



# EURO-info

## COMMISSION GIVES GO-AHEAD FOR PROGRAMMES OF 'COMMUNITY INITIATIVES'

On 16 February 1994, the European Commission approved the allocation of 13.45 billion ECU from the Structural Funds available for 'Community initiatives between 1994 and 1999. Unlike the Community support frameworks, which grant funds according to plans and priorities set by the Member States, the 'Community initiatives' adopted by the European Commission finance projects which are of substantial interest for the Community as a whole, and not projects which are only of national interest.

The Community initiatives adopted include INTERREG (promotion of transfrontier and transnational cooperation), LEADER (rural development), REGIS (integration of the most peripheral regions) and a series of three initiatives (NOW, HORIZON, YOUTHSTART) intended to promote employment and development of human resources. The URBAN initiative (urban policy) will enable targeted actions to be carried out in districts of large or medium-sized cities which are characterised by social exclusion, while PESCA will diversify the economies of areas which are particularly dependent on the fishing industry. The European Commission also adopted three types of Community initiative aimed at accompanying radical industrial changes which are currently under way. These initiatives, which are complementary, concern both the re-employment and re-qualification of workers (ADAPT), and the conversion of regional economic which are heavily dependent on coal mining (RECHAR), the steel industry (RESIDER), textiles (RETEX) and defense (KONVER). These are complemented and backed up by a new initiative which takes into account the decisive role of SMEs.

This new initiative is aimed at stimulating SMEs, especially in regions whose development has lagged behind, so that not only can they adapt to the requirements of the single market and international competition, but also so that they can improve their competitiveness: particularly by better use of modern technologies, promotion of new methods of management and access to innovative financial products.

67/94/EN  
March 1994

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## **COOPERATIVES: a statistical profile**

In 1989, the European Commission requested the Council to support its efforts to improve the involvement of cooperatives, mutual societies and foundations in existing Community programmes and initiatives, particularly in terms of information, access to sources of funding and training<sup>1</sup>.

Cooperatives, mutual societies and associations combine the traditional functions of a business with social aims corresponding to their objectives. Their status varies greatly depending on the field of activity and country concerned. Despite these differences, there is an identity common to these bodies in the so-called 'social economy' and the European Commission proposes to provide them with the resources necessary for them to play their role in the economic and social structures of the single market. Before this can be done, more precise information is required about the size of this sector, which means better statistics.

A first 'Statistical profile of cooperative and mutual societies and associations' in the European Union has been published by EUROSTAT — the Statistical Office of the European Communities<sup>2</sup>. The data published recently results from a study launched in 1991, and only gives a partial estimate of the activities of these organisations, as it only includes cooperatives affiliated to National Central Organisations (NCOs) at this stage, and then only to the extent that they were able to take part in the surveys. It provides a broad grasp of the activities of the size and economic impact of this sector. In the early 1990s, the total number of cooperatives, mutual societies and non-profit making associations affiliated to National Central Organisations (NCOs) covered by the study was almost 269 000 businesses, of which 39% were cooperatives, 5% were mutual societies and 56% were associations. The total number of people employed was almost 2.9 million, of which 69% worked for cooperatives, 8% for mutual societies and 31% for non-profit making associations. They had turnover of 1 553 billion ECUs: of this, cooperatives contributed nearly 79%, mutual societies nearly 5% and non-profit making associations 16%.

### **... and a work programme 1994-1996 in favour of cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations**

On 16 February 1994, the European Commission submitted a proposal to the Council for a decision to launch a work programme<sup>3</sup> in favour of cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations. This programme will be submitted for the opinion of the Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee. The objective is to aid businesses in the social economy to benefit, just like other firms, from the opportunities offered by the creation of the large, frontier-free market, while respecting the specific nature of this sector which has particular skills in the field of social innovation.

The following appear among the policy directions contained in the programme:

- performance of studies about the development of this sector in the European Union;
- creation of a favourable environment, and evaluation of the impact of Community policies on this sector;
- organisation of consultation of these firms;

<sup>1</sup> SEC(89)2187 final — Communication from the Commission to the Council — 18 December 1989 — Business in the social economy and the creation of the frontier-free European market.

<sup>2</sup> EUROSTAT — Services and Transport — B Series 'Economic situation' — supplement 2/1993 — ISBN 1019-0619 published by the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities.

<sup>3</sup> COM(93) 650 final.

- specific actions aimed at encouraging transnational cooperation (in particular for small-scale cooperative businesses, mutual societies and associations), searching for new business activities by groups of partners, and the spread of social innovations;
- stepping-up of actions in favour of businesses in the social economy within other Community policies, particularly due to the improvement of Community statistics in this sector, support for work on training and encouragement for the expansion of research;

A budget of 5.6 million ECU for the period-1994-1996 is proposed to this end. Of course, it does not include the funding of indirect actions resulting from the application of certain Community policies such as structural actions.

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## **EUROPARTENARIAT: after Glasgow, Gdansk on 9 and 10 June 1994**

The ninth EUROPARTENARIAT event was held in Scotland on 13 and 14 December 1993. In all, some 1 700 businesses — of which 626 came from the European Union — came to Glasgow from 55 different countries. Some 6 000 appointments were programmed with the 334 Scottish firms selected, and a large number of contracts and cooperation agreements were signed between the participants.

In 1994, EUROPARTENARIAT will be held outside the European Union for the first time. Organised in Gdansk on 9 and 10 June 1994, EUROPARTENARIAT POLAND will enable 400 Polish firms to meet their counterparts from the countries of the European Union, as well as those from the European Economic Area, the Mediterranean Rim, and Central and Eastern Europe, in order to set up profitable business contacts.

Organised by the Chamber of Commerce in Gdansk, with the support of the Polish Chamber of Commerce, this event will enjoy the technical and financial support of the European Commission (DG I — PHARE and TACIS — DG XVI — Regional Policy and DG XXIII — Enterprise Policy). As with the previous EUROPARTENARIAT events, the promotion of the event and the distribution of a catalogue containing the profile and offers and requests for cooperation by the selected Polish companies will be handled by specialised national consultants.

### **National consultants of EUROPARTENARIAT POLAND 1994:**

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##### **North Ireland**

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#### **For further information: EUROPARTENARIAT POLAND 94**

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## **SEED CAPITAL: the pilot plan enabled 187 new businesses to be set up with the creation of 1 706 jobs**

The seed capital and start-up capital which finances the start-up of new businesses is falling sharply in Europe. In 1988, the European Commission set up a Community pilot plan to help firms find this capital. What were the objectives of the plan? To attract private capital into this field, via the creation of 24 new investment funds, and to encourage, via these funds, the creation and development of new innovative firms, and enable an exchange of experience between seed capital experts at European level.

The 24 funds in the pilot plan constitute the core of the European Seed Capital Fund Network (ESCFN), which consists of 41 funds (the 24 funds in the pilot plan and 17 associated members who do not receive any Community financial support). They benefit, for a 5-year period, from repayable advances covering 50% of their operating costs. In addition, 15 of these 24 funds, established in assisted regions of the Community, receive from the European Community a capital contribution via the Business and Innovation Centres (BICs) established in these regions.

According to a progress report updated in January 1994, the 24 funds have collected 40 million ECU to date, and they are carrying out increases in capital which should bring their resources to nearly 50 million ECUs in 1994. They invested 20 million ECUs in 187 new firms, of which 161 are still operational, which limits the bankruptcy rate to 14%, which is nearly one-third of the Community average after 3 years. These 159 firms have enabled 1 706 direct jobs to be created. Their average turnover for 1993 is 480 000 ECUs and 75% of these firms have business activities with medium to high technology content.

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## **JOPP: facilitating the creation or expansion of joint ventures in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe**

As part of the PHARE programme (programme of economic aid designed to encourage the conversion and opening-up of the economies of Central and Eastern Europe), the Commission decided, in 1991, to launch the JOPP programme (Joint Venture PHARE Programme). This programme, which helps private operators in the Community to set up new joint ventures with local partners, or to expand those already in existence<sup>4</sup> is also intended to facilitate foreign investment and development of a competitive private sector in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

With a budget of 20 million ECUs for a period of 3 years, this programme has enabled over 250 joint venture projects to be funded in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In view of these positive results, the European Commission has decided to extend the programme in 1994, with an additional budget of 27.5 million ECUs.

Mainly aimed at SMEs, JOPP offers a certain number of forms of action which take into account the various stages of creation or expansion of a joint venture in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, from the feasibility study stage, through pilot projects up to training activities and technology transfer, and including the funding requirements for the joint venture. The programme can also provide assistance for the organisation of events or seminars aimed at encouraging the creation of joint ventures with these countries. The link between the European Commission services and the beneficiary companies is provided by a network of financial intermediaries involved in the programme.

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## **RESEARCH: A guide for greater transparency ...**

Every year, the European Commission supports several thousand research projects. To give an idea of what is involved, a budget of 2.5 billion ECUs was allocated for this purpose in 1993. To manage such a support system, a range of procedures and principles were developed, governing the manner in which the Commission invites and evaluates proposals from all over the Community and finances research projects.

<sup>4</sup> The following countries can benefit from the JOPP programme: Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Roumania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary.

The European Commission has just published a guide with the title 'COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT' an overview of the methods for handling proposals — an introduction to negotiation of contracts<sup>5</sup>, aimed at researchers in universities and industry. The first part of this document describes the way the evaluation of proposals is organised, once they have been submitted, and the procedure for selection of proposals for funding. The second part covers the process of negotiation of research and technological development contracts, and aspects linked to project management.

The publication of this manual is in addition to other measures taken in 1993 to improve the transparency of the management of research programmes: — launching of calls for tenders on fixed dates, four times per year (15 March, 15 June, 15 September and 15 December), with the closing date shown in the Official Journal of the European Communities normally three months later); — publication every two months of a newsletter 'RDT Info' containing information about future calls for tenders, about programmes and publications deriving from them, rotation system for experts in charge of evaluation of proposals, and simplification of the content of the information requested from applicants.

**For further information:** European Commission  
DG XXIII — Telecommunications, Information Market and Valorisation of Research — Dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge Unit  
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## ... and actions aimed at Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

SMEs can benefit from support for participation in projects for cooperation as part of Community research programmes under the same conditions as any other firm, university or research institute. The Commission has realised that sometimes they face difficulties participating in programmes, so it has set up special arrangements within certain programmes which remove a series of obstacles for SMEs, and foster their involvement, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and improve the transfer of technologies to SMEs. Among them, the 'Feasibility premiums' enable an SME to be helped to prepare a proposal for a project in the appropriate form, and the CRAFT programme scheme supports the performance of research work for transnational consortia of SMEs which do not have a research capacity.

On the basis of the experience gained, a single scheme will be set up in future, combining the various aspects of CRAFT and the feasibility premiums, and introduced to other programmes. A brochure is available describing the various schemes to help SMEs.

To obtain this brochure, please fax: (+32)2 296 30 25 (European Commission — Brussels)

## INTERPRISE: encouraging partnerships in Europe

The objective of the INTERPRISE programme is to stimulate contacts between small and medium-sized enterprises in the Community. Three regions of three countries of the Community must band together to organise a meeting between firms, in order to set up commercial, technical, or financial cooperation etc. A programme between three regions of the Community may also include one or more regions outside the Community.

Projects supported in the context of INTERPRISE must include at least the following phases: identification and selection of firms in the regions concerned interested in establishing a cooperation agreement with other participating regions; publication and distribution of a catalogue containing cooperation profiles; organisation of an event, in the context of which direct contacts are set up between participating firms (appointments planned in advance, interpreters present).

The following events are being organised as part of INTERPRISE in April and May 1994:

### **INTERPRISE RHONE-ALPES AERONAUTIQUE 94**

*Meeting dates:* 5 to 7 April 1994 in Dieulefit (Drôme, France)

*Countries involved:* France, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium, Canada, USA

*Business sectors:* aircraft industry

*Organisers:* ENTERPRISE RHONE-ALPES INTERNATIONAL — Anne CHAIZE — 78, route de Paris — F — 69260 LYON/Charbonnières — Tel.: (+33)7834 8348 — Fax: (+33)7834 5985

<sup>5</sup> This guide is on sale from the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities — L-2985 Luxembourg — for 11.50 ECUs (ISBN 92-826-7347-2)

#### **INTERPRISE BELGIUM — FRANCE — ITALY**

*Meeting dates:* 17 and 18 April 1994 in Ghent (Belgium)

*Countries involved:* Belgium, France Italy

*Business sectors:* manufacturing and services

*Organisers:* ECONOMISCHE RAAD VOOR OOST-VLAANDEREN — André BUYST, Chantal GEYSEN — Kouter, 4 — B-9000 GENT — Tel.: (+32)91 235783 — Fax: (+32)91 236613

#### **ECOPARTNERS**

*Meeting dates:* 18 and 19 April 1994 in AMIENS (France)

*Countries involved:* France, Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy

*Business sectors:* Management of industrial, technical and urban problems relating to the environment

*Organisers:* AGENCE REGIONALE DE L'EXPORTATION (ARE) — Bruno POISSON, Nicole NGO LIPEM — 36, rue des Otages — F-80037 AMIENS Cedex 01 — France — Tel.: (+33)2282 8082 — Fax: (+33)2291 2904

#### **TRANSCHANNEL 94**

*Meeting dates:* 20 to 22 April 1994 in TOURNAI (Belgium)

*Countries involved:* Belgium, France, United Kingdom

*Business sectors:* multiple sectors

*Organisers:* ORGA EXPO asbl — Maurice DELBROUCQ — rue du Follet, 2b — B-7540 TOURNAI (KAIN) — Tel.: (+32)6925 7111 — Fax: (+32)6925 7139

#### **EUROPALLIANCES**

*Meeting dates:* 5 and 6 May 1994 in PALMA DE MALLORCA (Spain)

*Countries involved:* France, United Kingdom, Belgium, Portugal, Romania, Hungary, Algeria

*Business sectors:* all, with emphasis on biotechnologies and advanced telecommunications

*Organisers:* CARREFOUR EUROPEEN DES ENTREPRISES — Jean-Marie LEPEULE — 17, rue Georges BIZET — F-751176 PARIS — France — Tel.: (+33)1-4720 2292 — Fax: (+33)1-47200409

#### **INTERPARTENARIAT ANTILLES — GUYANA 94**

*Meeting dates:* 4 to 10 May 1994 in Martinique, Guyana and Guadeloupe

*Countries involved:* Belgium, Spain, France, Portugal

*Business sectors:* multiple sectors

*Organisers and permanent secretariat:* ASSEMBLEE DES CHAMBRES FRANCAISES DE COMMERCE ET D'INDUSTRIE — Bureau de Bruxelles — Henri MALOSSE — Avenue des Arts 1-2 — B-1040 BRUSSELS Belgium — Tel.: (+32)2-221 0411 — Fax: (+32)2-217 6987

#### **EURO-ARTISAN**

*Meeting dates:* 18 and 19 May 1994 in INVERNESS (Scotland)

*Countries involved:* United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, France, Greece

*Business sectors:* crafts, ceramics, glass, jewellery, textiles, toys, gifts, leather, wood

*Organisers:* EURO INFO CENTRE — MANAGED BY HIGHLAND OPPORTUNITY LTD — Hugh F. BLACK — Development Department — Highland Regional Council — Glenurquhart Road -UK-INVERNESS IV35 NX — Tel.: (+44)463-702563 — Fax: (+44)463-710848

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In order to consolidate and continue its actions in favour of craft trades and small firms, the European Commission (DG XXIII) had decided to organise in Berlin, on **26 and 27 September 1994, the Second European Conference on Craft Trades and Small Businesses**. This conference will be preceded by colloquia which will allow definition of the most suitable measures to develop the competitiveness of SMEs and craft businesses.

- **SIMPLIFICATION AND REDUCTION OF THE BURDEN OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMALITIES ON SMEs AND CRAFT BUSINESSES:** 21 and 22 April in Charleroi (Belgium).

*Organisers:* Office de Création d'Entreprises, Mrs. CECCONELLO, B-6000 Charleroi (Belgium) — Tel.: (+32)7-413945 — Fax: (+32)71-422803

- **EUROPEAN IN-COMPANY EDUCATION MEETINGS:** on 5 and 6 May 1994 in Charleville-Mézières (France).

*Organisers:* SESAM (European sandwich courses in firms) — Mr. Gilles ROUSSEL, 6 rue de Braque, F-75003 Paris (France) — Tel.: (+33)1-4454 3636 — Fax: (+33)1-4454 3639 — and the Champagne-Ardenne Regional Council.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### PAN EUROPEAN FORUM ON CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SUBCONTRACTING BORDEAUX, 26 and 27 MAY 1994

The quest for increased competitiveness is a challenge facing each business individually. However, stimulation of inter-industrial cooperation at European level is an appropriate means for stepping up this competitiveness, and encouraging the economic recovery. As part of its cooperative actions, the European Union recently focused its attention on subcontracting, which is central to the new relationships which are being formed in industry.

In the context of transnational subcontracting, five key sectors were identified as priority areas, including construction, which is one of the main sectors, due to its possibilities for expansion across borders, and its ability to sustain economic activity in Europe.

Organised by Cobaty International with the active support of the European Commission (DG III — Industry and DG XXIII Enterprise Policy, and the Pan-European Forum on construction industry subcontracting), which will take place on 26 and 27 May 1994 in Bordeaux, is based on three round tables on themes covering all the problems posed in the sector:

- specific features of subcontracting in the construction industry;
- conditions for access to the construction market;
- Europe, recovery, subcontracting.

These three topics will enable those responsible for the various industrial sectors within the Commission and the representatives of the large European organisations concerned to explain their position, as well as allowing wide-ranging discussion with the industry professionals present.

- **Organisers: COBATY INTERNATIONAL**  
Bordeaux Congrès Service — Palais des Congrès — Avenue Jean Gabriel Domergue — F33300 Bordeaux Lac — FRANCE — Tel.: (+33)5611 8888 — Fax (+33)5643 1776.
- **For any information relating to the forum:** please contact the following people at the European Commission: DG III — Construction: Mr. R. CARONNA — Tel.: (+32)2-296 1416 — Fax: (+32)2-296 1065; Mrs. C.LIPCHITZ — Tel.: (+32)2-295 0405 — DG XXIII — Subcontracting: Mr. T. KALLIANOS — Tel.: (+32)2-295 8591 — Mrs. A. SODRO — Tel.: (+32)2-296 5893 — Fax: (+32)2-296 6048.

\* EURO-INFO is a newsletter for small businesses and craft trades. It is distributed free of charge to business organisations, associations and groups and to correspondents of the Business Cooperation Centre (BRE) to members of the BC-NET (Business Cooperation Network) and to EURO-INFO CENTRES and to SME executives who request a copy. EURO-Info appears 10 times per year.

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Distributed by: