



Guide
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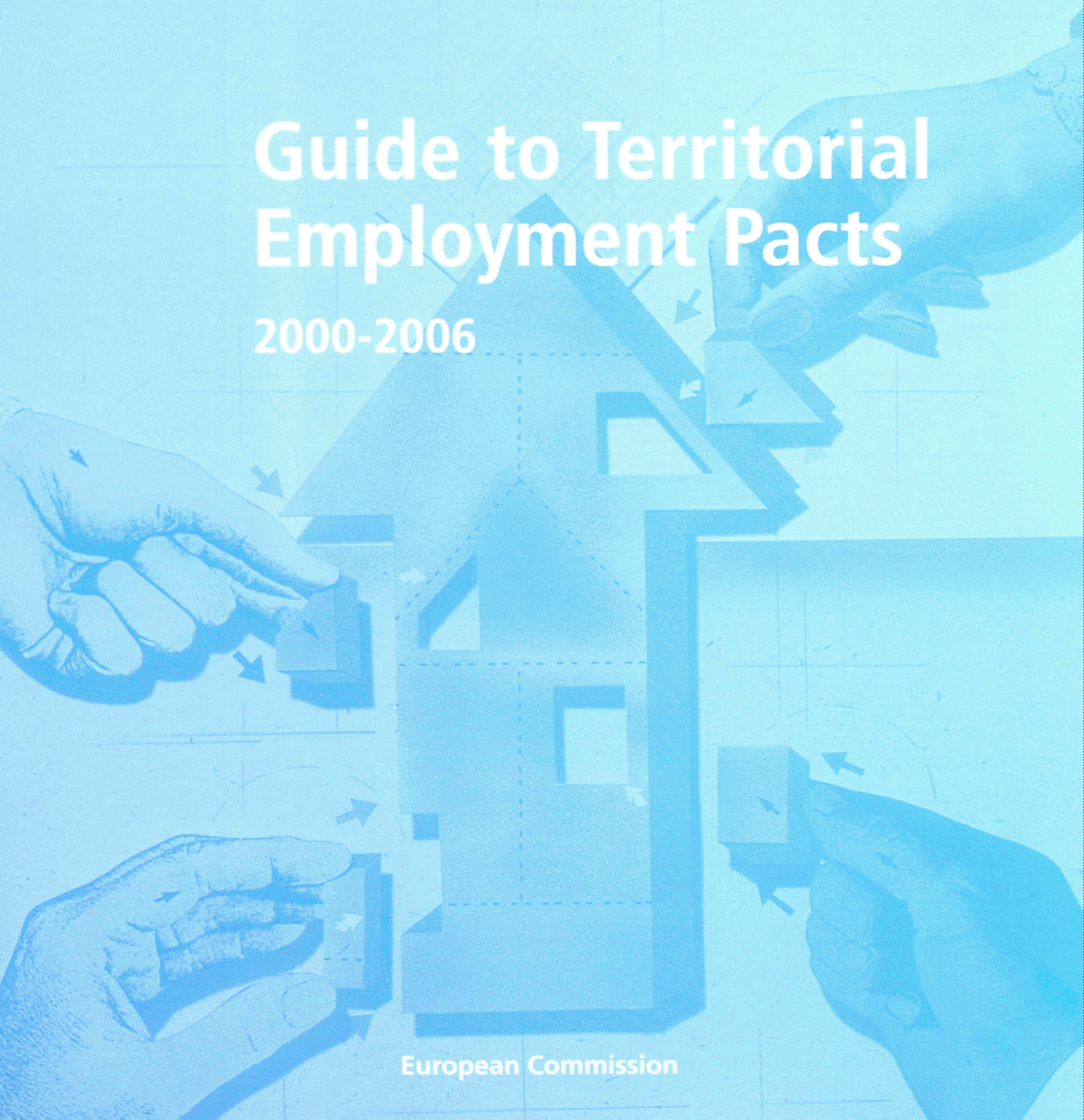
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European Union
Structural Funds

Guide to Territorial Employment Pacts

2000-2006



European Commission

Guide to Territorial Employment Pacts

2000-2006

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>) and on the Inforegio Website (<http://inforegio.cec.eu.int>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

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Web site of the Territorial Employment Pacts

The dissemination of information on the action plans of existing Territorial Pacts and other basic data is possible via a Web site (<http://info regio.cec.eu.int/pacts>). An indispensable tool for the exchange of information, this site provides various services such as access to documents on good practice, a discussion forum and links to other websites on European affairs and employment.

Introduction: objectives of the guide

Since the last major reform of the Structural Funds in 1988, the Europe in which we live and work has changed dramatically. In the past five years alone, we have witnessed the completion of the Single European Market, the countdown to Monetary Union, the continued expansion of the Union, the consolidation of economic globalization and rapid technological change. A significant further enlargement of the Union is on the cards for the near future.

Substantial progress has also been made during the past decade with regard to economic and social cohesion, particularly in the reduction of disparities in per capita income between Member States.

Although the impact on the evolution of unemployment varies considerably from one region to another, on the whole the positive effects remain insufficient. This is due to several reasons. In the past twenty years, the baby-boom generations arrived on the labour market and considerably increased the supply of labour, particularly in the intermediate group aged 30 to 49. This demographic trend and the wider participation of women entailed an additional intake on the labour market that could not be absorbed by the creation of jobs. During the decade of 1985/95, the working population in the twelve Member States increased by 9.4 million, which corresponds to about 7%. As only 8.5 million jobs were created in the European Union during the same period, the difference led to a rise in unemployment which reached record levels and caused a 5% drop in the employment rate compared with 1973, as the unfavourable situation on the labour market forced many people to withdraw from it.

Concern about the employment situation was the main reason prompting the Heads of State and Government to include a new title on employment in the Amsterdam Treaty. This measure led to the rapid development of the European Employment Strategy.

With the recent revision of the Structural Fund regulations, the complete range of Community tools aiming to support the implementation of new strategies for economic and social development promoting job creation are now in place.

It is nonetheless obvious that both the new political and institutional context and the availability of sizeable resources from the Structural Funds will prove optimally

efficient only with the active participation of local and regional actors.

This is the reason why the territorial dimension is gaining increasing importance in the European Employment Strategy.

The Commission's proposal to promote the implementation of Territorial Employment Pacts falls within this context and is based on the experience acquired in the experimental phase.

This Commission guideline is henceforth fully in line with the views expressed by the Council and the European Parliament which adopted the new regulations of the Structural Funds.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information on:

1. the implications of the implementation of the "employment" title of the Amsterdam treaty for national officials in their interaction with local and regional partners;
2. the new provisions of the Structural Fund regulations likely to support the local approaches to development and employment, and in particular the possibilities of support for Territorial Employment Pacts.

One of the main reasons for this transfer of a pilot action¹ into the mainstream of the Structural Funds, where it will now be integrated, lies in the positive results it has achieved in redirecting the programming process for the years 1998 and 1999: a total amount of EUR 1600 million has thus been allocated to support the action plans of the 89 pacts launched in 1997.

Explicit eligibility of this type of local development and employment initiative for structural intervention is one of the innovations introduced by the Structural Fund regulations for the period 2000-2006.

This regulatory and policy framework is set out in this guide. Those aspects of the accompanying operational guidelines issued by the Commission which have implications for the Territorial Employment Pacts are also explained.

While the guide calls for an integrated approach by the three Structural Funds to the Territorial Employment

1. See Commission publication "89 local partnerships rise to the challenge of unemployment," October 1999

Pacts, it highlights the priority areas for the intervention of each.

Finally, the guide reiterates the basic principles of the Territorial Employment Pacts as laid down in 1997 by the Commission when it launched this approach.

The Commission services involved in this process would like to see this guide become a useful tool for local and regional actors wishing to participate in the preparation and implementation of a Territorial Employment Pact, at a time when the active negotiating phase of future programmes under Objectives 1, 2 and 3 for the period

2000-2006 is beginning. One of the consequences of mainstreaming Territorial Employment Pacts is that they must be announced in the plans submitted by the Member States.

This concern of the Commission is fully in line with the views expressed by the Committee of the Regions in its own-initiative opinion of July 1999.

Territorial Pacts must therefore be included as early as possible in this new programming process where the Commission hopes they will find a meaningful place.

I. Framework

A) The European Employment Strategy

The Amsterdam treaty, now ratified by all the Member States, recognizes that employment is a common problem for the Union as a whole. This facilitated the rapid launch of a dynamic innovative process based on the development of a common strategy for job creation and the implementation of a multilateral monitoring process. The 15 Member States of the European Union henceforth operate under shared guidelines for employment and national action plans for employment based on the following four pillars:

- Improving employability;
- Developing entrepreneurship;
- Encouraging adaptability of businesses and their employees;
- Strengthening equal opportunities policies.

The employment guidelines for 1998 and 1999 already contained specific provisions for *"Member States to utilize all possible sources of employment and to promote measures to utilize fully opportunities for new employment-creating activities at local level with the supply of services meeting unsatisfied social needs."*

The Commission's proposals for the guidelines for the year 2000², adopted on 8 September 1999, reinforce these provisions. Thus, Measure no. 12 in the pillar entitled "Developing entrepreneurship" provides: *"that the Member States will promote measures to exploit fully the possibilities offered by job creation at local level and in the social economy, especially in new activities linked to needs not yet satisfied by the market, and examine, with the aim of reducing, any obstacles in the way of such measures. In this respect, the special role and responsibility of partners at the regional and local levels, as well as of the social partners, need to be more fully recognised and supported. In addition, the role of the Public Employment Services in identifying local employment opportunities and improving the functioning of local labour markets, should be fully exploited."*

B) The new Structural Fund regulations

These documents, which can be consulted in the OJEC³, contain a number of useful tips for designing and implementing Territorial Employment Pacts. A presentation of their general architecture will be followed

by an overview of the main provisions concerning Territorial Pacts.

1. General architecture

The general architecture of the regulations tends to strengthen the employment content of structural policies, in particular by local mobilization.

Council Regulation 1260/1999 of 21st June 1999, which contains general provisions for the Structural Funds, defines the missions, priority Objectives and the organization of the four Structural Funds, the rules that govern them, as well as the provisions required to ensure their efficiency and co-ordination both with each other and with other existing financial instruments.

The regulation clarifies the roles on the programming and implementation of interventions. In this context, the Member States and different partners bear greater responsibility for the definition and the implementation of Structural Fund interventions. The regulation improves the transparency, monitoring, assessment and financial control and enhances the participation of local and regional actors in charting structural policy.

Pursuant to the guidelines communicated by the European Commission to the Member States for the preparation of programmes⁴ for the period 2000-2006, the integrated approach to development or to restructuring must be reflected in the programming methods. To this end, it is recommended to define strategies that maximize synergies between priorities and measures, in pursuit of a coherent vision. This, to some extent, is a generalization of sorts of the successful experience of the Pacts. This experience offers prospects and means of action in the medium term for the different parties involved in the development and social cohesion of a given territorial unit, including at an infra-regional level. Another recommendation made to the Member States is to opt for a decentralized partnership that should be efficient and wide enough to define, monitor and evaluate interventions; the possible use of global grants should make this provision more effective. As long as this form of intervention is provided for from the outset in the plans submitted by the Member States, the latter have the option to decide to entrust the implementation and management of a part of an operational programme or single programming document to one or more authorized agents, including

2. The Commission's proposals for the guidelines for the year 2000 and the national action plans for 1999 can be consulted on the Web site http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/empl&esf/ees_en.htm

3. L series, no. 161 of 26 June 1999 and no. 213 of 13 August 1999, also available on the Web site <http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int>

4. COM (99) 344 final of 1st July 1999

local authorities, regional planning organizations or non-governmental organizations.

The total resources available for the Structural Funds in terms of commitment appropriations amount to EUR 195 billion for the period 2000-2006. The bulk of these resources will be devoted to the priority regions of the Union's structural action, i.e. Objective 1 regions.

• **Regions lagging in development (Objective 1)**

Under the terms of the regulation, Objective 1, financed by the four Structural Funds, aims to "*promote the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind,*" i.e. those whose level of development, measured on the basis of per capita GDP figures for the last available three-year period, is less than 75% of the EU average.

The French overseas departments, the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands, as outermost regions but also because these regions meet the 75% criterion, and areas currently eligible under Objective 6, will be covered by this Objective.

Regions currently eligible under Objective 1 which no longer meet the 75% criterion will receive decreasing transitional support over a period of six years – extended to seven years for areas that meet the criteria of Objective 2. The list of regions covered by Objective 1 was decided by the Commission on 1st July 1999 in strict application of the criteria laid down in the regulation.

A sizeable part of the total budget of the Structural Funds (69.7%) will be allocated to Objective 1 regions, including 4.3% as transitional support (for a total of EUR 135.9 billion).

Pursuant to the Commission's guidelines, the new programmes should reinforce both actions to improve the competitiveness of regional economies and decentralized approaches tapping into local expertise, through integrated action both on employment supply and demand as demonstrated by the Territorial Pacts. Concurrently with macro-economic policies and the development of infrastructures, it is important to carry out accompanying measures at local level, as close to the economic actors as possible. The Pacts have shown the emergence of new areas of co-operation, for example in inter-company relations or among public and private operators for financing projects. These operations must

be consolidated and amplified as they represent new sources of business and employment.

• **Areas facing structural difficulties (Objective 2)**

Objective 2, which is financed by the ERDF and the ESF, aims to support the "*economic and social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties.*" These areas undergoing social and economic changes include industrial and service areas, rural areas, urban areas and areas that depend on the fishing industry. The Guarantee section of the EAGGF will also contribute to the development of rural areas under Objective 2.

Aid granted under Objective 2 will cover 18% of the EU population. This maximum amount has been divided up between the Member States by the Commission, limiting the reduction per Member State to a maximum of one third of the cover of regions currently eligible under Objectives 2 and 5b. Areas currently eligible under Objectives 2 and 5b no longer eligible under the new Objective 2 will receive graduated support from the ERDF over a period of six years, while these areas will also be eligible under Objective 3. The Commission will draw up the list of eligible areas for a period of seven years, taking due account of the recommendation of and close consultation with the Member States and of the opinion of the relevant advisory committees.

11.5% of the budget of the Structural Funds will be allocated to Objective 2 regions, including 1.4% by way of transitional support (for a total of EUR 22.5 billion).

The new framework of the single regional programming for Objective 2, responding to several territorial needs, should promote the emergence of decentralized actions that will rely on the mobilization of organized actors and territories. The widening of the geographic coverage to include rundown urban areas will require using differentiated forms of intervention and specific actions, in particular regarding mobilization. The capacity of the local productive fabric to adapt to the new economic requirements and of actors to co-operate will be further central preoccupations. In short, the different methods tested by the Territorial Pacts should lead to a means of amplifying their actions.

- **Support for the adaptation and modernization of policies and systems of education, training and employment (Objective 3)**

Objective 3 is the frame of reference for the development of human resources across the whole territory of the Union and the Objective under which the ESF contributes to adapting and modernizing education, training and employment outside Objective 1 regions.

Within this context the ESF regulation supports the Member States in the development and implementation of the employment guidelines under the European Employment Strategy, which is reflected in the national action plans. These plans therefore combine the national strategy on employment and its supporting instruments with the European priorities of cohesion and employment.

12.3%, i.e. EUR 24.052 billion of the total budget for the Structural Funds over the period 2000-2006, are earmarked for ESF interventions under Objective 3. In addition EUR 2.847 billion will be made available under the ESF Community Initiative EQUAL.

Throughout the human resource strategy three general elements are of particular importance:

- a mainstreaming approach for equal opportunities between men and women;
- the harnessing of the employment potential of the information society in the interests of the society as a whole;
- the enhancement of the contribution of the ESF to promoting local development, for example via the TEPs.

2. Specific provisions

Specific provisions with an impact on Territorial Pacts:

- **ESF**

The new ESF regulation provides a strong role for activities in the field of local development. The explicit references are:

Article 2.2: *"Within the policy fields set out in paragraph 1 the Fund shall take account of support for local initiatives concerning employment, in particular initiatives to support local employment and Territorial Employment Pacts."*

Article 4.2: *"The programming of Fund interventions shall provide that a reasonable amount of the Fund appropriations made available for interventions under Objective 1 and Objective 3 shall be available, in conformity with Article 27 of Regulation (EC) No. 1260/99, in the form of small grants, with special arrangements for access by non-governmental organizations and local partnerships. Member States may choose to implement this paragraph in accordance with financing arrangements set out in Article 29.6 of Regulation (EC) No 1260/99 (General Regulation)."*

Moreover, the definition of one of the eligible activities as *"development of new sources of employment, including in the social economy (Third System)"* (Article 3.1 d) should encourage Member States to improve their efforts in this field.

- **ERDF**

The new ERDF regulation mentions Territorial Pacts in its 7th recital clause:

"Whereas the ERDF should play a particular role in favour of local economic development, in the context of improving the quality of life and developing the territory, especially by promoting Territorial Employment Pacts and new sources of jobs."

Article 2.1 c) stipulates as a priority area of intervention: *"The development of endogenous potential by measures which encourage and support local development and employment initiatives and the activities of small and medium-sized enterprises, ..."*

To this end, Paragraph 6 introduces a new element by specifying: *"aid for structures providing neighbourhood services to create new jobs but excluding measures financed by the European Social Fund."*

- **The principle of an enhanced partnership is stressed in the general regulation**

Further emphasis on the concept of partnership is a noteworthy aspect. To this end, the 27th recital clause of the regulation declares that *"the action of the Community should be complementary to, or intended to contribute to, the action of Member States; whereas, in order to ensure significant added value, partnership should be strengthened..."*

Article 8, paragraph 1, specifies that: *"Community actions ... shall be drawn up in close consultation, hereinafter referred to as "the partnership" between the Commission and the Member State, together with the authorities and bodies designated by the Member State within the framework of its national rules and current practices, namely:*

- The regional and local authorities and other competent public authorities;*
- The economic and social partners;*
- Any other relevant competent bodies within this framework.*

The partnership shall be conducted in full compliance with the respective institutional, legal and financial powers of each of the partners as defined in the first subparagraph.

In designating the most representative partners at national, regional, local or other level, the Member State shall create a wide and effective association of all the relevant bodies, according to national rules and practice, taking account of the need to promote equality between men and women and sustainable development through the integration of environmental protection and improvement requirements.

All the designated parties, hereinafter referred to as the "partners," are partners in pursuing a common goal."

Paragraph 2 continues:

"The partnership shall cover the preparation, financing, monitoring and evaluation of assistance. Member States shall ensure the association of the relevant partners at the different stages of programming, taking account of the time limit for each state."

II. Guidelines

This chapter provides an overview of the Commission's guidelines for Structural Fund programmes in the period 2000-2006 which are pertinent for the preparation and implementation of Territorial Employment Pacts.

A. Common principles

This section recalls the common principles of the three Structural Funds as regards their intervention in support of the Territorial Employment Pacts.

These principles can be summarized as follows:

- Consistency with national action plans (NAP) and the employment guidelines;
- Territorial basis for the programming process;
- Need for technical assistance measures.

1. Integration in the frame of reference of the national policy for employment

Consistency with the employment guidelines applied in a Member State by including the "Territorial Pacts" approach in the policy frame of reference: Article 9 c) of the general regulation stipulates that *"Objective 3 policy frame of reference means a document which sets the context for assistance concerning employment and human-resource development throughout the territory of each Member State, and which identifies the relationship with the priorities set out in the National Action Plan for Employment."*

Article 15 (3) of the same regulation specifies that: *"the Commission shall appraise these plans [Objectives 1, 2 and 3] to determine whether they are consistent with the aims of this Regulation, taking account of the framework of reference."*

These texts define the function of the policy frame of reference as the link between the NAP and the Structural Funds overall, which is to provide:

- the general strategic context for employment policy;
- the selection of some (or all) of the priorities in the NAP for Structural Funds support, and the rationale for that selection (i.e., why some priorities are to be supported by the Structural Funds, and others not).

2. Territorial basis for the programming process

Since there is no clear indication on the question of financial allocations for local development measures in the new regulations, it is up to the Member States to decide on the respective amounts in the framework of

the programming process. The Commission will encourage Member States both to maintain funding of their pacts (as far as they have been successful) and to support the establishment of new pacts within the mainstream programmes. Member States are therefore expected to include a synthesis on this issue in their plans and to submit further details in the so-called "programme complement". Funding the TEPs under the global grant scheme mentioned above should be considered as a possible way of implementation.

It will therefore be the responsibility of the Member States to decide whether they wish to maintain the existing pacts and to which extent new pacts will be developed. There should, therefore, be transparent criteria for the assessment and the selection process, both for existing pacts and for the development of new ones.

As in the past (see chapter III) each TEP should cover an identifiable, relatively small area. Each pact should be based on a description and an analysis of the social and economic situation, notably the employment situation, and should contain a clear strategy as regards quantified employment objectives.

The plans to be submitted to the Commission will not be detailed enough to show how Member States wish to integrate the TEPs into their programmes, particularly since the bottom-up approach of the Pacts takes the local or regional level as their starting-point. However, the plans should provide first information on this issue and explain the intentions of the Member States regarding this local complement of their employment strategy (including the possibility of intervention in the form of global grants) and thus refer explicitly to the national action plans.

• Objectives 1 and 2

As these are Territorial Pacts located in areas eligible under Objective 1 of the Structural Funds, their support can combine ERDF, ESF and EAGGF/Guidance interventions. These may take the shape of a national programme within the Community Support Framework, combining all pacts implemented in a Member State, itself broken down in axis dedicated to each pact. Past experience has shown this type of organization to be of limited flexibility.

It would seem preferable therefore to provide support to Territorial Pacts in regional operational programmes where they could benefit from a set of specific measures or a measure/action tallying with those provided in their action plans.

For the implementation of specific programmes, global grants as provided by Articles 9.i and 27 of the general regulation of the Structural Funds merit particular attention. This technique makes it possible to provide, through an intermediary organization which need not be part of the public authorities, a global package intended for the implementation of an integrated range of actions.

Member States should therefore be encouraged to consider this approach to implementing measures within the framework of their TEPs and to indicate in their plans if they wish to do so.

More detailed information should be given in the programme complement which will indicate the extent to which the measures set out will include TEPs and the ways in which authorities will come to further decisions on the selection of the Pacts in the Monitoring Committees.

For pacts in Objective 2 areas, the same guidelines apply in the framework of SPDs. However, it should be noted that a specific ESF intervention, outside its contribution to Objective 3, will be possible only if the SPD provides at least 5% of the total amount of its interventions on this account, as stipulated by the ESF regulation.

Furthermore, any intervention by the EAGGF will fall under its Guarantee section and will have to be co-ordinated with the rural development plan provided under Article 33 of the corresponding regulation. The latter will have to provide measures to promote employment.

• Objective 3

The new ESF Regulation dovetails perfectly with the employment guidelines, effectively making the revised European Social Fund a key instrument for policy and financial support for the European Employment Strategy (EES).

The general policy fields in which the ESF may intervene post-1999 provide a near-perfect match with the main

pillars of the EES (employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities):

(i) The development of **active labour market policies** to fight unemployment, to prevent women and men from moving into long-term unemployment, to facilitate the re-integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market, and to support the occupational integration of young people and of people returning to the labour market;

(ii) The promotion of **social inclusion and equal opportunities** for all in accessing the labour market;

(iii) The improvement of education, training and counselling as well as the development of education and training systems as part of a lifelong learning policy to enhance and sustain **employability, mobility, and integration into the labour market**;

(iv) The promotion of a **skilled, trained and adaptable workforce**, to foster **innovation and adaptability** in work organization, to support **entrepreneurship and employment creation**, and to boost human potential in research, science and technology;

(v) Increasing the **participation of women in the labour market**, including their career development and access to new job opportunities and entrepreneurship, and reducing segregation in the labour market.

These priorities are, by necessity, relatively broad, not only because employment and human resources policies, practices and needs vary considerably from Member State to Member State, but also because of the seven-year life span of the new regulation. The objective is to ensure the participation of the ESF in all five fields, whilst at the same time allowing each Member State to decide its own priorities for ESF investment.

3. Importance of technical assistance

The pilot action "Territorial Employment Pacts" launched in 1997 clearly shows the important role that technical assistance has played in the organization of the partnership and in the formulation of action plans.

More specifically, activating a bottom-up local development process entails reorganizing the social fabric, bringing about a gradual change in attitude, feeding channels for the circulation of ideas and

information and raising awareness about a new local development culture. It is moreover worth developing a climate of co-operation and commitment as well as initiating a systematic approach to developing the endogenous potential, accompanied by a broad and genuine partnership that uses consultation among the different actors – Member State, region, local authorities, social partners – as a working method.

Since the TEPs follow the bottom-up approach and require strong and independent integration into a specific framework of local partnership, they will need additional support besides the general public administration in order to finance staff, offices, technical equipment, studies, external expertise and so forth. The amounts for technical assistance provided in the SPD or OP should therefore include an additional indication of the amount of technical assistance specifically required for operations in the field of local initiatives and the TEPs.

As regards Territorial Pacts in rural areas, those located in Objective 5b areas received technical assistance from the EAGGF/Guidance in the preceding period.

Under the new regulation, pacts initiated in Objective 1 rural areas or existing pacts in Objective 1 areas pursuing their activities may turn to one of the three Structural Funds, including the EAGGF/Guidance, for technical assistance. The ESF will intervene in areas outside Objectives. Finally, for Objective 2 areas, technical assistance can come from ERDF or the ESF, depending on the case, to the exclusion of any cumulative assistance.

The Guarantee section of the EAGGF does not provide for technical assistance measures.

B. Contents of the programmes

As regards the contents of action plans and main measures likely to be financed by the Structural Funds, the following guidelines can be provided.

In compliance with the eligibility criteria for the different funds, the Territorial Pacts must ensure that their action plan is geared to the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy.

Indeed given the broad thematic scope of the Pacts a particular reference to only one of the five policy fields does not seem to be feasible or desirable. It is likely that

the TEPs will include operations covering two or more policy fields and thus represent a wide range of local employment measures.

In areas eligible under Objectives 1 and 2, the Funds will be used in such a way as to capitalize on their synergy and complementarity while remaining consistent with the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy – employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship, equal opportunities. In particular, the ESF will seize the opportunities offered by the new regulation by giving preference to an approach focused on strengthening human resources and on the development of the labour market at local level. For their part, the ERDF and EAGGF will concentrate chiefly on improving the economic environment. This joint approach is intended to facilitate the creation and growth of businesses at local level as well as to provide support for all job-creating initiatives.

In areas where the ESF operates alone, the intervention of this Fund could, with due compliance with the eligibility criteria, contribute to all the interventions deemed necessary to capitalize fully on local potential, including aid for the creation of small companies namely within the social economy, which respond to currently unfulfilled social needs by providing neighbourhood services.

Finally, in rural areas outside Objective 1, the interventions of the EAGGF/Guarantee will concentrate on supporting multi-functions in rural development.

The main Commission guidelines on these different topics are set out in its Communication of 1st July 1999⁵ and can be summarized as follows.

1. Affirming positive actions in favour of women

While mainstreaming a gender perspective into all actions supported by the Structural Funds is essential, specific positive action is required to complement this. These specific actions must be based on:

- an analysis undertaken in the mainstreaming context of the difference between women and men in the sectors and areas concerned and of specific constraints to equal benefits from policy measures;
- targets based on this analysis to correct these imbalances.

Indicators should then be set to monitor and assess progress in equality. Programmes and measures should be designed to fully address the gender-specific obstacles to equal access and participation in order to make sure that discriminatory effects are neutralized and that gender equality is promoted. A balanced participation of women and men in decision-making structures should be ensured. This could be achieved through measures which aim to improve women's career progression and access to higher level positions, correct the imbalance in the representation of women or men in certain economic sectors and occupations, support the increased employment of women and increase the level of entrepreneurial activity among women.

In this field, it will be important not just to rely on training measures, but to use the full potential of all eligible measures available, so as to support a comprehensive positive strategy. Member States should therefore ensure that active labour market policies are made available for women in proportion to their share of unemployment, give particular attention to obstacles which hinder women who wish to set up new businesses or become self-employed and ensure that women are able to benefit positively from flexible forms of work organization.

It should reflect the main objectives of the European Employment Strategy and supplement the general actions aiming at improving the employability of the workforce.

2. Developing the adaptability of the workforce

Under this policy field, Member States should demonstrate how, working with the social partners, they can combine their efforts to modernize work organization and forms of work, and enable the workforce to adapt better to economic change. It will also be important for the creation of more and better jobs to support entrepreneurship and the expansion of training opportunities.

ESF action should focus on helping individuals to adjust to changes arising from new technologies and from new market conditions, particularly employees who risk becoming unemployed. The anticipation of skills needs is crucial here, as is the supply of training activities and advisory services to employees of SMEs. Such actions imply the strengthening of partnership and the full

involvement and co-operation of the social partners, as does the development of new ways of distributing working time among occupational groups and of reconciling working and family life.

It will be necessary to link actions and measures aiming at integration, professional training (initial or ongoing) and re-skilling to activities supporting economic development and conversion. This applies both at the level of support for enterprises (for example for innovation) and at the level of basic conditions such as research and technological development (for example in the development of a regional strategy for innovation and technological development). Such a pro-active approach is particularly important in regions undergoing structural conversion.

3. Improving employability

This policy field covers strategies to broaden access to the acquisition of skills, support the diversification and reinforcement of training opportunities and improve the quality of education and training systems.

In order to reinforce the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce, opportunities for lifelong learning, particularly in the fields of information and communication technologies, should be improved. In this respect, attention should be given to the development of nationally recognized certification permitting flexibility in the continuation of studies.

The quality of education and training received is fundamental to young people's capacity to enter the labour market. Education and training systems should be better equipped to give people the ability to adapt and to integrate into the labour market, and notably to provide every individual with the minimum basic skills required (specifically literacy and numeracy). Particular attention should be given to young people with learning difficulties. The improvement of skills through basic education and training may be supported where there is a clear link with improving the functioning of the labour market and/or the employability of the individual.

In regions lagging behind, improving the capacity and effectiveness of the education and training systems as a whole is an important element in up-grading their competitiveness. Consistent investment in this sector over time has been shown to produce excellent results.

4. Encouraging entrepreneurship

a. Competitive enterprises for employment creation

The creation or expansion of competitive enterprises is the pre-condition for creating sustainable jobs and thus for regional and local economic development. All the Structural Funds contribute to this aim in the regions eligible for Objectives 1 and 2, while the European Social Fund contributes across the whole of the territory of the Union. While all sources of employment are important, the increasing role of the services sector - which has been responsible for most of the net employment growth in the Union in recent years - needs to be reflected in Community programmes.

• Promoting entrepreneurship

In order to promote entrepreneurship and employment creation, a combination of demand-side measures (such as the provision of subsidies or other support for individuals in becoming self-employed or starting their own enterprises, and supply side measures (such as targeted information, training and tutoring activities) should be taken. Training for entrepreneurship and targeted support services for entrepreneurs are also important.

Entrepreneurial activity, including self employment, could also be supported, and Member States should promote measures to exploit fully the possibilities offered by job creation at local level, in the social economy, in the area of environmental technologies, in rural areas and in new activities linked to needs not yet satisfied by the markets.

Many actions in support of enterprises will involve the granting of financial assistance or other advantages to undertakings engaged in commercial activities. In these cases, the programme authorities should ensure that the assistance granted is in conformity with Community competition rules.

Assistance under the Structural Funds to stimulate the productive sector must focus in particular on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs including social enterprises) while not neglecting the needs of large enterprises, especially in view of the close relationship which often exists between them and SMEs. The priorities for support from the Funds for enterprises are as follows:

• Shifting the emphasis from capital grants

Alternative sources of finance should be promoted such as reimbursable advances, risk and venture capital, loan capital and revolving funds, mutual guarantee schemes, etc.

• Improving the delivery of assistance

Increasing attention should also be paid to more qualitative and organizational aspects, notably the systems for delivering assistance and the overall productive environment.

• Involvement of the private sector in the formulation of strategies

As evaluations of past assistance have shown, the quality of programmes to develop the SMEs sector can be improved where they are worked out and implemented in the context of a broad partnership including representatives of private companies and business service organizations.

• Involvement of emerging actors such as social entrepreneurs

b. Business support services: helping the creation and development of enterprises

The significance of business support services for the successful creation, growth, and transfer of enterprises, in particular SMEs, is well established. Such services enable companies to increase their competitiveness and their capacity to identify new markets. They also help to create a level playing field in areas essential to the opening up of the internal market, such as public procurement where SMEs have a potentially key role to play. Measures under the Structural Funds to support such services should include assistance for technology transfer, the promotion of marketing and internationalization (excluding direct aid linked to exports), innovation in organization and management and assistance for the creation and development of financial instruments such as start-up capital, mutual guarantee companies, etc. As a result, the priorities should be:

• Identification of the needs of companies

• Exploitation of synergies

There is particular scope for improved synergies in the case of service centres, technology transfer centres, science parks, universities, research centres, etc, which often operate in an uncoordinated manner.

• **Reinforcement of international co-operation**

This promotes co-operation between firms to develop the European and international dimension of their business in order to build a more solid position in the single European market.

c. **Areas with particular potential of job growth**

The measures discussed above aim to increase the competitiveness of enterprises, in particular SMEs, and thus their employment-creating potential. However experience in the current programmes has shown that there are some sectors where potential for employment creation is very significant but has so far been under-utilized.

Insofar as these sectors are also priority areas of action for social companies, particular attention should be focused on supporting activities of integration through economic means pursued by such organizations.

• **Environmental improvement: a contribution to competitiveness**

- **Preventive approach**
- **Clean technologies**
- **Environmental management**

- **Industrial sites**

Priority should be given to the rehabilitation of derelict industrial sites (brownfields) over the development of greenfield sites.

- **Training**

This is fundamental to improving skills in environment-related issues within the business sector and to promoting new employment (or conversion).

• **Tourism and culture: advantages for local development**

- **Sustainable quality tourism**

Tourism is one of the leading growth industries in Europe and worldwide, in terms of both output and employment creation. Tourism thus represents an important economic asset for a large number of regions, rural communities and cities in the Union. A balanced and sustainable development of tourism should be supported in particular through:

- the modernization of tourism-related infrastructures and the improvement of their efficiency;

- upgrading skills and professional profiles in order to respond better to the expectations of tourists, the needs of the industry and of social insertion;

- encouraging business-to-business partnerships, public-private co-operation and networking in order to improve the integration of the different services involved in the “tourism chain”.

- **Culture: an economic growth point**

Culture is closely linked to tourism as the cultural heritage of a region not only contributes to the development of a local or regional identity but also attracts tourists. Culture thus offers opportunities for additional employment, a factor of major importance to the disadvantaged regions of the Community with a high concentration of cultural potential. The cultural dimension should thus be integrated into tourism development strategies.

Culture is also an increasingly important part of the private economy in its own right, with considerable potential for growth, social inclusion and job creation. Territorial Employment Pacts should thus make more use of the employment potential of innovative and creative cultural products, e.g. in the areas of culture-related online services, media and the information society or design, and include measures in these fields in their action plans.

• **New employment-creating activities linked with the supply of services meeting unsatisfied social needs**

On the basis of the experience with national support schemes and community pilot projects as well as the action plans of some existing Territorial Employment Pacts, the priorities for assistance to this sector should be:

- **Active support for the creation and development of service providers**

This involves, firstly, the identification of promising new sectors of activity and, second, the provision of appropriate support services to potential and existing service providers, such as information and counselling, as well as financial and technical assistance.

- **Organization and durability**

Once established, service providers, especially those involving newly active persons, will generally require continuing assistance for some time, notably in the areas

of management support and training. As far as possible, the ultimate objective should in general be the operation of the service on a sustainable basis. Therefore, public support should be degressive over time, taking account of the particular needs of the service in question.

5. Supporting multi-functions in rural areas

For the new period (2000-2006), the rural development policy defined in Agenda 2000 and in the new regulation (regulation 1257/99, OJ L 160 of 26/6/99) prioritises the safeguarding and the creation of jobs in rural communities.

Agriculture will have to adapt to new market realities. The changes will affect the economies of rural regions, where job creation must be reinforced in order to avoid depopulation. In this context, the following measures require particular attention:

- Modernizing holdings and improving their economic viability. This involves measures to encourage farmers to remain in the sector and to halt the tendency towards a decline in their numbers;
- Helping young, newly established farmers by providing new opportunities in sectors with potential for growth;
- Ensuring that training is appropriate and adapted to the rural environment by directing practitioners towards new products, marketing approaches, management techniques, and other activities;
- Safeguarding the development of activities and services in rural communities, in order to prevent migration towards urban areas, and supporting measures for the employment of women and young people;

- Diversifying activities to promote additional and alternative employment opportunities and create jobs that aim to better utilize existing potential.

These guidelines allow farmers to diversify their activities towards new productions, marketing and transformation, environment and forestry activities. The rural workforce will also develop activities linked to tourism, crafts, small and medium-sized enterprises, and services. In these areas, prior Community action has demonstrated the scope for job creation. These activities can be combined to ensure multifunctionality in rural areas.

The Pacts that will be established in rural areas outside Objective 1 will be eligible for financing from the Guarantee section of the EAGGF for job creation and maintenance, as well as for the diversification of activities – in particular those specified in article 33 of the regulation on rural development. Clearly they will only be able to do so with the approval of the monitoring committee responsible for managing the financial operation of the Funds and in the framework of the measures provided for by the programme in question. To the extent permitted by the new regulation, the Pacts can also apply to the EAGGF/Guarantee to finance studies on employment in rural communities for the programme's target area and to evaluate measures relating to actions for creating and maintaining employment.

III. Overview of the basic principles of the approach

A) Definitions

1) The context: why Territorial Employment Pacts?

Despite the efforts of political and administrative authorities and authorities working in the economic and social sphere, and in spite of the considerable financial resources devoted to employment policies, unemployment remains a serious problem in the European Union.

In its Communication "Action for Employment in Europe: a confidence Pact", the Commission put forward practical proposals with a view to stepping up efforts on this front. In particular, it encouraged the promotion of Territorial Employment Pacts, which were taken up by the European Council at Florence as one of the instruments that would help boost employment.

This approach is now explicitly mentioned in the new Structural Fund regulations (see chapter II).

2) The aim of the Territorial Employment Pacts: launching schemes which can serve as an example

The basic objective is to encourage widespread regional or local partnership in order to:

- identify the difficulties, concerns, and future prospects facing each of the territorial players with responsibility for employment;
- mobilize all available resources in favour of an integrated strategy accepted by all parties concerned, based on their real needs and expressed in a formal commitment – the Territorial Employment Pact;
- improve the integration and co-ordination of job creation measures;
- implement exemplary actions and measures in favour of employment.

3) What are the criteria of the Commission?

The European Commission has defined three main criteria by which it evaluates pacts submitted by the Member States:

- A bottom-up approach
The initiative must spring from the local level and may not be imposed by a higher authority.

- A broad, active partnership
Ideally, all partners concerned by job creation in the target area will contribute to designing and implementing the pact. The partnership will therefore involve representatives of the business community, trade unions and other local socio-economic operators. Their participation must be more than a mere formality: each should play an active part in implementing or financing the work programme.

- An integrated and innovative strategy
The resulting initiatives must be co-ordinated and integrated within an action plan. They must also innovate on local practice. The Pacts are essentially experimental and designed to test out new ways of dealing with the endemic problem of unemployment.

4) Where can a Territorial Employment Pact be promoted ?

A Territorial Pact for employment can be promoted at regional or local level, in towns, cities or employment catchment areas which share socio-economic characteristics. The territories involved will have high unemployment, making them eligible for support under the Union's structural policies.

5) Who should participate in the discussions leading to the formal conclusion of a Territorial Employment Pact ?

The pact calls for an association of various key players, such as:

- national, regional and local authorities;
- the private sector, including large firms, representatives of small businesses, socio-economic organizations, financial institutions, and so forth;
- the Chairs of the Committees responsible for monitoring European Union structural assistance;
- associations for the development or redevelopment of the territory in question;
- both sides of industry;
- the non-profit-making and co-operative sector, community groups;
- professional organizations, chambers of commerce;
- training, research and technological institutions.

The initiative to promote and organize the pact must come from the public authorities which are in the best position to influence the level of employment in the target area.

This authority should invite all private and public-sector bodies, including employment services, with major responsibility in the employment field to take part in discussions and to draw up a programme of job creation measures, in line with the strategy of the territory concerned.

6) How should a Territorial Employment Pact be promoted ?

The pact should be the outcome of discussions involving as many of the relevant national or local bodies as possible with a view to drawing up a joint programme of job creation measures, but also to implementing that programme through practical measures that meet local and regional employment needs.

A substantial part of these measures can be financed by Community structural intervention, as was already the case for the 89 pilot actions launched by the Commission in 1997.

B) Preparation and implementation of the Territorial Employment Pact

1) Preparatory work

The preparation of the pact consists of a process involving a series of meetings between the partners with a view to:

- discussing the problems of employment, and in particular the specific causes of unemployment, the strengths and weaknesses of the areas and regions concerned and possible ways of improving the situation and encouraging job creation;
- improving the methods for measuring and analysing the employment situation and evaluating employment policies, improving the know-how and technical skills of the various partners;

- identifying and analysing new initiatives or pilot schemes which may have significant impact in terms of job creation, pooling the experience of the various participants in the pact;
- devising new arrangements for co-operation and consultation between the various partners;
- identifying the margins for manoeuvre and resources available to each partner;
- seeking a consensus on proposals to boost the job content of Community structural assistance, to be presented to the relevant Monitoring Committees.

2) The content of the Territorial Employment Pact

At the end of this process, a Territorial Employment Pact is drawn up in the form of a document setting out the views of the various partners, detailed commitments by each participants and the practical proposals selected in the light of the guidelines set out in point II B.

The content of the Territorial Pact may be financed partly by the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund, particularly as regards the creation of new businesses.

The pact can go beyond structural assistance and cover a wider range of activities or initiatives, financed or supported by the various partners in both the public and private sectors.

3) What is the nature of the pact?

The pact is the result of a debate leading to an agreement between the local partners, published in a strategic document and accompanied by operational or financial commitments made by each partner. This document contains a presentation of the principal objectives and the quantified results expected, as well as a definition of the target groups and the specific areas of job creation. The planned measures must be as concrete as possible. In a larger perspective, this initiative must allow players to identify potential obstacles in labour and employment legislation.

European Commission

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