



Newsletter
May 2003
No 110

en



European Union
Regional Policy

infoforegio | news

1025-7039

Online forum on cohesion policy reform

On the 16th of May, the Regional Policy DG launched a new website which presents contributions to the debate on the future of cohesion policy beyond 2006. Various actors have sent, and continue to send their positions to the European Commission. The new site will present this information and will contribute to increasing the transparency of the debate before the publication of the 3rd Cohesion Report in December 2003.

Contact:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/debate/reflex_en.htm

EU regulations in accession countries' languages

CCVista is a new database developed by the TAIEX office of DG Enlargement, which hosts translations of EU legal texts in the languages of the accession countries. The translated texts are not legally binding but may be a useful source of information for interested parties. The address of the database is: <http://ccvista.taix.be>

More information can be found at the newsroom of the Regional Policy DG:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/newsroom/index_en.htm

Ministers for Regional Policy and Cohesion meet in Chalkidiki, Greece

Regional Policy Ministers from the Member States and accession countries met for the first time on the 16th of May at an 'informal' ministerial meeting in Chalkidiki, Greece.

The Ministers were joined by Commissioner Michel Barnier for a discussion on the current implementation of structural interventions and the future of cohesion policy beyond 2006. The Commissioner presented lessons from the previous and current periods of Structural Funds programmes, and a simplification package consisting of measures to simplify the management of the funds. He also exchanged views on the reform of cohesion policy for the next programming period, which starts in 2007. Mr Barnier stressed the following points:

- Closure of programmes for the period 1994-1999: almost all final payment claims have been received by the Commission services, with the large majority arriving just in time for the March 31st deadline. The amount of funds to be automatically decommitted will be limited. The Commissioner asked Member States for their active co-operation in closing these files as quickly as possible.
- With the introduction of the "n+2" rule for the period 2000-2006, Member States run the risk of automatic decommitment if payments are not carried out within 2 years. The Commissioner emphasised this point and called for an efficient absorption of funds. In this context, the Commissioner also urged

Member States to improve the reliability of their payment forecasts, which are the basis of the European budget for Structural Funds.

- The Commission presents its 3rd Cohesion Report in December of this year, which will contain an outline of the Community's cohesion policy beyond 2006. Commissioner Barnier underlined his conviction that solidarity with the worst-off regions could not be of less importance in a larger EU with greater economic and social disparities.
- Following a request at the last Regional Policy Ministers' meeting in Namur (Belgium) in July 2001, the Commission services have suggested a number of immediate measures to simplify some procedures within the existing legislative framework (see below). The Commissioner expressed his view that the Commission and the Member States should share responsibility for simplifying the delivery mechanisms for final beneficiaries as much as possible.

More information can be found at the newsroom of the Regional Policy DG:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/newsroom/index_en.htm

Structural Funds: simplification package unveiled

On the 25th of April 2003 the European Commission adopted a Communication on «the simplification, clarification, coordination and flexible management of the structural policies 2000-06».

The Communication is the outcome of the debate on simplifying the management of the Structural Funds, and responds to a request from the Member States to streamline procedures and to facilitate the management and implementation of their appropriations. Based on an extensive dialogue with the Member State administrations, the Communication sets out the Commission's «simplification package», which consists of measures to:

- simplify the adjustment of programmes, controls and the programme's mid-term review,

- reduce and streamline the number of reports and indicators used to evaluate the results of the programmes, and
- address other procedural issues concerning the allocation of the performance reserve, annual meetings, the Commission's role in Monitoring Committees, financial management, and the speeding up of the Commission's internal procedures.

The full text of the Communication is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communicomm_en.htm

Challenges for evaluation in an enlarged Europe

Some 500 experts are expected to attend the 5th European Conference on Evaluation of the Structural Funds, which will be held in Budapest on the 26th and 27th of June 2003. This year's event will focus on the challenges for evaluation in an enlarged Europe.

The 2003 Structural Funds Evaluation Conference will be the fifth in a series, which started in Brussels in 1995. The overall objective is to contribute to the development of a European «culture of evaluation» in relation to the Structural Funds. A key aspect of the evaluation conferences is that they bring together those who commission evaluations and those who carry them out, as well as other relevant stakeholders. The exchange of experience and expertise which takes place feeds through into better management and use of evaluations, and to an improvement in the quality of the evaluations undertaken.

The backdrop to the 2003 conference is the imminent enlargement of the EU. The 10 future Member States are already developing Structural Fund programmes with the assistance of evaluations, and the existing 15 Member States are currently undertaking mid-term evaluations for the 2000-2006 planning period. The challenge now is to extend and build on the good practice developed in evaluation in this new context of enlargement. Further information is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docconf/budapeval/index_en.htm

Europe's ten most innovative regions

A benchmarking instrument requested by EU leaders at the Lisbon Summit in March 2000, the "European Innovation Scoreboard" summarises data on quantitative indicators of innovation performance for each Member State. For the first time, this year's Scoreboard (2002) also includes indicators on regional innovation performance, which is seen as an important step to underpinning regional policy with regional data.

Seven regional innovation indicators are used, covering the areas of human resources, employment in high-technology sectors, and the creation of new knowledge through R&D and patents. The 2002 results suggest a positive relationship between a region's innovation performance and its economic performance. According to the Scoreboard, Europe's top ten innovative regions are: Stockholm (S),

Uusimaa / Suuralue (FIN), Noord-Brabant (NL), Eastern region (UK), Pohjois-Suomi (FIN), Ile-de-France (F), Bayern (D), South-East region (UK) Comunidad de Madrid (E) and Baden-Württemberg (D). Further details are available at: <http://trendchart.cordis.lu> or contact: entrtrendchart@cec.eu.int or Peter Löwe at DG Enterprise, Fax: +352 4301 34129.



European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy

KN-AB-03-005-EN-C