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Cohesion fund: 1997 outturn

In 1997, the Cohesion Fund committed all of its financial allocation for the year. Compared with previous years, it provided more finance for environmental projects (54.4% of resources) than for projects connected with trans-European transport networks (45.5%).

The breakdown between these two sectors, which started out being more biased towards transport, is approaching the intended equilibrium between the two for the whole 1994-99 period. The split in 1993-97 was 49.1% for environment projects and 50.8% for transport projects.

The emphasis of the Fund's assistance in 1997 was more on managing and monitoring

projects already adopted than on the adoption of new projects. About 40% of its allocation for 1998 and 1999 will be devoted to projects already running, leaving 60% available for new projects.

Cohesion Fund: commitments by Member State in 1997 (ecu million)

	Total	Environ-ment	Transport
Greece	493.48	210.45	283.03
Spain	1 514.60	848.07	661.52
Ireland	245.54	134.05	111.49
Portugal	493.23	302.36	190.87
Tech. ass.*	1.85		
TOTAL	2 748.70	1 499.94	1 246.91

* 0.1% of funds is reserved for technical assistance.

RECITE II co-operation projects

The European Commission has made an initial selection of 56 projects under the RECITE II programme, which deal with co-operation among regions and cities in the European Union. Final approval of Community funding for the various RECITE projects under Article 10 of the ERDF Regulation will be spread over the months of March to June 1998, after meetings with the project promoters.

Following the Commission's call for tenders launching the RECITE II programme in October 1996, it received 301 proposals and has made a preliminary selection of 56. These projects are distributed among the various co-operation topics proposed as follows:

- 33 projects involving the development of small and medium-sized businesses
- 13 projects involving environmental protection
- 5 projects involving equal opportunities between men and women
- 5 projects involving the development of local potential.

Together these projects are to receive a maximum of ECU 110 million from the ERDF. A full provisional list of these projects can be obtained by fax at: +32-2-230.49.15. As soon as the list has been approved officially, it will be sent to you as well as being made available on the Inforegio site <http://www.inforegio.org/wbpro/prord/prordi/prdi_en.htm>

Adoption of three new programmes

The Commission has recently approved Community funding for three new programmes:

Madrid (Spain) Objective 2

This programme is to receive a Community contribution of almost ECU 194 million in 1997-99 and is designed to support the economic and social restructuring of declining industrial areas in the Madrid region. Most of the budget involves the promotion of employment and competitiveness and the internationalisation of economic activities. Other priorities are research, technology and information, environmental protection, the servicing of commercial estates, and local and urban development. The area covered has a population of 1.2 million and a surface area of 500 km², including about a hundred industrial parks and three universities.

Basque Country (Spain) Objective 2

The Objective 2 programme for 1997-99 in the Basque Country is to receive a Community contribution of over ECU

370 million. This programme is designed to meet the same economic and social restructuring priorities as for Madrid, and the major part of resources is also concentrated on employment, competitiveness and the internationalisation of economic activities. The eligible areas in industrial decline have a population of more than 2 million (98% of the regional population) and cover 4 500 km².

Depressed urban area in Syracuse (Italy)

This is a global grant with a Community contribution of ECU 25 million to support productive investment by small businesses (mainly under a state-aid scheme) and services to small businesses in Syracuse (Sicily). This area is faced with the economic and social impact of the decline of major local companies, in particular in the chemicals sector. The intermediary body managing the grant is CO.SVI.S. Spa.

For more information on these programmes, please contact L Nigri, DG XVI/F/2 (fax +32-2-230.49.15) or consult DG XVI's Internet site at: <<http://www.inforegio.org/erdf>>

IBEXes in Magdeburg, León and Libramont

As part of the transnational activities funded by the SME Community Initiative, three international buyers' exhibitions (IBEXes) are to take place in the near future with support from the European Regional Development Fund. Such IBEXes are designed to be a forum for contacts between major companies that have subcontracting work to offer and small businesses wishing to undertake subcontracting work. For small businesses in the sectors targeted, this is a chance to meet potential new customers.

Consult <<http://www.inforegio.org/wbpro/prord/guide/ibex/ibex01.htm>>

- Energy IBEX in Magdeburg (Germany) from 4 to 6 March 1998 for small businesses in the sector of energy technology, in particular environmentally friendly technologies (total planned cost: ECU 640 000, Community contribution: about ECU 320 000).

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- Agri-foodstuff IBEX in León (Spain) from 28 to 30 May 1998 for small businesses in the agri-foodstuff sector (total planned cost: ECU 961 000, Community contribution: about ECU 648 000).

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- Timber in Construction IBEX at Libramont (Belgium) from 24 to 27 November 1998 for small businesses in the structural timber industry (total planned cost: ECU 1 022 000, Community contribution: about ECU 300 000). In addition to contact appointments, this IBEX will offer various events providing for mutual exchange of information and experience.

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