



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Regional Policy

**State of play on cohesion policy
regulations and guidelines
for 2007 – 2013**

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The cohesion policy in a few words

- Reducing the regional disparities

- Contributing to the Lisbon strategy
 - competitiveness and growth
 - more and better jobs



Why is environment important for the cohesion policy?

Can you imagine starting and developing businesses in a polluted and derelict area? Certainly not!

- We know that ecosystems provide goods and services (air quality, water flow and quality, soil fertility, food, fuel and fibre). That nature is a key resource for tourism, leisure and the living and working conditions.
- **We need an attractive environment to invest and work in the European regions.**
- For this reason, the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion (SGC 2007-2013) give priority to waste and waste-water infrastructures, management of natural resources, decontamination of land, risk prevention, sustainable transport, energy efficiency and renewable energies (effect on climate change).



Towards a balance

between economy and environment

- The priorities of the SGC are clearly in line with the environmental policy.
- However, it is necessary to find a balance between the protection of the environment and the development of economic activities. Otherwise, "Homo sapiens economicus" could become classified on the list of the endangered species, under the Habitats Directive.
- Of course, such a balance requires promoting competitiveness, growth and jobs in a sustainable way, in terms of climate change, land use planning, air, water and soil quality.



Legislative framework to develop synergies

- Intentions are not enough; we need legal instruments in the relevant policies. We have these instruments.
- To develop synergies, we have to make the best use of the regulations, delivery mechanisms and experience gained from the regional policy.
- The sustainable management of the environment requires subsidiarity and partnership. The regional policy has a substantial experience for implementing these principles.
- The regional policy can offer its contribution to the management of the environment in the areas of integrated planning, coordination among sectoral policies, cooperation, networking, exchange of good practices and partnership between the Commission, the national and regional authorities and the relevant stakeholders.



Legislative framework: the next period

- For 2007-2013: each Member State has to define a National Strategic Reference Framework: initial analysis, strategy including thematic and territorial priorities, list of Operational Programmes.
- Environmental impact: DG Regional Policy together with DG Environment have sent a letter to the Member States early this year, reminding them of their obligations with regard to the implementation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.
- Many of the operational programmes may require assessment under the SEA Directive, particularly if they include projects covered by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (major projects).



Legislative framework: implementing SEA & EIA

- A handbook on SEA for the cohesion policy has been prepared through the INTERREG IIIC project "Greening Regional Development Programme".
- Therefore, the implementation in the Member States of the requirements of both SEA and EIA Directives will prevent potentially damaging projects to be funded by the structural and cohesion funds, if necessary through infringements procedures.
- However, the regional policy cannot be taken as a hostage because of some unreasonable complains related to the protection of the environment. It would block the discussion with the partners dealing with economic development.



Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion (CSG) – 1

The recommended guidelines for financial assistance affecting directly the environment, are the following:

- Investment in **infrastructure**, particularly in the Convergence regions, especially in the new Member States, to comply with environmental legislation (water, waste, air, nature protection).
- **Attractive conditions for businesses and their highly-skilled staff:** land-use planning (urban sprawl), rehabilitating the physical environment (natural and cultural assets), innovative & job-creating businesses.
- Investments that contribute to the **Kyoto commitments** (in addition to sustainable energy and transport).
- **Risk prevention:** improved management of natural resources, more targeted research and better use of ICTs, and more innovative public management policies.



Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion (CSG) – 2

Other guidelines, affecting indirectly the environment (1):

- Eco-innovations, by improving SME practices (environmental management systems). Businesses will be in a strong position when other regions appreciate the necessity of such technologies.
- **Energy efficiency**, and dissemination of low energy intensity development models.
- **Renewable and alternative technologies** (wind, solar, biomass) which can strengthen the competitive position (Lisbon objective).



Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion (CSG) – 3

Other guidelines affecting indirectly the environment (2):

- Environmentally sustainable **transport networks**: public transport facilities, mobility plans, ring roads, safety at road junctions, soft traffic (cycles, pedestrians), networks for alternative vehicle fuels.
- Development of secondary links, with a focus on inter-modality and sustainable transport, should be promoted.
- “**motorways of the sea**” and to short-sea shipping as a viable alternative to long-distance road and rail transport.
- Quality & sustainable **tourism**, integrated approach: positive impact on the local economy, people working in the tourism sector, visitors and the local population, natural and cultural heritage.



Timetables for the adoption of the regulations

- 12 June: adoption by the Council of all the regulations (General, ERDF, CF),
- early July: adoption by the Parliament of all the regulations,
- 20 July: publication of the Council regulations on the OJ,
- late July: adoption by the Commission of the list of regions eligible to the Convergence objective,
- late July: adoption of the Commission regulation establishing detailed rules for implementing Council regulations (consultation of the CDRR still to be done),
- October: adoption by the Council of the Strategic guidelines on Cohesion (SGC) (after a formal adoption of a revised version by the Commission and a discussion at the Council level)



Deadlines related to the programming documents

National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF):

- Transmitted by MS within 5 months after the adoption of SGC
- Observations of the Commission within 3 months after receipt

Operational Programmes (OPs)

- Submitted by MS asap, within 5 months after SGC adoption, eventually together with NSRF,
- Adopted by the Commission asap, no later than 4 months after submission, and not before 1st January 2007.



Some examples – 1

- The Commission suspended in June 2001 some payments related to the Objective 1 OP for Hainaut (B) until the presentation by the Walloon Government of a complete list of Natura 2000 sites.
- River protection (Interreg): partners regions from UK, ES, CZ & NL are developing sustainable river management initiatives and best practice toolkits for cleaning contaminated water and creating fish passages. It promotes education and training to local schools, volunteer groups and businesses.
- Eco-innovation (Interreg): partners regions of ES, IT, IRL & HU are producing a model to support sustainable SME development and industrial site management suitable to reduce resources consumption, waste production and the usage of natural land. It increases SME competitiveness by reducing their structural costs.



Some examples – 2

- Biomass: in Walsdorf (D), farmers, SMEs and the local council have together set up a heating company. A plant is fuelled by biomass (wood chippings from locally grown timber). It provides heat to a school and a guaranteed extra income for farmers.
- Accessibility and transport (Interreg): partners from IRL, P, A, SLK and CZ are elaborating environmentally-friendly strategies for multimodal transport system. It can preserve biodiversity.
- Sustainable tourism: in Castro Verde (Alentejo, Portugal), an environmental education centre has been funded to support traditional agricultural practice and products in Natura 2000 areas. Schools and visitors can explore thematic trails (water, energy, desertification and grassland birds).



Conclusion: a new initiative

- Together with colleagues from other DGs, DG REGIO prepares a new initiative to make more visible what we can deliver with the regional policy in different areas such as Enterprise, RTD, Transport, Energy and Environment.
- In practice, under this initiative, Member States and regions will have the chance of declaring their objectives and intentions at an early stage of the programming cycle and joining together to pool knowledge and spread good practice.
- **Thank you for your attention.**