

## COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2000**

**Venue: Committee Room ?**

**Title: INTERREG 111 ( 2000 - 2006)**

### **Purpose**

**1.To inform committee members of the latest developments.**

### **Recommendation**

**2. The Committee is invited to note the content of the report.**

### **Background**

3. An INTERREG III programme, building upon the experience of previous INTERREG Initiatives, is being developed for 2000 - 2006. The European Commission published its draft Guidelines for INTERREG III on 13 October 1999 and is currently consulting Member States and the European Parliament on their content. It is likely that the final Guidelines will be published in the Spring (around March 2000). Member States will then have up to six months to submit their plans for the new programme.

4. There are three strands to the new INTERREG programme:-

- **cross-border co-operation** - to develop cross-border economic and social centres through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development (Strand A)
- **trans-national co-operation** - to promote a higher degree of territorial integration across large groupings of European regions, with a view to achieving sustainable, harmonious and balanced development in the European Union and better territorial integration with candidate and other neighbouring countries (Strand B)
- **Interregional co-operation** - to improve the effectiveness of policies and instruments for regional development and cohesion through networking, particularly for regions whose development is lagging behind and those undergoing conversion (Strand C)

5. Two strands will be of particular interest to Wales :

**Strand A – Ireland/Wales Programme** – this will build on the current programme.

- The Commission has proposed that the eligible area should remain the same as the current programme. This is based on the old counties of Gwynedd and Dyfed. Adjacent areas may participate, but this needs to be identified in the Single Programming Document.
- Initial discussions between officials of the National Assembly for Wales and the Department of Finance in Dublin have taken place.
- The programme content is likely to be similar to the current programme, though some adjustments may be made in the light of experience in running the current programme
- The plans must be written jointly by Ireland and Wales, and all relevant partners must be involved at all stages.

**Strand B** – Wales is likely to be eligible to receive funding from two programmes:

- **North West Europe** – this programme will cover a large geographical area, including the whole of Ireland and the UK, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and parts of France, Germany and the Netherlands. This is an important source of funds for joint projects between areas of Ireland and Wales which are not eligible under Strand A, as well as for links with other European countries.
- **Atlantic Area** – this programme will cover the whole of Ireland, the whole of Wales, parts of England, the west coast of France, the northern coast of Spain and the whole of Portugal

**Strand C** is a general pot of money for networking, exchange of experience and setting up an Observatory. This will fund projects between regions which are not necessarily geographically close. This is an extension of the old Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which previously funded this type of activity.

## **Financial Allocations**

6. The United Kingdom has been allocated a total of 362million Euros (about £234 million) for INTERREG for 2000-2006. At least 50% of this must be allocated to Strand A. It is too early to estimate the amount of resources likely to be allocated to the Strand A Ireland/Wales programme.

## **Compliance**

7. Under Section 33 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 the Assembly may consider and make appropriate representations about any matter affecting Wales.

## **Cross-cutting Themes**

8. Policy Divisions with an interest (such as Environment and Transport) have been consulted and will be involved at all stages of negotiations.

## **Contact Point**

9. European Affairs Division