



Adoption of two new programmes

During September, the European Commission approved financing under the Structural Funds for two new programmes:

An Interreg II C programme to combat drought in Portugal:

This programme, to which the Community will contribute ECU 6 247 000, aims to improve the control of water resources and make better use of water in agriculture. The means to be employed include studies on the effects of drought, the launching of pilot irrigation projects and projects to promote co-operation, both between the various authorities in Portugal and with authorities in other countries experiencing problems of this type.

A specific programme of technical assistance for the declining industrial areas (Objective 2) of France:

This programme, to which the Community will contribute ECU 1 008 000, concentrates on three types of activities:

- training for programme managers (eligibility rules, compliance with Community policies, etc.);
- the organisation of seminars and the distribution of documents to promote the exchange of good practices;
- the adoption of a national monitoring system.

Draft territorial employment pacts for the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom authorities recently presented to the European Commission the 10 draft territorial employment pacts which they had selected.

From the 66 proposals made by local actors in the United Kingdom, the British Government chose the following ten:

- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough
- Birmingham City Council on behalf of Black Country Districts, Birmingham and Solihull
- Borough of St Helens (Great Liverpool)
- East Midlands 3 Cities (Nottingham, Derby and Leicester)
- London Borough of Haringey/North London Leadership (Tottenham Partnership)
- Northern Ireland Training and Employment Agency
- North Wales Economic Forum

- South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
- West Cornwall Initiative
- Western Scotland Objective 2 Partnership

These projects will now be discussed with the Commission and could then be added to those already presented by the other Member States (see Inforegio News No. 41, June 1997), bringing the total number of draft territorial employment pacts to about ninety.

It will be recalled that the aim of these pacts is to prepare innovative plans for job creation on the basis of broad regional and local partnerships. The list of the other pacts can be obtained on request by fax: +32 2 230 49 15. See also the WWW site <<http://europa.eu.int/comm/pacts/>>

1994-96 assessment for Ireland and Northern Ireland

The mid-term report on implementation of the Structural Funds in the Objective 1 regions for the period 1994-99 will be completed at the end of this year. The results of the 1994-96 evaluation concerning Ireland and Northern Ireland are, however, already available. Here are the main points.

Ireland

The intermediate evaluation shows that Ireland has made very good use of the European Structural Funds. At the end of 1996, the Community appropriations spent amounted to ECU 2.4 billion, 41% of the allocation for 1994-99. In addition, all the economic indicators considered are positive. Thus, almost 56 000 jobs were created each year, instead of the 15 000 anticipated. At 1.6% of national GDP, the expenditure devoted to R&D also considerably exceeds the initial targets. Generally, the country has experienced impressive growth in recent years, so much so that its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is now well above 90% of the Union average.

For the rest of the period 1994-99, various reductions in the current programmes have enabled the Irish authorities and the European Commission to agree on the reallocation of ECU 163 million to:

- further investments in R&D (ECU 37 million)
- various supplementary measures to combat agricultural pollution and improve hygiene in the dairy industry (ECU 28.5 million)
- extending the fight against failure at school (ECU 26 million)
- continuing to improve the standard of trunk roads (ECU 26 million)
- helping install a wide-band telecommunications network (ECU 10 million)
- financing preparatory work on the light train to Ballymun (LUAS) provided this respects planned deadlines.

For the period after 1999, European aid will concentrate on the areas and social groups which have not shared in the country's success. Conversely, the good performance of the Irish economy could lead to a gradual reduction in public support for the productive sector.

Northern Ireland

For Northern Ireland, the mid-term report shows that there too the Structural Funds are on course to meet the targets laid down. The Community appropriations spent amounted to almost ECU 500 million at the end of 1996, more than 40% of the total budget for 1994-99.

For the period 1997-99, the Northern Ireland authorities and the European Commission agreed to save about ECU 48 million on the current programmes and to reallocate this sum to certain specific fields including:

- the completion of the modernisation of the Belfast/Dublin rail link (ECU 10.35 million)
- R&D investments to make companies in Northern Ireland more competitive (ECU 7.2 million)
- support for the long-term unemployed (ECU 5 million)
- water supply in County Tyrone (ECU 4.95 million).

Overall, the three main goals of the programmes currently in hand - support for economic growth, the strengthening of social cohesion and improvements in links between Northern Ireland and the rest of the European Union - will continue to apply.

New information on the Inforegio site <<http://www.inforegio.org>>

- The complete text of the SDEC (European Spatial Development Perspective) can be downloaded in FR, EN, DE, ES
<http://www.inforegio.org/wbdoc/docoffic/official/sdec/sdec_en.htm>

- the on-line database contains 36 new programmes <<http://www.inforegio.org/erdf>>
- three new calls for tenders for evaluations on behalf of DG XVI may be downloaded in FR, EN, DE, IT, ES, PT, NL, DA, SV, FI, <http://www.inforegio.org/wbnews/newsite/nappe_fr.htm>



European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy and Cohesion

CX-AB-97-010-EN-C