



Brussels, 23 June 2009

## **HEARING ON FIRST FINDINGS OF EX POST EVALUATION 2000-06 CONCLUSIONS**

### **1. BUILDING UP AN EVIDENCE BASE THROUGH EVALUATION AND MONITORING**

- Today's event shows that evaluation can provide insights for policy development and can provoke productive discussions.
- The three evaluations presented dealt with three very specific and very different issues and tried to go deeper for these themes. We find that we do get more results to feed our policy debate, if methods are credible, experts in the field are carrying out the work and a proper use is organised. The first two have been achieved; it is up to us to ensure the third element.
- All three studies demonstrate that an active role of Member States is critical both for the creation of knowledge and use as we reflect how to improve current implementation of Cohesion Policy and its design in the future.

### **2. MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEMS**

- I draw the conclusion that we are all agreed with the conclusion that there is a need for a greater strategic orientation of the management systems of Cohesion Policy. We need real learning systems:
  - ⇒ Sharing of knowledge is an important tool to enhance performance of the policy.
  - ⇒ To achieve this, we need cooperation and partnership between Member States. Reliance on Commission advice and guidance is not enough.
  - ⇒ We need to reflect further on the administrative pressures caused by audit and control.

- Management systems in EU10
  - ⇒ 2004-06: The evaluation demonstrates that the EU10 successfully put in place the systems to draw down the EU resources available. Enormous learning took place and I want to pay tribute to this.
  - ⇒ This is a good starting point, but not enough. The evaluation gives strong recommendations on what needs to be improved to move to a system that is more performance oriented.
- The evaluation concludes that the general administrative performance of Member States is a decisive precondition for success of cohesion policy, but up to now out this is outside of our remit.
- This is an issue for further discussion. Is this a role for the Commission? Should we set stricter rules if Member States and Commission see weaknesses in the administrative system in general?

### **3. MAJOR PROJECTS**

- Major projects are an important and very visible aspect of our policy. As the experts have pointed out today, they are more important than ever in this time of economic crisis.
- The work done so far is an important first step to build a database of costs of projects. We will continue this work with the Cohesion Fund, and we can also work together with the EIB to widen the sample. The discussion shows that this database will be of benefit for public authorities throughout the EU who need to invest in transport and environmental infrastructure.
- Cost and time overruns are general problem of infrastructure projects. To tackle this problem, Member States and the Commission have to make changes in the treatment of risks and to think hard how we can get the right incentives in the system.

### **4. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**

- Demographic change was not an explicit priority in 2000-2006, nevertheless ERDF interventions had a discernible, though indirect effect on the main drivers of demographic change by financing infrastructures:
  - ⇒ childcare facilities;
  - ⇒ infrastructures for an ageing population: lifelong learning, health infrastructure, provision of basic services in areas with declining population, often rural areas;
  - ⇒ investments needed to deal with migration: e.g., education infrastructures.

- This is a demonstration that Cohesion Policy is not a top down policy, but driven also by regional and local actors who might spot problems more quickly than we do in Brussels.
- The evaluation proves that focusing on demographic change and gender equality together can improve the effectiveness of public policy in these fields. Gender equality and a better work/life balance seem to be conducive to increasing both female labour force participation and fertility.
- In current and future programming periods we should acknowledge this potential of our policy explicitly and consciously in order to use its potential.

## **5. THANK YOU TO PARTICIPANTS**

- Thank you to evaluators, speakers, discussants, and representatives of national and regional administrations.
- Discussion today is a contribution to a discussion of high quality on the future of cohesion policy. But it is only the first of these discussions.
- More results of the ex post evaluation will become available until the end of the year. During the OPEN DAYS in October 2009 we will look at more results in the areas of transport and environment. The synthesis report of this evaluation will be presented in another open event like today at the beginning of 2010.