



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Session document

15.9.2010

B7-0521/2010

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the European strategy for the economic and social development of mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

B7-0521/2010

European Parliament resolution on the European strategy for the economic and social development of mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Title XII of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and in particular to its Article 174,
- having regard to the regulations governing the Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013,
- having regard to the Council Decision of 6 October 2006 on Community Strategic guidelines on cohesion¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 September 2003 on structurally disadvantaged regions (islands, mountain regions, regions with low population density) in the context of cohesion policy, and their institutional prospects,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 7 July 2005 on the revision of the guidelines for regional State aids,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2007 on the islands and natural and economic constraints in the context of the regional policy,
- having regard to the Communication of the Commission of 6 October 2008 on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion - Turning territorial diversity into strength,
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document ‘Regions 2020 - an assessment of future challenges for EU regions’ (SEC(2008)2868),
- having regard to the Commission Working Paper on ‘Territories with specific geographical features’ (No 02/2009),
- having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2009 on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and the state of the debate on the future reform of cohesion policy,
- having regard to the Communication of the Commission of 15 June 2009 on the Sixth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion,
- having regard to the Communication of the Commission of 31 March 2010 on Cohesion policy: Strategic Report 2010 on the implementation of the programmes 2007-2013 (SEC(2010)360),
- having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

¹ OJ L 291, 21.10.2006, p. 11.

- A. whereas the principle of territorial cohesion was consolidated in the regulations on the Structural Funds 2007-2013 and is one of the new European Union's key objectives introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, aiming to secure its harmonious development by reducing regional disparities and removing obstacles to development, including obstacles linked to natural and geographical handicaps,
- B. whereas following the Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union particular attention shall be paid to regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island and mountain regions,
- C. whereas mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas are exposed to particular challenges due to demographic changes, poor accessibility, climate change, migratory phenomena, energy supply and regional integration,
1. Welcomes the inclusion of territorial cohesion as a new objective of the Union and the new Article 174; believes that the provisions of the Article 174 should be translated into specific development strategies and concrete measures aiming to overcome the handicaps and exploit the potentials of these regions;
 2. Welcomes the Commission Working Paper on ‘Territories with specific geographical features’; considers however that mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas are far from constituting homogeneous groups of regions and that they deserve specific regional development programmes; highlights that these groups of regions share some important common features which differentiate them from other regions;
 3. Calls on the Commission to work towards more pertinent and territorialised statistical indicators in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the development level of these regions; stresses that indicators other than GDP (total population, unemployment, employment rates, level of education, population density) can already be used in regions eligible under the Regional competitiveness and employment objective; asks the Commission to study the possibility for designating in the future specific indicators also for mountainous regions, islands, remote or sparsely populated areas;
 4. Calls on Member states and regional and local authorities to play an important role in the development strategies of mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas because a vertical approach with the implication and contribution of all levels of government, observing the principle of subsidiarity, is required to put these regions in the right path of sustainable development; stresses that not only Regional Policy but also other EU policies that have a significant territorial impact on the development of these regions should contribute to the sustainable development of the potential within these regions;
 5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas will continue to benefit from specific provisions also within the new financial perspectives and during the next programming period;
 6. Welcomes the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) as an instrument aimed to overcome the obstacles hindering territorial cooperation; encourages mountain

regions, islands and sparsely populated areas to make use of EGTC for the management of territorial cooperation projects with other regions co-financed by the EU as a way to bring them closer to their surrounding economic areas;

7. Encourages the Member states to take to full use of the European Neighbourhood Policy instruments in the mountain areas, sparsely populated areas and islands in order to benefit in the resources available cross the borders;
8. Calls for dropping the distance-related criterion (150 km) when it comes to classifying islands as border regions eligible for financing under the cross-border cooperation programmes in the framework of the Territorial Cooperation Objective of the Cohesion Policy or in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy; believes that in case it would be necessary to establish some kind of limit, it would be more appropriate for island regions that the cross-border territory condition was applied at maritime basin level;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, regional and local governments and the economic and social partners.