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ECOS-Ouverture II

For more than 5 years now the Community has been supporting cooperation projects between regions and cities of the Union and those in non-Community countries under the ECOS and Ouverture programmes. For 1997-98 the Commission will very shortly be launching a new call for proposals under ECOS-Ouverture II, endowed with ECU 17 million from the European Regional Development Fund (Article 10), supplemented by ECU 7 million from the Phare programme. The main features of Ouverture II are:

Geographical cover

The whole territory of the Union remains eligible, while outside the Union the programme with henceforth cover not only the central European countries (CECs) but also those of the Mediterranean basin (MED), as well as the newly independent states of the ex-USSR (NIS).

Scope

- Five areas of action for projects are being offered:
- improving the working methods of public authorities;
 - improving access for small businesses to the European market and improvement of services available to them in the field of innovation;
 - development of local potential, particularly for the purpose of job creation;
 - creation of resource centres to support the integration of women into economic life;
 - safeguarding and improving the environment.

Partners

Each cooperation project should involve 3 to 7 partners from at least two Member States and at least one non-Community country. Half of the partners from the Union must be eligible under Objectives 1, 2, 5(b) or 6 of the Structural Funds.

Selection

- The selection of projects will be on the basis of:
- the number, diversity and involvement of the partners;
 - the quality of the working methods proposed;
 - the scale of the exchange of know-how;
 - the expected results;
 - suitable size and transparency of budgets allocated to projects.

Budget

- Two types of project are envisaged:
- Large-scale projects, which will each receive Community funding of between ECU 200 000 and ECU 600 000 from the ERDF for the partners in the Union and ECU 50 000 to 200 000 from Phare and other financial instruments (TACIS, MEDA) for the partners in non-Community countries.
 - Micro-projects (CECs only), which will enable local and regional authorities in central Europe which have not yet organized a cooperation project with the Union to benefit from maximum funding from Phare of ECU 50 000.

Call for proposals

Proposals for cooperation projects should be sent to the Commission by 1 July 1997 at the latest.

For more information

An information dossier will soon be available on request by fax to +32-2-295.01.38/39/40 (mentioning European Commission, DG XVI, Article 10, external interregional cooperation), as well as on the Article-10 pages of the Internet site of DG XVI: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dgl6/art10/arhome.htm>

Desperately seeking partners

Proposals for projects under the Recite II programme have to be submitted to the Commission in the next few weeks (see Inforegio News No 33). The call for proposals under ECOS-Ouverture II will be published very soon (see article on the other side) and another under Pacte II will follow. What exactly do all these Community programmes cover? How can one find partners for these cooperation programmes? What methodology should one adopt to put together a viable project? And what are the criteria which will guide the Commission in selecting projects for funding by the Community? These are the main questions which the forthcoming DIRECTORIA event can help to answer.

The next DIRECTORIA event will be held from 24 to 26 February in Strasbourg. It is open to chief executives and other leaders of local and regional authorities as well as to consultants interested in cooperation among local authorities. It is not too late to decide to attend, since the registration deadline has been put back to 14 February (for those wishing to take part in the partnership exchange) and 20 February for all other potential participants.

In comparison with previous DIRECTORIAS, this meeting is marked by being held in Strasbourg rather than Brussels, the reduced participation fees so that the largest possible number can take part, and also the extent of the services

offered. On 24 February there will be the usual information workshops on the goals and methodology of the Recite II, ECOS-Ouverture II and probably Pacte II programmes, but there will also be sessions devoted to the development and operational management of a project, the role of women as players in regional development and explanations of what expenditure is eligible for Community funding. On 25 February the partnership exchange will start; its purpose is to bring into contact, via preprogrammed meetings, all the participants sharing the same concerns. At the same time, there will be presentations of other programmes funded by the Community (Leader, Life, Kaleidoscope, Leonardo, Europartenariat, etc). On 25 and 26 February, interested participants will also be able to meet Commission representatives and bodies providing technical assistance under such programmes as Recite II and ECOS-Ouverture, in order to discuss whether projects meet the guidelines set out in the calls for proposals.

Over the three days, each participant will be given a logical path to follow from general information to detailed and specific advice, passing via contacts with other regional and local authorities and potential partners.

Registration and additional information: DIRECTORIA V, 74 rue Ermesinde, L-1469 Luxembourg, tel: +352-22.98.03, fax: +352-22.98.04. The registration form can also be obtained via Internet on: <http://www.directoria.org>.

New programmes

Between 10 December 1996 and 10 January 1997, the Commission approved financing from the European Regional Development Fund for four new programmes. To obtain information sheets on these programmes,

contact L. Nigri, DG XVI/F/2, (fax: +32-2-296.60.03) or consult the "ERDF programmes" pages on the Internet site of DG XVI (electronic address: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dgl6/dgl6home.htm>).

Country / regions / topics concerned	Forms of intervention	Total public investment (ECU million)	Contribution of the Structural Funds (ECU million)
I (Obj 1) Mezzogiorno, energy	Operational programme	281.0	170.0
E (Obj 1) PITMA II, improvement of the environment in industry	Operational programme	85.3	59.7
IT/Switzerland (Valle d'Aosta-Lombardia-Piemonte-Bolzano)	Community Initiative Interreg II	48.7	20.0
D/Poland (Brandenburg)	Community Initiative Interreg II	98.0	73.5

Forum on cohesion

In the wake of publication of the first report on economic and social cohesion required under the Maastricht Treaty, the Commission is organizing a "cohesion forum" in Brussels from 28 to 30 April 1997. More than 1000 people active in the political, economic and social spheres are invited to this meeting, the aim of which is to examine the success or otherwise of Union policies on cohesion, to look

at ways of improving these policies in the future, and to evaluate the impact of other Community and national policies affecting this process.

For more information on the subjects to be discussed at this meeting, see also the programme for the forum on Internet: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg16/agenda/forum.htm>.



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Directorate-General for Regional Policy and Cohesion

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