Newsletter
August 2001
No. 89
en

European Union
Regional Policy

1025-7039

inforegio news

Objective 1 programmes closely scrutinised

On 5 July the Commission adopted a communication on the quality of the regional development programmes negotiated with the Member States under Objective 1 for the period 2000-06.

Under the Structural Fund programmes, the European Union will allocate EUR 127.5 billion between 2000 and 2006 to regions whose development is lagging behind and which are eligible in this capacity under Priority Objective 1.

The Commission, which attaches great importance to assessing the quality of structural policies, adopted a communication summing up the outcome of the negotiation of regional development programmes. Michel Barnier, Commissioner for regional policy, commented: “This communication clearly shows the benefits of having a coherent, strategic approach (...). The Commission was able to promote new ideas and ensure that clear sustainable development principles were established in the regions concerned. What is more, the way the Commission collaborated with the regions in the course of the negotiations is an indisputable example of *'good governance'* in Europe.”

The communication, which was submitted to the informal Council in Namur (see article opposite), emphasises that the resources made available will have a significant effect on attracting investment and should, by 2006, boost GDP levels in real terms in the regions concerned by around 6% for Greece and Portugal, 2.4% for Spain and 4% for the eastern German Länder.

In general, the negotiations revealed greater efforts to concentrate funding on four key fields of Community action: transport infrastructure, research and innovation, information technology and human resources. In addition, establishing strategic reference frameworks (for Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain) will improve consistency between ERDF and Cohesion Fund projects in the fields of transport and the environment.

Some problems persist

Although the assessment is on the whole positive, some problems persist. The average time taken to adopt programmes is between eight months and a year instead of the five months laid down in the Regulations. In several Member States the new management, monitoring and follow-up systems have been laid down in general terms, but the implementing arrangements still have to be worked out..

In addition, some Member States are not taking full account of the competitive aspect of the performance reserve, which is supposed to be used as a ”bonus” for the best programmes.

The Commission also notes that the new rules on the involvement of the regional partners, the social partners and civil society have been applied more strictly in some Member States than others.

For further information, consult:
http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/communic/obj1_en.htm

Informal Council on regional policy

At the informal Council held in Namur (Belgium) in July, ministers launched a debate on regional policy.

The discussions covered in particular the initial results of implementation of the Objective 1 programmes (see also article opposite). The participants stressed the substantial progress achieved on the strategic content of these programmes through systematic evaluation, stronger partnership and greater emphasis on Community priorities. It was also suggested that programme implementation should be further simplified.

In addition, all the participants expressed satisfaction with the quality of the Second Cohesion Report. It was generally agreed that a strong cohesion policy should be maintained and that it is important to recognise that enlargement will generate a greater need for cohesion. Some stressed that priority should be given to measures offering the greatest benefits to the Community.

For further information, consult:
http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbnews/new_en.htm

Enlargement: preparing border areas

The Commission recently put forward an action plan for regions bordering on EU applicant countries. The 23 regions concerned are situated in Austria, Finland, Germany, Greece and Italy.

The action plan was presented on the initiative of Günter Verheugen and Michel Barnier, Commissioners for enlargement and regional policy respectively. The proposed measures concern:

- additional funding for transport infrastructure (in the framework of the trans-European networks), small and medium-sized firms and youth exchanges;
- an option for Member States to increase assistance to their border regions by transferring, as from 2003, part of the European funding available for structural programmes under other Priority Objectives;
- better coordination with the Phare CBC programme (which will be amended by the end of 2002) and the possibility for the Member States concerned, acting in agreement with the Commission, to grant specific state aid schemes for the border regions of the applicant countries.

In addition, the European Investment Bank will provide extra lending facilities for environment and transport investments in border regions of the applicant countries.

Four Interreg III A programmes adopted

The Commission recently approved four cross-border cooperation programmes between the German Land of Saxony and Poland (Lower Silesia), Saxony and the Czech Republic, the German Land of Bavaria and the Czech Republic, and Austria and Slovenia. EU funding for the programmes amounts to EUR 42.7 million, EUR 170.7 million, EUR 63.8 million and EUR 27.3 million respectively.

For further information:
http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbnews/new_en.htm

Objective 2: Germany, Belgium and Italy

In July, the Commission tentatively approved sixteen new economic and social restructuring programmes: fourteen for Italy, one for Germany and one for Belgium.

Germany. The programme for Schleswig-Holstein will focus on stimulating job creation through the building of new infrastructure, support for SMEs, promotion of research and information technology, development of tourism and regeneration of deprived urban areas.

Belgium. The strategy adopted for the restructuring of urban areas in difficulty in the Brussels Region rests on two action priorities: economic regeneration and enhancement of the living environment.

Italy. The fourteen Italian regions eligible under Objective 2 (see table opposite) are now covered by a restructuring programme. Structural Fund assistance will concentrate on making businesses more competitive, integrating new information technology and innovation in general into the industrial fabric, developing the environmental, historical and cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable development at local level.

For more detailed information:
http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbpro/Prosr/prog_en.cfm

Programme 2000-2006	Total cost*	Contribution from Structural Funds*
Germany		
Schleswig-Holstein	831.0	258.0
Belgium		
Brussels Region	106.0	43.9
Italy		
Abruzzi	893.0	185.4
Bolzano	66.0	32.4
Emilia-Romagna	245.0	122.7
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	323.0	96.5
Lazio	918.0	371.5
Liguria	2 065.0	193.0
Lombardy	510.0	200.4
Marche	728.0	125.3
Umbria	393.0	150.5
Piedmont	1 256.0	488.6
Tuscany	1 133.0	322.5
Trento	73.0	16.9
Valle d'Aosta	43.0	16.1
Veneto	1762.0	286.0

* EUR million

European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy

KN-AB-01-007-EN-C

Responsible editor: Thierry Daman, CEC, Regional Policy DG, Unit 01. Fax: +32 2 296 60 03. The texts of this publication do not bind the Commission.
Electronic address of the Regional Policy DG on the Internet: <http://inforegio.cec.eu.int>.
Commissioner Barnier: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/barnier/index_en.htm>
Orders for publications: <regio-info@cec.eu.int> - This newsletter is published in all eleven official languages of the European Union.
Printed on recycled paper.
Text finalised on 09/08/2001.