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Information and publicity

22. Is surprised by the fact that the Annual Report of the Cohesion Fund 1999 was published only in January 2001; understands the efforts of the Commission to provide as complete information as possible, but nevertheless considers that a delay of over a year is not acceptable;

23. Insists on the need for a more interactive relationship to be maintained with the social partners in connection with information tasks, so that they can be more actively involved in the search both for solutions and for the resources which are needed if such solutions are to be put into practice;

Continued solidarity towards the cohesion countries

24. Believes that, overall, the Cohesion Fund has been effective over the period 1993-1999, and that its creation by the Maastricht Treaty has been fully justified as a fundamental support instrument for countries with the greatest structural problems, with a view to preparing them for the introduction and use of the single currency; recalls, however, that the Cohesion Fund has not yet brought about real convergence among all the Member States; stresses the need for continued solidarity with the cohesion countries;

25. Emphasises the political and economic importance of diminishing economic disparities between the current Member States and their regions, even after enlargement, since they may even worsen as a result of the impact and dynamics of enlargement;

26. Considers that the forthcoming enlargement is a huge challenge for solidarity in the European Union; reminds the Commission of the crucial importance of efficient preparations for the forthcoming enlargement; considers that the Structural Instrument for Pre-Accession (ISPA) is an excellent tool for preparing the administration at all levels for the requirements of enlargement in the structural policy field;

27. Considers that, in view of the enormous development needs of the candidate countries, proper account needs to be taken of the absorption capacity of these countries in economic, financial and administrative terms;

28. Suggests that, in the perspective of enlargement, and in light of the political choices facing the EU as outlined in the second Report on economic and social cohesion, the quality of expenditure, the value-for-money of the different instruments, as well as the performance of the different beneficiaries, will become key issues in determining the future shape of the Union's cohesion strategy and the redistributive function of its budget;

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29. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.

7. Structural Funds (1999)

A5-0247/2001

European Parliament resolution on the Commission's 11th Annual Report on the Structural Funds (1999) (COM(2000) 698 – C5-0108/2001 – 2001/2057(COS))*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission report (COM(2000) 698 – C5-0108/2001),
- having regard to Regulation (EEC) No 2081/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 on the tasks of the Structural Funds and their effectiveness and on coordination of their activities

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- between themselves and with the operations of the European Investment Bank and the other existing financial instruments⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 16 thereof, and Regulation (EEC) No 2082/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 4253/88 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards coordination of the activities of the different Structural Funds between themselves and with the operations of the European Investment Bank and the other existing financial instruments⁽²⁾, and in particular Article 31 thereof,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' annual report for 1999⁽³⁾ submitted pursuant to Article 248 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the Treaty of Amsterdam and the employment conclusions of the Luxembourg European Council,
 - having regard to Agenda 2000 and to Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds⁽⁴⁾ and to the specific regulations governing each of the Structural Funds,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Lisbon and Stockholm European Councils on the new economy, employment and sustainable development,
 - having regard to the Commission's second report on economic and social cohesion (COM(2001) 24) submitted pursuant to Article 159 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the Commission's sixth periodic report on the socio-economic situation and development of the regions of the European Union (SEC(1999) 66 — C5-0120/1999), submitted pursuant to Article 8 of Regulation (EEC) No 2083/93 of 20 July 1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 4254/88 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards the European Regional Development Fund⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 on additionality,
 - having regard to Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the Commission report on measures to implement Article 299(2) — the outermost regions of the European Union (COM(2000) 147),
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism, and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Committee on Fisheries and Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0247/2001),
- A. whereas 1999 was the final year of the application of the Structural Funds to seven different objectives, and whereas Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 reduces the number of objectives to three, on the understanding that each objective will be financed by a single structural fund, while the Community initiatives are to be reduced to four,
- B. whereas in 1999 an extensive period for applying the cohesion policies and, specifically, the Structural Funds, came to an end,
- C. whereas in the 11th Annual Report on the Structural Funds (1999) the main horizontal theme is that of measures to promote gender equality in employment,
- D. whereas the contributions from the Structural Funds have been substantial for the development of the regions, not only from the infrastructural and productive point of view but also that of social integration,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 193, 31.7.1993, p. 5.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 193, 31.7.1993, p. 20.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 342, 1.12.2000, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 161, 26.6.1999, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 193, 31.7.1993, p. 34.

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- E. whereas 1999 was the last year of the 1994-1999 programming period and saw the conclusion of the package of measures adopted in 1992 in Edinburgh and the preparation of the framework conditions for the new 2000-2006 programming period,
- F. whereas the reports should address the qualitative analysis and productive efficiency of the Structural Funds, and not confine themselves to measurement of their consumption, their quantitative distribution and the transparency of their application,
- G. whereas, despite the budgetary effort represented by the Edinburgh package and the progress achieved, the EU still exhibits major regional asymmetries in economic and social development, and whereas there are still disparities in the European Union between the periphery (including the outermost regions) and the centre,
- H. whereas the average per capita income of the 10% of the population living in the Union's most prosperous regions is still 2,6 times higher than that of the 10% living in the least-favoured regions, while the gap between the single richest and the single poorest region shows a ratio of 4:4,
- I. whereas, despite the aims underlying the creation and application of the Structural Funds, the correction of economic and social inequalities is having more impact at Member State than at regional level; whereas regional asymmetries have actually increased within some Member States,
- J. whereas there are signs of variations in income per inhabitant, particularly in the area of employment,
- K. whereas, following the two most recent programming periods, unemployment rates in the Member States which are the main beneficiaries of the Structural Funds have, with the notable exceptions of Ireland and Portugal, kept to the levels of 1988,
- L. whereas women are especially adversely affected by unemployment and low employment rates,
- M. whereas the Lisbon Council adopted full employment as a major objective of the Union, and set targets for 2010 of 70% in the employment rate as a whole (as against the current 62%) and 60% for the employment rate for women (as against 52,5%); whereas the horizontal objective of gender equality has been taken into account only partially, and policies still tend to be presented as gender-neutral,
- N. whereas the average wage differential between women and men in the EU is still extremely high (28%),
- O. having regard to the existing global relationship between lower income per inhabitant, overall unemployment and female unemployment,
- P. whereas the persistence of inequality as regards the male and female employment rates is also related to problems in the family and labour spheres: the domestic division of labour, the availability of crèches, children's and maternity allowances and occupational promotion factors; whereas, however, circumstances vary greatly from one Member State to another,
- Q. whereas, while education and training in new technology constitutes a factor of development, social and economic equality in the regional context remains a necessary condition for the operation of horizontal programmes for job creation, technical and vocational training and gender equality in employment,
- R. whereas the fact that the freedom of movement of workers constitutes a right inherent in European citizenship cannot be used to justify the validity or fairness of labour mobility as a strategy to balance supply and demand in employment in the EU, a strategy whose paradoxical result is that the most highly qualified people in the less prosperous regions and countries migrate to the more prosperous countries,

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- S. whereas it is essential to pursue socio-economic policies to reverse the trend towards the concentration of economic activity, employment and population in the most central and urbanised regions of the Union,
- T. whereas the factors of remoteness and insularity that are features of the remote, outermost and insular regions can be compensated by the development of activities financed by the Structural Funds, to increase the competitiveness of the value-added sector, facilitate access to information and define the role of these regions in the context of an enlarged European Union,
- U. whereas the entire territory of Europe, including the outermost regions, must be included in the trans-European networks,
- V. whereas the budget for cohesion policy, the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for the EU of 15, as a percentage of total GDP, will be reduced for the period 2000-2006, from 0,46 % in 1999 to a proposed level of 0,31 % in 2006, i.e. to no higher than the 1994 level,
- W. whereas with the enlargement to take in new member states internal regional inequality could reach an unprecedented level; whereas particularly acute problems could arise concerning unemployment, as has already occurred with the integration of the two German economies,
- X. whereas Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 states that the Member States are obliged to respect the principle of additionality when implementing projects cofinanced from the Structural Funds and that EU funding cannot replace structural expenditure or its equivalent by the Member States themselves; whereas over the 1994-1999 programming period not all the Member States provided the obligatory information on compliance with the principle of additionality,
- Y. whereas the risk exists that economic and budgetary stability programmes could result in cutbacks in public investment, notably in transport infrastructure and R & D in the less-favoured regions; whereas it would be most unfortunate if such practices were followed by Member States which are beneficiaries of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, since they are precisely the ones that most need such investment; whereas particular care must be taken to ensure that Member States' zero budget deficit policies do not jeopardise the principle of additionality,
- Z. whereas the sound and efficient implementation of the Structural Funds, guaranteed by suitable assessment and monitoring systems, is absolutely crucial for the credibility and effectiveness of the Community institutions,

Execution of the budget

1. Notes that, over the period 1994-1999, 99 % of commitment appropriations under the Structural Funds were utilised, and that ultimately only the considerable sums transferred in 2000 and the use of transversal financing permitted a satisfactory conclusion for the package of measures adopted in Edinburgh;
2. Acknowledges the efforts of the Commission, in the Annual Report for 1999, also to provide an overview of results for the whole 1994-1999 period; regrets that the Commission does not provide more extensive analysis of the budgetary performance over the period, but limits itself to a description of the actual out-turn;
3. Notes that indirect reference is made to the backlog of outstanding commitments remaining to be paid at the end of the period (*reste à liquider*) (RAL) without either a complete quantitative description or detailed explanations being given; this is despite the fact that reducing that backlog and speeding up implementation have been recurrent objectives of each successive revision of the Structural Funds regulations, and a constant concern of the Budgetary Authority;

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4. Confirms for the record a backlog of some € 41 600 million at the end of 1999, of which some € 21 860 million remained at the end of 2000 according to the accounts; recalls that payments can be made on outstanding commitments from the 1994-1999 period until the end of 2001;
5. Criticises the fact that the RAL grew further in the period 1994-1999 and calls on the Commission to reverse this trend at once;
6. Considers that the appropriations of € 160 million allocated by the Commission at the end of 1999 which were not covered in the budget should have been treated as a transfer of appropriations, and that appropriations for innovative activities should not have been cut to cover the shortfall; urges the Commission to ensure that the appropriations for innovative activities are restored to their agreed level at Berlin;
7. Welcomes the fact that outstanding appropriations from previous programming periods were substantially reduced in 1999; regrets, however, the fact that there are still outstanding appropriations from the period prior to 1989, i.e. some 11 years after the end of the programming period; welcomes the fact that the rules on decommitment of appropriations for the programming period 2000-2006 will prevent such backlogs from occurring in future;
8. Notes the absence of clear guidelines concerning utilisation in respect of the Community initiatives, with an excessive dispersal of measures;
9. Notes that, during the last programming period (1994-1999) projects were delayed and accumulated at the end of the period, which in turn slowed down the launching of projects for the following programming period (2000-2006); considers that it would be to everyone's advantage for the implementation of projects to be spread as evenly as possible over the programming period;
10. Points out that the level of commitments does not properly reflect actual implementation of measures, especially as a significant proportion of commitments were not entered into until directly before the end of the programming period; expresses its concern, in particular, at the slow implementation of Community Initiatives, given that only just over half of appropriations available for the 1994-1999 programming period have been paid, making the programmes more difficult and costly to implement by those responsible for them, namely local authorities, NGOs, and the like;
11. Calls for the Funds to have as a policy priority and effect the incorporation of small businesses (creation, expansion, technological equipment, development and innovation, internationalisation of markets etc.) by their inclusion in all priority projects of the Community Support Frameworks and their substantial participation in the take-up of such funds;
12. Takes the view that the recent reform of the Structural Funds is likely to significantly improve programming, implementation and financial implementation of operations; calls on the Commission to assist the national authorities in adjusting to the new regulations by means of an active information policy;
13. Welcomes the Commission's approach involving linking programming and evaluation more closely together; regrets, however, the fact that, when programming is being carried out, the final evaluation of previous programmes is generally not yet available;
14. Proposes that there be an improvement in the process introduced to simplify the Structural Funds, objectives and Community initiatives, in order to increasingly concentrate assistance in areas whose development is lagging behind and prevent further delays, of the kind observed to date, in the implementation of appropriations;

Employment

15. Calls on the Member States to continue with the employment policy process launched in Amsterdam;
16. Stresses the need to move towards a joint regional development and employment policy;

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17. Calls on the Commission to orientate the joint implementation of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the interests of internal regional equality in the beneficiary states, and to carry out a full analysis of their effectiveness;
18. Takes the view that coordination between Structural Fund operations and national action plans for employment needs to be improved;

Gender equality

19. Welcomes the Commission's initiative to present measures to promote equal opportunities for men and women as the special theme for its annual report for 1999; takes the view, however, that the report in question fails to provide specific details either on access for women to the Structural Funds or on the impact of assistance under the Community Initiatives, including the NOW Programme, on the situation of women on the labour market and the promotion of equal opportunities, details which, supported by figures, ought to make it possible to weigh up the effectiveness of the measures pursued in this regard;
20. Calls for an integrated policy to promote women's interests, considering that the horizontal objective of gender equality has only partly been taken into account so far, linking the target of 60% female employment by 2010 to the implementation of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund;
21. Calls for special measures to deal with the large problem of insecure employment, and particularly women's employment;
22. Calls for the implementation of general measures in support of women in order to encourage solutions to the problems related to work and family life;
23. Welcomes the Commission's decision to take steps in future to foster the principle of equal opportunities laid down in Articles 2 and 141 of the EC Treaty as amended by the Treaty of Amsterdam, incorporate the gender aspect into policy as a whole, and work at Community level for the adoption of horizontal affirmative action measures;
24. Notes that, in accordance with the new regulations on the Structural Funds for 2000-2006, which establish the mainstreaming of equal opportunities for women and men in the Funds as a priority aim, Member States are obliged to conduct an *ex ante* evaluation of the plans to be drawn up, establish selection criteria for projects and use indicators in monitoring assistance from the point of view of gender equality; notes accordingly that the monitoring indicators and statistics ought to be broken down by gender;
25. Calls on the Commission to ensure that henceforth its annual reports on the Structural Funds provide a breakdown by gender of data regarding the impact of assistance on the integration of women and men into the labour market, on education and vocational training, on the establishment of women in business and on the reconciliation of family and working life;

Enlargement

26. Calls for an immediate start to be made on the determination, on the basis of consultation which should be as wide as possible, of cohesion policy for the period after 2006, with a view to ensuring both continued support for the sectors and regions of the current Member States which will continue to be eligible in an enlarged Union, and specific supplementary cohesion arrangements for the new Member States;
27. Suggests that, in the perspective of enlargement, and in light of the political choices facing the EU as outlined in the Second Report on economic and social cohesion (COM(2001) 24), the quality of expenditure, the value-for-money of the different objectives and funds, the need for new Member States to develop their economies and societies, as well as the performance of the different beneficiaries, will become key issues in determining the future shape of the Union's cohesion strategy and the redistributive function of its budget;

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Agriculture and fisheries

28. Insists that the CAP and the CFP must be redefined as fundamental elements of the Union's policy for regional equality, social cohesion and sustainable development;

29. Calls on the Commission to submit a detailed report to Parliament and the Council in 2002 on the operations financed under the Structural Funds implemented in the Union's fisheries sector in the period from 1994 to 1999, together with a study on the socio-economic situation in the Union's fishing regions;

Other policies

30. Calls on the Commission and the Council, with a view to the period 2007-2010, to give priority in the context of TEN to linking the peripheral, insular and underdeveloped regions to the whole territory of the Union, without facing cutbacks in public investment in the Member States concerned; urges moreover that for the new period priority be given to the development of intermodal and sustainable transport;

31. Calls on the Commission to take account, in the interest of economic and social cohesion, of the ultraperipheral nature of the overseas countries and territories, Madeira, the Azores and Canaries when safeguarding access to the Structural Funds after 2006;

32. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to act over the coming years in accordance with the philosophy of the Structural Fund regulations as regards environmental mainstreaming in respect of all of the Funds' objectives;

33. Calls on the Member States to honour their undertakings under the Natura 2000 directive;

34. Notes the adoption of the specific programmes under the fifth framework programme for RTD, as well as the preparation in 1999 of the communication 'Towards a European research area', in which it is proposed to strengthen the role of the regions in the European research effort and, in particular, in the construction of the European research area;

Additionality

35. Is dismayed that the principle of additionality, one of the four basic principles underlying the Structural Funds, is evidently not being fully complied with by the Member States and the Commission; regrets the fact that no penalty can be imposed when Member States infringe the additionality principle; calls on the Commission, when carrying out ex-ante reviews in connection with programming, to place particular emphasis on compliance with the additionality principle; agrees, furthermore, with the recommendation of the Court of Auditors that, for the new programming period, procedures for verifying additionality should be drawn up that are more workable, that are integrated into the programming, monitoring and evaluation frameworks and that are suitable for use with the budgetary and statistical information available;

36. Calls on the Member States to comply strictly with the principle of additionality and asks the Commission to act to create instruments and rules ensuring that additionality is applied;

37. Calls on the Commission to supply Parliament as soon as possible with a list of the measures it intends to apply to ensure compliance with this principle, in particular where Member States which are beneficiaries of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund operate a zero budget deficit rule;

38. Calls for the regions, and not the Member States, to administer the Structural Fund projects implemented within their territorial ambit;

Partnership

39. Urges the Commission and the Member States, in their management of the Structural Funds, to apply the principle of partnership with economic and social agents and the principle of subsidiarity, and to recognise the competences of the Member States' internal political units;

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Evaluation and control

40. Welcomes the Commission's inclusion, for the first time in an annual report, of a chapter on the means of assessment and verification applied, in response to the criticisms made by Parliament in previous years;

41. Notes that the irregularities and cases of fraud reported by the Member States in 1999 involved an amount of € 120,6 million, in other words 0,39 % of the total Structural Fund appropriations (€ 30,6 billion); calls on the Commission to strengthen on-the-spot checks by the appropriate inspection bodies; requests the Commission to provide regular information on the steps taken to combat irregularities in European Structural Fund operations in the Member States;

42. Notes the detailed rules laid down in Regulations (EC) Nos 438/2001 ⁽¹⁾ and 448/2001 ⁽²⁾ for the purposes of implementing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999; welcomes the improvements brought about in financial control regarding the Structural Funds; calls for the above Regulations to be applied comprehensively by the Member States and the Commission; calls on the Member States to improve the management and control systems designed to prevent, uncover, and remedy weak spots and systematic irregularities; calls on Member States which have not yet done so to give full powers to their national audit institutions to check the use made of EU resources at every level up to the final recipients;

43. Underlines the key role which the European Parliament should play in the process of evaluation and control, a role which has been neglected over the period covered by the Annual Report; believes that the Parliament should not just rubber-stamp the annual allocations when it comes to adopt the budget, but should be actively involved in the evaluation process, as a guarantor of the European interest alongside the Commission;

44. Suggests that a review and strengthening of the role of Parliament's role is necessary, in particular to hold the Commission and the Member States to their obligations as regards transparency in this sector, notably as expressed in the Code of Conduct on implementation of structural policies agreed with the Commission in 1999;

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45. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Parliaments of the Member States.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 63, 3.3.2001, p. 21.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 64, 6.3.2001, p. 13.

8. Female genital mutilation

A5-0285/2001

European Parliament resolution on female genital mutilation (2001/2035(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution of 26 February 2001 by Maurizio Turco and others on female genital mutilation (B5-0686/2000/rev.), signed by 317 Members of the European Parliament,
- having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948,
- having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 26 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966,
- having regard to Articles 2, 3 and 12 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in 1966,