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## **Cohesion policy 2007-2013: Malta becomes the first Member State to have plan and priorities agreed with the Commission**

***Regional policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner and Employment and social affairs Commissioner Vladimír Špidla congratulated the Maltese authorities for becoming the first Member State to have officially agreed with the European Commission on the national plan and priorities for Cohesion policy 2007-2013. Malta had sent electronically its National Strategic Reference Framework to the European Commission on November 21. The document described how EU funding will be used to deliver growth and jobs in the new programming period to start on January 2007. The adoption procedure has now been completed as the European Commission issued its decision on elements of the Maltese plan, including priorities, indicative annual allocations, and list of operational programmes.***

Regional policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner and Employment and social affairs Commissioner Vladimír Špidla expressed their satisfaction at the new Member State's efficiency in timely submitting this key document and having all its elements finally adopted, urging other countries to follow that example. Seven other Member States, namely Austria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Denmark and UK, have sent their national strategic reference frameworks (NSRFs) to the Commission. All other Member States are encouraged to submit officially their NSRF and programmes as soon as possible.

The NSRF, negotiated over the past few months, sets out in broad terms how Malta will use € 840 M EU resources in the next seven years to deliver growth and jobs ([http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/atlas2007/fiche/mt\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/fiche/mt_en.pdf)).

Malta's priorities for 2007-2013, as set out in the NSRF, are to reduce the gap between its GDP per capita and that of the EU 25, increase the smaller island of Gozo's GDP per capita, as a percentage of Malta's, increase their exports of goods and services and increase employment.

Malta intends to translate the broad priorities contained in the NSRF into two operational programmes. The first - *Investing in competitiveness for a better quality of life* - will receive funding from the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion fund, the second entitled *Empowering people for more jobs and better quality of life* will receive funding from the European Social Fund.

Now that negotiations have been successfully concluded on the wider framework document, the list of programmes and the indicative annual allocation from each fund will be adopted by the Commission soon. Malta then passes to the next stage which is negotiation of its operational programmes' content.

Timely submission of its NSRF can only work in Malta's favour as the sooner its operational programmes are adopted, the sooner implementation can begin on the ground.

In drawing up their NSRFs, all Member States must take account of the Community guidelines for 2007-2013 which place particular emphasis on innovation, research and technological development, the information society, environmental protection, renewable energy sources and creating more and better jobs. The NSRF must also tie in closely with Member States' national reform programmes which set out the measures they will implement to deliver the Lisbon jobs' and growth strategy.

Further information about European Regional Policy available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm)