

Brussels, 29 November 2007

Commission approves 10 programmes for pre-accession assistance to Croatia, Turkey and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Commission today approved a package of 10 operational programmes totalling € 920 million for 2007-2009 to support candidate countries in regional development and human resources. This investment is being made available in the framework of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The candidate countries are: Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner commented: "With these programmes, candidate countries will make significant progress in their preparation for accession. IPA programmes are good practical experience for these countries in view of their potential future participation in Cohesion policy. It will give them a taste of the community approach regarding the planning, implementation, control and evaluation of projects."

Social affairs Commissioner Vladimír Špidla added: "*I am pleased that human resources development has now been incorporated as a specific component under IPA to prepare the countries for the future use of the European Social Fund. More particularly, for the three candidate countries concerned, I am convinced that it will contribute to promoting greater levels of employability as well as strengthening their existing education and training systems.*"

The programmes, developed by the beneficiary countries in close partnership with the Commission, received a positive opinion from the Member States.

Croatia: four programmes with investment worth € 180.7 million for regional competitiveness, transport, environmental protection and human resources development.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: two programmes with investment worth € 56.8 million for regional development (including transport and environment) and human resources development.

Turkey: four programmes with investment worth € 682.7 million for regional competitiveness, environment, transport and human resources development.

Notes for editors

The programmes take into account each country's medium- to long-term strategic development priorities. Main projects include:

- transport infrastructure in rail, inland waterways, ports and roads, with particular relevance to projects which are important to the extension of the pan-European transport corridors;
- environment infrastructure in waste water, drinking water and solid waste management;
- support to the productive sector, to boost competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises and to create employment;
- support for human resource development and for strengthening social inclusion.

As from January 2007, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance replaces the financial instruments previously applied for these countries: PHARE, ISPA, Sapard, CARDS and pre-accession financial assistance for Turkey.

The resources available for pre-accession assistance to candidate countries are not comparable in macro-economic terms to structural fund interventions in Member States. However, they offer a 'learning by doing' opportunity regarding EU structural and cohesion policy principles and values. Candidate countries will be initiated into drawing up and implementing operational programmes in a strategic way. There will also be cross-border programmes adopted soon, some of them involving Member States (Slovenia, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Cyprus).