

Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2008/2100(INI)
Procedure completed	
Complementarities and coordination of cohesion policy with rural development measures	
Subject 3.10.01.02 Rural development, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) 4 Economic, social and territorial cohesion 4.70 Regional policy 4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	REGI Regional Development		26/03/2008
		UEN ROSZKOWSKI Wojciech	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development		01/04/2008
		PSE BOURZAI Bernadette	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Regional and Urban Policy	HÜBNER Danuta	

Key events			
24/04/2008	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
20/01/2009	Vote in committee		Summary
04/02/2009	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0042/2009	
24/03/2009	Results of vote in Parliament		
24/03/2009	Debate in Parliament		
24/03/2009	Decision by Parliament	T6-0157/2009	Summary
24/03/2009	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
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Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/6/61840

Documentation gateway

Committee opinion	AGRI	PE406.045	11/09/2008	EP	
Committee draft report		PE412.207	15/09/2008	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE415.311	14/11/2008	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0042/2009	04/02/2009	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0157/2009	24/03/2009	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2009)3060	04/06/2009	EC	

Complementarities and coordination of cohesion policy with rural development measures

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Wojciech ROSZKOWSKI (UEN, PL) on complementarities and coordination of cohesion policy with rural development measures. The committee notes that the reform of structural policy for the period 2007-2013 brought with it changes to the structure of the Funds and the basis for the allocation of assistance under this policy, and the establishment of a new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) linked to the common agricultural policy (CAP) and disconnected from cohesion policy. It is of key importance to the EAFRD's success to ensure mutual complementarity between activities co-financed under the EAFRD and those co-financed under the structural funds.

The committee takes the view that the criteria traditionally used to distinguish rural areas from urban areas (lower population density and level of urbanisation), may not always be sufficient to provide the "full picture", and considers, therefore, that the possibility of adding additional criteria should be explored and calls on the Commission to produce an analysis and concrete proposals in this field.

In view of the major differences between rural areas in the various Member States and because such areas account for up to 80% of EU territory, it is necessary to implement a suitably integrated approach for the sustainable development of such areas, aiming at levelling existing inequalities and promoting economic dynamism of urban and rural areas. Members underline the need to allocate adequate funding to the corresponding actions.

The committee calls on the Commission, Member States and regional authorities, as appropriate:

- to formulate, a transparent, long-term, sustainable rural development strategy, in order to be able to identify rural development priorities and objectives and ensure the adaptation, coordination and complementarity of the aid originating in the various sources of funding available;
- to ensure the direct participation of the organisations representing SMEs, microbusinesses and craft undertakings, in order to identify those priorities with a view to responding in the best way possible to those enterprises' needs and expectations.

Members consider that the efficiency of rural development policy can only be achieved if the measures implemented under EAFRD and regional development policy are coordinated and complementary, so as to avoid double financing and gaps. They note with concern the insufficient coordination between those actions during the current programming period in Member States. The Commission is asked to propose reforms aimed at ensuring better coordination in the planning and implementation of measures co-financed under the cohesion policy and CAP. The post-2013 reform of the CAP and the EU Structural Funds will provide an opportunity to re-assess the relationship between rural development on one hand and agricultural policy and cohesion policy on the other.

The approach of separating rural development from cohesion policy with the creation of EAFRD needs to be monitored very closely in order to evaluate its true impact on the development of rural areas. Since the new system was put in place in 2007, it is too early for any conclusions to be reached with regard to the future of this Community policy.

Members stress that one of the priorities of rural development policy is to propose measures which do not result in the rural population having to abandon agriculture and help to promote competitive holdings. They also stress the importance of support for young farmers to keep them on their land, even if they are not engaged solely in agricultural production.

The report calls on the Commission:

- to supply detailed figures for the take-up of EAFRD and structural funding in rural areas and to look into the synergies that can be created by the EAFRD and the Structural Funds in terms of the funding available in rural areas;
- to assess whether regional policy programmes can contribute to offering farmers a reliable income, for example through carrying out environmental protection, nature conservation and landscape management activities;
- to take systematic account of the countryside in EU policies and to provide appropriate support for projects to develop human capital, in particular through the provision of training opportunities, with a particular focus on young women, with the aim of promoting employment and job creation;

- to lay the emphasis on strengthening competitiveness by also assisting other productive sectors and to foster entrepreneurship in rural areas;
- to create a high-level working group by 2011 as part of the CAP Health Check which would bring forward proposals to secure the future of the rural economy after 2013.

It notes that the difficulties in implementing rural development policy stem from the fact that sectoral policies and territorial cohesion policy cut across each other, as do the economic and social aspects of both types of policy, and from the wide variety of responsibility allocation and policy coordination systems used in the Member States. It stresses the necessity to create synergies between the EAFRD and the Structural and Cohesion Funds and calls on the Commission to assist national and regional authorities in properly understanding the possibilities offered by these financial instruments. Member States must ensure dialogue between managing authorities so as to create synergies between the interventions of the different funds and enhance their effectiveness.

Lastly, prior to rural funding reform, the Commission should conduct a detailed assessment of all sectoral policies having an impact on rural areas, and notably CAP and regional policy, in the context of cohesion policy and a set of best practices should be drawn up for rural development policy as a whole.

Complementarities and coordination of cohesion policy with rural development measures

The European Parliament adopted by 626 votes to 34, with 37 abstentions, a resolution on complementarities and coordination of cohesion policy with rural development measures.

MEPs believe that it is of key importance to the EAFRD's success to ensure mutual complementarity between activities co-financed under the EAFRD and those co-financed under the structural funds, and thus for the assistance under the various funds, in particular the European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF), to be suitably coordinated and for the complementarity of those funds to be ensured.

Distinguishing rural areas from urban areas: MEPs believe that the criteria traditionally used to distinguish rural areas from urban areas (lower population density and level of urbanisation), may not always be sufficient to provide the "full picture", and consider, therefore, that the possibility of adding additional criteria should be explored and call on the Commission to produce concrete proposals in this field.

Targeted and integrated approach: the resolution stresses that, in a large number of rural areas, development possibilities, especially for young people and women, are reduced by difficulties in accessing public services, lack of jobs and the age pyramid. Moreover, in certain areas there are no alternatives to certain forms of agricultural production. In view of the major differences between rural areas in the various Member States and because such areas account for up to 80% of EU territory, it is necessary to adopt and implement a suitably targeted and integrated approach for the sustainable development of such areas, aiming at levelling the existing inequalities and promoting economic dynamism of urban and rural areas.

Rural development strategy: Member States and regional authorities, in cooperation with the Commission, are called upon to: (i) formulate, in partnership with all competent authorities and bodies representing civil society, a transparent, long-term, sustainable rural development strategy at national and regional level; (ii) ensure the direct participation of the organisations representing SMEs, microbusinesses and craft undertakings, with a view to responding in the best way possible to those enterprises' needs and expectations.

Better coordination and planning: MEPs consider that the efficiency of rural development policy can only be achieved if the measures implemented under EAFRD and regional development policy are coordinated and complementary, so as to avoid double financing and gaps. The Commission is therefore called upon to propose reforms aimed at ensuring better coordination in the planning and implementation of measures co-financed under the cohesion policy and CAP.

Preventing the rural exodus and promoting competitive holdings: the Parliament recalls that one of the priorities of rural development policy is to propose measures which do not result in the rural population having to abandon agriculture and which also help, inter alia, to promote competitive holdings. It also stresses the importance of support for young farmers to keep them on their land by providing them with incentives for development and other activities too, such as rural tourism and of strengthening SMEs in the countryside.

In this context, the Commission, the Member States and regional authorities are called upon to:

- supply detailed figures and forecasts for the take-up of EAFRD and structural funding in rural areas and to look into the synergies that can be created by the EAFRD and the Structural Funds in terms of the funding available in rural areas;
- assess whether regional policy programmes can contribute to offering farmers a reliable income, for example through carrying out environmental protection, nature conservation and landscape management activities;
- take systematic account of the countryside in EU policies and to provide appropriate support for projects to develop human capital, in particular through the provision of training opportunities, with a particular focus on young women;
- lay the emphasis on strengthening competitiveness by also assisting other productive sectors and to foster entrepreneurship in rural areas;
- create a high-level working group by 2011 as part of the CAP Health Check which would bring forward proposals to secure the future of the rural economy and all who live in rural areas after 2013.

Implementation of rural development policy: the resolution recognises that the difficulties in implementing rural development policy stem from the fact that sectoral policies and territorial cohesion policy cut across each other, as do the economic and social aspects of both types of policy, and from the wide variety of responsibility allocation and policy coordination systems used in the Member States. In this connection, it stresses once again the necessity to create synergies between the EAFRD and the Structural and Cohesion Funds and calls on the Commission to assist national, regional and local authorities in properly understanding the possibilities offered by these financial instruments. It calls on Member States to ensure dialogue between managing authorities so as to create synergies between the interventions of the different funds and enhance their effectiveness.

Defining best practices: lastly, MEPs believe that, prior to rural funding reform, the Commission should conduct a detailed assessment of all sectoral policies having an impact on rural areas, and that a set of best practices should be drawn up for rural development policy as a whole.

