



Cohesion Fund: initial assessment for 1996

In 1996 the Commission committed ECU 2.44 billion, representing all the resources available from the Cohesion Fund, for financing transport infrastructure and environmental projects in the Community's four least prosperous Member States, Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland. As expected, an even split between the two areas of assistance, i.e. 50% for transport infrastructure and 50% for environmental projects, was virtually achieved. The breakdown between beneficiary Member States is within the anticipated ranges with Spain receiving 55% of total aid, Greece 18%, Portugal 18% and Ireland 9%.

Spain

In the environmental field nearly half the assistance to Spain in 1996 was for projects to improve and treat waste water. Some 40 projects were adopted to boost supplies of drinking water, mainly in the Madrid region and the Balearic and Canary Islands. Other environmental projects cover the treatment of waste, improvement of the urban environment and reafforestation of areas suffering from erosion and desertification. In the field of transport, four-fifths of the assistance went to road schemes such as the Rias Bajas motorway connecting Galicia to the Spanish motorway system and with the major routes to France.

Portugal

Environmental projects adopted in Portugal in 1996 had three main goals: to provide infrastructure for drinking water supplies (in Oporto, Lisbon and Barlavento), to treat waste water (clean-up of the Leça and Trancoa rivers)

and to manage urban waste (Valorsul and Limarsul intercommunal networks around Lisbon and an incineration plant at Oporto). In the field of transport, nearly half the assistance was allocated to the new bridge over the Tagus and the remainder to various major road and rail links designed to integrate Portugal into the trans-European networks.

Greece

Two-thirds of the assistance for environmental projects in Greece was allocated to waste water treatment. Across the whole of the country the Cohesion Fund is to be used to finance the provision of water supplies and waste water collection together with the construction of biological sewage treatment plants. In the field of transport, nearly two-thirds of the amount earmarked was for the road network, principally the PATHE (Patras-Athens-Thessaloniki-Evzoni) motorway. Improvements in rail and air transport were also programmed, chiefly the station at Thriassio, the Athens-Corinth link and Spata airport at Athens.

Ireland

On the environmental side, the priorities continued to be waste water treatment and the improvement of the drinking water supply. A new trend has become apparent however: developing water saving schemes, which are often more cost effective than the construction of new infrastructure. With regard to transport, in Ireland as elsewhere, the bulk of the assistance was for investment in roads (the Dublin-Cork-Limerick and Dublin-Belfast trunk roads, Kildare by-pass).

Adoption of five new programmes

The Commission recently approved Community funding for five new programmes: three under the Urban Community Initiative, one for airport infrastructure in southern Italy and a global grant in northern Greece.

The three Urban programmes will help in revitalizing the following districts:

- Delfshaven in Rotterdam (NL): Community grant of ECU 6.5 million
- Kanaalstraat and surrounding area in Utrecht (NL): ECU 6.5 million
- "Zentrumsnahe Nordvorstadt in Zwickau (D): ECU 9.7 million

The airport infrastructure programme for Italy under Objective 1 (ECU 5 million) will provide assistance for the development and upkeep of runways at Bari and Palermo-Punta Raisi airports.

Lastly, the global grant for private infrastructure/facilities in northern Greece (ECU 15 million) replaces the measure bearing the same name under the operational programme 'Industry and services' adopted in 1994. In practice it involves developing joint services for small businesses covering transport, technology transfer and so on.

For further details on these programmes, contact L. Nigri, DG XVI/F/2 (Fax +32-3-396. 60.03) or consult the ERDF pages at DG XVI's Internet site (electronic address: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg16/dg16home.htm>).

In brief

European Summit of Regions and Cities

The Committee of the Regions is organizing a European summit of regions and cities to be held in Amsterdam on 15 to 17 May 1997. This event is designed to enable representatives of the Union's regional and local authorities to convey a strong political message to all their governments a month before work on the Intergovernmental Conference is completed. For information: fax: +32-2-282.20.85.

BIC Congress, Edinburgh

The sixth annual congress of the Business and Innovation Centres (known as BICs) will be held soon on 29 and 30 May in Edinburgh, Scotland. The task of BICs is to assist the setting up and development of small and medium-sized innovative businesses. Commission support for BICs dates from 1984. Currently there are over 140 such centres operating in the Community. For details and registration apply to European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN): fax: +32-2-772.95.74; E-mail: ebn@attmail.com

Europartenariat for Greece and the Massif-Central

The next Europartenariat events will take place in Pireaus, Greece, on 23 and 24 June and in Clermont-Ferrand, France, on 16 and 17 October. The Europartenariat events are trade meetings organized with the support of the Commission to encourage technological, commercial and financial cooperation between businesses in the host region and in the rest of the Community and elsewhere. For information and registration apply to Europartenariat Greece: Exporter's Association of Northern Greece: fax: +30 1 4227369; E-mail: ephellas@hyper.gr
Europartenariat Massif-Central: tel: +33 4 73 31 84 57; E-mail: europartenariat@ard-auvergne.com

Call for proposals under ECOS-Ouverture II

In Inforegio News No 36 of January 1997 we covered the main points of the new ECOS-Ouverture II cooperation programme. The call for proposals under this programme was published in the Official Journal of the European Communities of 22 April 1997 (OJ C125). An information pack will be available in early May on request by fax to: +32-2-295.01.38/39/40 (quoting European Commission, DG XVI, Article 10, external interregional cooperation) as well as on the Article 10 pages of the DG XVI's Internet site: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg16/art10/art10home.htm>



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