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Final agreement reached on Objective 1 development plan for Germany

On 16 June 2000, the European Commission definitively approved the Community Support Framework (CSF) for the five new German Länder and East Berlin. The CSF was allocated a budget of EUR 20.707 billion for the 2000-06 period. East Berlin is no longer eligible under Objective 1 but will receive transitional assistance at degressive rates until 2005.

The strategic priorities (see June Inforegio News No 75) will be implemented through six regional operational programmes and three national programmes (transport, human resources and fish-farming). The adoption of these programmes should start in the next few weeks.

The European Commission recently agreed in principle to the Objective 1 2000-06 single programming documents (SPDs) for the United Kingdom and to a programme of degressive assistance to 2005 for the Dutch province of Flevoland.

The UK is the only EU Member State which now has more Objective 1 regions than in the 1994-99 programming period. The four UK SPDs lay down the priorities that will guide how structural assistance is used for development in Merseyside, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, South Yorkshire and West Wales and the Valleys. In each SPD, the priorities are tailored to the specific needs of the region concerned.

With GDP in Flevoland recently breaking the 75%-of-Community-average barrier, this province no longer qualifies for full Objective 1 assistance. Under the new SPD, however, it will

receive transitional assistance at degressive rates until 2005.

The press releases on the adoption in principle of these programmes can be accessed from the "News" page of the Inforegio site: <<http://inforegio.cec.eu.int>>

Objective 1	Total investment*	Structural Funds contribution*
United Kingdom SPD	11 454	4 857
Flevoland SPD	470	126

*EUR million

Objective 2 programmes get under way in Finland

On 29 June the Commission gave the green light for the first Objective 2 programmes in Finland by approving in principle the development programmes for Finnish southern and western regions. These measures, financed by EUR 500 million worth of Community funding (EUR 284 million for western Finland, EUR 211 million for southern Finland), are designed to support Finnish areas undergoing economic and social adjustment.

These programmes should help to create 50 000 jobs in Finland and significantly boost competitiveness in the southern and western regions of the country.

The Commission will take its definitive decision on these programmes in the coming weeks, after hearing the opinions of the advisory

committees, made up of representatives from the Member States.

Objective 2	Total investment*	Structural Funds contribution*
Finland SPD	2 300	500

*EUR million

Parliament applauds implementation of 1998 Structural and Cohesion Funds

At its June plenary session in Strasbourg, the European Parliament delivered its opinion on the operation of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in 1998.

As regards the Structural Funds, Parliament praised the uptake of funding in 1998 in the context of ongoing efforts since 1997 to accelerate implementation. It noted, however, that, at end-1998, an insufficient portion of the overall 1994-99 budget had been disbursed, and therefore called for the new programmes to be finalised as soon as possible so that the payments for 2000-06 could be spaced more evenly over the whole period. The MEPs also called for Commission controls on structural funding to be tightened

and, in particular, for more inspection visits to the Member States by Commission officials.

MEPs also welcomed the 1998 report on the implementation of the Cohesion Fund, which noted that the appropriations had all been committed in full in that year and no instances of fraud had come to light. On the issue of transport projects, Parliament felt that in future funding priority would have to be given to the European railway network. On the environmental side, a prompt remedy was needed to the problem of solid waste and refuse processing. Finally the MEPs underlined the need for greater coordination between the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

New regional aid maps

In recent weeks the Commission has approved three new maps for the 2000-06 period showing State aid intended for regional development purposes. These maps concern the national territories of Austria and Spain and the Portuguese region of Lisboa e Vale do Tejo that was not originally included in the Portuguese list accepted in December 1999.

Readers will recall that, on the basis of these lists, the Commission will allow national authorities to grant public

investment assistance to private companies, in the interests of promoting regional development. It is vital that the lists are adopted by the Commission so that the Structural Funds can support this type of aid in the priority Objective 1 and 2 areas.

The only proposals on which the Commission has yet to reach a decision are those concerning Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and part of Italy.

Forthcoming events

Towards higher quality structural programmes

On 18 and 19 September 2000, the 4th Conference on Structural Funds Evaluation will be held in Edinburgh, Scotland. Organised by the European Commission in conjunction with the Scottish executive (the Scottish regional authority), the main subject of this year's conference will be "Evaluating for quality". Over a two-day period, academics, experts and specialists in evaluation will pool their experience with programme managers from the Regional Policy Directorate-General, with a view to designing more effective programmes for the future. The programme and registration form are available on the Inforegio site "<http://inforegio.cec.eu.int/evaluation>" or on request from Margaret White-Branagan at the Commission conference service (telephone: +32.2.295.66.50, fax: +32.2.295.37.36, or e-mail <margaret.white-branagan@cec.eu.int>).

Urban audit

Urban Audit Day will take place in Paris-Créteil on 21 September next, on the occasion of the Paris International Festival. European Commissioner Michel Barnier and Claude Bartolone, French Minister with responsibility for Urban Policy, will be present to comment on the results of the urban audit, which uses a series of indicators to measure quality of life in 58 European cities. The event will be an opportunity for participants to reflect on the future needs of these cities.

Contact <mireille.grubert@cec.eu.int>, <http://inforegio.cec.eu.int/urban/audit/src/publics.html>

Urban regeneration

On 25 and 26 September next, the British city of Birmingham and the European Commission are to co-host a convention on best practice in urban regeneration. The Commission is also looking forward to over-seeing a wide-ranging debate on its paper "Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for Action" (November 1998). Participants in the discussions will include Michel Barnier and Albert Bore, the mayor of Birmingham and a member of the Committee of the Regions.

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