



## The cohesion policy debate: facts and figures

To help promote a better understanding of the key issues in the debate about the future cohesion policy, the Regional Policy DG has recently published a new fact file. The file contains a general presentation of the reform issues, 10 questions and answers and four background sheets with graphics. It is available in English, French, Dutch, German, Italian and Spanish and can be downloaded from:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/debate/document/press\\_kit\\_reform\\_en\\_29\\_09.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/debate/document/press_kit_reform_en_29_09.pdf)

## The added value of the Structural Funds

The importance of identifying added value for the Structural Funds reform debate is the subject of a recent IQ-Net (Improving quality network of regional and national partners from Structural Fund programmes across the EU) report, entitled 'The added value of the Structural Funds: a regional perspective'. The report considers how added value can be defined; it addresses different types of added value: cohesion added value, political added value, policy added value, operational added value and learning added value; and it looks at some of the factors influencing added value, such as the scale of programmes and administrative systems. It concludes by presenting options for improving the added value of the Structural Funds after 2006. The report is available at: [http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/iqnet/iq-net/downloads/IQ-Net\\_Reports\(Public\)/IQ\\_Net\\_Added\\_Value.pdf](http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/iqnet/iq-net/downloads/IQ-Net_Reports(Public)/IQ_Net_Added_Value.pdf)

## New Member States to finalise preparation for Structural Funds management

**New Member States must intensify their efforts if they are to secure eligibility for Structural and Cohesion Funds from 1 January 2004, particularly in relation to the quality of programmes and projects, and the capacity of the managing authorities.**

This was the message delivered by Michel Barnier, Commissioner responsible for regional policy and institutional reform, to ministers responsible for the management of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds in the acceding countries at a meeting in Brussels on 6 October.

While acknowledging that much had been achieved since the presentation of the last report <sup>(1)</sup> on preparations for Structural Funds management in July of this year, Mr Barnier stressed that the new Member States could not benefit from eligibility from 1 January 2004 unless there was full alignment with Community legislation before the end of 2003. 'Sound and efficient management of the Funds is not only a requirement but also an issue of credibility,' he said.

In the July report, most of the acceding countries were advised to speed up preparations, particularly in areas of:

- legal alignment, in particular as far as it concerns public procurement legislation;
- finalisation of detailed design for the implementation structures, including the establishment of written agreements with the intermediate bodies;
- establishing a pipeline of sufficiently prepared projects ready for implementation;

- setting up monitoring systems, as required for financial management and control.

EUR 22 billion in Structural and Cohesion Funding has been agreed for the new Member States for the period 2004–06. Most of this will be spent in the framework of national and regional programmes, which the Commission services negotiate with the responsible ministries. This process started in July 2003 and should be finalised before the end of 2003.

The negotiations concentrate on verifying the internal consistency of all documents and on coherence with other national or EU strategies. In addition, they aim at ensuring that the programmes can be implemented in the limited remaining time of this programming period. Further information is available at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docconf/6oct/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docconf/6oct/index_en.htm)

<sup>(1)</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of commitments undertaken by the acceding countries in the context of accession negotiations on Chapter 21 — Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments ([http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/pdf/chap21/com\\_chapter21\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/pdf/chap21/com_chapter21_en.pdf))

## Parliament rejects calls to re-nationalise regional policy

**On 12 September, the European Parliament adopted two non-binding resolutions confirming their commitment to an inclusive Community cohesion policy and to a complete rejection of any attempts at 're-nationalisation'. MEPs also stressed the need for a minimum of 0.45 % of the Union's GDP to be spent on cohesion policy.**

If in the next programming period priority is to be given to Objective 1 regions, and the eligibility threshold of 75 % of the Community's average GDP is to be retained, then significant readjustments in the allocation of spending in favour of the new Member States will be required. However, in adopting two resolutions by Emmanouil Mastorakis and José Javier Pomes Ruiz, MEPs stressed that this must not be at the expense of existing Objective 1 regions.

Up to 10 existing Objective 1 regions may lose their eligibility as a result of the new statistical calculations and Par-

liament has called for a fair and equitable arrangement to be made for these regions. There was also a call for special treatment in the forthcoming period for regions which suffer permanent handicaps, such as islands, mountain regions or regions with low population densities. Finally, MEPs proposed that cohesion policy should be linked with the Union's agricultural, transport and competition policies. Further information is available from Ton Huyssoon, tel. (32-2) 28-42408, e-mail: [region-press@europarl.eu.int](mailto:region-press@europarl.eu.int)

## Revised guidelines for structural instruments adopted

**On 25 August, the Commission adopted revised indicative guidelines for the Structural Funds and their coordination with the Cohesion Fund.**

Under Article 10(3), of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds, the Commission, on 1 July 1999, adopted general indicative guidelines on the Structural Funds based on the relevant agreed Community policies. These guidelines were aimed at assisting national and regional authorities in the Member States in preparing their programming strategies under Structural Fund Objectives 1, 2 and 3 and in coordinating these with the Cohesion Fund. In this way, the Commission made known its priorities in the light of both past experience in implementing the programmes and of Community policies linked to structural measures.

However, Article 10(3) also requires the Commission to revise these guidelines prior to the mid-term review. This is seen as a crucial stage in the seven-year programming period (2000–06). The Commission makes it clear, however, that the original guidelines adopted in 1999 still

remain valid. The revised version simply takes account of changes since then in the economic, legal and political environment in which the funds operate and allows the Member States to adapt their programming documents accordingly.

These guidelines constitute only one of the elements of the mid-term review, however. It is up to the management authorities and the Member States to submit proposals for amendments of measures to be concluded in agreement with the Commission, notably taking into account the results of evaluations. The Commission also adopted additional indicative guidelines for the applicant countries to take account of their specific situation as well as the reduced duration of their programming period for the Structural Funds. Further information is available at:

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/guidelines/coord\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/guidelines/coord_en.htm)



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