

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3466/06  
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to the Commission

Subject: Impact of structural policies on the reduction of regional disparities in the field of scientific research, technological development and innovation (R&D+i)

Pursuant to Article 158 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, the Community shall strive to increase economic cohesion by devising and implementing suitable policies and actions and by developing the internal market on the basis of those policies. The Community shall also further the creation of that market by means of initiatives carried out with the support of the Structural funds, the European Investment Bank and other existing financial instruments.

One of the keys to reducing the differences between regional levels of development is to narrow the gaps as regards R&D+i investment and capabilities, since only increased scientific and technological capability will enable the less prosperous regions to acquire sustainable comparative advantages and to compete successfully in a globalised environment.

To this end the Community has brought a number of instruments into play, in particular the Structural Funds, the RDT Framework Programme and the EIB.

1. In the period between 1994 and the most recent year for which data are available, how has the R&D+i level evolved in the Objective 1 regions by comparison with the other EU regions (for example, in terms of expenditure on R&D relating to regional gross added value, R&D personnel and the number of patents registered)?
2. Has the Commission assessed the impact which the Structural Funds have had in the 1994-2000 and 2000-2006 periods on reducing the differences between the EU regions' R&D+i levels?
3. Has the Commission assessed the impact which the Fifth (1998-2002) and Sixth (2002-2006) Framework Programmes have had on reducing the differences between the EU regions' R&D+i levels?
4. What effect has coordinated use of the various instruments had on scientific and technological cohesion? How many projects under the Sixth Framework Programme have been cofinanced by means of the Structural Funds? What is the total value of the investment made available? What consequences does the Commission expect the initiative to have?