



Solidarity Funding for Greece

The European Commission has proposed to earmark €89.7 million to partially compensate expenditure on emergency actions and the restoration of infrastructure following the devastating fires which swept through Greece last August, leading to the death of 65 victims.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm

EU support for Northern Ireland

The European Commission has adopted a report from its Northern Ireland Task Force, which identifies a number of EU policy initiatives and programmes able to be mobilised in support of the region's economy. In 2007-13, six EU programmes, including PEACE III, will provide a total investment of €1.2 billion in the region.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/themes/peace/com2008186_en.pdf

Record participation in OPEN DAYS 2008

A record 217 regions and cities from 32 countries have signed up as partners for OPEN DAYS 2008 – European Week of Regions and Cities. This year's event will take place in Brussels from 6-9 October 2008 and will also involve more than 200 associated events in the Member States.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2008/index.cfm

New "NUTS" guide from Eurostat

"NUTS", the "Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics" was introduced more than 30 years ago to provide a single uniform breakdown of territorial units for the production of regional statistics for the European Union. Eurostat recently published a new guide highlighting the latest developments on NUTS: the EU's territory is now subdivided into 97 regions at NUTS level 1 (between 3 and 7 million inhabitants), 271 at NUTS level 2 (800 000 to 3 million) and 1 303 at NUTS level 3 (150 000 to 800 000).

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-RA-07-020/EN/KS-RA-07-020-EN.PDF

What next for EU Cohesion Policy?

The first results of the recent public consultation on the future of Cohesion Policy were presented at a conference in Maribor on 7-8 April, organised by the Slovenian Presidency of the EU.

This major event was attended by more than 170 representatives from Member States and international institutions concerned with EU Cohesion Policy. It focused on a range of issues including the policy's scope, monitoring system and its impact.

Addressing the conference, Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy, stressed that "Cohesion Policy is not a simple redistribution mechanism or 'money-go-round'. It is an investment policy (...)." In the future, Ms Hübner emphasised that Cohesion Policy should focus more on results. Evaluations should measure policy's success against performance criteria reflecting the nature of the interventions and policy objectives. "Resources in both the Commission and the Member States are limited; we must therefore work together to maximise not only the legality and regularity of expenditure, but also quality, performance and impact", she said.

Feedback from stakeholders

Last September, a public debate was launched by the European Commission on the future of Cohesion Policy. Around a hundred contributions were received from Member States, regions, cities, EU institutions, economic and social partners, civil society organisations, academics and citizens.

Some general conclusions can be drawn: there is overwhelming support for the continuation of the European Cohesion Policy beyond 2013. The "earmarking" principle (funds to target the Union's priorities) receives support from national and regional authorities. However, some contributors also caution against the excessive orientation of this policy towards the Lisbon Agenda and recall that this trend should not be detrimental to the objective of narrowing disparities. Territorial cohesion is strongly supported but its interpretation appears rather heterogeneous; there is an overwhelming demand across the Union for strengthening this objective in future.



Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy

A significant majority of the contributions call for further clarification of the allocation of responsibilities between the different territorial levels in the implementation of the Cohesion programmes. Another issue which has emerged from the consultation is the creation of a single fund to implement Cohesion Policy and the desire to further simplify it.

In Maribor, Commissioner Hübner announced that Dr Fabrizio Barca of the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, has been invited, with other external experts, to carry out a thorough assessment of the content and management of Cohesion Policy. A fifth progress report on economic and

social cohesion will be published next June by the Commission and will include a summary of the public consultation. The Commission will adopt a Green Paper on territorial cohesion in September 2008 to be followed by broad public consultation and an informal meeting of ministers for regional policy under the French presidency in November 2008. This should lead to the publication of an orientation paper in spring 2009 containing the first concrete ideas on the future of Cohesion Policy post 2013.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/4thcohesionforum/consultation_en.cfm

Governance and partnership in Regional Policy

A recent study on behalf of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development (REGI) highlights the importance of "Governance and Partnership in Regional Policy".

Based principally on case studies from five Member States – Austria, Denmark, Italy, Latvia and Romania – but also covering the situation in other Member States, the study examines the way in which the implementation of the "partnership principle" (Article 11 of Regulation 1083/2006) contributed to the preparation of the National Strategic Reference Frameworks for the 2007-13 period. The findings are presented in the context of the wider debate on EU governance.

The study concludes that: 1) governance and partnership are sometimes treated as formal requirements that are respected by the Member States during programme planning, and some Member States provide effective methods for the ongoing involvement of interested local stakeholders during programme implementation ; 2) The inclusion of the local level

and civil society strongly depends on the "opportunities" provided by the Member States; 3) Opportunities for "policy learning" by local partners and stakeholders are still not fully taken advantage of due to a lack of resources and appropriate structures. Such opportunities should be enhanced at EU level through the 2007-13 network programmes (INTERREG IVC, INTERACT, URBACT, ESPON); and 4) With regional policy becoming increasingly complex, qualified and appropriate media and communication channels are required. Partnership arrangements can be an effective way to contribute to overcoming such complexities.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/regi/regi_20080326_1500.htm

Launch of RegioStars Awards 2009

The RegioStars Awards for 2009 were officially launched on 26 February 2008 at the close of the Regions for Economic Change conference.

For 2009, RegioStars will be awarded in the following three categories: 1) Research, technological development and innovation; 2) Adaptation to or mitigation of climate change; and 3) Radio or television spots or programmes that highlight the benefits of Cohesion Policy.

To be eligible, projects must have received ERDF or Cohesion funding after 2000. The award criteria include innovation, sustainability and transferability and the winners will be selected by the RegioStars Jury, which will comprise experts on the award themes as well as representatives from the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions.

Completed application forms must be submitted by a Regional Managing Authority by 15 July 2008 to the following address: regio-stars@ec.europa.eu

The winners will be announced at the next Regions for Economic Change conference, in March 2009. They will receive a trophy awarded by the Regional Policy Commissioner and the president of the jury. DG Regional Policy will also produce a film on the winning projects in categories 1 and 2 which they may use to publicise good practice.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/regiostars_en.cfm?nmenu=4

"Telling the story - Communicating Cohesion Policy together"

The proceedings of the conference organised by the European Commission last November on the subject of how to inform the public on EU Cohesion Policy, are now available on the Inforegio website.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/commu/conferences/november07/sources_en.cfm?nmenu=5



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