



Structural Fund Actions 2000-2006: Schedule for the Formal Adoption and Implementation of the Regulations

Following the conclusions reached by the Heads of State and Government at the Berlin summit, the Council of Ministers has adopted the draft regulations on the reform of the Structural Funds for the period 2000-2006. The final texts were forwarded to the European Parliament on 14 April, which will discuss them during its final plenary session from 3 to 7 May 1999. The approval of these texts during this session will ensure a smooth transition towards the new programming period, 2000-2006. Once this process has been completed, the texts will be returned to the Council, who must formally adopt the new regulations, and the Commission, who must take the necessary decisions to implement interventions.

Eligible areas and allocation of funds

Immediately following definitive adoption of the regulations by the Council, the European Commission will inform Member States about:

- List of eligible Objective 1 regions, including those which will be accorded transitional status;
- Population coverage per Member State for Objective 2 regions (the definitive list of eligible Objective 2 regions will be definitively adopted by the Commission on the basis of proposals from the Member States);

- Amounts available for each Objective (distinguishing between the amount to be allocated to eligible areas, and that which will be accorded to regions in transition);
- Final adoption of the Guidelines for Objective 1, 2 and 3 programmes.

Following negotiations with the Member States, the Commission must then establish the list of new Objective 2 regions. A formal decision should be taken in this regard before the end of 1999.

Structural Funds programming

Structural Funds programming for Objectives 1, 2 and 3 will begin by the presentation of development or restructuring plans by the Member States. With regard to Objectives 1 and 2, the plans must be forwarded to the European Commission not later than four months after the establishment of the list of eligible areas (unless otherwise agreed with the Member State concerned).

Each plan must include:

- an analysis of the regional situation relative to the Objective concerned;
- an analysis of priority needs;
- the strategy and envisaged priorities for action;
- an indicative financing plan.

The above will be based on the appropriate national and regional priorities and the Commission guidelines.

The plans will be drawn up by the responsible authorities designated for this purpose by the Member State. Before submitting the plan to the Commission, the Member State will consult all relevant regional partners (for example, regional or local authorities, the economic and social partners etc.)

The programmes will be presented as single programming documents (SPDs) or as Community support frameworks (CSFs).

- For all regions accorded Objective 1 status, the Commission will establish Community support frameworks (CSFs). However, if the Community contribution is less than or does not substantially exceed EUR 1 billion, the Commission will consider draft single programming documents submitted by the Member States.
- In general, assistance under new Objective 2 and 3 regions shall take the form of single programming documents (SPDs); however, if the Member States so wish, they can choose to establish Community support frameworks (CSFs).

If a single programming document is to be used, the regional development plan submitted by the Member State will be treated as a draft SPD.

If assistance is to take the form of a CSF, the Member States may present draft operational programmes at the same time as the plan.

The Commission shall take a decision on the Structural Funds contribution to the CSFs and SPDs not later than 5 months after receiving the relevant plan. When adopting its decision on a CSF, the Commission will also approve the operational programmes presented with the plan.

Finally, each Member State or implementation body will approve all supplementary programming information establishing the measures envisaged to implement the strategy and priority actions.

This document will be forwarded to the Commission for information purposes not later than 3 months after the approval of the operational programme or SPD.

Community Support Framework:

the document approved by the Commission, in agreement with the Member State concerned, following appraisal of the development plan submitted by the Member State, and containing the strategy and the priorities for Structural Funds actions in the Member State, their specific objectives, and the contribution of the Funds and other financial resources. This document is divided into priority areas and implemented by means of one or more operational programmes.

Single Programming Document:

one single document, approved by the Commission, and containing the same information included in a Community support framework and in an operational programme.

