



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE GENERAL I B

EXTERNAL RELATIONS: SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN, MIDDLE AND NEAR EAST, LATIN AMERICA,  
SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND NORTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

Latin America Directorate

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### URB-AL /INFO

#### INFORMATION LETTER N° 1

#### A Summary of the URB-AL programme

The URB-AL programme is a **horizontal programme of decentralized cooperation** which applies to **towns, regions and other local and territorial communities of the European Community and Latin America.**

Its **objective is to develop a direct and lasting partnership between the local participants** by means of meetings, exchanges, transfer of knowledge and savoir-faire.

This partnership will rely on **the creation of networks** composed of towns and local communities of the two regions, around topics of common interest where cooperation between Europe and Latin American can be fruitful. These topics should be of priority importance and innovative vis-à-vis the major human, social, economic and cultural questions which affect these towns. **These sectoral networks will constitute the basis for a lasting relationship..**

In December 1995, the URB-AL Programme was adopted by the Commission, following the Member States' Representatives' approval. A public presentation was made in Naples on 7th June 1996 in the presence of many persons representing the local European and Latin American communities, as well as experts in urban problems.

URB-AL will be **operational** by the end of the **first half of 1997**, taking into account the time necessary for **setting up** the support structures and administrative rules. The "support structures" will be the **High Level Technical Committee** and the **External Secretariat.**

## **The Activities of the Programme**

The activities foreseen for URB-AL for the next **four years** of its duration, consist principally in:

- the organisation of political and technical **biennial meetings**, between the Mayors and representatives of the towns of Europe and Latin America.
- the constitution of 8 sectoral networks, with the participation of the local communities of the two regions. These networks will be in the framework for activities organized on topics relating to urban and regional problems.

## **Sectoral Networks**

The conception of the URB-AL programme is based on the **creation of a network of local communities** with a view to stimulating the rise of a **system of decentralized cooperation** whose activities will be initiated during the seminars.

These **seminars** will call for the discussion of the chosen topic, based on the analysis of a source document and the constitution of a **network organized around a common interest project**, to include various activities.

The **common interest project** will be proposed to the Commission by the organizing town which will act as co-ordinator for the network. In this context, the management of each network will be undertaken by the town, or other local community which is at the origin of the initiative. The **common interest project** will consist of activities defined by the partners at the time of the seminar and will lead in particular to **exchanges of experts, and some pilot projects**.

The projects will receive a **financial contribution** from the **Community**, either within the financing of the existing **Programme** or of **other Community programmes**.

After consulting the bodies involved, the Commission has defined the topics of the network and selected the organizing towns for the first two seminars. This is in order to ensure that the first two networks are set up correctly and to develop an appropriate methodology for the follow-up of the programme.

The **first network** will be devoted to the question of “cities and the drugs problem”. Essentially, it will tackle the role of the local communities in the matter of prevention of the consumption of drugs and the curing of addiction<sup>1</sup>. The Commission has given the town of Santiago de Chile the responsibility for managing this seminar and organizing the network on this topic. It is scheduled for the second half of 1997.

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<sup>1</sup> The action of the local communities of the two regions on the topic of drugs should be according to the orientation lines defined during the EU/Rio Group summit which took place in April 1996 transferring in a concrete manner the problems from a political level to those Civil society participants.

The **second network** will deal with the theme of “the conservation of urban history”, which covers the whole question of patrimony in the broadest terms. The city of **Vicenza** will be responsible for managing the activities of the network on this topic. This Seminar is due to take place in the course of the first half of 1998.

These choices are justified by the importance of drugs and cultural history as contemporary problems. There will also be the possibility for potential exchanges of cooperation in these fields.

The Commission will pass to local communities the initiative for the other six proposals and will allow them time to make their propositions. To this end, **calls for an expression of interest** will be launched at the appropriate time. The first call for tender will take place in the **first half of 1997** and will be widely circulated. The criteria for selection of proposals for the network and topics will be established in consultation with the High Level Technical Committee, taking into account their interest and topicality. Furthermore, the projects benefitting from financial support from the Commission will be selected according to the traditional criteria applicable and with respect for equilibrium - especially geographic.

In order to obtain the desired impact, the cooperation programme should be the collective work of all the members of the network. The seminars will consolidate the common interests and capacities of those taking part, after which the candidates should present their proposals to the Commission.

### **The Support Structures of the Programme**

#### ***The High Level Technical Committee***

**The High Level Technical Committee** will be composed of 8 persons from **the European Community and from Latin America**, experts in the fields of **urban problems and of cooperation**. The Committee will have the responsibility of **Adviser** to the Commission in the identification of topics and participants and in evaluating proposals of projects which are submitted.

The **constitution** of the Committee has been the subject of broad consultation, both by the Commission and the bodies concerned and is, at this stage, **practically finalized**. A list of 8 experts will be communicated in the next edition of the information letter of the URB-AL programme.

The **first meeting** of the members of the High Level Technical Committee is scheduled for the end of the year - probably in **November**.

#### ***External Secretariat***

Situated in Brussels, the **External Secretariat** will be responsible for supervising the development of the programme. Its tasks will include information, promotion and the follow up of activities.

The Commission will make an outside organization responsible for the management of this External Secretariat. To this end, a **public call for tender** will be launched in the course of the first three months of 1997.

Taking into account the time necessary to set up such a structure, which will in all probability not be operational before May 1997, a **provisional structure** should be set up **as soon as possible**.

The next information letter on URB-AL will be available from 30th November 1996 and will also be accessible via the informatics network of DG IB.

For further information, please contact:

**Commission of the European Communities**  
**Directorate General IB: External Relations**  
**Latin America Directorate**  
**URB-AL Programme**  
**Rue de la Loi 200**  
**B-1049 Brussels**  
**Tel: (32 2) 299 07 49**  
**Fax: (32 2) 299 39 41**