

Speaking points

(24.11.2008)

After introduction and thanks words

- This ERDF event is an excellent idea to collect together the stakeholders in regional policy and economics and to show how the ERDF is performing in Niedersachsen
- Let me please present on this occasion some amending remarks
- I will focus my presentation on the following 3 issues
 - What is the contribution of cohesion policy for the real economy
 - The Lisbon Strategy
 - And on the current financial crisis
- It is an necessary as well to illustrate what is the added value and leverage effect of the Structural Funds in your region

1. What is the contribution of cohesion policy for the real economy?

- In your Operational Programmes you put a special attention and a big amount of money for supporting SMEs
- an emphasized place in the program is entitled also to the innovation and innovative actions
- You developed a scope of new methods to support the SMEs, to facilitate their access to credits, like the loan system provided by the counties and county-free cities
- Or establishing of the mechanism of the regional partial budgets
- Beside these the programmes support small and medium sized companies in different other ways, for example
- company-close support of consulting and further education
- or supporting in the field of cooperation between companies and research
- supporting by establishing new companies
- consulting for enhancing the competitiveness of the SMEs
- enhancing of the cooperation between the SMEs
- and the main objective of all the activities:
 - Maintaining and growing of jobs in the region!

2. The Lisbon Strategy

- This objective stands at the heart of the EU's Lisbon Strategy for growing regions and creating jobs
- Europe and its regions must stay competitive in the global world
- Through innovation
- Through technology transfer between SMEs as well between SMEs and research
- Niedersachsen goes this way; it is fixed in the operational programmes and is visible in the use of Structural Funds in the terms of the European policy
- Niedersachsen follows consequently the European way:
 - In its ERDF Operational Programmes for the programming period 2007-13 the priorities in charge to reach the objectives of
 - Enhancing of the competitiveness and employment, in particular in the SMEs
 - And supporting of innovation development
- Are provided with substantial amounts
- To be concrete and rigorous the Council has established thresholds for Lisbon instruments in Structural Funds programmes:
 - 60% in convergence region
 - And 75% in Regional Competitiveness and Employment regions
- Niedersachsen made efforts to earmark those thresholds in their two Operational Programmes for such kind of interventions

- In Convergence region the earmarking reached 61%
- In the RCE region 68%
- The European Commission is convinced that innovation is one of the key answers to the challenges of the future.

3. Current financial crisis

- The challenge that we are facing now is that one of the current financial crises worldwide
- So especially now, we must think global and act local
- That means:
- The Regional Policy is firmly aligned on the Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs, with the emphasis on innovation, research and development and human capital
- With this agenda the investments are specifically targeted to address long-term challenges, like investments in the productive capacity of business, in priority infrastructures and human capital resources
- **These targets stay crucial**
- Especially now, in the time of challenging global financial crisis and recession it is particularly essential to ensure that investment is directed to best effect for growth and jobs

- A lot of these investment can be initialized and supported by the EU Regional Policy
- We need to make sure it is being used in the best way possible to respond to the circumstances facing us
- Regions that succeed in maintaining these priorities and delivering the expected benefits will profit from them in the future
- By investing in these priorities, Niedersachsen will belong to those ones who will benefit!
- But, nevertheless, we need to meet the new financial challenges now
 - The EU needs to add to its medium and long term measures of the Lisbon strategy actions, which tackle the crisis now. To add short term actions to its structural reform agenda, while continuing to invest in the future
- For the short terms actions the Commission will for example explore together with Member States the possibilities of increasing loans from the European Investment Bank for small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe granted via commercial banks
- Beside this the Commission encourages increasing the recourse to already existing financial engineering instruments such as JEREMIE, which are to provide new opportunities for economy, especially for SMEs.
- All these measures are meant to enable the ongoing and to encourage the future investments and to maintain the prosperity of Europe's regions

- Niedersachsen, I am sure, will effectively manage the situation using the Structural Funds for stimulation of the economy
- Moreover, in two days, on 26th of November and for the upcoming Informal Ministerial meeting to be held in Marseille, the Commission will bring forward a comprehensive EU recovery plan
- This recovery plan will include targeted short-term actions to add to the medium-term reform agenda under the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs
- Regions, Member States and the European Union can and will manage the financial crisis by acting together!

- Thank you for your attention!