

Brussels, 6 July 2005

The European Commission presents the new Community Strategic Guidelines for cohesion, growth and jobs

Danuta Hübner, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, together with Vladimir Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, yesterday presented a Communication on the Community Strategic Guidelines on economic, social and territorial cohesion. The new Guidelines will establish priorities for the next generation of cohesion policy programmes, helping Member States to focus on key areas for growth and employment. The Commission will propose the Guidelines for formal adoption by Council and European Parliament, once the legal regulations underpinning the new cohesion policy have been adopted. Meanwhile, a public consultation will help to shape the final version. Interested parties are invited to submit their observations before 30 September 2005 through internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/index_en.htm

Commissioner Hübner said: *“The Community Strategic Guidelines are an essential aspect of the Commission’s efforts to align cohesion policy closely with the Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs. The Guidelines are the missing link between our legal regulations and regional programmes on the ground. By adopting this Communication, the Commission has shown its determination to press on with our strategic priorities, despite the delay in reaching agreement on the future finances of the EU.”*

Referring to one of the proposed Guidelines, Vladimir Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, added: *“Europe is focusing on growth and jobs. By focusing on investing in human capital to achieve growth, the Guideline on more and better jobs reflects the recently revised European Employment Strategy. They will help Member States to manage economic change, including restructuring, stimulate the knowledge economy and innovation and combat the long-term and youth unemployment. They will also contribute to enhancing the occupational and geographical mobility of citizens and equipping them with better education and skills”.*

The Community Strategic Guidelines are a key element in the architecture for the new generation of cohesion policy post-2007. They constitute the link between Member States’ operational programmes and the regulations on the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund. Based on the Strategic Guidelines, Member States will set out their own strategic priorities for cohesion policy to be incorporated into their “Lisbon” National Action Programmes for growth and jobs.

Adoption of this Communication is timely, especially given the failure of the June European Council to reach agreement on the future of the EU's finances. National and regional authorities need to make substantial progress now with the management and substance of their cohesion policy programmes to avoid severe disruption in 2007. The draft Guidelines have been discussed extensively with Member States at an informal level. In adopting this Communication, the Commission hopes to reduce the level of uncertainty faced by regional authorities owing to the lack of a financial framework. Nevertheless, early agreement on the EU's "financial perspectives" remains urgent.

The Strategic Guidelines provide Member States and regions with indicative Community priorities for cohesion policy programmes. They emphasize the need to strengthen synergies between cohesion policy, national and regional priorities and the Lisbon strategy, and they reinforce the ownership of cohesion policy by regional and local authorities, social partners and other stakeholders. As outlined in the Guidelines, the limited resources of cohesion policy need to be concentrated on the fields where they can deliver best results in terms of growth and employment.

Three overarching priorities have been identified:

Guideline I: Making Europe a more attractive place to invest and work: *expanding and improving infrastructures; improving the environmental contribution to growth and jobs; addressing Europe's intensive use of traditional energy sources and supporting renewable and alternative technologies.*

Guideline II: Knowledge and innovation for growth: *increasing and improving investment in RTD; facilitating innovation and promoting entrepreneurship; developing an information society for all; facilitating access to finance.*

Guideline III: More and better jobs: *Attracting and retaining more people in employment and modernising social protection systems; improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises and the flexibility of the labour market; increasing investment in human capital through better education and skills; enhancing administrative capacity, maintaining a healthy labour force.*

The Guidelines also pay particular attention to territorial cohesion and cooperation. They recognize the contribution of cities to growth and jobs, support the economic diversification of rural areas and enhance cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation.

The Guidelines are not 'one-size-fits-all'. On the basis of the priorities outlined, each Member State or region has to find the suitable policy mix for its own development path in the light of its particular economic, social, institutional and cultural conditions.

Procedure

The Guidelines will be decided by the Council on the basis of unanimity, after the adoption of the regulations (following an agreement on the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013) and on the basis of a Commission proposal. They will form the basis for preparing National Strategic Reference Frameworks and the resulting operational programmes to be adopted by the Commission.

More information :

On Regional Policy :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm

On Employment, Social and Equal Opportunities :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index_en.html