

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(86) 571 final

Brussels, 30 October 1986

## COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

INTEGRATED PLANNING OF COASTAL AREAS: ITS ROLE IN  
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT POLICY

---

SUMMARY

At the meeting of the Council of Environment Ministers on 6 March 1986, Portugal requested a report on progress in implementation of the European Coastal Charter. Subsequently, at the 12 June Council meeting, the Commission undertook to submit a communication on this subject.

This communication is intended to meet that commitment :

It :

- explains why the Peripheral Maritime Regions in the EEC adopted the European Coastal Charter, and recalls the interest of the European Parliament and of the Commission in this initiative by the regions;
- places the special case of coastal areas in the context of the Community's environmental protection<sup>1</sup> and regional development policies, indicating the importance, in relation to the objectives of the Charter, of the machinery for coordinating the Community's structural Funds;
- presents a series of measures which the Commission is proposing to continue with, or embark upon, in the context of the policies in question.

---

<sup>1</sup> "New Directions" as set out in Commission communication to the Council COM 86 (76) final.

## I. INTRODUCTION.

1. Following Portugal's request concerning the application of the European Coastal Charter at the meeting of the Council of Environment Ministers on 6 March 1986, the Commission undertook, at the 12 June Council meeting, to submit a communication on this subject.

2. This communication is intended to meet that commitment. It :

- explains why the peripheral maritime regions in the EEC adopted the European Coastal Charter, and recalls the interest of the European Parliament and of the Commission in this initiative by the regions;
- places the special case of coastal areas in the context of the Community's environmental protection (1) and regional development policies, indicating the importance, in relation to the objectives of the Charter, of the machinery for coordinating the Community's structural Funds;
- presents a series of measures which the Commission is proposing to continue with or embark upon in the context of the policies in question.

## II. EUROPEAN COASTAL CHARTER : ITS ROLE AND THE RESULTS ACHIEVED AS A RESULT OF APPLYING IT.

3. Background. Under the first two European Community action programmes on the environment (1973-1976 and 1977-1981), the Commission paid special attention to matters concerning the planning and ecological management of coastal areas in Europe, because the environmental resources in coastal areas are among the most sensitive and the most threatened.

4. The work carried out by the Commission in the course of the first two programmes resulted in the formulation of a number of principles for the integrated planning of coastal areas and in a quest for ways of applying these principles within the Community.

5. At the same time, within the coastal areas themselves there was a growing awareness of the need to direct development in such a way as to protect the environment and natural resources more effectively. This need was recognized by a number of coastal areas whose level of development was less advanced and whose natural environment was often still intact. This

---

(1) "New Directions" as set out in Commission communication to the Council COM 86 (76) final.

desire for "quality" development prompted the coastal areas in question to work together within the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) of the EC (1) and to adopt a frame of reference and a blueprint for joint action : the European Coastal Charter.

6. Adopted in 1981 in Xania (Crete) at the plenary assembly of the C.P.M.R., the European Coastal Charter was supported by the European Parliament in a Resolution adopted on 18 June 1982 which approved the strategy and objectives of the Charter and called upon the Commission to support proposed measures relating to analysis,, planning and control.

7. The European Parliament's interest in the Charter has not waned, as can be seen from the Parliamentary Questions to the Commission concerning progress in its implementation.

8. The main objective of the Charter is to safeguard and develop coastal areas by coordinating the actions of the various institutions involved in coastal planning. Action programmes setting out the courses of action to be promoted and carried out at the various appropriate levels are an integral part of the Charter.

9. On the basis of this frame of reference and the programme of practical measures, regions could proceed to implement the Charter.

10. The Commission's role in the implementation phase - corresponding to the period covering the third Community action programme (1982-1986) - comprised provision of support for the C.P.M.R.'s General Secretariat (2) to ensure that activities consistent with the principles of the Charter could be identified, prepared and implemented by the regions themselves.

11. Also, during this period, several Community activities, conducted in different contexts but having a definite link with the principles of the Charter were continued or launched, in particular under the "Integrated Development Operations", and "Studies and measures prior to the

---

(1) The CPMR comprises 70 regions which account for over 80 % of the Community's coast and have a total population of 100 million.

(2) Studies U/82/202 COM 82 PV 645 and U/84/139 COM 84 PV 733.

application of the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes" (1), and the ACE Regulation concerning the management of natural biotopes of importance for bird conservation (2). In this connection, the Community took account of the problems of coastal areas with the wider context of Community policies regarding the environment, regional development, social affairs and transport.

12. Results of the operations carried out by the regions. Under the European Coastal Charter Action Programme, 19 integrated planning operations were launched by the C.P.M.R. regions between 1982 and 1985 : three in Spain, five in France, three in Greece, one in Ireland, seven in Portugal and one in the United Kingdom. These operations, which are now being prepared or carried out, concern coastal areas with several simultaneous planning problems, such as those connected with the development of fishing, agriculture, tourism, small industry and local craft industry, the protection of sensitive areas, action to combat water pollution and protection against natural hazards. The resolution of such inter-related problems necessitates an integrated approach such as that of the European Coastal Charter.

13. On the basis of regional initiatives, these operations consist of preparing development and/or planning schemes complying with the principles of the Charter. They therefore mainly comprise the carrying out of coordinated preparatory work to ensure that coastal resources are utilized in an environmentally-compatible way :

- setting up multi-disciplinary work teams, bringing together all interested parties;
- collecting and processing the socio-economic and environmental data available;
- launching additional research and studies and
- jointly preparing development projects.

14. In the light of these operations, it can nevertheless be considered that the Charter has not been applied by the regions themselves as effectively and swiftly as its originators and the European Parliament would have wished. The reasons for this lie in the complexity of the problems affecting coastal areas, and the comparatively recent nature of the integrated approach, for which appropriate methodologies and application instruments are needed. However, these are not yet fully available or perfectly mastered in the regions in question.

15. As regards the application instruments, it has emerged from the initial work carried out so far under the Charter action programme, that in the regions :

- the existing information, and in particular environmental information, is more often than not incomplete, disparate, inconsistent and mostly ill-suited to the objectives pursued;

---

(1) See the Commission's answer to the Written Question by Mr. de Pasquale, OJ C 189/12, 29 July 1985.

(2) Regulation 1872/84/EEC.

- the instruments for economic and environmental assessment are often ill-suited to the context of these regions, thus making it difficult to make development choices which take account of the entire range of possibilities;
- the legal and regulatory instruments, and in particular the Community Directives concerning the environment, are little known or misunderstood;
- the training of managerial and technical staff should be developed in such a way to prepare them better for the inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary cooperation required by integrated development.

16. These points do, to be sure, also apply to other types of regions, but in the case of coastal regions they are particularly salient since a large number of these regions have proclaimed that development must take the environment into account, and are adopted a Charter and action programme to this end.

### III. NEED FOR STRICTER APPLICATION OF THE EUROPEAN COASTAL CHARTER.

17. It should be noted that the problems of coastal areas are more acute and more difficult to resolve than problems in other regions, since these areas are particularly sensitive and in demand, and a large number of factors are involved where planning is concerned. Moreover, the close inter-relationships between the coastal strip and its hinterland, on the one hand, and the sea, on the other, mean that, in spatial terms also, an integrated and overall approach is needed in order to ensure complementarity and consistency between the development of coastal areas and the development of other parts of the territory of coastal regions.

18. It should also be noted that most of the coastal areas are among the economically less-favoured regions and that their development is to a large extent determined by the sound administration of their main asset : the quality of their environment and of indigenous resources. Moreover, these regions are very often ones with high unemployment rates in which there is a urgent need for machinery to protect and manage the environment and implement rules and regulations. Accordingly, an overall, integrated approach to these very inter-related problems is essential.

19. Coastal areas are therefore eminently suitable areas for endeavouring to promote economic and social development while protecting and improving the environment. In this connection, stricter application of the European Coastal Charter is desirable.

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY POLICIES.

20. Within the Community two recent developments (which are of fundamental importance for Community policies and are extremely relevant from the point of view of the management of coastal regions) have taken place : there has been a considerable increase in the importance attached to environmental protection in the context of Community policies, and efforts are being made to ensure better coordination between all the Community's financial activities.

21. Where environment policy is concerned, prevention is still the key objective ; this objective was strongly endorsed by the European Council of 29 and 30 March 1985, which also emphasized that environmental protection policy can contribute to economic growth and job creation and urged more clearly than ever that environmental considerations should be taken into account in other Community policies.

22. In order to give practical expression to this renewed commitment, the economic-development policies are tending to take great account of the environment. Three aspects of this should be mentioned in particular :

- the Commission is going to carry out a study in the context of the Community programmes under the European Regional Development Fund in order to ensure greater consistency between the Community's regional-policy and environment-policy objectives;
- under the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes, which concern most of the southern maritime regions of the Community of Ten, the requirements of the various Community policies, and in particular environment policy, will be taken into account in the carrying-out of measures relating to investment in the production sector, the provision of infrastructure and the utilisation of human resources, and
- the Commission's recent policy guidelines regarding the future of the common agricultural policy emphasize that the maintenance of agriculture, particularly in less-favoured areas, is an essential factor as regards regional planning and environmental protection. The Commission recently submitted to the Council specific proposals to implement these guidelines.

23. With regard to the need for better coordination, in its answer to the Written Question by Mr de Pasquale<sup>1</sup> the Commission stated that efforts should be made to ensure more effective utilisation of the existing Funds and consistency between policies and between measures taken, both at Community level and in the regions themselves. Accordingly, appropriate machinery was recently established within the Commission with a view to ensuring increased coordination between the financial instruments. On the basis of an examination of development programmes and measures by representatives of all the departments concerned, the machinery in question is intended to ensure consistency between the action undertaken, both at an administrative and financial level and as regards the content of the programmes.

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ C 189/12, 29 July 1985

24. Another ongoing development which is of particular significance in the context of stricter application of the Charter concerns the integration of environmental-protection policy into other Community policies. It should be emphasized that for integration to be effective - or even possible - environmental impact must be assessed as early as possible in the decision-making process, i.e. when programmes and policies are being conceived and not just at the project-implementation stage. Within this context, instruments such as cost-benefit analysis and the procedure for applying the "polluter pays" principle will be developed.

V. ACTION TO BE TAKEN AT COMMUNITY LEVEL WITH A VIEW TO ENSURING STRICTER APPLICATION OF THE EUROPEAN COASTAL CHARTER WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

25. Generally speaking, the peripheral regions in the Community are given priority with regard to the ERDF and the Community's other structural instruments such as the Social Fund (by way of an example, Annex 1 contains a table setting out ERDF assistance for maritime areas between 1981 and 1985). Most of the coastal regions are in these peripheral regions. As a result, the way in which these funds operate is of direct relevance to the application of the Charter principles.

26. In this context, the developments mentioned in paragraphs 23 and 24 above, namely the improvement in administrative and financial operation, on the one hand, and the integration of the environmental dimension, on the other, are two essential, but specific, components of an overall, integrated approach as advocated by the European Coastal Charter.

27. Practical application of this coordination and integration machinery designed to step up the overall assessment and management effort entails two types of action which will also take account of the specific features of coastal areas :

- the active and constant involvement of the Directorate-General for the Environment in the assessment and direction of plans and programmes under the Community's structural Funds, in the framework of the coordination structures, and with the help of the available application instruments ; this involvement is already ensured and appropriate means are being developed (internal procedures for environmental impact assessment), and
- working out a frame of reference to assess the spatial implications of Community policies in order to guarantee rational management of natural resources.

28. In more practical terms, an analysis of the initial results obtained by applying the Charter indicates that, in order to derive greater benefit from their natural, human and financial resources, while respecting the environment, regions require appropriate information, instruments and procedures, and that specific training schemes are needed. In this connection, the Commission has an important role to play in the circulation of information and transfer of know how.



29. Information-gathering instruments. Under the CORINE programme (1), in 1985 the Commission embarked on the collection of information on the state of the environment and natural resources in the Community. This concerns on a priority basis the identification and description of biotopes of major importance for nature conservation, acid deposition, and protection of the environment in the Mediterranean region by collection and organisation on a consistent basis of information concerning the environmental resources and characteristics most directly affected by development programmes (land use and quality, soil erosion, water quality and resources, etc.). In addition, the work programme provides for transfrontier projects, including a number concerning coastal areas, under point 1, B, a (improvement in the comparability of data). The problems of these areas are systematically tackled in each of the relevant projects involved in the priority application of the programme.

30. In the future, when the CORINE system is more developed, it will be possible to process the information in the light of the specific problems of coastal areas.

31. More generally, where information is concerned, the Commission will support, in the context of the environment programme, the preparation and circulation of practical methodological manuals designed to help the various parties to gain a better understanding of the preparation of integrated plans and to promote the carrying-out of work on a multidisciplinary basis. Such manuals can also encourage more efficient development in coastal areas.

32. Environmental impact assessment procedures. The directive on the environmental impact assessment of certain public and private projects adopted by the Council on 27 June 1985<sup>1</sup> is vitally important to the effective implementation of environment policy. If it is to be applied properly, it is necessary to have simple and practical implementation methodologies and appropriate powers to carry out studies and implement the procedure itself.

33. To meet these requirements, the Commission intends :

- to support the preparation and circulation of practical methodological guides to environmental impact assessment;
- to launch "teacher-training" schemes concerning environmental impact studies.

In so doing, the Commission intends to take account, among other things, on the specific features of coastal areas.

34. "Environment-employment" demonstration projects. In its communication on new directions in environment policy (COM (86)76), the Commission announced its intention of proposing a programme designed to demonstrate that environmental protection can make an effective contribution to job maintenance and job creation, in particular in sectors of activity where environmental quality is a condition of development. The projects in question will concern various sectors such as :

---

<sup>1</sup> Directive 85/337/EEC OJ N° L 175 of 5 July 1985

- the upkeep of sensitive areas;
- the management and protection of surface water; and
- support for environmental protection technologies.

They will also focus on five different types of areas in which there are both employment problems and environmental-protection needs. The areas in question include certain coastal areas (and their immediate surrounding) which are under pressure as a result of tourism and where there are environmental hazards.

35. Soil conservation. As indicated in COM (86) 76, soil is an essential, but threatened resource. Accordingly, soil conservation and better land management will be assigned priority in the Community's fourth action programme on the environment. Management techniques and schemes should be developed in order to conserve this resource. The Member States' experiences should be pooled and the results of the work and analyses in question should be made available to the parties concerned. All these endeavours will be particularly important for coastal regions where soil-related hazards (which take various forms: misuse, pollution, erosion, etc.) are often considerable.

36. Promotion. The results obtained so far by the CRPM regions in applying the European Coastal Charter are, to a large extent, due to the promotional activities carried out with the Commission's support. The Commission considers that this promotion work makes an effective contribution, since initiatives by the regions themselves offer the best guarantee of the political and technical involvement of the regional and local levels of intervention. It also makes it possible to incorporate the socio-cultural and environmental dimensions into the plans and programmes, thus guaranteeing balance and consistency in development schemes. The Commission therefore intends to continue its support for this work.

VI. 1987, EUROPEAN YEAR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

37. The European Council had designated 1987 European Year of the Environment (EYE). The Commission intends to make use of EYE to make people more aware of the need to protect the environment and to show, by means of practical examples, that the environment is an essential factor of economic development and the quality of life, and that all strata of society can help improve the state of the environment.

38. The measures to be undertaken during EYE will be of various kinds and will concern all the Community regions. It will therefore provide an opportunity for launching measures designed to protect coastal areas more effectively. The measures in question may take various forms but it can already be asserted that some of them will be of great interest where coastal areas are concerned, in particular :

- the organization of events specific to these areas, whether as part of the national programmes or in the Community action programme;
- the carrying out of certain projects under the employment-environment programme mentioned in paragraph 34 above;

---

<sup>1</sup> Studies U/82/202 (COM(82) Min 645) and U/84/139 (COM(84) Min 733)

- the publication and circulation of studies and information concerning coastal areas;
- the publication of a first list of protected areas in the Community, many of which are on the coast; and
- the establishment of a twinning programme for natural coastal sites.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

39. There is a broad measure of agreement between, on the one hand, the guidelines for and the implementation of Community environment policy and the operation of the structural policies (in particular regional policy) and, on the other hand, the European Coastal Charter, its approach, its principles and its action programme.

40. The Charter calls for the integrated development of coastal areas. The Community's environment policy call for the integration of environmental aspects into the economic, industrial, agricultural, and social policies of the Community and its Member States. Coordination machinery has been established within the Commission departments to ensure that the activities of the Community's various structural Funds are coordinated and to develop the habit of combined and integrated projects in which each Fund plays an appropriate part.

41. The Commission will endeavour to ensure that this convergence of ideas and actions continues. It will also take account of the specific interests of coastal areas in the various activities described in Section V above.

In general, it will ensure that the principles of the European Coastal Charter are fully taken into account in future developments and particularly in the Commission's internal coordination procedures.

A N N E X 1ERDF ASSISTANCE FOR MARITIME REGIONS (1)1981-85

COUNTRY	AMOUNT (million ECU)
Denmark	97,01
France	747,85
Ireland	598,13
Netherlands	46,84
United Kingdom	1.865,90
Federal Republic of Germany	51,71
Greece	788,49
Italy	2.241,40
TOTAL MARITIME 1981-1985	6.437,74 (61,3 %)
TOTAL FEDER 1981-1985	10.504,47

(1) Maritime regions in this instance are level III regions having a coastline.