



inforegio | news

'Open Days 2004': the workshops are already full

Registration for the 'Open Days 2004' — to be held in Brussels from 27 to 30 September and organised by the Committee of the Regions, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy and 12 offices representing Europe's regions and cities — certainly proved a success: the 30 workshops proposed by the Regional Policy DG on the subject of 'Managing regional development' have been fully booked since 25 August.

<http://www.cor.eu.int/opendays/opendays>

Solidarity Fund

The European Commission (Directorate-General for Regional Policy) is holding a conference in Brussels on 8 December entitled 'The European Union's Solidarity Fund and the immediate response to disasters'. More detailed information will be provided in a future issue.

Cadses and CARDS partners

A transnational partner search forum will be held in Zagreb (Croatia) on 11 and 12 October 2004. The meeting aims to bring together the principal players in the CARDS (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Montenegro) and Cadses (Austria, Germany's eastern and southern *Länder*, the regions of eastern Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania) cooperation areas.

<http://www.interreg3c.net/>
<http://www.cadses.net>

Mrs Danuta Hübner, the next Commissioner for regional policy

Mr José Manuel Barroso, President-designate of the European Commission, announced on 12 August that he had awarded the regional policy portfolio to Mrs Danuta Hübner, Member of the European Commission since May 2004 and previously Polish Minister for European Affairs.

Born in Warsaw in 1948, the future Commissioner responsible for regional policy pursued an academic career before acquiring solid political experience at national, European and international level.

After obtaining her post-doctoral degree in international trade relations from the Warsaw School of Economics (formerly the Institute for Planning and Statistics), she completed her training at the universities of Sussex (United Kingdom), Madrid (Spain) and Berkeley (United States).

A professor of economics, her career assumed a new dimension with the regime change in Poland in the early 1990s. Appointed Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (1994–96), she was Poland's chief negotiator during negotiations for Poland's membership of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). As Secretary of State from 1996 to 1997, Danuta Hübner was charged by the Polish Government with negotiating European Union membership. In 1997 and 1998, she worked directly for the Polish President as Head of Chancellery, with the rank of minister.

At the end of 1998, Danuta Hübner embarked on an international career at the United Nations, where she became Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. In 2000, she was appointed Executive Secretary of the said Commission with the rank of Under-Secretary General of the United Nations. In 2001, she returned to Poland to take up the post of Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before being appointed Minister for European Affairs. In February 2002, Danuta Hübner was appointed member of the European Convention charged with drawing up an EU Constitution, while remaining at the forefront of the final stage of negotiations for Poland's EU membership.

When Poland joined the EU, on 1 May 2004, Danuta Hübner was appointed member of the Commission responsible for foreign trade, alongside Pascal Lamy. On 1 November 2004, she is to replace Jacques Barrot at the Directorate-General for Regional Policy — by which time, of course, the new Commission must be approved by the European Parliament.

To find out more: http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/hubner/cv_en.htm

Budgetary implementation of the Structural Funds in 2003: a good performance

The Directorate-General for the Budget has published a report dealing specifically with the budgetary implementation of the Structural Funds in 2003. EUR 26.2 billion were paid out last year (or 89 % of the appropriations available), compared with EUR 20.3 billion in 2002 (or 72 % of the appropriations available).

This good performance is the result of the progress of programmes on the ground as well as successful efforts by the European Commission to improve the Structural Funds budgeting so that appropriations match needs as closely as possible.

In 2003, payments for the 2000–06 programmes increased by 19 % for all objectives, although the

Community initiatives made less progress than the mainstream programmes.

The cumulative results of the Member States by the end of 2003, in terms of absorbing their respective 2000–06 financial envelopes, vary considerably. The leading countries are Portugal,

Ireland, Spain and Austria, which absorbed between 39 and 46 % of their allocations.

A similar analysis by objective highlights the good performance of Objective 1, followed by Objectives 3 and 2 (Objective 2 did particularly well, going a long way to catching up), in contrast to the much slower execution of the Community initiatives.

The year 2003 also saw the start of the N+2 de-commitments for the 2000–06 programming period. The total amount de-committed under the N+2 rule was quite low (EUR 31.1 mil-

lion). The de-commitments were made only for Objectives 1 (27 %) and 3 (73 %). The ERDF is the only Structural Fund that did not make any N+2 commitments.

Finally, the DG Budget report analyses developments in outstanding commitments (RAL). The total RAL at the end of 2003 was EUR 62.4 billion, 85 % of which related to the 2000–06 programmes and 15 % to the 1994–99 programmes.

The full text of the report in English, French and German is available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/furtherinfo/index_pg2_en.htm

Outermost regions: taking stock

Following its communication of 26 May 2004 on 'a stronger partnership for the outermost regions', the European Commission has published a report that assesses the measures adopted for the benefit of these regions since 2000.

The document analyses the most recent indicators of the socioeconomic development of the outermost regions, describing the progress achieved and the challenges that remain. It also describes the working of the Funds and structural instruments as well as the various Community policies that have played a significant role during the past three years in a number of key sectors: regional development and cohesion, competition, agriculture, fisheries, enterprise, transport, energy, research, information society, taxation and customs, the environment, international trade, justice and home affairs.

Although the assessment of measures taken by the Union for the outermost regions is very positive, there are still constraints on their development and EU integration compared with other European regions. Difficulties of access remain a problem, as are handicaps to the competitiveness of their firms faced with the opportunities of the single market.

The report also details the strategy adopted on 26 May 2004 by the Committee for the Outermost Regions in the context of cohesion policy reform and other Community policy for the

2007–13 period. This strategy has three priorities: to reduce the handicaps caused by difficulties of access and to compensate for other constraints specific to the outermost regions; to improve the competitiveness of the outermost regions, in particular in the spirit of the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives; to encourage the inclusion of the outermost regions in their regional geo-economic area.

The 10th Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions was held, on 2 and 3 September, at Ponta Delgada in the Azores. This was the occasion for a meeting with the European Commission and Member States, attended by Commissioner Jacques Barrot. This gave him the opportunity to exchange comments with the presidents of the outermost regions who want to see the Commission's strategy rapidly implemented on the ground and for all Community policy areas, including fisheries and agriculture.

The text of the communication and the report (Commission working document) are available in English, French and German: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/comm_en.htm

Inforegio News online

Visit the Inforegio website for a comprehensive insight into European regional policy, and get all the latest news at the Inforegio newsroom: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/newsroom/index_en.htm



European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy

KN-AB-04-126-EN-C