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

Fiorello Provera, Nikolaos Salavrakos, Niki Tzavela
on behalf of the EFD Group
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 Articles 174, on economic, social and territorial cohesion, and 170, on trans-European networks, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
– having regard to Protocol No 26 thereto on services of general interest,
– having regard to Protocol No 2 thereto on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,
– 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 (2002/2119(INI)),
– having regard to its report of 16 October 1998 on a new strategy for mountain regions (A4-0368/98),
– having regard to its report of 30 July 2008 on the situation and outlook for hill and mountain farming (2008/2066 (INI)),
– having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2007 on the islands and natural and economic constraints in the context of the regional policy (2006/2106(INI)),
– having regard to paragraphs 15, 16 and 46 of its resolution on the fourth report on economic and social cohesion (2007/2148(INI)),
– having regard to report of the Committee of the Regions on ‘Community action for mountain areas’ (2003/C128/05),
– having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 13 March 2002 on the problems of island regions in the European Union in the context of enlargement (2002/C 192/10),
– having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘A better integration in the internal market as key factor for cohesion and growth for islands’ (2009/C 27/26),
– having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘The
future of upland areas in the EU’ (ESC 1025/2002),

– having regard to the Commission statement of 21 September 2010 on the European strategy for the economic and social development of mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas,

– having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the need for particular attention to be paid to mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas is explicitly recognised in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, both in Article 174 establishing the aim of territorial cohesion and in Article 170 on trans-European networks,

B. whereas Protocol No 26 on services of general interest in the single market is of particular relevance to these areas,

C. whereas not only the European Parliament but also the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have pointed out to the EU authorities on numerous occasions the need to translate the abovementioned provisions into practice in the law and policies of the Union, while observing the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity,

D. whereas, while it is recognised under the TFEU that many of the areas in question suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, it is equally true that, by virtue of their geographical location, natural resources, environment and cultural heritage, they are rich in terms of opportunities and potential,

E. whereas the opportunities and potential should be exploited within a framework of sustainable development in line with the aims of the EU 2020 strategy,

F. whereas all the tools afforded by EU policies should be used in the task of making these areas more attractive, developing their economies and providing acceptable living conditions for their inhabitants, a task which will entail better linkage and coordination of European, national and regional policies,

G. whereas, moreover, many of the areas in question are located on internal or external EU borders and are therefore particularly exposed to single-market pressures and to a range of risks (e.g. trafficking of various types and externally caused environmental dangers),

H. whereas, both in order to ensure that the single market recovers effectively and fairly (see Monti report) and to contribute to the success of the EU neighbourhood policy, the Union must prevent these areas being exposed to depopulation and unacceptable socio-economic inequalities,

I. whereas the current task is to outline a general framework applicable both to all the areas in question and to the full range of EU policies, especially those with a marked territorial impact (regional policy and policies on state aid, agriculture and rural development, fisheries, transport, energy and the environment),
1. Recommends that the Commission apply the new provisions of Article 174 TFEU when preparing the new multiannual financial framework;

2. Asks the Commission, in this regard, to undertake without delay a study of the additional costs incurred by the people of these areas, or companies based there, when it comes to the construction and management of infrastructure or when they need access to goods or services;

3. Recommends measures such as the use of macro-regional (multi-regional, transnational or cross-border) strategies to understand the situation not only of mountain ranges or sea basins but also of functional areas so as to provide a picture at infra-regional level of the specific circumstances of islands or glens;

4. Recommends, likewise, that, in pursuit of sustainable local development, cross-border initiatives should be adapted to the realities of specific areas, taking into account geographical, economic, cultural and historical aspects;

5. Emphasises that it is vital to study the effects of the various geographic and demographic parameters jointly in order to appreciate situations where a number of territorial constraints combine (as in mountainous islands, sparsely populated uplands, etc.) or where such constraints are particularly severe (e.g. micro-islands, archipelago effect);

6. Considers that there can be no standard EU response to the huge range of circumstances in so-called ‘specific’ areas, and that what is needed instead is a framework offering a certain flexibility and the capacity to take a case-by-case approach to problems – with due observance of the principle of subsidiarity;

7. Asks the Commission to introduce into the relevant legislation a framework enabling the situations of islands, mountain regions and sparsely populated areas to be addressed case by case with the necessary degree of flexibility;

8. Points out that preparation and implementation of appropriate measures will necessitate close cooperation between, on the one hand, national and EU authorities and, on the other, the regional and local authorities responsible for the everyday management of the areas in question and for representing the people who live there, in a context of multi-level governance and observance of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;