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Towards balanced and sustainable spatial development in Europe

The European Commission is organising a Forum to bring together and evaluate the results of consultations on the first draft of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), to be held in Brussels on 2 and 3 February 1999.

The Forum will comprise three sessions covering the following topics:

- strategic guidelines for balanced and sustainable European spatial planning;
- an initial evaluation of regional development programmes receiving assistance from the ERDF (Community Initiative 'Interreg II C', pilot schemes and Terra projects);
- the territorial impact of Community policies.

The Commission will avail of this opportunity to contribute to the debate on the ESDP, which is to serve as a basis for improving cooperation on regional planning in the European Union.

Official opinions on the first draft of the ESDP,

adopted at Noordwijk (NL) in June 1997 by EU ministers responsible for spatial planning, were issued by the Member States, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee. In order to broaden the debate, the Commission organised a series of seminars in 1998 on detailed aspects of regional development planning in Europe.

After the Brussels Forum, the Spatial Development Committee, composed of senior officials from the Member States and the European Commission, will forward a revised version of the ESDP to the ministers concerned.

A detailed Forum programme and registration form can be found on the Inforegio web site (under New), or can be requested by fax from: +32.2.296.60.03. Further information on Interreg II C and Terra can be found at: <<http://inforegio.cec.eu.int/interreg2c>> and <<http://inforegio.cec.eu.int/terra>>

Reform of the Structural Funds: the Italian response

In the run-up to the new 2000-06 programming period of the Structural Funds, the Italian Treasury organised a seminar in Catania on 2, 3 and 4 December to consider new investment strategies for the Mezzogiorno and Central and Northern Italy

The seminar provided an opportunity for the Italian central, regional and local authorities, social and economic actors and the European Commission to

pool information. Discussion focused mainly on the proposals set out by the Treasury in its paper "One hundred ideas for development".

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Urban development: In search of 'good practice'...

As a follow-up to the communication adopted on 28 October 1998, "Sustainable urban development in the European Union: A Framework for Action", the European Commission will continue to provide support for studies, pilot projects and exchange of experience on urban issues. Below are details of two such projects already underway.

Urban Audit

The urban audit is a pilot project launched by the Commission in June 1998 under Article 10 of the ERDF Regulation. Its purpose is to assess the quality of life in EU towns and cities by collecting comparable data from towns, urban areas and larger conurbations.

An initial group of 58 towns and cities were included in the first phase, which is expected to last a year. The principle aim during this period is to devise an appropriate methodology. The results will be put together in the form of a 'yearbook' which can be updated annually. Some results will be made available on the Internet with the consent of the city authorities concerned. The indicators used include socio-economic data, training and education, the environment, culture and leisure. The urban audit should also facilitate easier exchange of information between cities.

Further information can be requested by fax from Mrs Grubert, DG XVI/A.1: +32.2.296.32.73.

Good Practice Database

A database on good practice in relation to sustainable urban development has been set up by the European Commission on the Europa website. The projects selected for inclusion are predominantly of an integrated nature, having been designed to tackle several problems simultaneously (environmental protection, job creation, economic and social development, institutional issues, etc.). Each project is presented in standardised form in English but searches can be made in most EU languages, using a series of key words. Visitors are encouraged to contribute to the development of the site by adding details of new, interesting initiatives. The procedure to be followed is explained at the database website: <<http://europa.eu.int/comm/urban>>

Further information can be obtained from DG XI by fax on: +32.2.296.95.54 or from DG XVI by fax on: +32.2.296.32.73.

Do you appreciate ERDF publications?

Over 40 000 people have joined the mailing list for the Inforegio News monthly newsletter and other publications on European Union regional policy. A survey carried out last summer reveals a level of satisfaction of 75%.

In June 1998 a questionnaire was attached to the Inforegio News newsletter. The aim was two-fold: to seek readers' opinions on DG XVI publications and to update the mailing list.

The majority of those on the mailing list are drawn from local (14500), regional (3000) and national authorities or administrations, as well as from the national or regional press (4000), universities and study or documentation centres (3000), consultancy firms (3200), development agencies (2000) and chambers of commerce (1100).

Countries outside the EU, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, are showing an increasing level of interest in regional policy, with a combined mailing list of almost 2000.

In all 3163 replies to the questionnaire were received, close to 9% of subscribers, which is a high percentage for surveys of this kind. The general level of satisfaction with DG XVI publications is almost 75%.

Of those who responded, finally, 40% said they were interested in, and would like to receive, information via the Internet.



European Commission
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