COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 23 May 1979

to the Member States on the regional development programmes

(79/535/EEC)

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 155 thereof,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EEC) No 724/75 of 18 March 1975 establishing a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) [1], as amended by Regulation (EEC) No 214/79 [2],

Having regard to the Council resolution of 6 February 1979 concerning the guidelines for Community regional policy [3],

Having regard to the Commission's opinion of 23 May 1979 on the regional development programmes notified to it by the Member States pursuant to Article 6 of Regulation (EEC) No 724/75,

Whereas regional development programmes are to serve both as a point of reference for projects submitted for ERDF assistance and — in accordance with the aforesaid Council resolution — as the most appropriate framework for the practical implementation of coordination of national regional policies, and of the Community's regional policy;

Whereas, for the purposes of such coordination, the Member States and the Commission must be adequately informed of national policies aimed at achieving a better balance in the territorial distribution of economic activities, including such special measures as are taken with this aim in regions not eligible for ERDF assistance;

Whereas adoption by Member States of a uniform regional programme period would permit a greater measure of comparability between programmes and would make it easier to coordinate them at Community level with the medium-term economic policy programme being drawn up;

Whereas the general economic context and regional implications of the various national or Community sectoral policies are not sufficiently taken into account in the analysis of the regional economic and social situation given in the programmes examined;

Whereas, as regards Community policies in particular, the Commission and the Council made known in the resolution of 6 February 1979 their intention of taking fuller account of the regional impact of such policies; whereas, furthermore, implementation of the specific Community measures referred to in Article 13 of Regulation (EEC) No 724/75 also depends on an accurate assessment of the regional impact of these policies and of the measures taken by the Community;

Whereas a number of special problems arise in certain frontier regions; whereas effective coordination of the regional development measures taken by the Member States concerned may make a significant contribution towards resolving those problems;

Whereas setting quantified development objectives for each of the regions concerned presents various difficulties, notably as regards job creation; whereas, for this reason, the Commission will, as requested by the Regional Policy Committee, accord priority to the study of regionalized labour balance sheets;

Whereas Regulation (EEC) No 724/75 in its amended version has adopted a broader concept of infrastructure than that previously applied (direct link with industrial and service investment) but stipulates, in Article 4 (2) (b), that infrastructure investments may be financed by the ERDF only when the regional development programmes show that they contribute to the development of the region in question;

Whereas, in parallel with regional policy measures proper such as regional aid schemes or infrastructure investments carried out for regional development purposes, Member States take measures, whether of a regional nature or not, under other national or Community policies which have indirect but important effects on regional development: on these the programmes examined in general provide little detail;

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[1] OJ No L 73, 21. 3. 1975, p. 1.
[2] OJ No L 35, 9. 2. 1979, p. 1.
[3] OJ No C 36, 9. 2. 1979, p. 10.

Whereas regional policy measures regarded as being of prime importance for regional development are not in all cases described in sufficient detail in the regional development programmes examined; whereas, where ERDF assistance is concerned, Regulation (EEC) No 724/75 provides that the Commission determine the priorities for assistance after having examined these programmes;

Whereas, although the regional development programmes examined generally indicate the State's commitments of finance to regional development, they only rarely mention transfers between different levels of government or finance from regional or subregional sources; whereas sufficient information on these matters is essential if national regional policies are to be more effectively compared;

Whereas a number of regional development programmes neither provide for multiannual financial programming of infrastructure investment nor give the volume of investments to be made by public enterprises or by major private undertakings under planning agreements;

Whereas effective coordination of national regional policies and of Community regional policy is possible only if information is available on the Member States' intentions as to the future use, at regional level, of Communnity financial resources from the different financial instruments established for structural purposes;

Whereas the programmes notified generally contain sufficient information on their implementation, although some of them are not specific enough about the timing of the projected investments and the systematic assessment of the impact of the measures taken,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBER STATES:

1. Take the measures necessary to ensure that development programmes communicated to it as reference instruments for projects submitted for assistance from the ERDF reflect all aspects of national regional policies and can thus be used as a framework for policy coordination at Community level.

2. Communicate to the Commission, in addition to the regional development programmes for regions in which the ERDF is to provide assistance, and in so far as regional policy measures are applied in other regions, the principal measures whose aim is a better regional balance over the whole of the country, including the so-called disincentives, either in the form of programmes or in another form.

3. Adopt, for the next regional development programmes to be drawn up, a uniform programme period coinciding with that chosen for the fifth medium-term economic programme (1981 to 1985); for the financial part of this five-year programme two periods could be adopted.

4. Take fuller account, in the analysis of the economic and social situation in each region, on the one hand of the implications of national policies or measures in areas such as the restructuring of certain sectors, transport, energy, agriculture, fishing, the environment, physical planning, certain social measures and vocational training and, on the other of the most significant effects of Community policies and measures, particularly in the fields of agriculture, external trade relations and the restructuring of certain sectors.

5. Include in the above analysis, where it concerns frontier regions, the specific aspects that stem from their special geographical situation.

6. Provide, where the setting of development objectives for jobs is concerned, at least quantified forecasts of job deficits in each region for the years 1981 to 1985 and take further account in this connection of the tertiary sector, including tourism, and of the agricultural sector.

7. Bring out more clearly, when setting infrastructure objectives, the link that should exist between investments in infrastructure and the conditions that affect the development of a region, thereby making it possible to assess better the need for such investment and the priorities in this field and, more particularly, consider not only regional infrastructure proper but also national infrastructure of real regional importance.

8. Incorporate gradually, among the measures permitting attainment of the development objectives and alongside direct regional policy measures, measures arising from other national or Community policies which vary with the region or which have a clear regional impact. Such measures may concern the policy areas referred to in point 4.

9. Indicate more clearly in regional development programmes the aspects of national regional policy that are regarded as having priority, whether geographical or in terms of the type of measure to be taken.

10. Make the financial programming of regional development more transparent by supplementing the relevant information with details of financial transfers between different levels of government and of finance from regional or subregional sources.

11. Draw up a multiannual financial programme for infrastructure investment, where a programme of this type does not yet exist, and indicate, where such information is available, the volume of investment to be made during the programme period by public enterprises or by major private undertakings as part of planning agreements.

12. Include in future regional development programmes, alongside more detailed information on their intentions for the future use of ERDF resources, information concerning the other Community financial instruments, thereby permitting, at regional level, greater cohesion between the various financial measures of a structural nature taken by the Community.

13. Give a timetable for implementing the measures planned under regional development programmes and provide a more systematic analysis of the impact of the different regional policy measures, particularly on employment.

This recommendation is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels, 23 May 1979.

For the Commission

Antonio GIOLITTI

Member of the Commission