

Cohesion policy 2007-2013: Austrian regions first to have programmes approved by the Commission

The Austrian regions became today the first in the European Union to start drawing benefits from the new Cohesion policy 2007-2013 as the European Commission approved the first group of regional operational programmes. The Commission decision on the eight Austrian operational programmes opens the way for Austrian regions to start implementing the new policy in the framework of the strategic plans and priorities agreed between Austria and the Commission on 4th April 2007. Today's first package of adopted operational programmes includes one "Convergence (Phasing Out)" programme for Burgenland and seven "Regional competitiveness and employment" programmes for Carinthia, Lower and Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg. Austria submitted the first official versions of its operational programmes electronically to the Commission on 30th October 2006.

Commissioner Hübner expressed her satisfaction for the good quality and the timely submission of the programmes by Austria and stated that *"The new Cohesion policy is already working to deliver more growth and quality jobs to Austria and its regions. More regions will follow, hopefully soon, in this great collective effort to transform European economy and make our Union the most prosperous, dynamic and attractive place to live and work".*

Burgenland is expected to receive by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) an investment of € 125 million under the Convergence programme while the total financial allocation of the above-mentioned seven "Regional competitiveness and employment" programmes amounts to € 529.9 million.

The Burgenland operational programme comprises the priority axes "Competitiveness und innovative regional economy structures", "Infrastructure and sustainable regional development" and "Technical assistance".

The other "Regional competitiveness and employment" programmes consist of the priority axes "Strengthening the innovation and knowledge-based economy", "Strengthening the attractiveness of regions" and "Governance and Technical assistance".

The priorities defined in the individual operational regional programmes are fully in line with the priorities set out in the Austrian National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), the plans and priorities agreed with the Commission earlier in April. Strengthening and promoting regional competitiveness and innovation will support the Austrian regions and help them become more attractive offering increased quality of life and more adaptability and qualifications for the country's workforce.

The timely adoption of these programmes can only work in Austria's favour as the sooner the implementation can begin on the ground the more Austrian competitiveness will be reinforced. The implementation of the programmes will also help Austria to better prepare the transition to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy. Especially, the creation and reinforcement of innovative and dynamic small and medium sized enterprises (SME) will certainly play an important role in the implementation of these programmes. Research and development centres, clusters and the innovation in eco-technologies and energy technologies will traditionally play an important role in Austria.

Further information about European Regional Policy available at:

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

Further information about European Employment, Social affairs and Equal opportunities Policies is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index_en.html