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The 70 towns and cities supported by Urban II

Belgium: Bruxelles-Capitale, Antwerpen, Sambreville

Denmark: Århus, Gellerup

Germany: Berlin, Bremerhaven, Dessau, Dortmund, Gera, Kassel, Kiel, Leipzig, Luckenwalde, Mannheim, Neubrandenburg, Saarbrücken

Greece: Perama, Komotini, Iraklio

Spain: S.Cristóbal de la Laguna, Pamplona, Orense, Gijón, Teruel, S. Adrià de Besòs, Jaén, S. Sebastián-Pasajes, Cáceres, Granada

France: Clichy-Montfermeil, Le Mantois, Grigny/Viry, Val-de-Seine, Bastia, Le Havre, Strasbourg, Grenoble, Bordeaux

Ireland: Ballyfermot

Italy: Carrara, Caserta, Crotona, Genova, Milano, Misterbianco, Mola di Bari, Pescara, Taranto, Torino

Netherlands: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Heerlen

Austria: Wien, Graz,

Portugal: Amadora, Lisboa, Porto

Finland: Helsinki/Vantaa

Sweden: Göteborg

United Kingdom: West Wrexham, Belfast, Bristol, Burnley, Halifax, Hetton & Murton, Normanton in Derby, Peterborough, Stockwell, Thames Gateway, Clyde Waterfront

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

The European Commission recently approved the first four Urban II programmes for the sustainable development of urban areas in France and the Netherlands. The new generation of Urban programmes follows the Urban I programmes for 1994-99, which raised living standards in 130 towns and cities in the Community.

The 70 towns and areas proposed by the Member States for assistance under Urban II are in economic and social crisis caused by at least three of the following problems: high long-term unemployment, a weak economy, a high level of poverty and exclusion, a large immigrant, ethnic minority or refugee population, inadequate levels of education and skills, a high crime and delinquency rate, unstable population changes and a particularly run-down environment.

The programmes approved by the Commission propose innovative development models to revitalise the areas concerned by financing projects to:

- improve living conditions, e.g. by renovating buildings and improving the environment;
- create jobs;
- integrate the less-favoured social classes into education and training systems;
- develop environment-friendly public transport systems;
- create effective energy management systems and make greater use of renewable energy;
- use information technologies.

The measures set out in each programme will be selected and implemented through a broad partnership involving all the parties concerned.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) may finance up to 75% of the total cost of a programme for urban areas in regions whose development is lagging behind (Objective 1), and up to 50% elsewhere.

The Community contribution will range from € 3.5 to 15 million.

A programme to exchange information and share experiences on the revitalisation of crisis-hit urban areas will also be launched.

France: the urban revitalisation programme for the municipalities of Grigny and Viry-Chatillon will focus on developing economic activities, reducing unemployment and providing inhabitants of the areas concerned with access to culture and knowledge.

Netherlands: the three programmes concern the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Heerlen and are intended to improve the physical and commercial environment, encourage the business spirit and help inhabitants to participate in social and cultural life.

Programmes 2000-2006	Total cost*	Structural Funds* contribution
France		
Grigny/Viry-Chatillon	37	12.88
Netherlands		
Amsterdam	31	9
Heerlen	32	12
Rotterdam	24	9

* EUR million

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

Cohesion: how the forthcoming debate will unfold

Regional policy was on the agenda for the European Parliament's plenary session on 19 and 20 September, offering Commissioner Michel Barnier the opportunity to set out the main lines of the debate on the future of cohesion policy and to describe its different stages.

On 13 July, the informal Council in Namur had endorsed the general position in support of continuing aid after 2006 to the regions whose development is lagging behind. The majority of Members of Parliament also consider the Union's structural policy a success and believe it should continue after enlargement.

However, some regretted the Commission's failure to decide among the four options for aid under Objective 1 after 2006. These are: 1) maintaining the threshold for assistance at 75% of Community GDP; 2) accompanying that with transitional support; 3) raising the threshold above 75%; 4) fixing two thresholds: one for the existing Union and the other for the candidate countries.

Michel Barnier pointed out that this was not the time to talk about money but to discuss a new policy of European solidarity. The relevance of the choices made should, of necessity, stem from an open, high-quality debate. He also insisted on respect for the Community timeframe for taking a decision on the future of the Structural Funds, i.e. not before 2004 and on the basis of proposals presented by the Commission.

Meanwhile, next year the Commission will publish a progress report on its work, up-dated figures on socio-economic trends in the Member States and applicant countries and the results of the complementary studies currently being carried out. Ten seminars on the main themes identified by the Second Cohesion Report will be held during the first half of 2002.

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

New Interreg III programmes

The Commission recently approved four new cross-border cooperation programmes concerning Italy and Switzerland, Sweden and Norway, and Austria and both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The programme for **Italy** and **Switzerland** has three priorities: the economic development of the cross-border area, management and preservation of its cultural and natural assets and cooperation on cultural, social and institutional issues. This programme directly affects four million people.

In the southern border region between **Sweden** and **Norway**, the new programme will finance implementation of new cross-border networks, cross-border business activities, training courses, environmental projects and projects for the Sami community.

Austria will continue to receive support for cooperation with the neighbouring regions in the **Czech Republic** and **Slovakia**. Both programmes will include measures in five priority areas: economic cooperation, transport and information technology infrastructure, cooperation and networking for municipalities and NGOs, human resources and sustainable development.

Programmes 2000-2006	Total cost*	Structural Funds* contribution
Italy/Switzerland	25.6	74.4
Sweden/Norway	111.0	32.0
Austria/Czech Republic	51.8	25.9
Austria/Slovakia	52.5	26.0

* EUR million

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

Coordination between Interreg III and "CARDS"

At the end of August, the European Commission amended the guidelines for Interreg III and laid down the arrangements for cross-border cooperation between the regions of Italy and the non-member countries on the Adriatic covered by the Cards financial instrument for peace and reconstruction in the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Macedonia).

For more information, see:
www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/official/orient_en.htm



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