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1025-7039

The Commission's priorities for regional policy in 2001

Community Support Framework for Northern Ireland

On 18 December 2000, the Commission approved the Community Support Framework (CSF) for Northern Ireland. The development strategy for 2000-06 has been allocated a Community contribution of EUR 1.315 billion.

There are two strands. The first involves the transitional programme for "exiting" from Objective 1 and the second is the Programme of the European Union for reconciliation and peace (PEACE II). Five priorities are listed. Beyond reconciliation and peace, the CSF sets out to encourage: the development and revival of the economy; employment, human resources and social integration; balanced development between town and country, and cooperation between the north and south of Ireland.

For more information, see the 'News' page on our Inforegio website: http://inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbnews/new_en.htm

The Directorate-General in charge of regional policy published its work programme for 2001 last December. The programme lists seven priorities.

1. Consolidating the first phase of programming for 2000-2006

This entails finalising the negotiations on new Structural Funds programmes. The focus will be on Objective 2, the Community Initiatives (Interreg and Urban) and innovative actions. A new series of Cohesion Fund projects will be launched.

2. Preparing future policy for an enlarged European Union

The approach is twofold. The first, more conceptual in nature, involves the follow-up to the Second Report on economic and social cohesion as well as discussions on future regional policy. The second, aims for more concrete actions, with the launch of a second series of ISPA projects.

3. Winding up projects and programmes from before 2000

A clear agenda will be set for winding up the last few programmes dating back from before 1994. For the 1994-99 programming period, administrative preparatory work will be carried to accelerate the completion of final reports.

4. Reinforcing the management of the Structural Funds

The Commission will be implementing the new rules adopted in 2000 on managing the Structural Funds. These rules call for increased

rigour in both management and monitoring. Special efforts will be made to synchronize the rules relating to the individual Structural Funds.

5. Reinforcing the information and communication strategy

From 2001 onwards, the impact of the Structural Funds will be more clearly felt on the ground. This increased visibility will be backed by the dissemination of information on successful projects.

6. Evaluation

Evaluation work will concentrate as much on the value-added of structural policies in 1994-99 as on appraising the programming negotiations for the current period. Particular emphasis will be put on assessing the capacity of Member States and acceding countries.

7. Implementing the Commission's internal reforms

Administrative reforms will affect all the Commission's directorates-general. The DG for Regional Policy will be setting up new financial procedures, which will include integrated financial control and internal auditing functions.

For details of the work programme, see: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/regional_policy/index_en.htm

Satisfaction with Structural Fund performance in 1999

In its 11th annual report on the Structural Funds, the Commission notes that 99% of total assistance available from the Structural Funds in 1994-99 had been committed and 75% paid out by the end of 1999. The report also underlines the results achieved in two priority fields: creating jobs and promoting equal opportunities.

The complete report is available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/official/rastru99/rastru_en.htm

Second Report on cohesion

Within the next few days, the Commission will be adopting its Second Report on cohesion in the Union on the eve of enlargement. Importance is given to the likely effects of enlargement on regional disparities in the Union, with the aim of launching a major discussion on future Community structural assistance.

The report consists of four parts:

- The first part analyses the cohesion process and recent trends;
- The second part deals with the contribution to cohesion of other Community policies (economic and monetary union, the single market, competition policy, agriculture, employment, the environment, research and development, transport, energy, the business sector, fisheries);
- The third part covers the role played by the Community budget and the impact of the Structural Funds;

- The fourth part reviews the main features described in the first three and outlines various options for future Community action on cohesion in an enlarged Union.

The report helps to better identify the regional dimension in the enlargement process and to bring cohesion back into focus in the political debate. It is to be treated as a kind of White Paper in light of the forum on cohesion that the Commission is organising for next May in close collaboration with the other European institutions. The leading actors in regional development in the Member States and the applicant countries will be invited to attend.

The report is available initially only on our Inforegio website.

Objective 1 in Germany and Ireland

In December the Commission approved four Objective 1 operational programmes in 2000-2006 for Saxony, Thuringen, Brandenburg and East Berlin in Germany and three transverse programmes for Ireland.

Germany. The main priority for Saxony is to attract new businesses and introduce innovative technologies. Another aim is to build and modernise economic infrastructure and create and restore a high-quality environment.

The operational programme for Thuringen is designed to bring about the structural adjustment of the region's economy and stimulate the labour market. The use of innovative technologies is also stressed.

In the case of Brandenburg, the focus is on supporting the business environment of SMEs, especially as it concerns collaboration, their access to finance, innovation, and new technologies as well as to information and communication technologies.

The transitional support programme for Eastern Berlin will mainly concentrate on assisting research and development, various aspects of which will account for about 30% of the funding.

These four programmes also pay attention to horizontal themes: developing of the information society, equal opportunities and protecting and improving the environment.

Ireland. The three transverse programmes for Ireland cover manufacturing, economic and social infrastructure and technical assistance measures. The operational programme for the productive sector is designed to reinforce research, technology development and innovation, particularly in SMEs. Other aims are to strengthen competitiveness and the safety of the fishing fleet. The programme on economic and social infrastructure covers trunk roads, ease of travel in the major urban centres, water supply and renewable sources of energy.

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Programme	Total cost*	Contribution of Structural Funds*
Germany		
Saxony	11 258	4 858
Thuringen	10 020	2 880
Brandenburg	6 730	3 090
East Berlin	2 120	688
Ireland		
Economic and social infrastructure	1 479	854.8
Manufacturing	1 002	333.2
Technical assistance	9.8	4.9

* in million euro.

