Sustainable urban development: economic and social regeneration of cities and of neighbourhoods in crisis, URBAN

1999/2177(COS) - 21/02/2001 - Follow-up document

This report details the Special Report No 1/2001 from the Court of Auditors concerning the URBAN Community initiative. The Court decided to examine the URBAN Community initiative because of the large number of Community measures specifically targeting the urban question. URBAN is also one of the four Community initiatives to have been renewed for the period 2000 to 2006. The aim of the Court's audit was to examine the consistency of the regulatory framework and appraise the quality of the programming, implementation, financial management and evaluation of URBAN. The Council concludes by stating that the URBAN Community initiative has supported the implementation of many urban development projects in 118 areas of the European Union and has provided local authorities with access to Community co-financing. However, these projects could, in the Court's view, equally well have been carried out under existing Community measures, thus avoiding the creation of the new procedures and expensive management structures. In future any new Community intervention should be preceded by in-depth analysis of needs, taking into account the Court's observations, as well as previous experience, so as to ensure that the added value which they generate is real. It should also be noted that the implementation of URBAN was characterised by very long delays, so that operations were concentrated at the end of the period. This was was the consequence of superficial, or even non-existant, ex ante appraisals of the programmes, unrealistic programming and poor monitoring. Lastly, the Court's main findings concerning the implementation of URBAN are similar to those already expressed in previous inquiries in the Structural Fund measures, and the Community initiatives in particular. The new Regulations at the start of the 2000 to 2006 programming period represent a fresh opportunity for the Commission and the Member States to introduce tangible initiatives rapidly, with the aim of simplifying and improving the programming, management, monitoring and evaluation of structural actions. The Commission is in agreement with the Court's opinion on this matter.