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# inforegio news

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## Dialogue with the regions

In the context of the follow-up to the White Paper on European governance, the European Commission launched a public consultation in March 2003 on a permanent and systematic dialogue with national and European associations of local and regional authorities. Over 60 such organisations participated actively in the consultation, making written submissions to the Commission. These contributions, which will now feed into the preparation of a Commission communication on this topic, are currently available on the inforegio web site, at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comml/regional\\_policy/consultation/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comml/regional_policy/consultation/index_en.htm)

## Structural Funds and telecommunications

On 23 June, the European Commission launched a new consultation process with interested parties, in particular local and regional authorities, on guidelines concerning the criteria and the means of implementation of Structural funding in the telecommunications sector. Within the framework of the regional development programmes co-financed by the Structural Funds for the period 2000–06, approximately EUR 10 billion has been allocated to activities in the telecommunications sector. Draft guidelines will be published before the end of July, at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comml/regional\\_policy/consultation/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comml/regional_policy/consultation/index_en.htm)

## Objective 1 regions catching up

**In the period 1994–99, Structural Funds expenditure in Objective 1 regions contributed to reducing structural disparities and to accelerating economic growth and job creation.**

A recent evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the Structural Funds in Objective 1 regions in the period 1994–99 finds that a degree of convergence was achieved for all the cohesion countries and eastern Germany, and most of the other Objective 1 regions. The evaluation concludes that the EUR 114 billion in Structural Funds (total expenditure of EUR 210 billion) expended in these regions during this period contributed significantly to this process.

The Structural Funds had a particular impact in areas such as: access, with the construction or upgrading of over 4 100 km of motorways and 32 000 km of other roads; the knowledge society, through the education and training of at least 8.15 million people, and considerable investment in infrastructure; competitiveness, with the strengthening of physical infrastructure and human capital. It is estimated that in excess of 800 000 (gross) jobs were created in Objective 1 regions with Structural Funds support.

In the larger programme areas; Structural Fund activities were found to have a positive impact on GDP. The highest impacts were seen in Por-

tugal (+ 4.66 %), eastern Germany (+ 3.95 %), Ireland (+ 2.83 %) and Greece (+ 2.16 %).

For the current programming, the evaluation recommends a greater focus on research and technological development, more performance-based programme management, and a more strategic role for the monitoring committees. Post 2006, recommendations include: a focus on building institutional capacity in the new Member States; better integration between funds; a lighter, less prescriptive framework for allocating resources to smaller regions. The evaluation also recommends that increasing consideration be given to the 'exit strategy' for existing Objective 1 regions.

The Commission will now be encouraging Member States to use these lessons in the mid-term review of current Structural Funds programmes. It will also ensure that the lessons are brought to the attention of the future Member States to assist programming for the period 2004–06. The text of the evaluation can be found at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comml/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/rado\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comml/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/rado_en.htm)

## New NUTS regulation

A new EC regulation on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) was published in the Official Journal on 21 June 2003. Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 aims to establish a new NUTS classification, to replace the existing

system. The regulation will enter into force on the 20th day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L 154, volume 46, 21 June 2003). Available online at:

<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/oj/2003/l15420030621en.html>





## Structural Funds negotiations begin with new Member States

**The European Commission has begun negotiations with new Member States on their regional development programmes for the first three years after accession.**

Talks have already commenced with Poland and the Czech Republic and negotiations with the remaining countries will commence during the months of July and September.

On 27 June, negotiations began with the Polish authorities on the Community support framework (CSF) and related operational programmes (OPs). Of the new Member States, Poland will be by far the largest recipient of Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds. For the period 2004–06, Poland will receive almost EUR 8.3 billion in EU Structural Funds and EUR 4.2 billion from the Cohesion Fund. Poland has 16 regions, all of which are eligible for Objective 1 assistance.

The Czech Republic was the second accession country to start negotiations, with talks commencing in Prague on 3 July. For the period 2004–06 the Czech Republic will

receive EUR 2.6 billion, including almost EUR 1.7 billion in Structural Funds and EUR 0.9 billion from the Cohesion Fund. Structural funding will be mainly concentrated on Objective 1 areas, except for the region of Prague, which is designated Objective 2.

The Commission plans to start negotiations with Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia in July and with the other five future EU members in September. The talks are expected to continue until the end of 2003. The future Member States will become eligible for expenditure under the Union's Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund on 1 January 2004.

Further information is available at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/themes/enlarge\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/themes/enlarge_en.htm)

## New instrument for cooperation at external borders

**On 1 July 2003, the European Commission adopted a document which presents plans to significantly boost cooperation over the EU's new 10 000 km border with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, the western Balkans and the Mediterranean.**

Between 2004 and 2006, existing instruments for cross-border cooperation, such as Interreg, Phare-CBC, Tacis-CBC, CARDS and MEDA, will be better coordinated through the creation of new 'neighbourhood programmes' to be launched in 2004. For the period after 2007, the Commission highlights a number of options, including the creation of a single new neighbourhood instrument.

The new document, 'Paving the way for a new neighbourhood instrument', identifies four key objectives for future cross-border cooperation: promoting economic and social development in the border areas; working together to address common challenges in fields such as the environment, public health, and the fight against organised crime; ensuring efficient and secure borders; promoting local, 'people-to-people' -type actions.

The new neighbourhood programmes will be based on current legislation but will offer new solutions to problems likely to arise following enlargement. The Commission foresees total funding for these programmes of EUR 955 million. Key features of the new programmes include: funding to be allocated on both sides of the external border; a single application procedure; joint decision-making for project selection and management. Beyond 2006, a new neighbourhood instrument is envisaged, applicable to all the areas covered by the Union's existing cooperation programmes in the border regions. The Commission intends to present more detailed proposals in 2004. For further information, see:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/newsroom/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/newsroom/index_en.htm)



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