

Research and regional policy - forging new synergies

Regions: Statistical Yearbook 2001

Eurostat has just published the 2001 edition of its yearbook on the EU regions. It contains a wealth of economic and social indicators illustrating both the regional diversity of the Union and the links forged between regions in recent years. Topics include agriculture, population, GDP, employment, unemployment, science and technology, tourism and transport. For the first time, the yearbook includes indicators on the 53 regions in the applicant countries of central and eastern Europe.

Study on island and remote regions

The Commission has decided to finance a study on the EU's island regions, including its outermost regions, identified by the Second Cohesion Report as one of the ten priorities for regional policy after 2006.

The goal is to present an objective analysis of the situation, covering the inherent strengths and weaknesses of islands and their specific needs. The results are expected in the second half of 2002 and will nurture the debate launched at the Cohesion Forum on the proposals that should be included in the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion in 2004.

For additional information, see: www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/

The European Commission recently adopted a communication on the regional dimension of research in Europe. It is meant to encourage the regions to build more research and innovation capacity, especially by combining aid from the Structural Funds with the new options available in the European Research Area.

The communication is based on recognition of the regions' increasingly important role in the Union's transition to a knowledge-based society and economy. But the EU's regions are still very unequal in terms of technological development, potential for innovation and availability of skilled labour.

After focusing for years on financing the construction of the physical infrastructure necessary for R&TD, Structural Fund aid in Objective 1 regions will from now on be directed more towards building integrated regional strategies to promote innovation and develop partnerships between researchers and business. In this context, the new communication highlights the different options open to the regions (especially these eligible under Objective 1) in the European Research Area.

A special effort will be made to involve researchers and organisations from less-developed regions in the new R&TD framework programme 2002-2006. They will be offered special grants to improve training and mobility. The Structural Funds will provide direct additional financing to help Objective 1 regions participate in the transnational projects implemented under the framework programme.

There are also plans for coordinating and networking the programmes implemented in the Member States, including regional programmes. These measures should promote synergies between less-developed (Objective 1) regions and advanced regions.

As regards the most remote regions of the EU, the Commission has launched a number of studies to identify areas of research suitable for development in collaboration with the rest of the EU.

Explaining the value of this strategy, Commissioner Barnier noted that the concept of the European Research Area now provides a framework within which R&TD projects in the regions can be directed towards common goals, in an approach going hand in hand with the Structural Funds initiatives for innovation and regional development.

For more information, see: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/pdf/com-2001-549-en.pdf>

Assessment of the Territorial Employment Pacts

The financing period for the 89 Territorial Employment Pacts (TEP) implemented under the Structural Funds is drawing to a close. A number of reports and studies have recently been made available on the Internet, including an end-of-period report on the pacts entitled "State of Play", a series of "Best Practice" factsheets, a survey of the TEP approach entitled, "Four years of experimental local development policies to promote employment" (June 1997-June 2001)", an evaluation of the TEP methods, "Method for Innovation" and a summary of the answers to the questionnaire entitled "Pacts have the word" (March 2001).

For more information, go to: <http://www.europa.eu.int/pacts/EN/news.html>

Urban II for Germany and France

The Commission has approved nine urban development programmes for Germany and two for France for the 2000-06 period.

Germany. The programmes cover parts of Leipzig, Gera, Berlin, Kiel, Saarbrücken/Dudweiler, Neubrandenburg, Mannheim/Ludwigshafen, Kassel and Dessau. They will focus primarily on promoting entrepreneurship and employment, regenerating urban areas, improving social, cultural, tourism and recreational facilities and tackling social exclusion and inter-ethnic tensions.

France. The French regeneration programmes adopted by the European Commission in October cover certain neighbourhoods in Bastia and Clichy-sous-Bois/Montfermeil. Several priorities have been set: improving quality of life and the urban environment, regenerating and promoting economic activity, providing equal access to knowledge, developing infrastructure and promoting mobility within urban areas.

2001-06 programmes	Total cost*	Total Structural Funds financing*
Germany		
Berlin	19.8	14.9
Dessau	19.8	14.9
Gera	19.8	14.9
Kassel	42.0	9.9
Kiel	19.8	9.9
Leipzig	19.8	14.9
Mannheim/Ludwigshafen	21.4	9.9
Neubrandenburg	19.8	14.8
Saarbrücken/Dudweiler	22.5	9.9
France		
Bastia	31	12
Clichy/Montfermeil	35	13

* EUR million

For more information, go to: www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbnews/new_en.htm

Interreg III: Germany and the Baltic region

The Commission has adopted five Interreg III programmes. Four concern Germany and some of its neighbours (Interreg IIIA - cross-border cooperation), and the fifth concerns the Baltic region (Interreg IIIB - transnational cooperation).

Germany. Two programmes involve Germany and Poland and are intended to develop infrastructure and the economy on both sides of the border. The regions selected are Brandenburg and Lubusky for the first programme and Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Zachodniopomorsky for the second. A third programme covers the regions of Lower Saxony in Germany and Ems-Dollart in the Netherlands. The last programme covers the "Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein" region, straddling Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Liechtenstein.

Baltic region. This programme covers Germany (north-east), Denmark, Finland and Sweden plus Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Russia. Priorities include development of tourism in coastal areas, networking of the main urban and rural centres, promotion of IT and inter-modal transport.

2001-06 programmes	Total cost*	Total Structural Funds financing*
Brandenburg/Lubuskie	131.79	96.21
Brandenburg/Zachodniopomorskie	110.78	83.09
Lower Saxony/Ems-Dollart	86.75	35.45
Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein	36.24	17.48
Baltic region	186.51	97.11

* EUR million

For more information, see: www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbnews/new_en.htm

Objective 1: transport development programme for southern Italy

The European Commission has approved a programme to improve transport systems in the less-developed Italian regions covered by Objective 1 during the 2000-06 period. The programme has a total budget of EUR 4.28 billion, of which EUR 1.801 billion will be contributed by the Community.

For details, see: www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbpro/Prosr/prog_en.cfm



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