



inforegio news

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Portrait of the regions

Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, has launched a new website entitled 'Portrait of the regions' that presents a range of comparable information on Europe's diverse regions. Visitors can navigate through the site by means of the clickable maps or by entering the name of a region directly. This site builds on the series of publications of the same name, financed by the Regional Policy DG and published between 1993 and 2001.

http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/pls/portal/url/page/SHARED/PER_GENSTA

Eurostat has also published a new edition of *Regions: statistical yearbook*, covering the 254 regions of the 25 Member States as well as the 14 regions of Bulgaria and Romania.

http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-AF-05-001

Urbact

The second Urbact annual conference of the cities, to be held on 14 and 15 November 2005 in Liverpool (United Kingdom), will bring together all the programme partners: elected representatives, national and local administrations, local decision-makers, civil servants, technicians and representatives of local associations.

http://www.urbact.org/en/news_event/events

The cities and local employment initiatives

The Eurocities network has published a study on local employment initiatives covering the 2000-04 period. Based on data collected in 17 European cities, the results highlight the crucial role played by the cities in increasing the efficiency of centralised policy and in developing new ways of combating unemployment.

<http://www.eurocities.org/>

'Open Days 2005': Europe's regions and cities demand a solid agreement for cohesion.

The speedy conclusion of a satisfactory agreement on the 2007-13 financial perspectives was the major concern of participants at the 'Open Days — European Week of Regions and Cities' meeting was held in Brussels from 10 to 13 October, at the initiative of the European Commission (Directorate-General for Regional Policy) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR), with the cooperation of the European Parliament and 106 regions and cities from 26 countries.

With the theme of 'Working together on regional growth and jobs', the third Open Days proved a resounding success. A total of 2 500 persons attended the event that included three plenary sessions and 70 workshops on four subjects: the three priority objectives proposed by the Commission for reform of the Structural and Cohesion Funds and the management of financial instruments.

'We must act now.' In welcoming the participants, Commissioner Danuta Hübner and CoR President Peter Straub both stressed the urgency of an agreement on budgetary issues and that any further delay, following the failure of the June Council discussions on the subject, could affect growth and job prospects in the regions as it is already time to start preparing the next generation of development programmes, to be implemented from 2007. 'We must act now,' stressed Mrs Hübner, who declared that, without a sound financial agreement, 'it is becoming pointless to speak of solidarity, cohesion and competitiveness.' Mr Gerardo Galeote-Quecedo, Chairman of the European Parliament Regional Development Committee, reinforced the message: 'We need an agreement, not just any agreement, but an agreement that guarantees cohesion policy.'

The opening session was the occasion to present the results of the public consultation on the 'Community strategic guidelines for cohesion, 2007-13', proposed by the Commission in July. These show wide support for the guidelines and a balance between the desire for a diversification of priorities in the light of regional needs and a concentration of efforts in the most disadvantaged regions. These results will be taken into account in the final version of the guidelines, after the Council has pronounced on the Commission's legislative proposals for cohesion policy in the period 2007-13.

The CoR in plenary session. The session of 12 October was the CoR's 61st plenary session. In addition to a vibrant call for a rapid and sound

financial agreement, the meeting decided on a 'fully decentralised' implementation of the Lisbon strategy, early consultation with the regional and local authorities in drawing up European legislation, and an 'active' regional policy covering the EU territory as a whole.

Concerns. Repeated throughout the debates by many delegates, budgetary concerns were particularly evident in the closing session. 'It is vital for Heads of State or Government to reach agreement on the financial perspectives in December, under the British presidency,' stressed Mr Galeote-Quecedo. 'The agreement ... must be based on the principle of solidarity and a step-by-step approach, for the old as well as the new Member States.' Stressing the combined efforts for a cohesion policy that is both modern and rooted in solidarity, with the emphasis on growth and jobs, Mrs Hübner expressed her fear of seeing many of these efforts wasted: 'As time passes, I can see more and more anguish and confusion in our cities and regions.'

Responsibility. The Commissioner also welcomed the firm support for the Jaspers and Jermie initiatives (see *Inforegio news* No 139) expressed by regional development ministers at a seminar on 11 October. She stressed the need, demonstrated during the Open Days, to move 'towards more partnership and decentralisation', two elements that are closely linked. 'The main message taken from this week,' she concluded, 'is that it is difficult to find another Community policy which is of so much interest to our citizens.' The intensity of the debates 'shows that Europe has a future, that it can communicate with its citizens, and that people place their hopes in the Union. It is our joint responsibility not to disappoint these hopes.'

More information is available on the websites of the CoR: <http://www.cor.eu.int/en/index.htm>

and of the European Parliament: http://www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert/documents_presse_par_theme_page/910/default_en.htm

The Magdeburg best practice

The third 'Competitive regions: shaping best practice' seminar was held from 5 to 7 October in Magdeburg, the capital of Saxony-Anhalt, one of the 'new' German *Länder*. It was attended by the managing authorities of the Objective 1 and 2 programmes for eight Member States (Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Austria, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom), delegates from other countries and Commission representatives, including Mrs Danuta Hübner.

About 150 participants responded to the invitation from the Ministry of Finance of Saxony-Anhalt, the managing authority of the ERDF regions for this Objective 1 region, and the European Commission, who were organising the seminar. Following the success of the two previous seminars, in Sheffield (United Kingdom) in 2003 and in Rovaniemi (Finland) in 2004, the meeting had the same objective of promoting the exchange of experiences and dissemination of best practice among the managing authorities as well as implementation of programmes under Objectives 1 and 2 of the Structural Funds, in the framework of the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs.

Two plenary sessions and three workshops were the occasions to learn the lessons from the 18 projects selected in the eight Member States cited above, in particular on three principal themes: innovation, research and development, and information society.

Varying in size and nature, these projects each have their own history, their point of departure and development. They each

provide a response to today's challenges: globalisation and the loss of competitive advantages, the need for innovative developments and new approaches by R & D, accessibility to knowledge and sustainable development. Each of them also reflects the efforts of local players to set up a public-private partnership able to promote an idea, mobilise goodwill and sustain the necessary drive and commitment to succeed even where the risk seems high.

The debates highlighted the particular role the Structural Funds can play in this process by making up for financial insufficiencies and encouraging a multidisciplinary approach. For the representatives from the new Member States, this kind of seminar is an excellent opportunity to familiarise themselves with examples of best practice as a basis for setting up and managing their own projects co-financed by the Structural Funds. It is also an opportunity for all to establish contacts and to network information.

The following site contains summaries of the 18 examples presented at the seminar as well as about 30 other projects:
<http://www.best-practice-magdeburg.de/projects.html>

Nineteen measures for innovation and research

On 12 October, the Commission presented an integrated innovation/research action plan designed to achieve a radical improvement in the EU's performance in this area.

For the first time, this action plan recommends an integrated approach by Community policies in the field of research, technological development and innovation (RTDI). The emphasis is on the conditions for private-sector investment in these fields. The 19 measures proposed fall into four categories.

- Research and innovation at the heart of EU policies: Among other things, this includes the redeployment of State aid in the direction of RTDI.
- Research and innovation at the heart of EU financing: The proposal highlights the role of the Structural Funds in driving RTDI.

- Research and innovation at the heart of business: In particular through public-private partnerships and innovation poles.
- Improvements to RTDI policies: Especially through the national reform programmes for growth and jobs.

To find out more:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1252&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

and:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/05/366&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

2007–13: Preparing the next generation of programmes with the Inforegio site

The Member States and regions are beginning to prepare the upcoming 2007–13 programming period. The Inforegio site presents extensive information and important documents of interest to all the players interested in the process. The aim is to facilitate exchanges between these players and at the same time inform the general public of the progress made. Do not hesitate to address your questions and contributions to the Regional Policy DG.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/debate/forum_en.htm



European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy