

European Union

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Brussels, 22 March 2002

RESOLUTION
of the Committee of the Regions
of the 13 March 2002
on the
WORK PROGRAMME
OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Committee of the Regions

HAVING REGARD TO The Communication of the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – The Commission's Work Programme 2002 [COM (2001) 620]

HAVING REGARD TO The resolution of the European Parliament to the Commission's Work Programme 2002 (B5-0821/2001)

HAVING REGARD TO The 2001 Annual Statement on the Priority of the Committee of the Regions (CdR 45/2001 fin)

HAVING REGARD TO The Protocol governing arrangements for cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions (DI CdR 81/2001 rev. 2)

WHEREAS Events since 11 September have made us acutely aware of the value of peace,

democracy and human rights, and that they cannot be taken for granted;

WHEREAS European integration has proven to be by far the best way to achieve peace and prosperity; that the forthcoming enlargement of the EU is a historic peace operation that brings stability, prosperity and democracy to almost the entire continent;

WHEREAS Grassroots support is not optional, but a pre-condition for successful European integration, whereas top-down, exclusive decision-making alienates the citizens and puts the European project at risk;

WHEREAS The Committee of the Regions will adopt its Political Priorities for the period 2002-2006 in May.

adopted by a majority the following resolution at its 43rd plenary session of 13 and 14 March 2002 (meeting of 13 March)

The Committee of the Regions

1. welcomes the efforts of the Commission in recent years to reduce the volume of legislative proposals, and encourages the Commission to be firm against calls for unnecessary EU legislation from other EU bodies, Member States or third parties; calls on all EU institutions and the Member States' governments to show more restraint in calling for EU legislation;
2. while recognising the right of initiative of the Commission, CoR – as the voice of grassroots Europe - would like to have the opportunity to contribute to the preparatory work in areas relevant to local and regional authorities; calls for the assessment of the territorial impact of EU policies, as a compulsory element of each policy proposal;

A common European area of freedom, justice and security

3. agrees with the Commission that this is a priority theme, and welcomes the wider perspective that the Commission has chosen to the issue of *security*;
4. recalls that the best safeguard against extremism and violence is a democratic, open and stable society that respects fundamental rights; refers in this context to the joint European values, laid down in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as a concrete step to establishing a real rather than a notional European citizenship;
5. is therefore of the opinion that – in addition to the proposed security measures – policies aiming to achieve economic and social cohesion, the spread of education and culture, fair trade and sustainable development, contribute equally to a safe living environment for citizens;
6. welcomes the progress that has been made recently in the area of justice and security, but underlines that even more must be done for effective EU protection of EU citizens, notably in areas such as international organised crime, trafficking in human beings, drugs trade and money-laundering.
7. stresses the essential role of local and regional authorities in the fight against crime and terrorism and wishes to be closely involved in any proposals for EU policies;

The future of the European Union and Governance

8. expresses its satisfaction at the decision of the Laeken Summit to set up a Convention, as a first step towards a more democratic, transparent and inclusive method of Treaty revision and is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute;
9. will actively pursue its priorities: more democratic and transparent work methods of the EU institutions, institutional reforms needed to keep an enlarged EU efficient and effective, delimitation and clarification of competences and EU tasks, strengthening of the position of CoR, greater recognition of the role of regions with legislative powers, integration of the CFR into the Treaties and constitutionalisation of the Treaties;
10. is looking forward to the Action Plan with proposals for implementation of the White Paper on Governance, in particular the proposals concerning closer involvement of local and regional authorities in EU policy-making;

Enlargement

11. of the view that enlargement of the EU is a historic opportunity for peace and prosperity for Europe and its neighbours reaffirms its commitment to the Copenhagen criteria, but warns against unnecessary delays, as they might lead to scepticism both in current and future Member States;
12. the basic principle underlying the process of European integration is respect for and the promotion of cultural diversity, a source of wealth that needs to be preserved;
13. warns against the creation of two classes of EU citizens, and calls therefore for full application of the *acquis communautaire* wherever possible, from the moment of accession;
14. deplores the lack of progress regarding reform of the CAP, and urges the Member States to show more courage and determination on this issue; is of the opinion that reform of the CAP is necessary regardless of enlargement of the Union, although enlargement does make reforms more urgent; advocates a CAP that is an integral policy for rural development that will make agriculture in Europe a competitive, sustainable and consumer-oriented sector that supports a flourishing and diverse European countryside;
15. in addition, the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy should be prioritised in light of the socio-economic impact of this sector on certain regions;
16. points out that for the post-2006 period structural policies will have to be reviewed; draws attention to the initial CoR contributions to the debate, and believes that on the future of regional policy the overall objective will be that of strengthening solidarity and territorial cohesion within the enlarged Union; underlines the important role of the trans-European networks in the achievement of these objectives;
17. concerned at the insufficient involvement of local and regional authorities, and the resulting lack of awareness of what accession will mean for them; urges the Commission and the governments of the applicant countries to step up considerably consultation of, and information to local and regional authorities during the pre-accession stage;

External dimension

18. pleased with the renewed focus on the Euro-Mediterranean partnership under the Spanish presidency, notably the conference foreseen for April, draws attention to the very positive and important contribution that can be made to the process by cooperation between local and regional authorities;
19. stresses the importance of the interregional or regional cooperation partnerships not only for cooperation but also for dialogue, peace and democratic growth and considers that regional and local authorities should be more closely involved;

Sustainable development

20. believes that sustainable development should aim at the goals of full employment, and social and territorial cohesion; calls therefore for full integration of the principles of sustainable development into all EU policy areas;
21. underlines the importance of an integrated approach to the environment and combating climate change, especially the Johannesburg summit on sustainable development and implementation of the Göteborg strategy;

Lisbon strategy

22. is looking forward to the outcome of the Barcelona Summit as well as the in-depth revision of the employment strategy in fall 2002, and once again underlines the key role of local and regional authorities in achieving the aims of the Lisbon strategy; it stresses the need to focus in particular on the development of Information and Communication Technology in education and training systems, upon which the success of the knowledge society depends;
23. instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Commission, to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the Belgian, Spanish and Danish Presidencies of the Union.

Brussels, 13 March 2002.

The President

of the

Committee of the Regions

The Secretary General

of the

Committee of the Regions

Albert Bore

Vincenzo Falcone

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CdR 41/2002 fin EN/o

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