Cohesion policy and environment

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OBJECTIVE: the Commission communication aims to set out the guidelines likely to increase the synergy between the cohesion policy and the environmental policy when implementing programmes under the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund. SUBSTANCE: the Commission considers that, within the existing legal framework of the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, it has an important role to play in encouraging, screening and coordinating national practices in a climate of partnership. Various options may be chosen to implement this strategy: - dividing the appropriations for the Cohesion Fund equally between transport and the environment; - in terms of programming, stepping up the Commission's efforts to better understand the impact of measures likely to have a direct effect on the environment, and considering new possibilities for pilot projects in the field of the environment; - systematically including the aspect of the environment when monitoring and assessing programmes, in close collaboration with the Member States and, where necessary, the regions involved; - in terms of the selection of projects, drawing up criteria reflecting sustainable economic, social and environmental development and granting the Commission a more active role in preventing infringements of environmental rules; - encouraging dialogue between interested parties, including NGOs working in the field of the environment. Finally, the Commission points out that it agrees with the European Parliament's objective to increase the funds set aside in the budget for the environment.