



# inforegio | news

## Cohesion Funds

In March 2005, the European Commission informed the managing authorities of the Cohesion Funds of their interpretation and how they want to apply some rules of this financial instrument. These terms are now published on the Inforegio website.

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/working/sf2000\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/sf2000_en.htm)

## Public-private partnerships

In its communication of 19 November, the Commission proposes clarification of the EU rules on public-private partnerships (PPP), which are vital to investment in infrastructures and public services.

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal\\_market/publicprocurement/ppp\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/publicprocurement/ppp_en.htm)

## Call for papers

A call for papers has been launched for the international conference 'Shaping EU regional policy: Economic, social and political pressures', organised in Leuven (Belgium) on 8 and 9 June 2006 by the Regional Studies Association, in cooperation with the Catholic University of Leuven.

Submission deadline:  
31 January 2006.

<http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/events/cfp/belgium2006.pdf>

## EUKN portal

The European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) has launched an Internet portal that provides access to substantial useful information on urban and regional development.

<http://www.eukn.org/eukn>

## Structural and Cohesion Funds: vintage 2004

**Record payments, faster realisation of the programmes and commitment appropriations representing 32 % of the EU budget are some of the main points underlined by the Commission in two reports published on implementation of Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds in 2004.**

The year 2004 was marked by three important events for the current programmes: the allocation of the performance reserve, the mid-term review of the programmes in the EU-15 and the enlargement of the Union giving rise to 43 additional programmes, mostly in the category of less developed regions. Community aid totalling EUR 24 billion (at current prices) has been allocated for the period 2004–06.

In 2004, the available commitment appropriations for the Structural Funds totalled EUR 35 353 million, i.e. 32 % of the EU budget. The commitment appropriations for the 10 new Member States amounted to EUR 3 812 million. Actual commitments made totalled EUR 35 212 million, practically 100 % of the available appropriations. All of the allocation foreseen in the Copenhagen agreement for the EU-10 programmes was committed.

Payments on commitments in 2004 were the highest ever recorded for the Structural Funds, equivalent to EUR 31 516 million, or 99 % of the available payment appropriations. This reflected a significant acceleration in the realisation and a more proactive management by the authorities at Community, national and regional level.

**Performances.** In 2004, the accelerated implementation allowed seven out of the 15 Member States to decrease their outstanding commitments in absolute terms. Absolute reductions in this respect were highest for Spain (EUR 500 million) and Ireland (EUR 361 million). Reductions were also achieved on accumulated commitments in Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden. Five Member States counted for almost three quarters of all payments, in order: Spain, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Greece.

In the 10 new Member States, the payments in 2004 (EUR 1 550 million) largely consisted of advances to create the rolling funds to help programme realisation. This first year of programme implementation in the EU-10 suggests that project selection activity is well under way in most cases.

Encouragingly, the number of project applications for some measures exceeded the financial resources available in the programmes. At the same time, challenges remain such as raising the quality of projects and ensuring a balanced geographic coverage, as well as the need to address deficiencies in management.

Innovation in the programmes for 2000–06, the allocation of the performance reserve, which followed the mid-term review, provided the opportunity to contribute better to the priorities of the revised European employment strategy and to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives. Some EUR 8 billion thereby allocated to Structural Fund programmes (Community initiatives were excluded) also allowed Member States to adapt their programmes to changes in the general socio-economic situation or to changing labour market conditions and to take on board the results of the mid-term evaluations.

**Cohesion Funds.** In 2004, more than EUR 2.7 billion (1999 prices) were invested in the 13 Member States eligible for the Cohesion Funds, for projects regarding transport networks and environment. During that same year, the transport sector accounted for 51.8 % of total Cohesion Fund commitments. The report highlights numerous projects concerning railway and infrastructure relating to trans-European transport networks.

The environmental projects accounted for 48.2 % of total Cohesion Fund commitments. In this sector, the priorities remained the supply of drinking water and the treatment of water and solid waste.

To find out more:

COM(2005) 533 final of 28.10.2005 (Structural Funds): [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/fs2004/com2005\\_533\\_fsannuel\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/fs2004/com2005_533_fsannuel_en.pdf)

COM(2005) 544 final of 7.11.2005 (Cohesion Funds): [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/fc2004/com2005\\_544\\_fcannuel\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/fc2004/com2005_544_fcannuel_en.pdf)

# New initiatives of regional policy

**On 24 November in Brussels, before an audience of 500 representatives of Member States, regions and banks, European Commissioner Danuta Hübner presented two new initiatives — Jaspers and Jeremie — aiming at financing employment, growth and cohesion in European Union regions. She also underlined the perspective of a close cooperation with international financial institutions (IFI) in favour of social housing and urban renovation.**

The initiatives Jaspers <sup>(1)</sup> and Jeremie <sup>(2)</sup> involve closer cooperation among the Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Investment Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and other international financial institutions.

Those two initiatives received the support of the Member States during the ministers' meeting of 11 October (see *Inforegio* No 139). They are designed to help the national and regional authorities respectively to prepare large infrastructure projects (Jaspers) and to improve access to finance for small and medium-sized enter-

prises (Jeremie). People attending the conference of 24 November also gave a favourable welcome to the proposition of a third initiative aiming at supporting the development of 'sustainable communities' thanks to a common approach between the Commission, the EIB, the EBRD and the Development Bank of the European Council (CEB) in order to finance actions regarding social housing and urban renovation in the framework of the 2007–13 programmes. The strengthening of this cooperation will soon be part of a protocol agreement.

To find out more: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/events/ifi/index.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/events/ifi/index.cfm)

(1) 'Joint assistance to support projects in the European regions.'

(2) 'Joint European resources for micro to medium enterprises.'

# Partnership as a catalyst for the Structural Funds

**The use of Structural Funds is more important, more effective and more qualitative when the authorities at national, regional and local levels set up an appropriate cooperation with socioeconomic partners and representatives of civil society to implement the project. That is one of the conclusions of the discussion paper published on 24 November by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy of the European Commission.**

This analysis is based on information and survey results from the EU-15, before the enlargement in 2004. It shows that the implication of a wider range of partners than ever before improved the efficiency, the coordination, the legitimacy and transparency of interventions. However, in some cases, the involvement of partners at different stages of the programming cycle is not considered as equally necessary and some-

times is even seen as placing an additional burden on time and resources. Many partners felt that their role was little known or recognised; they called for more precise rules and more transparency. The document concludes on proposals for the implementation of the partnership principle for 2007–13.

Full text: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/partnership\\_report2005.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/partnership_report2005.pdf)

# Knowledge society: the example of the northern experience

**The conference 'Towards a knowledge society — the nordic experience' was held in Gothenburg (Sweden) on 14 and 15 November 2005. 'Investment in knowledge brings jobs and growth to Europe', declared Commissioner Danuta Hübner in her speech highlighting the central role the EU Structural Funds play in turning research knowledge into business ideas.**

Jointly organised by the Regional Policy Directorate-General, the Information Society and Media Directorate-General of the European Commission and the region of West Sweden, the conference had three key themes: Partnership for ICT development; e-Government: modernisation and innovation in the public sector; development and usage of innovative clusters.

'In current Structural Funds programmes, almost EUR 6 billion (over 5 % of funding) go to telecommunications

infrastructures and information society activities. In the future period this participation stands to increase substantially as "knowledge society" is one of the priorities of the strategic guidelines for 2007–13'; added Danuta Hübner.

To find out more: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1416&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

## 2007–13: Preparing the next generation of programmes with the Inforegio site

The Member States and regions are starting to prepare the upcoming 2007–13 programming period. The Inforegio site presents extensive information and key documents of interest to all the players interested in the process. The aim is to facilitate exchanges between these players and at the same time inform the general public of the progress made. Do not hesitate to address your questions and contributions to the Regional Policy DG.

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/funds/2007/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/funds/2007/index_en.htm)



**European Commission**  
Directorate-General for Regional Policy