Nota sobre el proyecto de informe de la Comisión sobre la cohesión económica y social (29 octubre 1996)

Leyenda: Nota del 29 de octubre de 1996 expedida por la Representación Permanente de España ante la Unión Europea sobre el proyecto de informe de la Comisión sobre la cohesión económica y social.

Javier Elorza, Representante Permanente de España ante la Unión Europea, informa que, según fuentes de la Comisión, se suprimirán del informe las afirmaciones que puedan prejuzgar la futura reforma de la regulación de los fondos estructurales. Según la Representación Permanente, esta decisión es satisfactoria para los intereses españoles.

Sin embargo, Elorza señala que perjudican a España algunas consideraciones según las cuales existirán casos en los que no indican explícitamente como posibles objetivos de los fondos estructurales.

Fuente: Secretaría de Estado para la Unión Europea, Madrid, 1016.2.2., 29.10.1996.

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ASUNTO: **REMITE NOTA SOBRE EL PROYECTO DE INFORME DE LA COMISION SOBRE LA COHESION ECONOMICA Y SOCIAL (ART. 130 B TUE)**

TEXTO :

Adjunto se remite nota mencionada en el epígrafe.

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NOTA SOBRE EL PROYECTO DE INFORME DE LA COMISION SOBRE LA COHESION ECONOMICA Y SOCIAL (ART. 130 B TUE)

La decisión sobre el Informe de la Comisión sobre la Cohesión Económica y Social ha sido retirada del orden del día de la reunión del Colegio de Comisarios del día 30 de octubre de 1996 y se incluirá en el orden del día de su próxima reunión del día 6 de noviembre.

Enterada del contenido del proyecto de informe, esta Representación Permanente se puso en contacto con los gabinetes de los Comisarios españoles expresándoles su profunda discrepancia con el contenido del Capítulo 6, Perspectivas, de dicho informe, en cuanto prejuzgaba la futura negociación de la política estructural de la Unión en violación por tanto del acuerdo a que se llegó en el Consejo Europeo de Madrid de posponer dicha negociación para después de la finalización de la CIG.

Como resultado de dichas gestiones y según fuentes de la propia Comisión se suprimirán del Capítulo 6 del Informe todas las manifestaciones o afirmaciones que puedan prejuzgar la futura reforma de la regulación de los Fondos Estructurales, lo que, a juicio de esta Representación Permanente, es satisfactorio para los intereses españoles.

Asimismo se reducirá la extensión de las conclusiones con relación a las que se reflejaban en el anterior texto conforme al documento COM (96) 542/4 (addendum al documento COM (96) 542).

Se acompaña a esta nota la última versión de dichas conclusiones, entre las que resalta la intención de la Comisión de convocar una Conferencia sobre la Cohesión en la primavera de 1997 como plataforma de debate para las políticas estructurales.

Habrá que tener gran cuidado ya que según las conclusiones del Consejo Europeo de Madrid la Comisión no podrá hacer su propuesta de financiación para el post 1999 hasta que concluya la CIG.

Asimismo, con relación a dichas conclusiones, cabe resaltar que, aunque se considere como punto de partida de la política estructural de la Unión el apoyo a largo plazo de sus regiones más pobres, también se indican como problemas que afectan a otras partes de la Unión, que deben ser también reconocidas, las correspondientes a las áreas rurales, la falta de dotaciones urbanas, la exclusión social, la congestión y otros

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desequilibrios territoriales, si bien ya no se señalan estos problemas de manera explícita como posibles objetivos futuros de los fondos. Por último, también merece señalarse que entre los puntos determinados de reflexión se continua hablando de hacer un esfuerzo en la utilización de préstamos y de fuentes privadas de financiación.

Estas consideraciones continúan siendo graves y perjudiciales para los intereses españoles, en cuanto pueden suponer un cambio en los objetivos de los Fondos, debiendo recordarse que la política de ordenación del territorio cae fuera de las competencias comunitarias.

Bruselas, 30 de octubre de 1996

Javier ELORZA
Representante Permanente de
España ante la Unión Europea

CONCLUSIONS

The contours of the global economic landscape have changed radically in little more than two decades. Globalisation of production and financial markets and rapid technological progress have led to far-reaching changes in national and regional economies, in patterns of employment and in the organisation of work.

This is also a critical period in the history of European integration with monetary union, enlargement and the future financing of the Union high on the agenda.

In the face of the challenges, the Member States and the Union need to work in partnership to help adjustment to new circumstances and to seize new opportunities.

The primary responsiblility for improving economic and social cohesion falls on the Member States. Efforts to maintain fiscal discipline and to combat the recent rise in public debt need to be continued. The question arises as to how to guarantee, at the same time, structural programmes which invest in the future while ensuring that incentive systems, fiscal or otherwise, favour job creation.

At the same time, and as recognised by the Member States themselves when they signed the Maastricht Treaty, the harmonious development of the Union as a whole cannot be achieved through national policies alone. The Union's structural policies address cohesion directly while its other, non-structural, policies can also make an important contribution.

Some of the Union's non-structural policies have the potential to make a greater contribution to cohesion.

For the market policies of the **Common Agricultural Policy,** the Commission confirms its commitment to the process of reform in such a way that its cohesion and environmental benefits are further improved in the context of a more integrated rural development policy.

For EU **competition policies**:

- the Commission has reacted positively to the need for more flexibility in state aids matters by revising the '*de minimis*' rules and by creating a framework for state aids addressing specific urban problems. It is the intention of the Commission to pursue this further by putting forward a proposal to the Council for more flexibility;

- permitted aid ceilings for investment in the poorest regions of the Union tend to exceed levels affordable from national budgets, while lower aid ceilings are exploited more fully in richer Member States. The question arises as to whether a concerted effort should now be made for a general reduction in expenditures on State aids;

- the Member States and the Commission need to address in partnership the issue of eligibility under national regional policies, and under EU regional policies. Eligibility for EU regional policies should in the future become one of the criteria for granting eligibility for national State aids;

For the Union's **RTD policies**, the maintenance of its fundamental commitment to excellence could be combined with a greater focus on the needs of the weaker parts of the Union, building on the experience gained from past programmes.

For the **network policies** of the EU in the fields of transport, telecommunications and energy supply, the basic need is to ensure that the whole Community benefits from the gains from innovation and from liberalisation:

- public service contracts/ universal service obligations must be maintained and

where necessary extended to help to ensure that regional or social needs are met in conditions where the market fails to provide;

- in transport, Union actions for intermodal networks must continue to promote sustainable mobility and ensure good linkages with local networks to maximise cohesion benefits. The advantages of public/collective transport for cohesion should be fully recognised;

- in telecommunications, it may require lower cost access to modern services in schools, hospitals, libraries, etc;

- in energy supply, it requires greater efforts to increase energy diversity in view of the higher dependence on oil in the poorest Member States.

Finally, in addition to improvements within the policies themselves, opportunities for synergies between them and those explicitly targeted on cohesion need to be more systematically identified and addressed in order to make an effective contribution to the reduction of the economic and social disparities.

The starting point for the Union's structural policies must be to guarantee its long-term support for its poorest regions, in view of the profound disparities which persist between the lagging regions (Objective 1) and the rest. Solidarity with these regions is an important basis for progress not just for social reasons, but in order to increase the economic potential of the Union as a whole. Catching-up tends to be a slow process, calling for the Union's long-term commitment.

The problems affecting other parts of the Union must also be recognised: rapid economic and sectoral change including changes affecting rural areas, urban deprivation, social exclusion, congestion and other territorial imbalances, the unsustainable use of scarce resources. The Union must be ready to support the process of adjustment affecting different regions, local communities and social groups, to accelerate their adaptation to new circumstances.

The Union's response to these problems is a strategic one which seeks to promote, in partnership with the Member States, investment in new areas of growth and sustainable development, improving physical and human capital to raise competitiveness.

Effectiveness must be ensured through the quality of the strategic response and by the streamlining of the delivery system. There are a number of key areas for reflection:

- scarce resources must be better targeted on the most serious problems and problem areas while addressing themes which are relevant to the prevailing economic circumstances;

- a greater degree of performance orientation could be introduced into cohesion policies where performance criteria would be directly linked to the attainment of cohesion objectives. The Commission and the national authorities must cooperate further to increase the transparency of the policies, and to ensure that effective monitoring, control and evaluation systems are in place;

- more effort should be made to increase the use of loans and private sources of finance;

- opportunities must be more exhaustively explored for networking across regions and across borders to attain common goals and to exchange experiences and best practices;

- in view of the complexity of procedures all avenues for the simplification of the financing and implementing of the measures must be explored;

- strengthened subsidiarity should go hand-in-hand with widely drawn partnerships, playing an active role in the programmes;

Finally, the system as whole must become more adaptable than at present to changing circumstances to be able to respond to the new challenges and opportunities thrown down by a changing world.

In seeking to prepare the way forward, it is important to begin, now, a dialogue. The Report is intended to lend structure to this dialogue. It will be used to launch a debate involving the other institutions and bodies of the Union, which are preparing their own position papers on the future.

It will be complemented by further initiatives. The first is the organisation of a major conference - a Cohesion Forum - in Spring 1997 which will provide a platform for a debate on structural policies with representatives of all interested parties.

Secondly, during 1997, the Commission will complete the mid-term review of progress since 1994 under the different Objectives. This will provide an opportunity to adapt the programmes to new priorities for the remainder of the period, as well as acting as an experimental basis for actions to be taken after 1999. Meanwhile, new strategies recently negotiated for Objective 2 (only) for the period 1997-99 will be in place which will give the Commission the opportunity to see how far they reflect a more focused approach in response to the major priorities which have been agreed between the Member States and the Commission.

The Report should therefore be seen as a further step in the process in improving the effectiveness of Union action to promote economic and social cohesion.