



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 6.8.2004  
COM(2004) 543 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION**

**on a stronger partnership strengthened for the outermost regions: assessment and prospects (COM (2004) 343 Communication of the Commission of 26 May 2004)**

{SEC(2004)1030}

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### **on a stronger partnership strengthened for the outermost regions: assessment and prospects (COM (2004) 343 Communication of the Commission of 26 May 2004)**

The European Council of Seville asked the Commission to submit a report containing an overall and coherent assessment of the characteristics which affect the situation of the outermost regions and of the corresponding means of redress, by deepening the implementation of Article 299 (2) of the treaty.

The Commission responded to this request by adopting on 26 May 2004<sup>1</sup>, a communication on a stronger partnership for the outermost regions. On the same occasion the Commission undertook to present in a report both a detailed assessment and evaluation of the measures adopted with regard to the outermost regions since 2000 – the year in which the last synthesis report of the Commission on the subject was published. The report attached to this communication as a Commission staff working paper fulfils this undertaking. The report is divided into parts – namely assessment and prospects.

The assessment provides an analysis of the recent data concerning the socio-economic development of the outermost regions, illustrating the progress achieved and the challenges still confronting them. It also describes the working of the structural instruments and of the various Community policies which have played a significant role for three years. This part is divided into chapters for each Community policy concerned: regional and cohesion policy, competition, agriculture, fisheries, enterprise policy, transport, energy, research, information society, taxation and custom policy, environment, international trade and justice and home affairs.

The prospects section of the report refocuses upon the strategy adopted by the Commission on 26 May 2004, describing the three priorities for action pinpointed by the Commission. It should be borne in mind that this part of the report introduces no new measure in terms of the Communication adopted on 26 May 2004.

The three priorities selected are:

- (1) lessening the handicaps caused by reduced accessibility and compensating other constraints specific to the outermost regions.
- (2) improving the general conditions of competitiveness of their economies, particularly within the spirit of the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies.
- (3) inclusion in the regional area: the aim is to enlarge the natural area of socio-economic and cultural influence of the outermost regions by reducing the barriers restricting trade within the geographical environment of these regions.

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<sup>1</sup> COM (2004) 343 final of 26.5.2004

The development strategy for outermost regions is a component within the framework of the reform of cohesion policy for the 2007-2013<sup>2</sup> programming period. It also includes recommendations on the implementation of other Community policies in these regions.

In providing both the detailed assessment of the measures adopted with regard to the outermost regions and a description of the contents of the strategy adopted by the Commission, the report constitutes an essential additional element to the Commission communication of 26 May 2004, thus meeting fully the request of the European Council of Seville.

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<sup>2</sup> COM(2004) 492, 493, 494 et 495 final of 14 July 2004