

WRITTEN QUESTION P-4059/08
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to the Commission

Subject: QREN - legitimacy of the exceptions to the general rule of allocating Community funds according to territorial eligibility

- The 2007-2013 national strategic reference framework (QREN) establishes the basis on which EU-funded development policies are to be implemented in Portugal.
- By virtue account of the eligibility criteria, ERDF and ESF funding may be granted only to NUTS II regions whose per capita GDP is less than 75% of the Community average.
- In 2005 per capita GDP (in PPP) was equivalent to 59.8% of the Community average in northern Portugal and to 106.3% in Lisbon (Eurostat).
- The monthly income level of the working population in northern Portugal is one of the lowest in the country and 24% less than the figure for Lisbon (INE (Portuguese National Statistics Institute), 2008).

The unemployment rate in the North has been consistently higher than in Lisbon (9.1% compared to 8.4% at the end of 2007); 35% of the Portuguese population live in the North and 26% in Lisbon (INE, 2008).

- Annex V to Council Resolution No 86/2007 has laid down exceptions to the eligibility rule, under which Community funds are allocated within the QREN.
- These exceptions work clearly to the advantage of Lisbon, whereas 39% of the total investment provided for in the QREN is to be channelled towards the North.
- The sole criterion on which the exceptions are based is the territorial 'dissemination effects' that investment made in Lisbon will have on the other Portuguese regions.
- These dissemination effects are not quantified in the above-mentioned annex: the grounds underlying them are confined to their 'great significance' and similar qualitative considerations.

Northern Portugal is highly unlikely to benefit from the Lisbon-based investment under the Human Potential Programme to remedy the skills shortfall, which is particularly severe in the North.

1. Has a thorough quantitative analysis been carried out in order to confirm the assessment of the above-mentioned dissemination effects?
2. Does the Commission believe the exceptions outlined above to be consistent with the aim of achieving closer convergence and greater territorial cohesion among the Member States' regions?