



inforegio | news

1025-7039

Accession negotiations shift attention to regional policy

Guide to financial engineering in regional policy — 2002

In September 2002, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy will publish a new edition of the *Guide to financial engineering in regional policy*. The first edition of the guide was published in 1994. The guide is designed to help those responsible for designing and implementing measures under the Structural Fund programmes, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG). Its principal objective is to describe how to implement equity schemes (including venture capital schemes), loan schemes and guarantees. It also references existing schemes and experts in order to facilitate knowledge transfer.

Information on the guide is available on the Inforegio web site (http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/newsroom/index_en.htm).

The most recent round of accession negotiations, which took place in Brussels from 19 to 22 April 2002, looked at regional policy and two of the three other chapters ('Financial and budgetary provisions' and 'Institutions') which the EU negotiating schedule envisages for the Spanish Presidency.

Chapter 21, 'Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments', which is considered one of the most sensitive chapters due to its financial content, was provisionally closed with Cyprus and the Czech Republic. The latter agreed to close the chapter subject to further discussion on the financing elements.

The main issues addressed in the negotiations under Chapter 21 are administrative and programming capacity and eligibility. The EU proposal lists the requirements that candidates will have to meet on the administrative side, and also indicates the proportion that each would be eligible to receive under EU structural funding.

The *acquis* under Chapter 21 does not define how the specific structures for the practical management of the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund should be set up, leaving this instead to the new Member States. The administrative structures to be put in place also differ from Poland to smaller can-

didate countries without regionalisation. The European Commission has, however, provided Member States with a road map.

In order to benefit from the funds, the candidate countries will be required to have the appropriate system in place by the time of accession. Thereafter, the candidate countries will also have to comply with financial and administrative requirements in order to ensure good management, which are also addressed in the context of the negotiations. These relate to issues such as territorial organisation, adapting legislation, raising their programming capacity, mastering administrative requirements, and financial and budgetary procedures.

The latest assessment of each candidate country's compliance with the *acquis* under this chapter heading can be found at: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/negotiations/chapters/chap21/index.htm>.

Euromontana conference considers the future of Europe's mountain regions

Against the backdrop of the enlargement negotiations and the imminent review of the Structural Funds and the common agricultural policy (CAP), the third Annual Conference on European Mountains, which took place in Inverness from 16 to 18 May 2002, provided a valuable opportunity to discuss the future of mountain regions in the EU.

The conference, which was organised by the Euromontana network, examined a range of issues relating to the future of mountain areas in the EU, including: the contributions of mountain areas to the economic and social development of Europe; the mountain areas of the candidate countries; the

issues for cohesion policy; and the potential role of young people in sustaining mountain areas.

A number of thematic workshops also explored the following topics:

- strengthening the strategy for quality products;

- sustainable development of forestry resources;
- the preservation of cultural identity;
- the development of social capital;
- the social, environmental or territorial impacts of mountain farming.

Mountain regions represent around 38 % of the EU territory and are home to around 30 million inhabitants, or 10 % of the total EU population. In some countries, such as Greece, Spain, Italy, Austria and Portugal, mountain areas represent more than half of the national territory. This is also the case in many of the candidate countries (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovenia).

For the period 2000–06, more than 95 % of mountain territory in the EU will receive assistance under EU regional policy. Looking beyond this, the second report on economic and social cohesion in Europe, adopted by the European Commission in January 2001, concludes that the harmonious development of mountain regions will require ongoing EU intervention.

In the context of the International Year of the Mountain in 2002, the Commission will organise a special 'Mountains' seminar in October, which will assist in establishing concrete perspectives for the period beyond 2006.

For further information on the Inverness conference, visit <http://www.mountainconf.com> or contact Euromontana, rue Philippe le Bon 46, B-1000 Brussels — tel. (32-2) 280 42 83; fax (32-2) 280 42 85; e-mail: euromontana@skynet.be.

'Cities for cohesion: lessons from the European URBAN programme'

This URBAN conference, which is being organised by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy, will take place in London on 8 and 9 July 2002. The aim of the conference is to provide an opportunity to discuss the future of cohesion policy and to advance the urban aspects of the cohesion debate. Over 250 mayors from across Europe will participate in the event.

The first day of the conference will include the presentation of a new Commission communication on the results of URBAN II programming. This will be followed by an open debate on 'URBAN and the future of European cohesion policies'.

The second day will commence with an overview of some of the highlights of URBAN, including the presentation of some key projects. Following this, there will be an open discussion on 'Social integration, governance and development: the

added value of URBAN', which will focus on the key lessons from the experience and innovations developed in the framework of URBAN, and consider future orientations in the context of an enlarged Union.

Further information on the conference is available from Mr Lewis Dijkstra, Office CSM2 03/92, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, B-1049 Brussels — fax (32-2) 29-63271; e-mail: lewis.dijkstra@cec.eu.int; Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/urban2/index_en.htm.

'Promoting innovation in Europe's regions': the biannual conference of the Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) network.

The third plenary meeting of the Innovating Regions in Europe network, which is being organised jointly with the Directorate-General for Enterprise, will take place in Stratford-upon-Avon on 17 and 18 June 2002. The conference will be hosted by the West Midlands (UK) region.

Over 400 delegates from more than 100 different European regions will participate in the event, which will provide a valuable opportunity to debate the role of innovation in the future of European regional policy. Most of the participating regions have already benefited from the regional innovation strategies'

pilot projects or from the regional innovative action programmes financed by the ERDF.

Further information is available at: <http://www.ire-event-stratford.co.uk/index.asp>.



European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy

KN-AB-02-007-EN-C