



INTERREG III B «Atlantic Area» launch first call for projects

The first call for projects under the «Atlantic Area» INTERREG III B Programme has just been launched. This call is open from December 9, 2002 to March 7, 2003. In principle, a second call for projects will be launched in the autumn of 2003 and at least one call for projects per year thereafter until 2005. Further information is available on the programme website at: <http://www.interreg-atlantique.org/iib/eng/index.htm> (see «Practical information»).

EUR 15.9 million for Europe's towns and cities

Under the Urban II Community Initiative, the Commission has just approved Urbact, a programme for the exchange of experience between European towns and cities. The priorities of the programme include the creation of thematic networks, training actions, studies and other initiatives taken by city administrations or other public bodies. Further information is available from the managing authority: Ministère délégué à la ville et à la rénovation urbaine, 194, avenue du Président Wilson, F-93217 Saint Denis La Plaine Cedex, Tel: +33 (0) 1 47 04 11 23, E-mail : jl.drubigny@wanadoo.fr OR on the REGIO website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/urban2/index_fr.htm

TEPs add value to local employment and development

A new evaluation of the Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) concludes that they can represent an effective method of adding value to local employment and development.

89 Pacts all over the EU were financed by the Structural Funds between 1996 and 2001, with the objective of tackling unemployment and promoting job creation. The evaluation states that the successful Pacts enhanced resource deployment at local and regional level, helped match supply and demand, reduced administrative overlap and strengthened clarity in local policies for promoting employment.

It also found that there were very significant variations between the Pacts across the EU, in terms of size, organisation, numbers of partners and methods of working. The most successful applications of the Pact principle were evident in countries where a system of devolved governance at local level is in place, but where there is not a tradition of working in partnership. Ireland and Italy were cited as good examples of this.

While TEPs no longer exist as a separate instrument, and successful Pacts have now been absorbed into 2000-2006 Structural Funds' programmes, the conclusions and recommendations do contain some important lessons in terms of future policy formulation. These include:

- The Pact type approach has the potential to be applied to a wider set of local development

issues other than employment, including territorial competitiveness, business support and planning education and training.

- In current Objective 2 and 3 regions, especially where there is a track record of multi-stakeholder partnership working, the pact type approach could add value in terms of strategic co-ordination.
- Where there is little tradition of bottom-up partnership working the Pact model is less appropriate in the short term.
- If Pact type approaches are to be implemented, it is important that the Commission develops clear guidance on the overall purpose of the approach, Pact selection, objectives and their measurement and evaluation, the timescale, and dissemination and mainstreaming.

These lessons will now be considered by the Commission in the context of planning for the future of the Structural Funds post 2006. The Thematic Evaluation can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/doc/tep_report1.pdf

New report highlights special situation of outermost regions

On January 10, 2003 the Commission adopted its biannual report on the implementation of Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty: measures to assist the outermost regions.

The report provides an update on the progress of and the prospects for the measures adopted under the various Community policies during the second half of 2002. In particular, it refers to measures adopted in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, regional policy, State aid, taxation, customs, tourism, transport, energy, the environment, the information society, research and the international environment.

In terms of agriculture and fisheries, the report underlines the commitment of the Commission to continuing to take account of the special features of the outermost regions in finalising the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy. Reference is also made to changes in the measures concerning traditional products and amendments to programming for the structural derogations in agriculture and fisheries.

As regards regional policy, the report highlights the inclusion of qualitative criteria in determining eligibility under the new "Solidarity Fund" as evidence of the ongoing consideration of the situation of outermost regions. It also refers to a

number of studies that were commissioned or completed in 2002, which will inform the preparation of a general strategy for these regions in 2003.

The report notes that the concept of remoteness was incorporated into the rules on state-aid schemes in 2000 and it also refers to special tax exemptions and customs measures tabled or implemented in 2002. It states that a number of projects for small firms and tourism are being carried out under Structural Fund programming for 2000-2006, and that, as of 2001, ports in the outermost regions form part of the trans-European network (TEN).

The report concludes that the promotion of sustainable development in the outermost regions calls for a variety of responses, requiring the input of several Community policies, and it confirms the intention of the Commission to pursue a global implementation strategy with regard to these regions. The report is available in pdf format at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/pdf/rup_en.pdf

INTERREG: Commission meets offices of the regions in Brussels

Some 70 regional representations met with DG REGIO in Brussels on December 12, 2002 to discuss the implementation of the INTERREG Community Initiative.

Organised in the offices of the Austrian region of Styria, the seminar provided an opportunity to discuss progress in the implementation of INTERREG and to present good practices from strands A, B and C. The programmes and projects presented related in particular to the Baltic region, the experiences of the Saxony-Anhalt region and cross-border cooperation between Austria (Carinthia and Styria) and Slovenia.

The participants also had the chance to meet with Mrs. Elisabeth Helander, Director of the Community Initiatives and the Innovative Actions at DG REGIO, and Mr. Esben Poulsen, head of the Interreg unit. Mrs Helander outlined the new challenges facing INTERREG after enlargement,

when the EU will have 9 new internal borders and 15 new external borders, and underlined features to be strengthened in the INTERREG A and B programmes in the future.

In his presentation, Mr. Poulsen gave an overview of the INTERREG joint management structures and identified some important criteria for the success of INTERREG programmes. These include: having strong joint management structures; moving toward concrete projects; having clear objectives, and being truly cross border/transnational. Further information is available on the REGIO website, at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/interreg3/new/doc_en.htm



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