

en

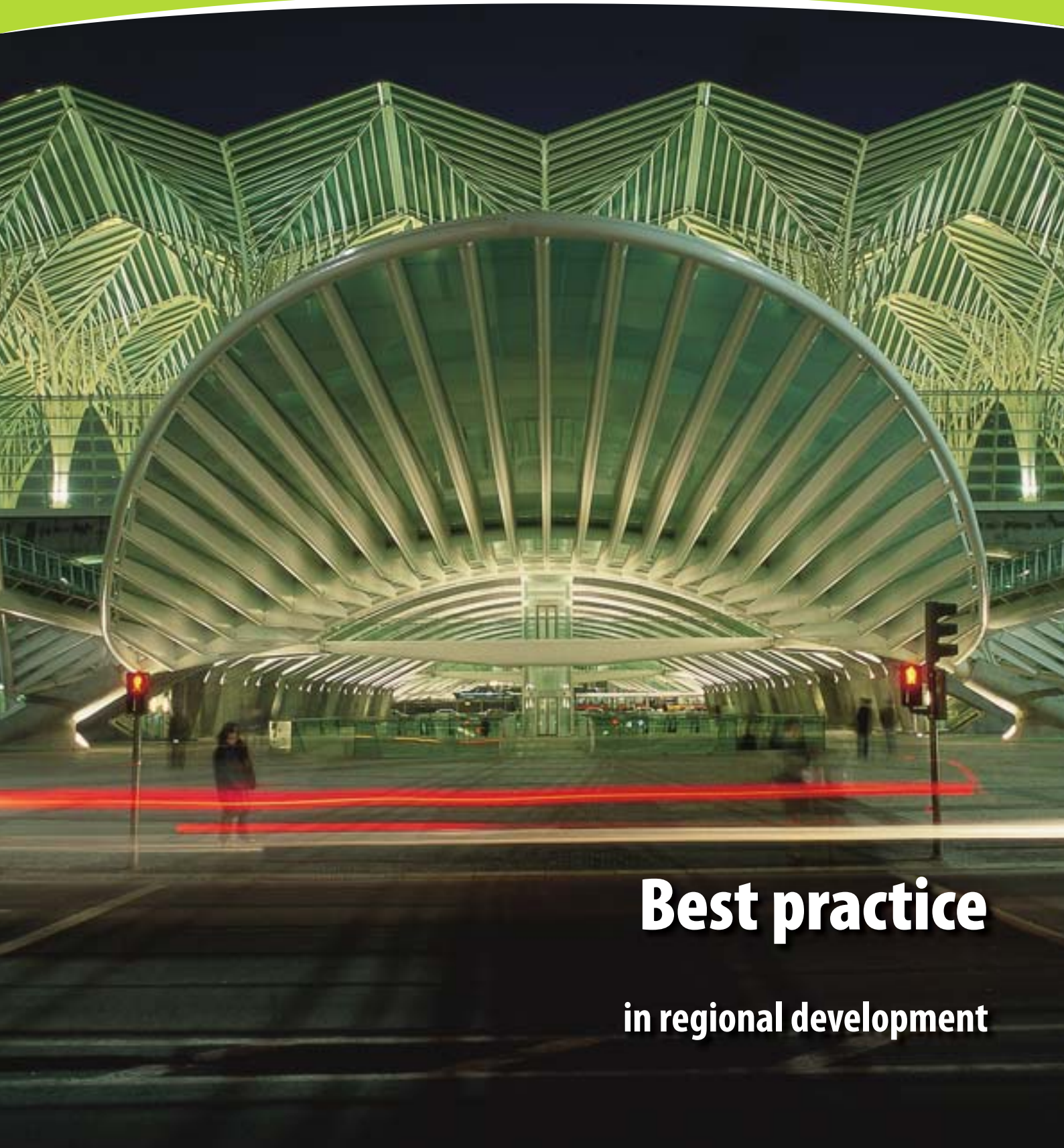


European Union  
Regional policy

# inforegio

| No 16 | May 2005 |

## panorama



**Best practice**

**in regional development**

# Contents

## Europe's cities and regions put their weight behind Lisbon

On 3 March 2005, at the invitation of Commissioner Danuta Hübner, a conference was held in Brussels on the role of the regions in relaunching the European strategy for sustainable growth, competitiveness and employment, as adopted in Lisbon in 2000.

## Best practice *in regional development*

### Learning about best practice

The implementation of Structural Funds is often regarded as an area of Community added value. One aspect is the scope for learning about best practice in Structural Fund management, from one programming period to the next, and through the exchange of experience among Member States and regions.

### Enhanced evaluation capacity in the Member States

During 2004, the Regional Policy DG undertook an analysis of the mid-term evaluations of Objective 1 and 2 programmes in order to take stock of the results and consider how good practice can be built on in the future.

### From the ground: Sweden

### The ERDF in action: Germany, France, UK, Greece

### Testimony: The Visegrad Group countries are cooperating on evaluation

### Report: Irish recipes for success

It was the poorest country in the European Community when it joined in 1973. But 30 years later, having made judicious use of European aid programmes in particular, it has become one of the most prosperous EU States. But what was it that put Ireland's economy into gear? Can it offer any tips to the new Member States?

### From the ground: Belgium

### From the ground: Spain

### The ERDF in action: the Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal, Italy

### Sustainable development: acting promptly

The Commission's proposals for updating the 'Gothenburg strategy'.

### REGIO and networks

### Online

Photographs (pages): European Commission (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 25, 26), A. Janssens/Euro Liège TGV (15), Örebro län (16), AZ publica (17), Nicéphore Cité (17), Creggan Enterprises Ltd (17), URBAN Greece (17), Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj (18), National Roads Authority (19), Dublin Bay Project (20), Women's Community Projects (Mullingar) Association Ltd (21), AEIDL (21), National University of Ireland, Maynooth (22), Région wallonne (23), URBAN II Noord aan de Rotte (25), Nordjyllands Amt (25), Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior (25).

The 'Estação do Oriente' railway station in Lisbon (Portugal) was built for Expo 98 with the help of the European Regional Development Fund.

The following also contributed to this issue: Pierre Ergo, Véronique Faure, Veronica Gaffey, Jean-Luc Janot, José Luis Kaiser, Ann Martin, Catherine Mathot, Eirini Nikolaïdou, Wolfgang Petzold.

Editor: Thierry Daman, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy.

This magazine is printed in English and French on recycled paper.

The thematic dossier is available in 19 languages of the European Union at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm)

The text of this publication is not legally binding.

4



7



13



16



17

18

19



23



24

25

26



27

28

## 'Best practice' for growth and employment in the regions and in the Union

On 3 March, some 550 regional and cohesion policy actors gathered in Brussels at the invitation of Commissioner Danuta Hübner to debate the role of the regions in achieving the 'Lisbon objectives' for a competitive job-creating European economy. The conference was an important step in the dialogue initiated by the European Commission on its proposal for a new partnership for growth and jobs that will give new impetus to the strategy as it reaches its mid-point. The following pages provide a summary of the meeting's principal results as well as a brief outline of the Commission's proposals for updating the supplementary strand to the Lisbon strategy, namely the 'Gothenburg objectives' for sustainable development that respects the environment.

The central dossier in this issue of *Inforegio Panorama* stays with the theme of 'updating' and focuses on 'best practice' in implementing cohesion policy, in particular in light of the recent mid-term evaluation in the Objective 1 and Objective 2 regions of the Structural Funds.

'Best practice' provides the best possible illustration of the way many of Europe's regions are succeeding, with the help of the Structural and Cohesion Funds, in taking control of their future in the interests of EU competitiveness as a whole and of regional cohesion. This dossier shows that cohesion policy is a key instrument in achieving the Lisbon strategy throughout the Union while at the same time taking into account the specific needs of regions, each of which has its own potential for growth.

In addition to financial solidarity — almost EUR 80 billion already disbursed since 2000 as a contribution to the Lisbon strategy — cohesion policy is notable for methods that have already proved their worth, such as joint programming, the pooling of resources, and an 'evaluation culture' that is rich in the exchange of experiences between the regions. 'Best practice' is the result and the best possible added value of cohesion policy.

In presenting its reform proposals for the future 2007–13 programmes, the Commission aims to further increase the impact of this policy on economic performances and the living conditions of Europe's citizens by virtue of the increased involvement of all regional development actors in achieving the objectives of growth and jobs.

The European Council on 16 and 17 June will discuss the Union's financial perspectives for the 2007–13 period and will therefore determine the resources available to cohesion policy. On this point, the Commission has made a proposal that is both prudent and reasonable. It remains for this to be approved so that cohesion policy can continue to lend its support to all the regions and all the citizens of Europe who need it.

**The editorial team**



## 'Cohesion and the Lisbon strategy — The role of the regions' conference

# Europe's cities and regions put their weight behind Lisbon

On 3 March 2005, at the invitation of Commissioner Danuta Hübner, a conference was held in Brussels on the role of the regions in relaunching the European strategy for sustainable growth, competitiveness and employment, as adopted in Lisbon in 2000. It was an occasion for Europe's cities and regions to put their weight behind the Lisbon strategy. If it is to realise its full potential, the strategy must be coupled with a policy of dynamic cohesion implemented throughout the Union and with the necessary resources at its disposal.



European Commission President José Manuel Barroso opens the conference

Organised in advance of the spring European Council on 22 and 23 March, at which a review of the Lisbon strategy was on the agenda, the conference involved 550 participants from 24 Member States, four candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Turkey) and almost 200 regions. Participants included about 100 presidents of the regions and regional and local elected leaders, delegates from 11 European associations, assorted experts, and representatives of the European institutions.

Citing the major challenges the Union faces — international competition, demographic change, disparities within the EU-25 — in his welcoming address European Commission President José Manuel Barroso restated the three key words for refocusing and relaunching the Lisbon strategy.

- > **Attractiveness.** This involves 'combining growth and territorial cohesion by developing the potential of the single market, infrastructure and poles of innovation. In this respect, concentration of excellence must certainly not result in the exclusion of the least developed regions. On the contrary, these must be helped in attaining high levels of excellence'.
- > **Knowledge.** This constitutes 'a powerful factor for integration benefiting individuals through education and training, and benefiting companies and markets through research and innovation'.
- > **Jobs.** The Member States are requested to 'implement active policies aimed at the greatest possible inclusion in labour markets. Nobody must remain excluded from the world of work. In this respect, the creation of quality jobs must be one of our major priorities in the years to come'.

## Cohesion policy as a coefficient for 'Lisbon'

Defined in this way, the Lisbon strategy is in itself conducive to EU cohesion. However, the experience of regional development programmes over the past 15 years also makes an essential contribution to the strategy, as Mr Barroso stressed: 'Local and regional elected representatives have a better understanding of the link between cohesion — economic, social, territorial — and competitiveness. The Lisbon strategy must draw inspiration from the partnerships between the national, local and social players that cohesion policy has put in place. It must benefit from regional dynamism and the know-how of cohesion policy in the field of governance.' Mr Barroso thus appealed for 'a voluntary agreement on the financial perspectives that awards cohesion its rightful place. Without solidarity, without the idea of cohesion, there would no longer be a Union'.

Introducing the plenary session, Danuta Hübner, Commissioner responsible for regional policy, also stressed the key role of cohesion policy, demonstrating that its objectives and the 'Lisbon'

objectives are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing: with the aid of the Structural and Cohesion Funds 'the regions are already in the process of meeting the key challenges of the Lisbon agenda'. Citing the figures as evidence, she illustrated — as many speakers would later confirm — the vital contribution of European funds to growth and jobs, research and innovation, the creation and development of SMEs, human resources and social inclusion. 'This effort must continue and it is in this spirit that the Commission presented its proposals for regional and cohesion policy reform for the 2007–13 period.'

## Regional diversity as potential for the Union

Commissioner Hübner also stressed how regional programmes are a means of providing *ad hoc* responses to needs on the ground. In doing so, they can encourage ownership of the Lisbon strategy. There are no 'one size fits all' solutions and regional diversity 'provides us with great potential for the exchange of best practice, for building synergies and for networking'. In return, 'Lisbon' encourages awareness, at regional level, of the crucial role of an efficient economy for the European social model and for the environment. 'The regions need Lisbon and Lisbon needs the regions. We are opposed to any renationalisation of regional policy, as that would kill the spirit of the Treaty and undermine what has been created, which constitutes the basis of cohesion policy.'

For Nicolas Schmit, speaking on behalf of the Luxembourg EU Presidency, 'the European Union has a unique opportunity, as it can prove that it is able to acquire a vision to preserve its social model' through a more integrated approach to economic, social and environmental challenges. But, the minister stressed, 'if Europe wants to be credible to its citizens, to create a reform process and redefine the macroeconomic framework, it cannot fall short when it comes to financing its policies'.

## The key points of the debate

Following the opening addresses, debates were organised in three sessions. First Mrs Hübner chaired a debate on the Wim Kok report offering a mid-term evaluation of the Lisbon strategy. This document delivers a mixed verdict on the past five years and stresses the need for all parties to be actively and responsibly involved as well as the need for Community financial incentives for competitiveness, growth and jobs. The debate was followed by two round tables, on 'Competitiveness and governance' and on 'Innovation and the regions', chaired respectively by Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission responsible for transport, and Mrs Neelie Kroes, Commissioner responsible for competition.

The debates were rich and lively, with many questions asked and many answers given. In conclusion, Mrs Hübner identified the key messages below.

> **Active involvement of the cities and regions.** Essential to a new start for the Lisbon strategy, this participation is based on a unique mechanism that enables Community priorities to be converted into results on the ground that can be disseminated throughout the EU.

- > **Adequate resources for cohesion.** In advocating a budget that remains at the present percentage of the EU's GNI — and this despite the growing disparities following enlargement — the Commission has made a prudent and realistic proposal below which a drastic reduction in European aid, if not the abandoning of entire regions, could be seen. For its part, the European Parliament has also called for a credible regional financing policy.
- > **Keys to growth, in less favoured areas and in more developed regions.** While cohesion policy must give financial priority to areas where needs are greatest — first and foremost in the new Member States — strategic priorities must be supported throughout the EU in order to anticipate the territorial impact of changes brought by globalisation. Cohesion policy must therefore continue to be implemented outside the poorest regions. However, investment must be concentrated on well-defined thematic priorities — starting with innovation — that will ensure maximum impact in terms of growth and jobs.
- > **Less bureaucracy and better quality programmes.** Regional policy must be more flexible and more effective, with more decentralised implementation that strictly respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It must also be based on strengthened quality criteria.
- > **A policy that wins public support.** Projects supported by the Union provide the most visible evidence to citizens that Brussels is doing something useful to improve their living conditions. It would be unwise to deprive European integration of this argument.
- > **A coherent policy.** Finally, it is of the utmost importance to ensure coherence between cohesion policy and the EU's other policies, especially competition policy.



Commissioner Danuta Hübner presents her conclusions



*The ERDF supports research on photovoltaic materials at the Gelsenkirchen Scientific Park in North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany).*

### Areas with natural handicaps and lying on the former external borders

Participants drew attention to territories facing permanent handicaps, such as the far north regions and mountain zones that, although requiring specific aid, can also play a pilot role in developing innovation and strengthening territorial cohesion. Commissioner Jacques Barrot, who was Mrs Hübner's predecessor at regional policy, pointed out in this respect that Commission proposals for post-2006 foresee 'the possibility of increasing aid for these regions'. Increases are also planned for zones that were on the Union's external borders prior to enlargement, in order to avoid excessive differences between the aid they receive and that granted to neighbouring areas in the new Member States.

### The figures: cohesion policy's contribution to the Lisbon strategy

Since 2000, the Structural and Cohesion Funds have contributed almost EUR 80 billion to investments in fields that cover virtually all the Lisbon strategy priorities. During the 2000–06 period, the expenditure agreed at Lisbon will be allocated as follows:

- > combating unemployment, human resources, social integration on the labour market (EUR 60 billion);
- > social infrastructures and public health (EUR 5.8 billion) and accompanying measures for the labour market (EUR 1.2 billion);
- > research, technological development, innovation (EUR 9.6 billion);
- > development of SMEs and their risk capital (EUR 2.16 and 1.3 billion respectively);
- > telecommunication infrastructures linked to the information society (EUR 1.5 billion);
- > infrastructures for education and vocational training (EUR 1.5 billion);
- > transport infrastructures, including multimodal links (EUR 29.3 billion from the ERDF), and Cohesion

### State aid: the emphasis on innovation, R & D and SMEs

In response to concerns expressed about the effect of future State aid reform on achieving regional aims, Commissioner Neelie Kroes stressed the need for 'coherence between policies on State aid and cohesion policy (...). We are working on this in close cooperation with Mrs Hübner'. She recalled that President Barroso suggested during the conference a 'structured dialogue' on this subject between the Commission and the regional authorities. Thanks to this proposal, 'there will be opportunities for horizontal aid. I am aware of the importance of State aid for innovation, research and development, and SMEs'.

### Sustainable development

Among the many other subjects discussed, a number of participants argued in favour of strengthening the Gothenburg strategy for sustainable development, which supplements the Lisbon objectives. For more on this subject, read our article on page 26.

Further information can be found on the following websites:  
Conference:

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

Commission Communication COM(2005) 24, 'A new start for the Lisbon strategy':

[http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/COM2005\\_024\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/COM2005_024_en.pdf)

Kok report:

[http://www.europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/kok\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/kok_report_en.pdf)

Commission's legislative proposals for 2007–13 ('Cohesion policy: the 2007 watershed' fact sheet):

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/informat/reg2007\\_en.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/reg2007_en.pdf)

Fund expenditure on trans-European networks (EUR 4.3 billion and expected supplement of EUR 5.5 billion);

- > renewable energy sources (EUR 833 million);
- > environmental infrastructures (EUR 10.4 billion from the ERDF and EUR 2.8 billion from the Cohesion Fund, plus a supplement of EUR 6.2 billion).

In terms of growth, since 1994 the increase in GDP per capita in Spain, Greece and Portugal has exceeded the EU average by 1 %, and was four times this average in Ireland. In the Objective 1 regions, the gap between GDP per capita and the EU average was reduced by one sixth between 1988 and 2001. Growth in these regions was three times the rate for the rest of the Union.

In the present Objective 2 regions, unemployment fell by 1 % more than in the rest of the Union between 1995 and 2000 with a particularly sharp fall in declining industrial areas where lost jobs were offset by new jobs, especially in the services sector. The global impact in these regions is estimated at 500 000 jobs created or saved.



## Managing Structural Fund programmes

# Learning about best practice

by John Bachtler <sup>(1)</sup>

**The implementation of Structural Funds is often regarded as an area of Community added value. One aspect is the scope for learning about best practice in Structural Fund management, across time from one programming period to the next, and through the exchange of experience among Member States and regions. Each stage of programming has produced lessons from which others can learn.**



■ A business incubator in Egg in the Vorarlberg (Austria).

Managing Structural Fund programmes presents formidable challenges. The implementation of large, multiannual, multi-sectoral funding allocations within an administrative framework that may conflict with national practices is complex and demanding. However, the experience of the past 15 years illustrates how Member States have been able to use the Structural Funds to generate Community added value and develop new approaches to regional policy. One of the most valuable aspects of this added value is the scope for learning about best practice in Structural Fund management, across time from one programming period to the next, and through the exchange of experience among Member States and regions.

### **Programme management: different systems for different countries**

Each Member State has developed its own programme management arrangements, in some cases with region-specific systems. An important distinction can be made between countries that have:

- > a *differentiated* approach to resource allocation, with separate administrative structures established to deliver the Structural Funds (as in the Netherlands, Sweden or the UK);

<sup>(1)</sup> Professor John Bachtler is a Director of the European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK.

- > a *subsumed* approach, as in Austria, Spain, parts of Germany and most new Member States, where the allocation of resources is channelled through national/regional ministries and agencies; and
- > *composite* systems, with a mix of the two approaches, as in Finland, France and Italy.

Each management type has advantages and drawbacks. Differentiated systems can be administratively complex (and may be less appropriate for larger Objective 1 interventions), but they allow for greater strategic coherence, transparent decision-making and visibility of EU funding. Subsumed systems, in turn, are more straightforward and streamlined to operate, but they often find it difficult to integrate different interventions and exert leverage on the use of EU funding.

## Outsourcing programme management: Ziel 2 Sekretariat in North-Rhine Westphalia (Germany)

One approach to Structural Fund management — common in differentiated management systems — is to ‘out-source’ parts of programme administration to a separate secretariat, as has long been the case in parts of Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK. A recent addition is North-Rhine Westphalia which has created the Ziel 2 Sekretariat, outsourced to a consultancy company, to improve co-ordination between the programme committees, to provide technical support to the many different ministries and agencies administering the programme, and to undertake publicity and communication.



The Bragança (Norte, Portugal) bypass facilitates the traffic flow to Spain.

A trend in many EU Member States over the past 10 to 15 years has been a progressive regionalisation of programme management responsibilities, most recently in Greece and Ireland. In some regions, intermediate implementing bodies have been created to administer sub-regional or thematic parts of programmes, e.g. Austria (regional management offices), France (localised grants), Italy (integrated programmes/projects) and the UK (action plans).

Management systems have become more sophisticated, in an effort to gain more control over resource delivery in line with strategic programme objectives. Evaluation research stresses that management efficiency depends on clarity in the definition of organisational roles and processes and the flexibility to handle innovation. An important factor in helping to improve management is regular networking among programme secretariats — an established feature of Structural Fund implementation in Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

## Best practice initiative for better programme management in England (United Kingdom)

In 2003, the UK Office of the Deputy Prime Minister launched a best practice initiative to improve Structural Fund management in England. With three main elements, it involved: (a) a detailed review of good practices which could be duplicated and weaknesses needing to be addressed, especially with respect to strategic leadership and project support; (b) a rolling training strategy to develop programming skills and knowledge; and (c) networking and the provision of support materials to embed the learning.

## Marketing the programme: publicity and communication

Information is at the heart of Structural Fund programming. Programmes need to inform and engage applicants and grant-holders to ensure they know whether an application is appropriate, how to make a good-quality application and how to implement their project effectively. Programme partners require information to ensure the smooth administration and steering of their programme. And the wider public needs to be informed about the contribution of Structural Funds to improving regional and local development in their area.

In the current round of Structural Funds, more emphasis has been placed on publicity and communication. Programmes have different communication needs over the





Work on the access routes to the archaeological sites in Athens (Greece) on the occasion of the 2004 Olympic Games.

programme life-cycle, and a range of good practices can be identified. These include:

- > identifying the target audiences in terms of their information needs and expected responses;
- > choosing the right tools, ensuring they have a clear purpose, taking account of audience capacity, and presenting clear and succinct messages; and
- > developing an appropriate communication management system with clear roles and responsibilities, investment in capacity, efficient exploitation of results, and in-built mechanisms for assessing effectiveness.

### Publicising Structural Funds in Greece

The CSF Managing Authority in Greece has established a unified communications framework to inform beneficiaries and the public. It involves a network of around 50 information and publicity officers, a central information coordination group, a detailed vade mecum on the information and publicity requirements of all stages of the programme life-cycle, and an evaluation programme for assessing the effectiveness of communication activities.

### Delivering programmes: project appraisal and selection

More than ever before, programmes are under pressure to deliver, with the sanctions and incentives of the decommitment rule and performance reserve. Programming authorities are trying to improve project quality and generate better projects with an underlying strategic rationale, a strong likelihood of being implemented on time, and (in the case of regions likely to lose aid in 2007) leaving a lasting legacy to the region.

In this context, project appraisal and selection systems play an important role. Over time, the scrutiny of applications has become more systematic and professional, with some regions employing sophisticated methods for scoring, weighting and ranking projects (especially in Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK). The use of entry criteria and quality criteria enables programme managers to influence the shape of applications and to prioritise the allocation of resources. Independent experts, specialist panels and intermediaries (e.g. banks) are commonly used for certain measures or schemes — as in Germany, Italy and Spain — particularly for large and complex infrastructure projects or specialist RTDI schemes. Training for beneficiaries in project appraisal techniques is also given a high priority.

The key objectives underlying all systems are the need for appraisal and selection procedures to be streamlined and transparent; to have the flexibility to deal with innovative applications, as well as the scope for fast-tracking low-risk projects; and to incorporate aftercare arrangements to support beneficiaries with project delivery.

### Raising project quality through integrated local programmes in Italy

Among a range of types of integrated projects in Italy, *Programmi Integrati per lo Sviluppo Locale* (PISL) have been introduced in some regions to raise project quality and improve the strategic capacities of regional actors. Each PISL is a meso-level strategy — a coherent set of integrated, inter-sectoral actions (encompassing infrastructure and enterprise aids), providing a coordinated local territorial framework for the design, selection and delivery of projects.

### Improving the quality and transparency of project generation and selection in Austria

In Austria, regional management offices work with applicants at local level to generate applications and develop good-quality projects. To improve transparency and consistency in project selection, *Maßnahmeverantwortliche Förderstellen* (measure managers) are employed in each funding agency to ensure a standardised approach to the receipt, assessment and decision of applications and the award of funding.

### Intelligence for better programming: the role of monitoring

Structural Fund monitoring has frequently been regarded as a diversion from the more important business of programme delivery. In recent years, however, it has become recognised as a prerequisite for effective programming, providing critical intelligence to inform every aspect of programme design, delivery and evaluation.



The Danutoni (Romania) purifying plant benefited from PHARE and ISPA funds.





■ Visiting the irrigation systems financed by the ERDF on the west coast of Réunion Island (France).

### **Tracking financial and physical progress: national and regional monitoring systems**

As monitoring has become more important, many Member States have invested in developing shared, user-friendly systems to track both financial (commitments and payments) and physical indicators. The national monitoring system in France, Presage, is one of the best-known systems, adapted for use in several other countries. Further examples are SIRGIS and SINIT (Italy), STINS (Sweden) and, at regional level, efReporter (Sachsen-Anhalt). Among the new generation of systems developed in the new Member States is SIMIK (Poland), currently being networked as SIMIK-NET. Interestingly, the experience of Structural Fund monitoring is being used to develop much broader systems for tracking government interventions, as in the case of the planned public investment monitoring system (MIP) in Italy.

Effective monitoring begins with the identification, definition and quantification of indicators, taking account of the feasibility of data collection and the relevance of the data. It requires a data collection and storage infrastructure, ideally delivering real-time information for programming purposes. Lastly, the human capacity for monitoring needs to be

developed through a mix of awareness-raising and motivational mechanisms to ensure standardised procedures. None of this is straightforward, and most regions have struggled at different times with the quantification of indicators, the technical constraints of IT systems and deficiencies in the accuracy and utility of data.

### **Partnership: learning to work together**

Partnership is one of the fundamental principles of Structural Fund implementation and has probably had more influence than any other aspect of EU cohesion policy on regional development practices in the EU. It is also one of the most difficult principles to operationalise, requiring partners from different institutions and organisational cultures, with varying priorities and interests, to work together in pursuit of shared objectives. Nevertheless, partnership has evolved from being treated as a formal regulatory requirement to a mechanism that is seen (albeit unevenly across the EU) to improve the effectiveness of strategic planning, programme management and project selection, providing greater ownership and commitment to the programme and increasing the scope for innovation.





■ A recipient of ERDF funds, the PUZZLE agency in Hultsfred (Sweden) puts its talents at the service of rock music, which this small town has made its speciality.

Important lessons have been learned. Partnership is about more than just ensuring the representativeness of monitoring committees. It requires partner input to be managed, distinguishing between the strategic and operational roles that different partners can play at various stages in the pro-

gramming cycle. Partners also need training and technical support if they are to participate effectively.

### Partnership working in Western Scotland (United Kingdom)

Partnership underpins the approach to economic and social regeneration in Western Scotland. Partners are actively involved not just in the monitoring committee but also in a series of advisory groups and an implementing committee, where project appraisal and selection recommendations are made. Peer group appraisal of project applications is used to achieve a balance between objective selection criteria and individuals' knowledge and expertise. More broadly, the approach is used to avoid duplication and promote better understanding and working relationships between agencies in the region.

### Learning and exchange of experience

Finally, effective programme management involves a process of learning and adaptation of systems and procedures. As national and regional programming authorities have gained experience with respect to the different stages of programming, they have undergone a 'learning curve' of development in all the above programming processes.

An important contributory factor has been the stability of the programming environment, enabling innovation and experimentation in the implementation of the funds. A common international regulatory framework has provided scope for cross-national networking, broadening horizons and facilitating the exchange of best practice.

### Improving the quality of Structural Fund programming through exchange of experience: IQ-Net

One example of cross-national networking is IQ-Net, a practitioners' network of Objectives 1 and 2 programme management authorities from 10 Member States, which promotes applied research and debate on best practice in the management of Structural Fund programmes, and from which many of the case studies here are drawn.

Further information is available at:  
<http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/iqnet/>

## The mid-term evaluations of Structural Fund programmes

# Enhanced evaluation capacity in the Member States

During 2004, the Regional Policy DG undertook an analysis of the mid-term evaluations of Objective 1 and 2 programmes in order to take stock of the results and consider how good practice can be built on in the future <sup>(1)</sup>.

Mid-term evaluations of all Structural Fund programmes were completed at the end of 2003, feeding into the mid-term review of programmes and the allocation of the performance reserve during 2004. The mid-term evaluations were carried out under the responsibility of the managing authorities but in partnership with the Member States and the Commission.

### Quality

Overall, the evaluations were of a higher quality than Structural Fund evaluations undertaken in the past, with some excellent examples. A higher amount of resources was allocated to the evaluations (over EUR 35 million in Objective 1 and 2 regions) and the quality of the planning and partnership within regions and with the Commission contributed positively to the quality of the evaluations.

Weaknesses of the evaluations were related to the rigid deadline for the production of all evaluations (with some programmes which were finalised late having little activity to evaluate), the breadth of the evaluations (covering eight evaluation questions across all measures and priorities), and methodological problems in some cases (lack of primary research and weak analysis).

### Findings of the evaluations

While it is difficult to synthesise the results across such a wide range of programmes, the general conclusions listed below can be drawn from the evaluations.

- > In nearly all cases, the evaluators concluded that the programme **strategies were still appropriate**.
- > It was **too early to assess effectiveness** in many cases, given the late or slow start-up of programmes. A difficulty was presented by the monitoring system which often required revision of the definition of indicators and their targets.
- > It was likewise **too early to measure impact**, although evaluations did in some cases recommend the revision of targets based on the experience of the early years of implementation. Macroeconomic modelling undertaken for large CSFs suggests that **programmes are on course** to achieve their global objectives.



*The art of marquetry, an activity supported under the Welsh Regional Technology Plan (United Kingdom), co-financed by the ERDF.*

- > Efficiency was more often defined as financial absorption rather than the cost per output or result achieved. **Financial absorption is clearly improved** compared with the past, driven by the requirements of the  $n + 2$  rule <sup>(2)</sup>.
- > Evaluations found an urgent **need for improvement of the systems of quantification of objectives**.
- > **Implementation systems** were found to fulfil the regulatory requirements and to be **significantly improved** on the past.

Although the mid-term evaluations did not aim to evaluate the contribution of the Structural Funds to the Lisbon priorities, some evaluation findings provide interesting insights, as outlined below.

- > As regards **transport and accessibility**, the evaluations find good progress being made in large road and rail projects. Projects to develop ports, airports and local transport initiatives are also progressing but often at a slower rate.
- > The Structural Funds are supporting the **knowledge-based economy** through cooperation between research institutes and businesses, the development of business clusters and research centres, investment in broadband access, the development of regional innovation strategies and the training of researchers, as well as applied research projects. Many innovative projects and approaches are being supported but some take longer to establish than originally anticipated.

<sup>(1)</sup> *The mid-term evaluation in Objective 1 and 2 regions — Growing evaluation capacity*, November 2004. Available at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evaluation\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evaluation_en.htm)

<sup>(2)</sup> Under this rule, annual allocations to a programme co-financed by the funds must be spent before the end of the second year following the commitment ('n' being the year of the commitment), unused credits being automatically decommitted, save in exceptional circumstances.



Salzburg (Austria): the *Frau und Arbeit* (Women and Work) association supports women seeking to start up their own businesses.

- > **Entrepreneurship** is supported through grant aid to start-up, small, innovative and large enterprises, the development of business parks, consultancy support and the creation of special venture funds. Many of these interventions are demand led and slower progress than anticipated is linked to the global economic slowdown in the early years of the programmes.
- > The promotion of **social inclusion** is an important dimension in the majority of Objective 1 and 2 programmes and most evaluations find that performance is satisfactory or above target. Integrated actions are found to be the most effective, although these are resource intensive.
- > The **environment** was a horizontal priority for the Structural Funds and the evaluations provide insights into how to enhance the practical integration of the priority and how the concept of **sustainable development** can be made real in the programmes. The Structural Funds also support direct environmental actions including the revitalisation of industrial sites, the development of renewable energy sources and the development of facilities for fresh water supply or waste disposal, as well as the development of protected areas. In general, the more traditional types of projects are proceeding according to plan with more innovative measures taking longer to start up.

## Use of the evaluations

The primary use of the mid-term evaluation was for the mid-term review and adaptation of programmes. The evaluations were used mainly by managing authorities, monitoring committees and implementing bodies. In some Objective 1 regions where the Structural Funds have a high profile, the evaluations stimulated public debate in parliaments and in the media.

The evaluations had a strong impact in improving implementation systems, particularly the further development of systems of indicators, implementing horizontal priorities and improving project selection criteria. Changes to financial allocations in programmes were primarily driven by absorption concerns, although the evaluations did contribute to decisions in this regard.

Two key factors influenced positively the use of the mid-term evaluations:

- > the **quality of the evaluations** — higher quality evaluations that had rigorous methodologies and clear presentation of results and that made precise recommendations were more likely to be used;
- > an **active partnership involved in managing the evaluation** — where the managing authority and monitoring committee were interested in the outcome of the evaluation and participated throughout the process in providing information and challenging evaluators while respecting their independence, the evaluations tended to be used.

## Growing evaluation capacity

The Commission believes that the mid-term evaluation demonstrates growing evaluation capacity among administrations responsible for Structural Fund programmes and among evaluators. The challenge is to build on this experience in the future and to further strengthen evaluation capacity across the now enlarged EU. For the future, the intention is to move towards more needs driven evaluation where managing authorities and monitoring committees take more responsibility for identifying the topics where evaluation can add value. Thus, evaluation will become a more integrated management tool contributing to enhanced performance of programmes.

**For more information:** [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/tech\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/tech_en.htm)

## Welsh European Funding Office: when assessment improves administrative practices

**Experience from earlier programmes demonstrates the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation regimes. The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) is applying that principle to both processes and outcomes to ensure the opportunities and impact of Structural Funds are maximised.**

Securing success of good projects needs to be at the heart of implementation. Initially the focus has been on getting robust assessment and monitoring regimes in place. The mid-term evaluation confirmed the Welsh developers' view that this needed to be complemented by more regular contact with those delivering projects and to streamline the processes. Action was strengthened to give a greater customer focus to the application process and through the introduction of aftercare to support delivery. A recent independent customer satisfaction survey has confirmed that the simpler application process and customer focus is resulting in positive improvements.

As part of the changes, the assessment of cross-cutting themes (employment, equal opportunities, environment, etc.) has also been strengthened, both during assessment of projects, and later in monitoring and taking forward of best practice. Concern during project assessment triggers the involvement of a special team of cross-cutting advisers, who will work with the applicant to ensure better integration of the themes within the project. Projects which demonstrate a strong emphasis on cross-cutting themes are monitored for best practice.

An example of this is the Genesis project, which provides subsidised childcare in one local authority area for women wishing to access training, learning and work opportunities, thus improving the economic activity of women and regeneration of the area. The project also provides a proactive, outreach advisory service, to encourage more women to take up training and work opportunities. Identified as an area of best practice it is now being rolled out across other local authority areas.

**Contact:** [enquiries-wefo@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries-wefo@wales.gsi.gov.uk)



## Rewarding programme performance

**The performance reserve was an innovation for the 2000–06 programming period, whereby 4 % of Structural Fund resources was held back at the initial programming stage for allocation at mid-term to successful programmes.**

This was the first time that financial allocations from the Structural Funds were linked to the performance of programmes. The performance reserve amounted to EUR 8 billion and was allocated by the Commission on 23 March 2004.

### What was a successful programme?

The Structural Funds regulation<sup>(1)</sup> provided that Member States should assess the performance of their programmes in close consultation with the European Commission on the basis of a limited number of monitoring indicators reflecting effectiveness, good management and financial implementation. For effectiveness, Member States identified a limited number of output and result indicators and established targets for mid-term performance. The management and financial indicators were common across most Member States and included indicators and targets relating to monitoring, evaluation, control and project selection as well as financial absorption.

At the end of 2003, Member States assessed the performance of their programmes and submitted proposals to the Commission for the allocation of the resources. Intensive discussions over a short period of time led to agreement on the amounts to be allocated. The Commission stressed that allocations should respect principles of transparency and equity and be in line with objectively measured performance. In most cases, the Commission accepted the proposals from the Member States. In some, further explanations of the method used were required while in a limited number of cases discussions with the Member States led to changes in the amounts allocated between programmes.

### Allocation of resources

Overall, over 90 % of Objective 1 and 2 programmes received an allocation from the performance reserve, reflecting the successful implementation of the Structural Funds and a significant improvement in performance compared with previous periods.

- Nearly 80 % of Objective 1 programmes received allocations from the reserve, some receiving less than 4 %, while others received more. Greece was the most rigorous in its proposals for the allocation of the reserve, excluding 10 programmes, while in Spain, Portugal and Ireland some programmes did not receive any allocation. In Greece, the range of allocations to programmes was from 1.3 % of total commitments to 16.9 %. In Italy, the allocations ranged from 2.3 % to 7.2 %. In Ireland, the entire allocation went to one programme (infrastructure).
- All Objective 2 programmes except some technical assistance programmes received an allocation from the reserve.

A more limited range of allocations is evident, reflecting the good performance of programmes in meeting their objectives. The largest range is evident in France, with allocations ranging from 2 % to 6.5 % of commitments, while a significant range is also evident in England — from 4.02 % to 5.96 %.

### An incentive for good management practices

The allocation of resources tells only part of the story. That so many programmes received allocations reflects the fact that they met their targets and this demonstrates increased capacity in the management of Structural Funds across the regions of the EU. The linking of financial allocations to criteria which reflect good management practice stimulated positive developments in relation to financial absorption, project selection, monitoring, evaluation and financial control.

### Reflections on the performance reserve instrument

The Commission has analysed the first implementation of the performance reserve in Objective 1 and 2 regions<sup>(2)</sup>. Of the three types of indicators, dealing with effectiveness, financial performance and management, limited capacity to appropriately identify effectiveness indicators and set targets made it difficult in some cases to base judgments on performance across programmes on these criteria. While financial performance was enhanced compared with the past, the main impetus for higher levels of expenditure was the *n + 2* rule. The overall conclusion of the analysis was that the management criteria were the most effective and had a positive effect on programme performance.

### Evaluating socioeconomic development

The European Commission has recently published a new web-based guide to the evaluation of socioeconomic development. The new guide is freely available to all. It builds on the experience of the MEANS programme of methodological guidance on evaluation. The intention is to update the guide regularly and to explore the possibility of developing an interactive element of the website which can help promote the exchange of experience and good practice among evaluators and those who commission evaluations.

<http://www.evaled.info>



*In the area around the new TGV station in Liège (Belgium), the EU has co-financed various measures for economic regeneration.*

<sup>(1)</sup> Article 44 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999, laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.

<sup>(2)</sup> Report on the performance reserve and mid-term evaluation in Objective 1 and 2 regions, 27 July 2004. Available at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evaluation\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evaluation_en.htm)



Östra Mellansverige (Sweden)

## 'For sustainable projects'

**Fredrik Eliasson**, Örebro County Administrative Board, Objective 2 programme for Eastern Sweden

Since the launch of our Objective 2 programme five years ago we have had to make a number of changes to better take account of the environment, gender equality and social inclusion of immigrants. These are 'horizontal' areas of action, which means that they must be inherent in the objectives and activities of any project that is financed.

The mid-term evaluation of the Objective 2 programme for Eastern Sweden showed that projects often failed to properly integrate these horizontal priorities, in contrast to the growth objectives, which are generally well integrated. As a general rule, while it is easy to find projects dealing specifically with the environment, gender equality or social inclusion, it is much more difficult to find good economic development projects that include these themes in their day-to-day activities.

We believe we can identify four main causes of this failure to take proper account of horizontal priorities: the status of the priorities; knowledge and information on these subjects; their inclusion in project planning; their definition. It is therefore on these elements that we have concentrated our efforts.

### > Improving the status of the horizontal priorities

The first cause of the problem lies in the fact that horizontal priorities are often awarded a lower status than a project's global objective, that is, its direct contribution to development. As a managing authority, we believe it is important to prioritise these issues more highly. However, this is a message we must ourselves clearly convey, and we will do so by paying particular attention to projects that take real account of horizontal priorities. In future, projects that do not plan to contribute actively to at least one of these priorities will no longer qualify for financing.

### > Improving knowledge and information

It is difficult to take the right decisions concerning the environment, gender equality or social inclusion without proper knowledge. For this reason most of the Objective 2 programme managers for Eastern Sweden (as for the majority of the other Swedish Structural Fund programmes) have received specific training on the horizontal priorities. Every manager must be able to offer concrete solutions to project promoters. We have, moreover, compiled a guide for project promoters, setting

out in simple terms how they can include the horizontal priorities in their daily work.

### > Including horizontal priorities from the outset

A problem with a number of projects has been that the question of horizontal priorities was not raised until a late stage in project planning. This resulted in artificial and inappropriate measures. At such a late stage in the planning there is little scope for a natural integration of these priorities. To avoid this situation, we will in future raise this issue at the time of the initial contacts with the beneficiary.

### > Explicitly and precisely defining priorities

Horizontal priorities must be given the same importance as other programme priorities. Experience leaves no doubt about the benefits of clearly defining the horizontal priorities in the project plan. A precise definition of priorities simplifies the follow-up of objectives and also enables us to be more demanding. At the same time, we must of course ensure that these demands are not seen as obstacles to project implementation but rather as a means of enabling the beneficiary to measure to what extent horizontal priorities can contribute to the region's growth and development.

### > Sustainable development and a clear understanding of the benefits

There is an increasing understanding that the objectives of economic growth and environmental protection must be tackled in tandem. While it is generally accepted that economic growth must have the least possible impact on the environment, we nevertheless want to go further and arrive at a situation whereby project beneficiaries see environmental concerns as something that can actually favour their activity. As to projects that have a clearly negative effect on the environment, these should not be financed, because, quite simply, they are damaging to long-term development.

Is our approach to horizontal priorities producing results? We hope that subsequent evaluations will show, for example, that immigrants are more involved in the programme, that environmental demands are seen by beneficiaries as factors for economic growth, and that women are participating just as much as men. We are already seeing that a higher percentage of women are occupying management positions within companies set up with Structural Funds support than they do in other companies in the same sector. However, I will refrain for now from attributing that to the good practices introduced in connection with the horizontal priorities.

**Contact:** [Fredrik.Eliasson@t.lst.se](mailto:Fredrik.Eliasson@t.lst.se)



The 'Formen Hus' was built using only ecological materials.

### GERMANY

#### An 'electronic butler' for the Structural Funds in Saxony-Anhalt



**Total cost:** EUR 300 000  
**EU contribution:** EUR 300 000

'The efREporter management system developed by the Land of Saxony-Anhalt makes it possible to transfer information electronically, manage financial support instruments and monitor projects at every stage of operational programme management. The system permits data exchange and includes various modules corresponding to the different stages of project development: application processing, financial planning, input of the data needed for evaluation. With the pilot stage completed, Saxony-Anhalt is now making full use of the eREporter system, which has also been adapted and adopted by several German *Länder* under Objective 1. The system also has the potential to be transferred to other European regions.'

**Jürgen Biernath**, *Ministry of Finance of Saxony-Anhalt*  
[biernath@mw.lsa-net.de](mailto:biernath@mw.lsa-net.de)

### FRANCE

#### Nicéphore Cité, a platform of sound and image resources and exchange



**Total cost:** EUR 7 000 000  
**EU contribution:** EUR 3 500 000

'To stimulate development in the south Bourgogne region, the Chalon-sur-Saône Greater Urban Community decided to capitalise on the town's culture and know-how as the home of photography to create an international hub based on the technologies of sound, image and virtual reality. The creation of "Nicéphore Cité" aims to develop the use of digital technologies in sectors as diverse as engineering (automobile, aeronautics, nuclear, etc.), heritage, architecture, medicine, audiovisual and video games. The centre is the site of many activities including 3D imaging, high-definition post-production, video special effects, 3D film, recording, sound creation, archiving and image base management. With a wide range of partners, Nicéphore Cité manages a complete cycle from innovation to product development, including all stages of technology transfer and business creation. Great attention is paid to supporting project promoters.'

**Michel Drouet**, *Director*  
[contact@nicephorecite.com](mailto:contact@nicephorecite.com) ([www.nicephorecite.com](http://www.nicephorecite.com))

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### Creggan Enterprises Ltd



**Total cost:** EUR 627 000  
**EU contribution:** EUR 314 000

'Creggan Enterprises Ltd (CEL) was established in 1994 as a community development organisation to assist the socioeconomic regeneration of the Creggan community. Creggan is one of the oldest public housing estates in Northern Ireland, widely recognised as one of the most deprived in the region having suffered significantly as a result of the 30 years of conflict. CEL purchased an abandoned factory, which closed in 1997 with the loss of almost 600 jobs and had become defaced by sectarian graffiti. CEL have now renovated the facility to create workspace units for new/expanding businesses and facilitate the creation of new jobs which would contribute to the ongoing regeneration of the area.'

**Maeve Hamilton**, *Deputy Principal*  
[maeve.hamilton@detini.gov.uk](mailto:maeve.hamilton@detini.gov.uk)

### GREECE

#### Water bills spread the URBAN message



**Total cost:** EUR 393 653  
**EU contribution:** EUR 294 240

'The URBAN managing authority wanted to inform the general public about the various urban development projects implemented in Komotini, on the Turkish-Bulgarian border. The Komotini municipal authorities came up with an original idea: to distribute an URBAN leaflet enclosed with the water bills as an effective and economic way of reaching all the city's inhabitants. About 20 000 copies of the leaflet were submitted to the Municipal Water Distribution Company to be placed in the envelopes with the November 2003 water bills. Two versions of the leaflet were produced to take into account Komotini's different cultural communities, one entirely in Greek and the other in three languages (Greek, Turkish and Russian).'

**Kiki Manola**, *Director of the Urban Managing Authority for Greece*  
[urbansite@mou.gr](mailto:urbansite@mou.gr)



Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia

## 'The Visegrad Group countries are cooperating on evaluation'



**Eva Pišová**, Director of the Czech Structural Funds Evaluation Unit, **David Grolig** and **Michal Kokeš**, Project leaders

The Czech Republic's accession to the European Union was a historic event not only for the citizens of the new Member State, but also for the government departments that had to adopt a new administrative culture. It is in this context that, on 1 December 2003, the Czech Structural Funds Evaluation Unit was set up.

Very quickly, the Evaluation Unit was faced with the task of creating an evaluation plan. This was particularly difficult as none of those involved had done anything like it before. The Czech Republic also lacked a model drawn up by a country of comparable size with similar socioeconomic objectives to use as a reference. Close cooperation with experts from the EU-15, Regional Policy DG representatives and twinning partner experts therefore formed the starting point for the development of evaluation know-how.

The other Visegrad Group countries (Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) were in much the same situation as the Czech Republic. Historically, these countries have much in common, sharing the same cultural roots. Today they have comparable levels of economic development. Unlike the other new Member States that preferred the single programming document, all these countries opted for Structural Funds management in the form of Community support frameworks that include several operational programmes.

From September 2004, the Czech Evaluation Unit therefore began cooperating with the other Visegrad Group countries. The first joint working meeting was held in Valtice, south Moravia (Czech Republic), on 2 and 3 December, marking the first anniversary of our Evaluation Unit. This meeting was also attended by representatives of the European Commission's

Regional Policy DG and Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG. In addition to the Commission's proposals for 2007–13, the subjects on the agenda were organisation of evaluation, the evaluation plan, evaluation problems and risks, and the potential for cooperation between the Visegrad Group countries.

This first meeting showed that the Visegrad Group is fully aware of the importance of evaluation. For the moment, activities are focused mainly on building an evaluation capacity. The first evaluation projects and evaluation capacity-building projects have begun in all four countries. In this respect, the participants stressed the possibility of co-financing certain evaluation development activities out of the 'Technical assistance' measure.

Broadly speaking, three project categories can be distinguished: those for the present programming period, those preparing for the 2007–13 programming period, and projects aimed at developing evaluation capacities. The latter are at the most advanced stage.

The Evaluation Units all recognise that the difficulty of finding competent human resources — whether internally or externally — could compromise a successful evaluation process. Another major risk could be delay in carrying out evaluations due to insufficient monitoring system data or an inadequate supply of services from contractors.

We have therefore decided to cooperate to develop quality evaluation capacities, effective evaluation planning and an interconnected monitoring system. Other areas of cooperation will concern the exchange of information and experience on project implementation, methods and the creation of evaluation standards. The Evaluation Units also agreed to share experiences of good and bad evaluation projects with a view to improving practices.

The representatives of the Polish Evaluation Unit were tasked with preparing the new meeting.

**Contact:** Eva.Pisova@mmr.cz  
David.Grolig@mmr.cz

Participants at the Valtice meeting.



## Optimising the impact of European aid

# Irish recipes for success

**It was the poorest country in the European Community when it joined in 1973. But 30 years later, having made judicious use of European aid programmes in particular, it has become one of the most prosperous EU States. But what was it that put Ireland's economy into gear? Can it offer any tips to the new Member States?**



*The M1 motorway crosses the Broadmeadow's estuary*

Foreign visitors arriving in Dublin might imagine they'd travelled back to the 'Golden Sixties'. Two things are particularly striking: the youthfulness of the numerous pedestrians hurrying along its busy streets and the number of cranes that pierce the skyline of the Irish capital. Visitors travelling by car would add a third observation: the slowness of the traffic, which is more a result of the city's chronic traffic jams than the placid nature of Irish drivers.

Ireland is definitely no longer the large peaceful garden at the furthest reaches of Europe that visitors only arrive in for a break. The postcard of the herd of sheep blocking a country lane under the amused, spellbound eye of the tourist is no longer appropriate, except perhaps in a few corners of the countryside. Everywhere, even in its most western and border regions that are in a far less favourable position than Dublin, Ireland now resembles one huge building site, a bustling country, bringing its roads, housing, services, etc. up to date, with the help of European funds.

### Efficiency and effectiveness

'Between 2000 and 2006, 75 ERDF projects, four Cohesion Fund projects, seven trans-European transport (TEN-T) projects and three Interreg IIIA projects were implemented across the country,' specifies Lillian Butler, Community funds administrator within the National Roads Authority. 'The major trigger was the Single Act,' states Jim Higgins, Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund coordinator in Ireland. 'Even if they don't explain our success entirely, far from it, regional aid has been decisive for us to get off the ground.'

If Ireland has indeed become statistically one of the wealthiest countries in the EU, this is partly because it has been able to use the Community funds allocated to it — EUR 5.58 billion between 1994 and 1999, and EUR 4.31 billion between 2000 and 2006 — as levers.



Inside the Ringsend wastewater treatment works

‘Beyond the figures, we have also learned a great deal from the Structural Funds,’ continues Jim Higgins. ‘Managing them has enabled national practices and, very importantly, long-term planning and assessment to be improved. We would have got there on our own, but it would have taken longer. We are fortunate to be a small country, with an administration on a human scale which can rely on smooth-running structures and informal networks. In one sense, everyone knows everyone else, which makes things easier. Efficiency, cost/effectiveness ratios, the capacity to implement projects that work quickly, this is what mattered for a long time and it worked very well. Now we are more concerned about effectiveness: what is the real added value of the project for the citizen or the user?’

Effectiveness is what dictated the construction of Luas (‘speed’ in Gaelic), Dublin’s new, ultramodern tramway, two lines of 9 and 15 km respectively that opened in June and September 2004. ‘The Luas is a highly structuring project,’ insists Tom Manning, public relations manager for the Railway Procurement Agency, the contracting authority. ‘With its 50 000 passengers per day, it contributes to decongesting the city and connects various public transport hubs in Dublin: north and south stations, DART suburban trains and major bus lines. It also contributes to urban revitalisation: since it was brought into service, the number of customers in shops along the tram line has increased by 75 %, while the value of nearby properties has increased by

15 % in three months. But more disadvantaged populations also benefit: social housing that previously had poor transport services is now directly connected to the city centre.’ Investment cost: EUR 775 million, 80 million of which was from the ERDF. ‘A little over 10 %, which may appear modest,’ explains Tom, ‘but Europe’s contribution was a symbol that inspired confidence and lent credibility to the project’s feasibility.’

Effectiveness was also central to the completion of one of Europe’s largest water treatment plants in 2003. The Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Works, the final stage in the ‘Dublin Bay project’, is a vast water treatment system in Dublin Bay, which was launched in 1994. It involved an investment of EUR 300 million, 80 % financed by the Cohesion Fund, and required the laying of a 10.5 km underwater pipeline connecting the plant to the pumping station in Sutton, on the other side of the Bay. The complex treats water for an equivalent of 1.7 million inhabitants.

Beyond its enormous size and evident modernity, the treatment plant offers all the characteristics of a ‘good’ project: it is technically innovative (it is the only installation of its kind that combines carbon hydrolysis, a process for digesting sludge and thermal dryers) which is particularly cost effective (10 cents per m<sup>3</sup>; EUR 8 per person per year), providing 60 % of its energy requirements. The project also includes a significant ‘transversal’ environmental dimension: a 2 hectare area of grass has been reserved to provide a habitat for the white-fronted geese that stage at Ringsend. It is estimated that the plant has made it possible to reabsorb 75 % of the Bay’s sources of pollution and, as it is one of the rare capitals to have beaches, Dublin now hopes to obtain the European bathing water label for summer 2005.

### Associating the population with projects

‘Owing to the nature of its activities and its proximity to inhabited areas, managing such a project was no easy matter,’ points out Battie White, engineer at Dublin City Council and supervisor of the Dublin Bay project. ‘This is why I would highlight two important principles that guided our work: we conducted constant benchmarking, comparing ourselves with foreign counterparts in England and the United States. And most importantly, we involved the local population in the project’s design.’ Battie also explains: ‘In 2000, we set up local liaison groups with the local inhabitants, which were convened every month to find out their opinions on the progress of the work and now on the plant in operation. It was a risk but it paid off: the construction of the complex met with no opposition from the local inhabitants and received no negative reaction from the media.’

Keeping the local population informed is also a basic rule for Jim McGovern, Director of the West Regional Authority, in the north-west of Ireland. Jim piloted the introduction of one of the 19 new broadband telematic networks recently established in Ireland in the Galway urban area (70 000 inhabitants). ‘It’s about being able to offer businesses a cutting-edge infrastructure at a price as competitive as in



the East of Ireland or in the United Kingdom.' In Galway, 57 km of high bit-rate lines were laid, at a cost of EUR 9.9 million, 8 million of which was provided by the ERDF. Throughout the entire works, between February 2003 and March 2004, the local radio informed its listeners daily about the project's progress. 'Every Monday, we provided them with the schedule of work for the week. We also distributed a map of the network through the newspapers. When people knew where we were going, when their street was going to be closed and for how long, for example, you win over a large part of support for the project.'

Support was particularly strong as the broadband installation in Galway accelerated the installation of other infrastructures: 'In order to avoid digging up the roads several times, we took the opportunity to lay 23 km of gas pipes and 10 km of electricity cables in the same trenches.' Hence the economies of scale were passed on in the costs. 'Also,' says Jim, 'the Irish government bought the fibre optic cables for all of the 19 networks, which made it possible to obtain better prices as well as an identical, coherent finished product throughout the country. Good partnership, at all the levels of decision-making, is very important.'

## Partnership

This too was Finbarr Breslin's opinion: 'You need to have a vision, think long term and be able to count on a partnership of motivated players.' In the 1980s, Finbarr, together with some of the women from the small town of Mullingar, in County Westmeath, founded an association of women who wanted to initiate certain projects which would meet their needs. It began with childcare services, which are still patently lacking in Ireland even though there are increasing numbers of working mothers and single-parent families. Since then, the Women's Community Projects (Mullingar) Association has continued to reflect the development of the status of Irish women over the past 25 years: the association has organised training courses in areas



*Some of the young clients of the Mullingar crèche.*

such as home economics (1985), crafts and literacy (2004), sewing uniforms (1985–87), secretarial, accountancy and computer courses (since 1997), and English language courses for immigrant women (since 2002).

In addition to various socio-professional insertion courses (co-funded notably by the EQUAL Community initiative) and local community services (meals on wheels, financial advice, etc.), the association now also manages a magnificent structure which includes a nursery, a nursery school and after-school care for the primary school. Initiated in 1997, the project was co-funded by the ERDF and the ESF alongside 15 or so public and private partners, which led Marcella O'Reilly, one of the association's employees, to point out: 'You also have to know how to manage complexity, especially in terms of financial engineering: social projects generally involve a great number of participants and sources of funding.'

## Clustering

Overcoming complexity and isolation are two of the objectives of 'Leitrim Design House', a network of some 60 artists and craftsmen. This 'cluster' has a shop in the centre of the small tourist town of Carrick-on-Shannon. Through various European funds and programmes (EQUAL, PEACE, Interreg, etc.) and FAS, the national training organisation, these craft producers have access to a range of services (training, promotion, marketing, exchanges, twinning, etc.) and one-to-one assistance. 'It's rather like a conveyor belt,' explains Tim Guilbraide, project leader: 'In order to be competitive in the market, the producer arrives with more or less nothing and then, little by little, his professional project grows, until the day when he no longer needs assistance and can pass on his experience to other members of the cluster.'

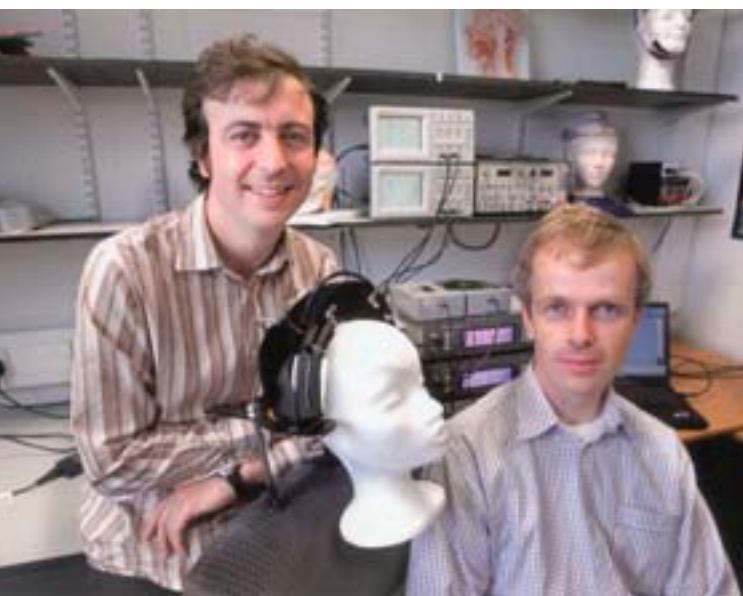


*Tim Guilbraide in the Leitrim Design House shop*

‘The group of individuals operating in the same sector is a very important factor in rural areas, where producers tend to be isolated,’ states Joe Lowe, chief executive officer of Leitrim County Enterprise Board, which supports 30 to 35 economic projects annually. ‘Such “clustering” promotes exchange, information, emulation, etc., which are all essential factors for commercial success. We estimate that networking of artisans in this way has resulted in the creation of some 100 jobs.’

More than just a fashionable word, ‘cluster’ is a concept in Ireland which has extended beyond the business sphere, and applies more generally to all of the impetus in a region. Between Carrick-on-Shannon and Boyle, along Lough Key, stretches a magnificent, historic estate that the Irish State purchased in 1957 to create a family tourist attraction. But owing to a lack of appropriate investment, the site fell into disrepair and was finally abandoned. ‘We conducted a survey among the local population, associations, professionals from the tourist sector and created focus groups to identify local needs and collect as many ideas as possible to develop this exceptional site,’ explains Neil Armstrong, tourist manager at Roscommon County Council.

The outcome of this joint consultation collective will be the transformation between now and 2007 of Lough Key Forest Park into a contemporary leisure centre, based on a ‘cluster of activities’ (sic) along the same lines as such televised adventure games as ‘The Crystal Maze’ or ‘Fort Boyard’. Cost: EUR 8 million, with ERDF participation. Expected impact on jobs: 10 full-time and around 20 part-time posts. ‘But take care,’ warns Neil, ‘the important point will be to sustain this in the future: in tourism as in other areas, it is easier to create an attraction than to make it last.’



Tomás Ward and Charles Markham in their laboratory at the Maynooth university centre, recipient of ERDF assistance. The two researchers have developed a device that can convert the brain's neurological fluxes into signals.

Especially as you have to innovate all the time whilst steering clear of dyed-in-the-wool modernism, as technologies quickly become unfashionable.’

## Research and innovation

Production centres also become dated. If the ‘Celtic Tiger’ is still leaping ahead (over 6 % growth in its GDP in 2004), Ireland is also beginning to see certain previously successful activities leaving the country to relocate elsewhere, especially as its economy is highly dependent on multinational companies. The Irish productive system thus has to move up a gear and target sectors with a high added value. Here as elsewhere in Europe, the Lisbon strategy is being used to the full. ‘And in our outlying regions, which in no way shared the experience of the Dublin boom, this necessarily implies starting with education,’ states Constance Hanniffy, Chairperson of the Border, Midland & Western (BMW) Regional Assembly, the managing authority for the regional operation programme (Structural Funds) in Ireland’s Objective 1 region. ‘Ireland fully subscribes to the spirit of Lisbon,’ confirm Gerry Finn and Kieran Moylan, Director and Assistant Director respectively of the Assembly. ‘We are currently changing over from direct support to businesses to more indirect support, oriented towards research and innovation.’

As such, in five years, ‘Europe’s good pupil’ has literally multiplied the public funding granted to researchers by 10: the annual national contribution has increased from EUR 20 million before 2000 to EUR 200 million today. ‘But this still only represented 1.12 % of GDP in 2003, and without the aid provided by major instruments such as the PRTLI<sup>(1)</sup> or the ERDF, it would be very difficult for medium-sized institutions such as ours to develop research activities,’ explains Jason Twamley, Dean of Research and Graduate Studies at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, which in 2003 built a new biosciences and electronic engineering facility. Nearly one third of the EUR 16.1 million required for the infrastructure was paid by the ERDF.

But in these uncertain times for European cohesion and long-term competitiveness, what general advice would the Structural Funds coordinator in Ireland give to his counterparts in the new Member States? Jim Higgins is clear: ‘Prioritise the public good, focusing investment on training, education, research, infrastructure and services that will benefit the entire society and meet with general interest. Aid directed solely at the private sector will only deliver short-term benefits.’

In March 2004, the Irish management authorities published an excellent *Guide to the implementation and administration of EU Structural and Cohesion Funds in Ireland* which, through its clear, comprehensive presentation, can facilitate management of projects financed through the Community funds.  
csfinfo@csfunits.irlgov.ie

<sup>(1)</sup> Programme for research in third level institutions.

## Wallonia (Belgium)

# 'Exchanging good management practices between regions'

Luc Hougardy, Ministry of the Walloon Region, European Programmes Directorate



It is noticeable that regions prefer to talk about the projects they have implemented more than about methods of managing programming documents.

Nonetheless, the way regions respond to the requirements laid down in the European regulations strongly influences the effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation. This is why it was particularly interesting to launch a pilot project aimed at obtaining an overall view of the systems of management, monitoring and control implemented in other European regions, thereby initiating a process for the exchange of good practices and benchmarking as a means of evaluating to what extent such practices could be transferred to Wallonia.

This was the aim of the project carried out on behalf of the Walloon region by the European Programmes Directorate. This directorate within the Ministry of the Walloon Region, is responsible for putting in place management, monitoring and control systems for programmes that are financed principally by the ERDF.

Five other regions participated in this exchange, the general organisation of which was entrusted to an external consultant. They were: the Rhône-Alpes region (France), Piedmont and Liguria (Italy), East of England (United Kingdom) and Maastricht (the Netherlands). The project was co-financed by the ERDF under Objective 2 technical assistance.

In addition to the lessons that can be learned from a comparison of systems, visiting other regions made it possible to establish direct contact with our partners. We were thus able to visit our opposite numbers in France (Regional Council and Prefecture of the Rhône-Alpes region) and Italy (Piedmont Department of Industry and Liguria European Affairs Department). It was also particularly interesting to note that the other regions are usually facing the same difficulties as our own.

Following this exchange it became clear that the systems put into place in Wallonia were viewed favourably by our European counterparts. Specifically, two good practices of the Walloon system were identified:

- > the **selection process**: Wallonia has set up an independent task force of academics and industrialists from the relevant Objective 2 areas that is charged with submitting recommendations to

the Walloon government to help it in selecting projects by checking that they correspond to the strategies as defined in the single programming document;

- > the **computerised system** for programme follow-up that permits online monitoring of co-financed projects.

It also became clear that in some fields (payment authority, annual reports on publicity measures, control levels, etc.) the systems in place in Wallonia go beyond what has been developed in the other regions.

Among our partners, the principal interesting practices identified, which could be included in full or in part in the Walloon system, are outlined below.

- > In Piedmont, a system of 'overbooking' that uses national financing allocated to current programmes makes it possible to exceed the ERDF budgets and thereby constitute a reserve fund to offset the abandoning of other projects. As a result, the final take-up rate for the 1994–99 programming period was 99 %. Another interesting practice, known as 'Chronoprogramme' and introduced to avoid any automatic decommitment after two years under the  $n + 2$  rule, grants premiums (linked to intervention rates) to projects when the implementing deadlines are met and penalties when the opposite is the case.
- > In the East of England, **local area groups** and **facilitators** are used to assist operators in setting up and monitoring their projects. Quarterly visits to the field make it possible to assist operators in implementing their project and to ensure a good operational follow-up of actions is implemented.

To conclude, while this experience has been extremely rewarding, we very much hope that the contacts established will be able to help us in our approach to the new regulations for management and control for the 2007–13 period and we invite all interested regions to participate in this system of exchanges so as to further improve programme implementation in the framework of a process of administrative simplification.

**Contact:** l.hougardy@mrw.wallonie.be  
Tel. (32-81) 33 39 27; fax (32-81) 33 37 44  
<http://economie.wallonie.be>  
(<http://europe.wallonie.be>)



## Andalusia (Spain)



## 'A major cooperation and coordination effort between all the players'

Directorate-General for Community Funds, Spanish Ministry of the Economy and Finance

As one of Europe's largest and most populated regions, Andalusia benefits from what in financial terms is the biggest of the Structural Funds programmes in the current programming period. The total cost of the integrated operational programme for Andalusia (IOPA — Objective 1) is EUR 11 288 million, of which EUR 7 840 million will be provided by the EU Structural Funds for the 2000–06 period. After the transfer, in 2004, of the 'performance reserve' to the most efficient measures, the assistance amounted to EUR 8 186 million out of a total cost of EUR 12 026 million. The IOPA is implemented under the responsibility of the general State administration and the government (*Junta*) of Andalusia.

The strategy aims to correct the region's deficiencies in terms of the infrastructure that is vital to its development, while placing the emphasis on investments that will improve economic competitiveness, human resources and employment, with greater focus on research, technological development and the information society.

The mid-term evaluation confirms the validity of this strategy, the region also not having experienced any substantial changes requiring a revision. A major effort was made to promote cooperation and coordination between all the parties involved: the programming authorities, local authorities, and economic and social players. This partnership produced a well-conceived programme which is, moreover, perfectly compatible with other programming documents at regional and national level, the EU's priorities, the multi-regional programmes, the Community initiatives and the innovative actions. The evaluation also shows the clear contribution the IOPA has made to encouraging the process of economic convergence in Andalusia.

Two devices, introduced in the 2000–06 Structural Funds regulations as a means of linking assistance to results, helped achieve these goals: the performance reserve as mentioned above and the *n* + 2 rule for the automatic decommitment of credits not spent within two years.

The integrated programme methodology also made it possible to strengthen programme coordination mechanisms and to obtain maximum benefit from potential synergies. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were also improved. Particular note should be taken in this respect of the establishment of differentiated indicators for the monitoring of the many measures under the 'equal opportunities' priority and for the implementation of major environmental infrastructure projects.

This is the result of the considerable efforts made during the previous period to increase awareness — even if the objective has not been fully attained — by having the competent authorities organise meetings to ensure that measures include equal opportunities and respect for the environment.

The December 2004 data show that the IOPA achieved a financial execution rate of 72 % for the 2000–04 period and 51 % for the 2000–06 period. This is very satisfactory given that experience shows that the final years always bring major progress. Three priorities exceed the 72 % average: competitiveness and productive fabric (79 %), human resources (84 %), and energy and transport networks (92 %). 'Environment, natural habitats and water resources' and 'agriculture and rural development' achieved an execution rate of just 43 %.

A number of useful figures can be given for the following priorities:

- > **competitiveness and productive fabric:** 6 550 allocations made, 11 172 independent jobs created, 9 054 beneficiary companies, EUR 5 524 million generated in private investments, 129 SMEs exporting for the first time;
- > **knowledge society (innovation, R & D, information society):** 2 327 persons (including 1 267 women) benefiting from assistance for research and technological development, 244 R & D projects co-financed for 17 648 researchers, 24 centres renovated and provided with scientific equipment, 1 913 computer networks installed in public administrations and used by 230 438 persons;
- > **human resources:** 898 school units created, 68 new training centres and 566 renovated centres, alternative education actions for 24 000 pupils lagging behind at school (including 6 560 girls), support for the reintegration of 47 000 persons in the labour market, assistance for 27 606 long-term unemployed (including 16 757 women), assistance with the vocational integration of 17 766 young people (including 7 690 girls).

The transport infrastructure projects, the majority of which are included within the trans-European networks, are also in the process of being implemented. Finally, mention must be made of the creation of activity zones for companies such as Alqueria (Huelva), Peral (Arcos de la Frontera, Cadiz), the Cordoba Jeweller's Park and the European Enterprise and Innovation Centre on the Salud Campus, Granada.

**Website and contact:** <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/economiayhacienda/fondos/POIA/poia.htm>

## THE NETHERLANDS

### Regenerating Rotterdam's Old North district



**Total cost:** EUR 851 059  
**EU contribution:** EUR 212 753

'Rotterdam's North Station was dingy, neglected and a genuine urban eyesore. A project was undertaken in 2002–04 under the URBAN II Community initiative programme with the aim of transforming the station and its immediate vicinity into an intermodal public transport platform that would have an excellent passenger flow and be safe, practical, attractive and easy to manage. A number of works were therefore carried out: the creation of a kiss and ride zone for dropping off passengers; the fitting of new lighting; the creation of parking areas for taxis, buses and bicycles; the laying of pavements; cable works; the installing of equipment to facilitate the combined organisation of various forms of transport; the relocating of a music kiosk; increased police patrols, etc. As a result of this project, Rotterdam's North Station has undergone a genuine metamorphosis. Today it is welcoming, safe and well organised. In the longer term, this regeneration should bring major socio-economic benefits, starting with a better quality of life for the Oude Noorden district.'

**Adri Hartkoorn**, *Director of the URBAN II programme 'Noord aan de Rote'*  
[a.hartkoorn@obr.rotterdam.nl](mailto:a.hartkoorn@obr.rotterdam.nl) ([www.noordaanderotte.nl](http://www.noordaanderotte.nl))

## PORTUGAL

### New medicines of natural origin



**Total cost** EUR 403 287  
**EU contribution:** EUR 94 431

'Promoted by the SA Labor Qualitas and the Institute for Experimental and Technological Biology (IETB), the Naturfar project is part of the effort to encourage cooperation between R & D institutes and technological businesses in the pharmaceutical sector. Its aim is to develop a high technology manufacturing process involving extraction using so-called 'supercritical' fluids that are specially adapted to the pharmaceutical industry. The project should permit the launch of new and innovative products consisting of active agents that are not covered by the patents of companies in the same sector. Naturfar is the result of a strategy to further develop a pharmaceutical market that until recent years was limited to bulk and fine chemicals activity.'

**Francisco Sousa Soares**, *Manager of the operational programme 'Science and innovation 2010'*  
[Poci2010@poci2010.mcies.pt](mailto:Poci2010@poci2010.mcies.pt)

## DENMARK

### The North Jutland export programme



**Total cost:** EUR 3 000 000  
**EU contribution:** EUR 2 000 000

'This programme was initiated as a result of a study which revealed that businesses in North Jutland were sitting on an export potential of between EUR 400 and 500 million a year. The County of North Jutland decided to act. A group with export expertise was set up with the task of developing this programme, which is the biggest export drive ever undertaken in a Danish region. The aim is to help producers to improve their ability to sell their exports abroad. The assistance consists of providing them with the services of consultants, 70 % of whose fees are covered by the Objective 2 programme. These consultants will carry out market analyses and draw up export strategies, etc. The operation should make it possible to create 354 new jobs. As a result, the County has decided to start a new programme for approximately 150 new companies.'

**Gitte Madsen**, *Project leader, County of North Jutland*  
[amt.gm@nja.dk](mailto:amt.gm@nja.dk)

## ITALY

### Campania's competence centres



**Total cost:** EUR 237 738 000  
**EU contribution:** EUR 83 204 500

'The objective of the network of competence centres in the Campania region is to disseminate knowledge, measure demand and transfer innovation to SMEs. The network's 10 centres operate in seven sectors: analysis and monitoring of environmental risks; advanced biology and its applications; preservation and exploitation of cultural and environmental heritage; agri-foodstuffs production; new technologies at the service of productive activities; information and communication technologies (ICT); and transport. The final aim is to encourage patentable research and the emergence of knowledge-based SMEs.'

**Maria Adinolfi**, *Director, Ministry of Scientific Research, Statistics, Information Systems and Computing, Campania Region*  
[ricercascientifica2@regione.campania.it](mailto:ricercascientifica2@regione.campania.it)

## The Commission's proposals for updating the 'Gothenburg strategy'

# Sustainable development: acting promptly

**'Setting long-term objectives must not come to mean postponing action.' In the face of mixed results, this is the concern running through the communication<sup>(1)</sup> presented on 9 February 2005 by the European Commission to the Council and Parliament for an initial updating of the European sustainable development strategy (SDS), also known as the 'Gothenburg strategy', adopted in 2001.**



*Agricultural research in the framework of the RITT project: collecting pollen samples in Corsica (France).*

Adopted in June 2001 by the Gothenburg European Council, the SDS completes the Lisbon objectives of March 2000 for growth and jobs by lending them an environmental dimension. The 'Lisbon and Gothenburg strategy' thus rests on three pillars — economic, social and environmental — all of which are necessary to a type of development that is not limited to the short term but that builds a bridge to the future: namely sustainable development. This type of development is about responding to present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to respond to their needs — and that supposes changes to present methods of production and consumption. In this respect, 'Lisbon' and 'Gothenburg' are mutually reinforcing while using different instruments and working to different timetables.

There has been little sign since Gothenburg that the principal threats to the environment — whether they be to natural resources, the climate or biodiversity — have decreased. Despite some progress, the Commission concludes that the results targeted in 2001 have not been achieved. What is more, many problems have in fact worsened. Social divisions remain stubbornly present. European economic performances are stagnating while, at global level, the emergence of new and major industrial nations (China, India, Brazil) and the growing north/south divide are bringing increased risks for sustainable development. There is consequently an urgent need, at national, European and global level,

for joint action to tackle the most serious threats to the environment and living conditions.

The Communication reviews the principal elements of the SDS:

- > its basic principles, which must be reaffirmed;
- > its methodology, based on an improved method of policy-making with greater coherence and coordination, the exchange of good practices, market-based instruments (incentive measures and prices that reflect environmental costs), investment in science and technology;
- > its priorities, which concentrate on combating the most serious trends that are clearly 'not sustainable', namely in regard to climate change and energy consumption, the management of natural resources, transport and land use, threats to public health, poverty and social exclusion, the effects of demographic ageing, and pressure on sustainable development in the context of globalisation by focusing on the various international commitments in this field. The Commission points to the role of the Structural and Cohesion Funds in the field of environmental infrastructure, reducing the environmental impact of transport, the rehabilitation of industrial or natural sites and urban regeneration.

## Intermediate targets and long-term objectives

In its proposals, which take into account a public consultation organised in October 2004, the Commission places the emphasis on both the need to provide long-term responses and to set clear intermediate targets. It thus wants to set more precise objectives and new deadlines for improving control mechanisms. Finally, it calls for increased awareness on the part of the general public and closer cooperation between the public and private sector at all levels. In short, it is society as a whole that must take ownership of SDS, a precondition for better governance.

On the basis of the results of the interinstitutional dialogue — the debates at the European Council on 22 and 23 March, the European Economic and Social Committee conference on 14 and 15 April, the debates at the European Parliament, etc. — the Commission will later this year present a second communication that takes into account the opinion of all the actors concerned.

<sup>(1)</sup> Communication COM(2005) 37 final ('The 2005 review of the EU sustainable development strategy: initial stocktaking and future orientations'): [http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/docs/COMM\\_PDF\\_COM\\_2005\\_0037\\_F\\_EN\\_ACTE.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/docs/COMM_PDF_COM_2005_0037_F_EN_ACTE.pdf)



# REGIO and networks

## Sustainable European regions

The 'Sustainable European regions network' has published a report based on eight case studies of best practice in sustainable development (in Wales, Emilia Romagna, Sardinia, Västra Götaland, East-Central Sweden, central Macedonia, Limburg and Asturias) together with policy study papers produced by nominated experts, and the findings of the programme of seminars and exchange visits.

<http://www.sustainable-euregions.net>

## Knowledge regions

A brochure published by the Research Directorate-General presents the 'Regions of knowledge (KnowReg)' pilot action, initiated by the European Parliament. Launched in August 2003 and with a budget of EUR 2.5 million, KnowReg seeks to involve local and regional actors in developing knowledge-based actions and projects. The brochure briefly describes 14 projects in 70 regions, classified according to the following subjects: technological audits and regional prospects; university actions and regional development; support and mentoring. The paper version can be ordered from the following address:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/publications/pub\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/publications/pub_en.cfm)

## Territorial cohesion

The year 2005 will be crucial for the regions and their role in Europe as the European Union firms up its ambitions by adopting the budgetary orientations and commitments for the 2007–13 period. In this connection, the Conference of the Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), a grouping of 150 regions, has just published *Objective 2009: a big step for Europe, a small step for the regions*, a work that argues for an ambitious policy of territorial cohesion. Available in six languages (English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Greek). [secretariat@cpm.org](mailto:secretariat@cpm.org)

## The Union and the regions

*Le lobbying des villes et des régions auprès de l'Union européenne*: This new book by Pascal Goergen, Doctor of Political Science, expert on regional policy and representative of the Brussels-Capital region to the European Union, looks at the position of the regions in the EU decision-making process. The work provides a practical tool for all the Union's local and regional actors as well as the candidate countries. With a foreword by former European Commissioner Michel Barnier, it will soon also be available in English.

[info@goergen.be](mailto:info@goergen.be)

## Agenda REGIO

Dates	Event	Place
19–20 May 2005	European Summit of Regions and Cities	Wrocław (PL)
8–9 June 2005	URBAN conference: 'EU cohesion policy and integrated urban development — Concepts, perspectives, networks'	Saarbrücken (DE)
9–11 June 2005	The Fifth Biennial of Towns and Town Planners 2005	Copenhagen (DK)
5–06 October 2005	Third Seminar on Best Practices — Lisbon and Gothenburg Agenda	Magdeburg (DE)
10–13 October 2005	Open Days —European Week of Regions and Cities	Brussels (BE)
7–8 November 2005	'Towards a sustainable knowledge society — The Nordic experience'	Gothenburg (SE)

## Latest publications

### Regions matter



Structural Funds action in the 25 Member States and Bulgaria and Romania.

Multilingual product.

### Cohesion policy: the 2007 watershed



Summary of European Commission proposals for after 2007.

Available in 19 languages.

<http://www.ianis.net>

IANIS ('Innovative actions network for the information society') is the ERDF's innovative actions network devoted to the information society, currently bringing together about 30 European regions. Its website is a platform for the exchange of expertise, experiences and good practice between regions seeking to cooperate on anything to do with the use of telematics in the interests of development.



[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/equal/index\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm)

At the beginning of 2005, the EQUAL Community initiative updated and reorganised its website. The trilingual site (English, French, German) presents activities and results, describes how EQUAL works, provides the latest news and useful links. Visitors to the site can also access information on programmes in the various EU Member States, launch subject-based searches, and consult a database of around 3 400 EQUAL partnerships and projects in Europe.



<http://www.qec-eran.org>

Set up in 1989, QeC-ERAN ('Quartiers en crise — European regeneration areas network') is a network of cities that promotes an integrated approach to the regeneration of disadvantaged areas. The new website (in English and French) contributes to achieving the key goals set by QeC-ERAN: to develop programmes/projects that facilitate the exchange of experience and good practice; to support initiatives based on an increased participation by the target groups; to promote cooperation between local authorities and associations; to conduct research and evaluations to influence urban regeneration policy; to represent the opinions and needs of member towns within European groups and networks.



<http://www.kepemep-cree.org>

Founded in 1995 and based in Athens, the 'Centre des régions euro-méditerranéennes pour l'environnement' (CREE-MedRegio) brings together Spanish, French, Greek and Portuguese regions seeking to promote the principles of sustainable development in the particularly sensitive environment of the Mediterranean Sea. The CREE-MedRegio is an international network for inter-regional cooperation and meetings, as well as a centre for organising and promoting joint programmes and projects in the framework of the EU and the neighbouring Mediterranean international area. As a showcase and forum, the MedRegio website (in English, Spanish, French, Greek, Italian and Portuguese) is a window to Mediterranean regional development.



### Inforegio website

Consult the Inforegio website for an overview of European regional policy. For the latest news, go to the 'Newsroom' section at:

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

European Commission  
Directorate-General for Regional Policy  
Unit 01 — Information and Communication  
Thierry Daman  
Avenue de Tervuren 41  
B-1040 Brussels  
Fax (32-2) 29-66003  
E-mail: [regio-info@cec.eu.int](mailto:regio-info@cec.eu.int)  
Internet: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/regional_policy/index_en.htm)

ISSN 1608-389X

© European Communities, 2005  
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed in Belgium



Publications Office  
[Publications.eu.int](http://Publications.eu.int)