

ECU 205 million for gas pipelines in Spain

The Commission has recently approved funding worth ECU 205.4 million from the European Regional Development Fund to build a series of infrastructures to transport natural gas in Spanish regions eligible under Objective 1 (regions lagging behind in their development).

The total volume of the works is put at ECU 513.5 million, of which 60% will be met by the firm ENAGAS and 40% by the ERDF. The overall length of gas pipeline networks to be built is 1115 km. The work programme falls into two main parts: a western section and a Mediterranean section. The first involves the construction of a North-South pipeline of about 750 km in length (Almendralejo-Cáceres-Salamanca-Zamora-León-Oviedo) and construction of the Oviedo-Villalba pipeline.

This section supplements the natural-gas supply grid between Spain and Portugal. The Mediterranean section includes increasing the storage capacity for liquid natural gas at Cartagena and the construction of various pipelines (and other related facilities) to make it possible to connect this site to the existing natural gas grid.

This programme is additional to the other gas pipelines being part-financed by the ERDF in Spain and in Portugal under the Community Initiative 'Interreg II B' (trans-European energy networks) and the three single major projects in Spain, including the "Estrecho de Gibraltar-Córdoba" pipeline to bring in natural gas from North Africa.

In brief

Regional development planning

Under its programme of studies in regional development planning, the Commission recently issued a call for proposals to select an organisation which will take charge of the overall coordination of the work to be carried out by various specialist research institutes. Information is available on request by fax: (+32-2-296.32.71) or on the Inforegio website
<http://www.inforegio.org/wbdoc/docoffic/amenag/amen_en.htm>

Research and innovation

On 27 May the Commission adopted a communication on the impact of research, technology development and innovation on competitiveness in the regions. The full text of this communication can be obtained on request by fax (+32-2-230.49.15).

Ecos-Ouverture: new call for proposals

On 13 June the Commission is publishing a new call for proposals to select projects involving cooperation between cities and regions in the European Union and others outside the Union. This new subsection of the Ecos-Ouverture programme will support about fifty projects over the period 1999 to 2001. Generally speaking, the terms and conditions governing this new call for proposals are similar to the call for proposals published last September. Here are the principal features:

Partners

Each project must comprise between three and six main partners (regional or local authorities or bodies controlled and mandated by them) from at least two Member States of the European Union and a country of Central Europe (CCE), to which authorities in the newly independent states of the former USSR and Mediterranean non-member countries can also be added. Other partners such as chambers of commerce, development agencies and social actors can also be involved in projects.

Fields of cooperation

Four fields of cooperation are defined for this new call for proposals:

- Improving the working tools and methods of regional and local authorities (setting up development strategies, urban and rural services, in particular in transport)
- Modernising and developing the small-businesses sector (services to small businesses, enhancing the role of women in economic life)
- Safeguarding and enhancing the environment (management of natural areas, control of pollution, energy conservation)
- Developing the cultural heritage for the purposes of job creation.

Budget

The total budget for this new subsection of the Ecos-Ouverture programme amounts to between ECU 25 and 30 million, from the ERDF for authorities in the European Union and a further ECU 15 million from the Phare programme for authorities in Central European countries.

Community funding for each project will lie between ECU 200 000 and ECU 800 000 from the ERDF and between ECU 100 000 and ECU 400 000 from Phare.

The Community contribution can be up to 75% in regions of the Union eligible under Objectives 1 and 6 and in the CCEs and up to 50% elsewhere.

Participation

The deadline for sending in proposals is 15 November 1998. Background material on this call for proposals is available on the Internet <http://www.inforegio.org/wbpro/prord/prordi/ecos/downl_en.htm> and can also be obtained on request from the following address:

European Commission
Ecos-Ouverture
Building CSM2 - Room 3/67
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels
Fax: +32-2-295.01.38/39/40

Ecos-Ouverture in 1991-98

Ecos-Ouverture was launched in 1991 as the European Union's programme to encourage cooperation between cities and regions in the European Community and their counterparts in non-member countries. Between 1991 and 1997, about 400 projects received ECU 70 million, divided among almost 1500 regional and local authorities. Within the Union, more than 99% of the partners came from areas eligible under Objectives 1, 2, 5(b) or 6 of the Structural Funds. In the early days, Ecos-Ouverture funded only relatively small projects based on sharing experience but since 1995 it has also supported more far-reaching cooperation projects involving services, the environment and energy, economic development and tourism. More information on this subject can be obtained on request by fax from: +32-2-230.49.15.

Concerning more particularly the call for proposals under Ecos-Ouverture launched by the Commission in September 1997, the results of which are not yet available, the Commission received 308 proposals from which 40 projects were shortlisted and should start before the end of 1998. As soon as this list of projects is officially confirmed, it will be published and announced in Inforegio News. These projects are to receive a Community contribution of ECU 24 million, comprising ECU 17 million from the ERDF (authorities in the Union) and ECU 7 million from Phare (authorities in the CCEs).



European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy and Cohesion

CX-AB-98-006-EN-C