities and that most Europeans live in medium-sized and small towns; considers it essential that measures for urban areas should extend beyond traditional metropolises and also allow for the role of the cities, satellite towns, and urban marketplaces linked to the leading urban centres;
50. Confirms its support for cross-border cooperation as a key instrument of European integration and calls for due attention to be paid, within the framework of this instrument, to the following sectors, inter alia: culture, the environment, R&D, information and communication technology, exchanges between administrations, disaster prevention and health;

51. Demands that Member States specify a priority for innovative measures and transnational cooperation in their operational programmes;
52. Calls for clear and transparent rules on both resource allocation and spending controls and for Member States to take full responsibility for the expenditure of cohesion policy funding;
53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

With the enlargement of the EU in May 2004 which expanded to 25 Member States, internal disparities have increased substantially. The forthcoming accession of Bulgaria and Romania can only further accentuate these disparities. However, the increase in the appropriations set aside for the new programming period 2007-2013 of the Structural Funds does not match the increase in the population living in regions whose GDP is less than 75% of the Community average: while the population of Objective 1 ('convergence') regions has increased by 46%, Structural Fund resources have risen only by 31%, owing to the present agreement on the financial perspective. The European Parliament is endeavouring, within the framework of negotiations on the Interinstitutional Agreement on the financial perspective, to obtain an increase in Structural Fund resources, as set out in the Böge report. The European Parliament is keen that the programme should begin in the regions as early as possible.

Legal basis

These widening disparities present the European Union with a daunting challenge: how to ensure that the new structural policy continues to pursue the Treaty objective, set out in Article 158, of strengthening its economic and social cohesion and reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions.

It is therefore particularly important to use the scant resources available in an intelligent, efficient and concentrated manner. The Community's strategic guidelines which are provided for in Article 23 and 24 of the proposal for a general regulation on the Structural Funds (COM(2004) (492)) are an important instrument for achieving this end. According to these guidelines, they constitute the framework for Fund interventions and, according to the assent procedure set out in Article 161 of the Treaty, must be adopted within three months of the entry into force of the general regulation on the Structural Funds.

Rationale and purpose of the guidelines

The purpose of the Community's structural guidelines is to ensure that in the period 2007 to 2013 cohesion policy is more geared to increasing European competitiveness in the support of growth and jobs. In order to achieve this, the Community has made knowledge, innovation and the development of human capital its priorities.

The cross-fund guidelines are intended to ensure that national strategic framework plans, and thus operational programmes, particularly, are more closely geared to the Lisbon and Göteborg strategies. The Commission hopes that at the programme planning stage:

- (a) the strategic dimension of cohesion policy will be reinforced;
- (b) the players on the ground adhere themselves more closely to the Lisbon and Göteborg strategy.

To this end, the guidelines propose that the cofunded programmes should use the resources for the following three priorities:

1. Making Member States and their regions and cities more attractive by improving connections, ensuring an appropriate quality and level of services and by reserving the environmental potential;
2. Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy by extending research and innovation capacities, notably by using the new information and communications technologies;
3. Creating more and better jobs, by ensuring that more people take are employed or engage in entrepreneurial activity, that the adaptability of the workforce and enterprises improves, and that investments in human capital are increased.

As regards horizontal aspects, the guidelines focus in particular on the importance of cities for growth and employment, on the promotion of the economic diversification of rural areas and on transfrontier and interregional cooperation.

Position and suggestions of the European Parliament

The European Parliament welcomes the fact that the strategic guidelines set the Community's priorities in promoting balanced, harmonious and sustainable development.

Before the European Parliament decides to give its assent, in accordance with Article 161 of the Treaty, it would like to draw attention to a number of points which will determine the success of the new structural policy based on the strategic guidelines.

It is commendable that cohesion policy should be more closely geared to the Lisbon Strategy, but it should be pointed out in this connection that the application of the Lisbon Strategy is primarily a matter for the Member States. Cohesion policy cannot replace the efforts of Member States which are necessary in many policy areas in order to attain the Lisbon Strategy's ambitious targets. For example, the European Structural Funds cannot make any direct contribution to reducing the number of pupils leaving school, as demanded in the guidelines. It is the Member States which are primarily responsible for this. We must not nurture unrealistic expectations.

Furthermore, the Lisbon Strategy, i.e. the drive to boost competitiveness throughout Europe, must not be pursued at the expense of achieving stronger social and economic cohesion, but rather must contribute to strengthening this cohesion within the framework of the strategic guidelines.

The Lisbon Strategy must go hand in hand with the Göteborg strategy on sustainable economic development. The Göteborg strategy is not secondary to the Lisbon Strategy. The Structural Funds may only be used for measures which are in line with the Göteborg objectives. Many non-governmental organisations have complained, no doubt justifiably, that this is not made clear enough in the strategic guidelines.

In this connection, we need to take a critical look at the Commission proposal for the earmarking of appropriations. The classification of measures as measures which contribute to

the Lisbon Strategy, or measures that do not, is problematical. Moreover, there is a danger that the earmarking of Structural Fund appropriations will not give the regions the flexibility they need in developing the programmes to meet their local and regional requirements. Care must also be taken to prevent 'earmarking' leading to the introduction of a new set of bureaucratic controls which make it difficult to draw up the programmes and implement the projects rapidly.

It is particularly important who decides which measures form part of the Lisbon Strategy. For example, the Commission President, who put forward the idea of earmarking in the first place, seems to believe that the extension of trans-European transport infrastructures is not part of the Lisbon Strategy. This position is open to question.

The current Commission proposal on the strategic guidelines can also be criticised for failing to take into account sufficiently the urban dimension. Owing to their economic and social disparities, conurbations are beset by numerous problems, for example heavy traffic, soaring crime rates and environmental pollution, and these need to be addressed more effectively. Assistance for urban areas must be increased. The JESSICA initiative is an important step in the right direction.

The European Parliament also sets great store by the partnership principle. The context for the close involvement of social partners, non-governmental organisations and municipalities under the partnership principle could hardly be less promising. There is little time left for preparing the programmes. This is why negotiations on the Interinstitutional Agreement and on the regulations and guidelines are being conducted simultaneously, while the Member States and their regions are already endeavouring to draw up the new programmes as far as possible.

Under these circumstances, it is particularly important to insist on the partnership principle which, in the eyes of the European Parliament, is a key factor in determining the success of the implementation of the programmes. It is absolutely crucial that all those concerned on the ground at local and regional level, including the social partners and civil society, be involved in the planning and implementation of programmes. This is the indispensable precondition for ensuring that the strategic guidelines attain their objective, which is to ensure that the players on the ground adhere more closely to the Lisbon strategy.

The European Parliament believes that at a time when public funds are scarce, it is permissible to promote private co-funding for projects in order to ensure the successful implementation of the programmes. However it is important to ensure compliance with the principle of the additionality of resources, i.e. Member States must always support structural policy with public funds in conjunction with the EU. Public-private partnerships are, unfortunately, only very seldom used in connection with the Structural Funds, since they raise a host of unresolved legal questions. The European Parliament calls upon the Commission to help establish an appropriate legal framework in the Member States.

The Structural Funds also have a contribution to make in advancing the economic and social equality of women. Experience with the Community initiative EQUAL has been positive, and this should continue in the new programming period. This must also be reflected in the strategic guidelines. It is particularly desirable that exchanges of 'best practices' through networks continue to be employed as an important instrument.

Last but not least, we should also refer again to the intention of the European Council in December 2005 to introduce different legal standards within the framework of cohesion policy for the old and new Member States. The European Parliament rejects this approach. It takes the view that all that is needed is a derogation for the application of the N+2 rule up to 2010. As regards cofunding rates, the eligibility of VAT and the construction of social housing should be subject to the same rules throughout the EU.

In enhancing human resources, one of the Commission's priorities is the Europe-wide flexibility of workers. It is important to bear in mind in this connection that:

1. This presupposes the existence of the necessary transport infrastructure. Particularly in border areas, this is often not the case.
2. Flexibility can also mean that emigration from certain regions affects them badly leads to depopulation. In these cases, it may be useful to reinforce existing potential of these regions in order to avoid excessive emigration.

The item 'territorial cohesion' is another issue which has not yet been sufficiently addressed in the Commission's guidelines. The Committee of the Regions also made this clear in its opinion. The European Parliament could adopt this position also in its opinion (see paragraph 34 and 36).

The European Parliament is confident that the Commission and the Council will take on board the suggestions of the European Parliament,, this is necessary if it is to give its assent to the strategic guidelines.

7.3.2006

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

for the Committee on Regional Development

on cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs: Community strategic guidelines, 2007-2013 (2006/2286(INI))

Draftswoman: Ana Mato Adrover

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that widening the base of economic activity, raising employment levels and reducing unemployment are vital to sustain economic growth, promote socially inclusive societies and combat poverty;
2. Considers that, given the recent and forthcoming EU enlargements, an adequate level of funding is more necessary than ever in order to ensure the necessary degree of economic and social cohesion to enhance real convergence; regrets that the European Council has failed to make available sufficient resources to pursue cohesion policy; points out that, although their problems are the same as in previous funding periods, there are still some European regions that will not be covered by the convergence objective; urges the Member States to ensure that all programmes are effectively implemented;
3. Is convinced that cohesion policy must be an inclusive policy counteracting social exclusion and discrimination on the labour market and, to this end, it must promote participation in all areas of society, particularly in economic activity by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups (women, young people, early school leavers, the long-term unemployed, the elderly, the handicapped, members of minorities and immigrants) in a targeted manner; believes that cohesion policies and instruments, with the contribution of local and regional authorities' initiatives, should pay particular attention to areas with underdeveloped infrastructure and high unemployment or with other specificities prejudicial to economic development and to the above-mentioned groups and should be used to enhance their employability, social integration and active citizenship; considers that accompanying and supporting measures to prevent social exclusion in general must also be incorporated into support for the above-mentioned

- groups, in order to increase their employability;
4. Takes the view that given the experience of the Equal programme, training and validation of competences acquired abroad, personalised guidance and language training should be supported in order to facilitate the integration into society of all migrants, including asylum seekers;
 5. Believes that it is particularly necessary for cohesion policies to take into account the problem of gender-based violence, with these policies being used to promote the employability of victims of ill-treatment;
 6. Believes that cohesion mechanisms should promote the social economy and include adequate social services which, as well as being a source of employment, help to achieve a balance between personal and family life and work, which is specially beneficial to the promotion of employment for women, and therefore helps to overcome social exclusion by accompanying support measures; calls on the Member States to include in their strategic reference frameworks elements which promote flexibility, combined with security for workers, and reduce labour market segmentation and occupational segregation, having due regard to the role of the social partners.
 7. Calls on the Commission to involve more actively representatives of the Member States, regions, local authorities and social partners in Cohesion Policy; considers that the social partners are an essential pillar of the partnership for growth and employment, and therefore also considers essential that trans-European social partner networks should be strengthened;
 8. Worries about the fact that the ageing population will provoke a decline in the employment in the European Union; welcomes the Commission's proposal to invest more in health promotion and disease prevention, in order to ensure higher employability, longer working lives, higher productivity and lower healthcare and social costs.
 9. Urges the Commission to make provision for ESF funds to be used to improve general working conditions and particularly to promote health and safety and reduce occupational accidents;
 10. Recognizes the importance of the development and enhancement of human capital and welcomes the emphasis placed by the Commission on active policies, particularly in the field of lifelong learning and training, and particularly for women and older workers, in order to achieve the Lisbon strategy goal of raising their employment rates; urges Member States to include in their strategic reference frameworks these elements and measures which help to improve the educational and training systems, ensuring an adequate supply and of, and completion rate for high-quality education and easing the transition from education to work, to encourage a spirit of enterprise and the knowledge-based economy through research and innovation.
 11. Points in this connection to the important role played in the European economy by micro-enterprises, as provided for in the European Charter for Small Enterprises, and the self-employed; considers it necessary, therefore, to support programmes to promote the development of these sectors, enhance their research, development, and innovation

capacities, foster the development of their human resources, and afford them easier access to funding; believes that all this will serve to boost competitiveness, growth, and job creation, thus helping to attain the Lisbon objectives.

12. Calls on the Member States, in order to boost competitiveness and promote employment, particularly in the poorest and remotest regions, to include measures in their strategic reference frameworks so as to strengthen the economic activities of SMEs by improving the infrastructure and services networks and the availability of ICT, providing appropriate assistance and access to financing for newly-established undertakings, speeding up the removal of bureaucratic obstacles and rewarding entrepreneurial initiative while ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment.
13. Calls on the Member States through national and regional development programmes to promote a life-cycle approach to work, ensure inclusive labour markets, enhance work attractiveness, and make work pay for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people, and the inactive;
14. Takes the view that cohesion policy should create an environment conducive to the mobility of workers, by ensuring the availability of support social facilities and ensuring non discriminatory administrative procedures for both workers and their families
15. Calls on the Member States to integrate into national and regional development programmes measures which will attract and retain people in employment and modernise social protection systems, improve adaptability of workers and enterprises and the flexibility of the labour market.
16. Calls on Member States to foresee in their strategic reference frameworks support mechanisms as to assist enterprises in exchanging best practices and evaluating the possibilities of cooperation with public research foundations and European information centres, with a view to promoting innovative products and applications
17. Urges the Commission to give special importance to programmes intended to promote the skills needed in a knowledge-based society - ICT and entrepreneurship - given their important social, territorial and cultural impact.
18. Calls for the carrying out of studies, taking into account, for example, former positive experiences, to identify in advance possible depopulation in areas with low economic performance, especially rural areas, and their needs and special problems in order to put into place preventive measures to avoid over-concentration in highly industrialised regions and to achieve a more balanced spread of economic activities across all regions of the EU, including the creation of new and better jobs and an easier access to social services for all citizens;
19. Stresses the importance of ESF participation in integrated support for rural areas, and considers that support for rural areas must be grounded in a comprehensive programming process, in the light of the positive experiences of the Leader programme involving those working in rural areas; stresses that priority must be given to the creation of synergies from all the Funds for rural areas, and that decentralised funding concepts such as the global grant are therefore particularly well suited to this purpose;

20. Considers that in some Member States public and private sector investment partnerships have been shown to be effective and calls on the Member States to encourage them;
21. Considers that the EU should encourage the restructuring of companies in Member States in order to promote and maintain employment, social welfare and competitiveness in newly liberalised markets and mitigate the social consequences of globalisation.

PROCEDURE

Title	Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs: Community strategic guidelines, 2007-2013
Procedure number	2006/2086(INI)
Committee responsible	REGI
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	EMPL ---
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary	no
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Ana Mato Adrover 5.10.2005
Previous drafts(wo)man	---
Discussed in committee	26.1.2006 21.2.2006
Date adopted	22.2.2006
Result of final vote	for: 34 against: 3 abstentions: 0
Members present for the final vote	Jan Andersson, Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, Jean-Luc Bennahmias, Emine Bozkurt, Iles Braghetto, Philip Bushill-Matthews, Milan Cabrnich, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Luigi Cocilovo, Jean Louis Cottigny, Proinsias De Rossa, Harald Ettl, Richard Falbr, Ilda Figueiredo, Joel Hasse Ferreira, Roger Helmer, Stephen Hughes, Karin Jöns, Ona Juknevičienė, Sepp Kusstatscher, Raymond Langendries, Bernard Lehideux, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Ana Mato Adrover, Maria Matsouka, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Csaba Óry, Siiri Oviir, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Pier Antonio Panzeri, José Albino Silva Peneda, Jean Spautz, Gabriele Zimmer
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Elspeth Attwooll, Edit Bauer, Mihael Brejc, Elisabeth Schroedter
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	---
Comments (available in one language only)	...

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

for the Committee on Regional Development

on cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013
(2006/2086(INI))

Draftsman: Zsolt László Becsey

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Transport and Tourism calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the Commission's Communication as a first step in identifying strategic guidelines for cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs.
2. Notes in this context that balanced competitiveness and polycentric development of the Community area, precursors of greater territorial cohesion reflected in the three priorities identified by the Commission, that is, improving the sustainable economic attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities; encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and a knowledge economy; and creating more and better jobs cannot be achieved without sustainable, integrated, and efficient transport systems, which need more substantial Community financial aid in order to be set up, and supported by adequate levels of investment and developed under the Lisbon strategy.
3. Agrees therefore that priority should be given to the 30 projects of European interest located in the Member States and regions eligible under the convergence criteria and rejects any attempt to reduce the number of priority projects. Deplores the fact, however, that the levels of transport network investment by the EU proposed by the European Council for 2007 to 2013 are wholly insufficient for achieving improved infrastructures and consequent convergence; considers, therefore, that they must be increased. Insists also that feeder routes for TEN projects must receive support under all the financial instruments of cohesion policy if the TEN projects themselves are to succeed.
4. Recognises the importance of cross border projects and trans-national cooperation for increased transnational integration, interoperability and cohesion, which need to be

encouraged by financial assistance set at incentive levels to avoid railways or routes terminating within national boundaries, and the importance of cross-border projects to help reduce obstacles at natural frontiers (the Alps and the Pyrenees), facilitate the modal shift from road to rail, and resolve congestion and safety problems, especially where the carriage of goods is concerned.

5. Calls on EU and national authorities not to overlook the important contribution inland waterways can make.
6. Agrees with the Commission that in project selection the criterion of return on investment should be applied by taking fully into account local and regional levels of economic activity and existing structural provision. Recognises in this context that public-private investment partnerships are only feasible where levels of economic activity already guarantee a commercial return on investment, and PPPs of the type concerned proceed in a transparent manner consistent with the principle of economic profitability within the meaning of the Lisbon and Göteborg strategies.
7. Underlines the importance of support from the Structural and Cohesion Funds for urban and suburban transport including new public transport systems or re-investment in existing systems such as trams, suburban railways, integrated systems and rolling stock which contribute significantly to tackling social and environmental problems in urban areas while encouraging economic activity in a sustainable way. Takes the view that to meet this strategic objective "urban areas" should be defined in Fund regulations.
8. Notes too the importance of sustainable tourism to many regions including rural regions and emphasises the need for an integrated and properly funded approach to public transport for rural, inland, remote, and the outermost regions in particular to allow them to experience the benefits of cohesion policy. Notes too the important role of regional railways and airports for this success.
9. Points to the need to boost the existing specific measures currently provided for in Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty in order to mitigate the adverse impact of the particular constraints affecting the outermost regions, especially in connection with the 'Motorways of the Sea' and, with a view to reducing the additional costs incurred by the outermost regions on account of their geographical location, other measures related to transport between those regions and the European mainland.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Current background to Cohesion Policy

The decision taken by the European Council on 15 December 2005, if unaltered, will mean that the amount available for Trans-European Networks-Transport (TEN-T) will be reduced to an estimated 6 billion Euros for the period 2007-2013 from the 20 billion Euros the Commission requested. This is relevant to the consideration of Cohesion policy because the existing large backlog in projects will worsen if this cut is implemented, given that public-private partnerships (PPP) cannot make good all of the funding shortfall. Where Cohesion is concerned the purchasing power of new Member States is relatively weak, which makes PPP and other arrangements more difficult and complicated.

New EIB-EIF funding possibilities, as well as possible guarantee arrangements would be welcome, if the conditions for investment in both the more developed Member States and in Cohesion countries are really attractive.

EU 15 and EU 10 compared

There is a regrettable imbalance between old and new Member States in the use made of TEN-T. The new Member States did not call down any TEN-T money up to last summer, with the exception of preparatory costs. There are very few TEN-T projects in the new Member States as a whole, and those which do exist are largely financed by the Cohesion Fund.

Not even the provisions of new proposed regulation on levels of funding support for each project will be enough to stop the increase in the backlog of projects in the new Member States. This serves to emphasise further the importance of feeder routes in the new Member States in achieving Cohesion objectives. Moreover points of connection between the different TENs (TEN-T, Energy and Telecommunication) need to be examined to determine where there are possibilities of synergy, for example the linkage between inland water transport, maritime ports and energy-supplier networks.

Public service and funding options

Public service needs to be maintained and developed, and its contribution to the different aspects of Cohesion policy should be re-examined, as the Committee on Transport and Tourism is doing in the context of the report by our colleague Erik Meijer.

As was stated in the report by our colleague Markus Ferber in the context of postal services, so also with public transport, it remains the case that "the tried and tested funding instrument for universal services in the Member States in the past has been the reserved sector and there has as yet been little experience with other funding models". The Commission should therefore examine such models in detail.

A realistic balance between modes

Urban and suburban transport, as well as transport in remote areas with small villages, has to

be strengthened, because of its pre-eminent role in aiding territorial and social cohesion, while contributing to the development and use of environment-friendly infrastructures.

In addition in the context of the implementation of Cohesion policy the Commission should pay more attention to the basic infrastructure of transport, especially to both inland waterways and to the rail. With rail, special emphasis needs to be put on track infrastructure and rolling stock; in the new Member States spending on rolling stock ought not to be considered as an operational cost.

Priorities

Fostering competitiveness in developing transport networks has to be the general rule, but this implies taking into appropriate consideration the differences between old and new Member States. Considering rail as an absolute and overall priority would be an error, for in the new Member States the relative backlog in road development is much greater than that in rail.

Cross-border projects must be considered as high priority, with special regard to the enlargement and new neighbourhood policies of the EU; cross-border projects play an inestimable role in the completion of transport network development.

For TEN-T however the EU project funding at 50 % is too low. For cross-border projects it should be up to 70-80 %. It should be borne in mind that new Member States are all transit-countries.

In cohesion-related transport development there has to be a synergy between different community policies, such as rural development, CAP and taxation; in this respect special tax allowances need to be given to the use of biodiesel, especially in the context of the Ukrainian gas-crisis. Infrastructural development can also support alternative means and methods of energy supply (e.g. LNG).

From a regional point of view, regional airports in the new Member States must be supported, as in these countries in many regions road and railway infrastructures are so underdeveloped that regional airports are vital. They can act as a driving force for the development of the whole regional transport network; in this respect the positive effect on local, regional, national and trans-border tourism has to be underpinned.

PROCEDURE

Title	Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013	
Procedure number	2006/2086(INI)	
Committee responsible	REGI	
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	TRAN	
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary		
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Zsolt László Becsey 30.8.2005	
Previous drafts(wo)man		
Discussed in committee	21.2.2006	21.3.2006
Date adopted	21.3.2006	
Result of final vote	+: 34 -: 2 0: 0	
Members present for the final vote	Inés Ayala Sender, Etelka Barsi-Pataky, Philip Bradbourn, Paolo Costa, Michael Cramer, Arūnas Degutis, Petr Duchoň, Roland Gewalt, Mathieu Grosch, Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Georg Jarzembowski, Stanisław Jałowiecki, Ioannis Kasoulides, Jaromír Kohlíček, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Fernand Le Rachinel, Bogusław Liberadzki, Michael Henry Nattrass, Seán Ó Neachtain, Willi Piecyk, Luís Queiró, Reinhard Rack, Ulrich Stockmann, Georgios Toussas, Marta Vincenzi, Corien Wortmann-Kool	
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Zsolt László Becsey, Guy Bono, Nathalie Griesbeck, Anne E. Jensen, Jelko Kacin, Sepp Kusstatscher, Francesco Musotto, Vladimír Remek, Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García	
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote		
Comments (available in one language only)		

PROCEDURE

Title	Assent procedure for the Community's strategic guidelines for the period 2007-2013 (Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs)				
Procedure number	2006/2086(INI)				
Committee responsible Date authorisation announced in plenary	REGI 06.04.2006				
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary	TRAN 06.04.2006	EMPL 06.04.2006	FEMM 06.04.2006	CULT 06.04.2006	ITRE 06.04.2006
Not delivering opinion(s) Date of decision	CULT 25.04.2006	ITRE 20.03.2006	FEMM 21.03.2006		
Enhanced cooperation Date announced in plenary					
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Constanze Angela Krehl 12.09.2005				
Previous rapporteur(s)					
Discussed in committee	22.02.2006	06.03.2006	02.05.2006		
Date adopted	03.05.2006				
Result of final vote	+: -: 0:	41 2 0			
Members present for the final vote	Stavros Arnautakis, Elspeth Attwooll, Jean Marie Beaupuy, Rolf Berend, Jana Bobošíková, Graham Booth, Bernadette Bourzai, Giovanni Claudio Fava, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka, Gerardo Galeote Quecedo, Iratxe García Pérez, Eugenijus Gentvilas, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Ambroise Guellec, Zita Gurmai, Gábor Harangozó, Marian Harkin, Jim Higgins, Tunne Kelam, Miloš Koterec, Constanze Angela Krehl, Miroslav Mikolášik, James Nicholson, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Jan Olbrycht, Markus Pieper, Francisca Pleguezuelos Aguilar, Bernard Poignant, Elisabeth Schroedter, Alyn Smith, Margie Sudre, Salvatore Tatarella, Oldřich Vlasák				
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Jan Březina, Simon Busuttil, Brigitte Douay, Den Dover, Emanuel Jardim Fernandes, Eluned Morgan, Toomas Savi, László Surján, Manfred Weber				
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Margarita Starkevičiūtė				
Date tabled	10.05.2006				
Comments (available in one language only)					