

EU News Bulletin

The latest news, funding and events from the EU for local and regional government

Number 22 – December 2005

Produced by the Irish Regions Office (IRO), Brussels
in association with the Institute of Public Administration (IPA)



Irish Regions Office



FUNDING 1

Bringing research closer to society

European prize for urban space

Combating violence

Youth exchange

The Dubai international award

NEWS & POLICY 2

Agreement on EU budget 2007-2013

UK vision for major CAP reform

Rural development guidelines adopted

New impetus for renewable energy

New rules on "green" vehicles

Radical reform of EU sugar sector

Partial agreement on LIFE+ 2007-'13

Structural Funds and urban areas

Consultation on biodiversity

Ireland's GDP at 138% of EU average

Ireland lagging in R&D investment

EVENTS 4

Communicating Europe – going local

Innovative regional policies

International partnership fair

EU energy efficiency conference

PUBLICATIONS 4

Project pipeline for 2007-2013

EU sustainable development strategy

Online register of expert groups

FUNDING

Bringing Research Closer to Society

On November 30, the European Commission published a call for proposals under the Science and Society measure of the EU's 6th Framework Programme for Research. This call is designed to support civil society organizations, which facilitate the general public, including young people and ethnic minorities, to have easier access to scientific culture and to research. Civil society organisations must be non-governmental organisations, not-for-profit, not representing commercial interests and pursuing a common purpose in the public interest. Their partners should be research centres, universities or other relevant stakeholders, such as foundations. Closing date for applications: 30 March 2006. Total budget: €3.5 million. *Further details at:* <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/society.htm>

European Prize for Urban Public Space

The European Prize for Urban Public Space is a biennial competition that aims to highlight the important role of public space in urban life and to recognize and foster investment by public authorities in its creation, conservation and improvement. The Centre de Cultura Contemporània (Barcelona), the Institut Français d'Architecture (Paris), the Architecture Foundation (London), the Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, the Architektur-Zentrum (Vienna) and the Museum of Finnish Architecture have announced the 4th European Prize for Urban Public Space, which is to be awarded in July 2006 in Barcelona. Applications should be submitted between 15 January and 15 March 2006. *Further details at:* <http://urban.cccb.org/prize/pdf/PRIZE2006.pdf>

Combating Violence

On December 15, the European Commission published a call for proposals under the Daphne II programme (2004-2008), which supports projects aimed at preventing and combating violence against children, young people and women, and protecting victims and groups at risk. The deadline for applications is 10 February 2005. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/funding/daphne/funding_daphne_en.htm

Youth Exchange

On December 15, the European Commission published a call for proposals aimed at supporting projects which promote the exchange of experience and good practice in the field of youth work between the EU, candidate countries, EFTA/EEA countries and Africa, the Caribbean, Pacific (ACP), Asia and Latin America. The total provisional budget is €1 million and up to 80% co-financing (to a maximum of €100,000 per project) is available. The deadline for applications is 30 June 2006. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/call/ind ex_en.html

The Dubai International Award

The Municipality of Dubai and the UN Human Settlements Programme are inviting submissions for the 2006 Dubai International Awards. The Awards aim to highlight and promote 'Best Practice' initiatives which have made outstanding contributions to improving the quality of life in cities and communities around the world. 10 Best Practices will be awarded a prize of US\$30,000, a trophy and a commemorative certificate. Deadline for submissions: 31 January 2006. *Further details at:* <http://www.blpnet.org/awards/awards.htm>

NEWS & POLICY

Agreement on EU Budget for 2007-2013

At the EU summit in Brussels on December 15-16, EU leaders reached agreement on an EU budget of 1.045% of EU GNI (€862 billion) for the period 2007-2013, somewhat less than the 1.06% (€871 billion) proposed by the Luxembourg EU Presidency in June 2005. However, the allocation to the Structural Funds has been increased slightly on what was proposed in June, up from €306.4 billion to €308 billion. Most of this additional €1.6 billion will go to the so-called, "Phasing in" regions, which includes the BMW region in Ireland. 81.9% of the total Structural Funds budget (€252 billion) will be allocated to the Convergence Objective, 15.7% (€48.4 billion) to the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (for which Ireland is eligible), of which 21.4% (€10,368 billion, up from €9.5 billion under the Luxembourg EU Presidency proposal) will go to the "Phasing in" regions, and 2.4% (€7.5 billion) to the Territorial Co-operation Objective (current Interreg). Member State allocations will be based on criteria such as GDP and unemployment levels. However, it is expected that Ireland will receive around €800 million (c. €3.5 billion for 2000-2006). €200 million will also be allocated for the PEACE Programme for 2007-2013.

The new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) will have a budget of €69.25 billion for 2007-2013, somewhat less than the €74 billion proposed in June and considerably less than the €88 billion originally proposed by the Commission. However, a reduction in Ireland's rural development allocation is somewhat offset by a special ringfenced allocation of €500 million. Ireland's overall allocation will be around €1.9 billion (c. €2.25 billion for 2000-2006). Member States will also have the option of further increasing their rural development budget by increasing the rate of modulation, up to a maximum of 20%. Other aspects of the new budgetary agreement include, an increase in funding for research of up to 75% by 2013 and the establishment of a new €500 million Globalisation Adjustment Fund. Finally, it was agreed that there would be "a full, wide ranging review" covering all aspects of EU spending, including the CAP, in 2008/9. Further details at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/FinanciaIPerspective16Dec.pdf> for background see: <http://www.iro.ie/publications.html>

UK Vision for Major Reform of CAP

On 2 December, the UK government presented 'A Vision for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)', which proposes a major overhaul of the CAP and a shift to a new sustainable model of European agriculture within the next 10-15 years. The report was jointly prepared by the UK's Treasury and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and was made public in advance of the presentation by the UK EU Presidency of its proposals for the EU's Financial Perspective for 2007-2013. The report highlights the financial costs of the CAP, as well as the social and environmental costs. It refers to successful reforms of agricultural policy in countries outside of the EU, most notably in New Zealand, and puts forward a number of recommendations for future reform of agricultural policy in the EU, including: abolishing all price supports, export refunds and other production and consumption subsidies; integrating agriculture within EU competition policy; and basing all future spending for agriculture on the current Pillar II ('rural development'). The report will most likely form the basis of the UK input into the EU budget review in 2008/2009. Further details at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/capreform/pdf/vision-for-cap.pdf>

Council Adopts Rural Development Guidelines

On November 24, EU Agriculture Ministers reached provisional agreement on the EU strategic guidelines for rural development for the 2007-2013 programming period. The Guidelines will only be formally adopted early next year after the European Parliament has delivered its opinion. Irish MEP Ms Mairead McGuinness (EPP-ED) is the Parliament's rapporteur for this report. The Strategic Guidelines outline the EU-level priorities which national authorities should consider when developing their national rural development strategies. Further details at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/index_en.htm

New Impetus for Renewable Energy

On December 7 the European Commission adopted a detailed action plan designed to increase the use of

energy from biomass (agricultural, forestry and waste materials). The main objectives of this initiative are to reduce Europe's dependence on imported energy, cut greenhouse gas emissions, protect jobs in rural areas and extend the EU's technological leadership in these sectors. The plan includes more than 20 actions aimed at encouraging the use of biomass for transport, heating and electricity generation. For transport, this includes the promotion of "biofuels obligations", whereby suppliers would have to include a minimum proportion of biofuels in the conventional fuel they place on the market. In 2006, the Commission will also bring forward proposals for a possible revision of the biofuels Directive (the EU market share of bio-fuels is currently 0.8%, well off the 2010 EU target of 5.75%). The plan also includes measures to promote investment in research and a campaign to inform farmers and forest owners about energy crops. The Commission will encourage Member States to develop national action plans and to promote biomass through their rural development and cohesion policies. It is estimated that the measures in the action plan will increase the use of biomass to about 150 Mtoe by 2010 (from 69 Mtoe in 2003). The Commission also adopted a report on the different support schemes for electricity from renewable energy sources, which concludes that governments need to step up cooperation and remove administrative and grid barriers to green electricity. Further details on both documents at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/res/biomass_action_plan/green_electricity_en.htm

New Rules on "Green" Vehicles for Public Authorities

The European Commission published a proposal on 21 December for a new Directive which will require public authorities to allocate 25% of their annual vehicle procurement budget to clean vehicles. The clean vehicles Directive will impose strict standards for the type of fuel or engine used by 25% of vehicles weighing more than 3.5 tonnes, when bought by public bodies, including governments, regional and local authorities and EU institutions. This includes buses and most utility vehicles, such as rubbish collection vans, etc.. The key objective of the Directive is to boost the market for "Green" vehicles by stimulating demand. For a large vehicle to meet the necessary environmental standards, it will have to use an "alternative" fuel,

such as biofuels or hydrogen, or alternatively be an electric or hybrid vehicle. Member States will be able to partly offset the costs implied by the Directive through public finances and EU funding. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/05/495&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> This Directive will be covered in more detail in the next EU Policy Review.

Radical Reform of EU Sugar Sector

On November 24, EU agriculture ministers reached political agreement on a wide-ranging reform of the Common Market Organisation (CMO) for sugar. The reform attempts to bring the CMO for sugar, which has remained largely unchanged for almost 40 years, into line with the rest of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy. Key aspects of the reform include: a cut of 36% over 4 years in the guaranteed price for white sugar; compensation for farmers of, on average, 64.2 percent of the price cut through a decoupled payment, linked to environmental and land management obligations and added to the Single Farm Payment; an entitlement to pay farmers an additional coupled payment of 30% of income loss for a temporary period of five years in countries which give up more than half of their production quota; establishment of a voluntary restructuring scheme to provide incentives for less competitive producers to leave the sector; an additional diversification fund for Member States where quota is reduced by a minimum amount; and sugar beet to qualify for set-aside payments when grown as a non-food crop and also to be eligible for energy crop aid of €45 per hectare. *Further information at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/careform/sugar/index_en.htm

Partial Agreement on LIFE+ (2007-2013)

On December 2, EU environment ministers reached a partial agreement on LIFE+ (2007-2013), the new funding instrument for the environment. The "partial" nature of this agreement is due to the fact that the budgetary aspects had been excluded pending the outcome of the discussions on the Financial Perspective 2007-2013. LIFE+ will support best practice or demonstration measures to support nature and biodiversity objectives, such as urgent conservation measures for

protected species and innovative or demonstration measures to support the implementation and development of Community environmental policy. It is expected that the Council will adopt the text as a common position early in the New Year. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/news/futureoflife.htm>

Consultation on Urban Dimension of Structural Funds

On December 8, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the contribution of cities to EU cohesion policy. The results of the consultation will feed into a formal Commission Communication and will also be taken into account in drafting the final version of the Community Strategic Guidelines on future EU cohesion policy. The consultation document contains a series of concrete suggestions in areas the Commission is keen to see reflected in future programmes. This includes: making public transport more affordable and linking different transport modes; guaranteeing access to services in run down urban areas; investment in the renovation of public areas; investment in complying with EU environment legislation; investment in cultural centres; promoting cooperation between local partners, including businesses, universities, training centres, etc.; and implementing measures to integrate immigrants, notably through language training. The Commission will organise a conference in March 2006, in association with the Parliament and the EU's Committee of the Regions to draw conclusions from the consultation. Interested parties are invited to submit comments before 17 February 2006. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/consultation/index_en.htm

Consultation on Biodiversity

On 12 December 2005, the European Commission launched an 8-week Internet consultation on the measures the EU could adopt to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and restore biodiversity in the longer-term. The consultation suggests a number of key challenges and 'delivery measures' to 2010 and beyond, such as safeguarding priority sites and species; conserving and restoring biodiversity in the wider countryside and marine environment outside of protected areas; reconciling territorial development with biodiversity; supporting biodiversity adaptation to climate change; reducing the impact of

invasive alien species; and integrating biodiversity concerns into policy-making. The results of the consultation will be taken into account in finalising a Communication designed to address commitments made by the EU Heads of State and Government on biodiversity. The general public and experts are invited to submit comments before 6 February 2006. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=BIODIVERSITY>

Ireland's GDP at 138% of EU25 average

In 2004 Ireland had a GDP of 138% of the EU25 average, up from 135% in 2003. Ireland was second only to Luxembourg, which had a GDP of 227% of the EU25 average, up from 219% in 2003. Behind Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Belgium, Sweden and the UK all had a GDP of around 120% of the EU25 average. Finland, France and Germany recorded figures of about 110%, while Italy and Spain were at the level of the average. Cyprus, Greece and Slovenia were about 20% below the EU25 average, while Latvia was just below 45% of the EU25 average. *Further details:* <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=STAT/05/164&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

R&D Expenditure in Ireland Still below EU Average

In 2004 R&D intensity (i.e. expenditure as a percentage of GDP) in the EU25 stood at 1.90%, down from 1.92% in 2003. Ireland had a rate of 1.2%, still well below the EU average, but up from 1.16% in 2003. R&D intensity remained significantly lower in the EU25 than in other major economies. In 2003, R&D expenditure was 2.59% in the US and 3.15% in Japan. In 2004, the highest R&D intensities in the Member States were registered in Sweden (3.74%) and Finland (3.51%). The lowest intensities were found in Malta (0.29%) and Cyprus (0.37%). Annual average growth rates in R&D expenditure ranged from +16% in Estonia to -4% in Portugal. Ireland had an average annual growth rate of 7.3%. The EU goal, as set by the Lisbon Strategy, is to achieve an average EU R&D intensity of at least 3% by 2010. *Further details at:* http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2005/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2005_MONTH_1/2/9-06122005-EN-AP.PDF

EVENTS

25 January 2006, Brussels

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) has been asked to issue an Opinion on the European Commission's Communication on "Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate." To assist in this process the CoR is organising a conference on, "Communicating Europe – Going Local", which aims to provide an opportunity for regions and local authorities to present their views and input into the Opinion. Registration before 11 January 2006. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office*

27 January 2006, Turin (Italy)

An international workshop on "Innovative Regional Policies" is being organised by the Piedmont Region, in cooperation with the IANIS+ project, funded under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6). The event is dedicated to the discussion of how experiences derived from Regional Innovative Actions Programmes (RIAPs) can contribute to regional policies and projects. The workshop will focus on information and communication technologies (ICT) and local development, and will be an opportunity to highlight lessons learnt and compare regional experiences. *Further information at:*
<http://www.azioni-innovative.it/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=100>

13-15 Feb 2006, Vienna (Austria)

The International Partnership Fair is being organised by the OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance and the Austrian Co-ordination Unit of the Territorial Employment Pacts. The fair will provide opportunities to meet, exchange and build new co-operation relationships with local partnerships from the EU, America and Asia Pacific. The Fair will also include discussion groups on core themes for partnerships. *Further details at:*
<http://www.partnershipfair.zsi.at/>

2-3 March 2006, Wels (Austria)

The "European Energy Efficiency Conference" is part of the World Sustainable Energy Days 2006, which will also include conferences on "Renewable Heating & Cooling", the "European Pellets Forum" and "Green Electricity for Europe's Regions." With the sharp increase in energy prices and the new European Energy Efficiency Directive, the "European Energy Efficiency Conference" will look at the new opportunities for employment, innovation and economic

growth arising from emerging new markets for energy services. The conference fee is €150 for the "Energy Efficiency Conference", €200 for all conferences. *Further details at:*
<http://www.wsed.at>

PUBLICATIONS

Project Pipeline for 2007-2013

The Local And Regional Authorities (LARA) Interreg Toolbox is an ERDF financed project designed to inform European local and regional authorities about the possibilities of the EU Structural Funds and to support them in developing projects financed by the Structural Funds. The LARA Interreg Toolbox Project guides local and regional authorities through the different phases of project development, from a vague project idea to a final project proposal. The project website contains a database of projects and a partner search facility for future projects. The overall goal of the LARA Toolbox is to create a pipeline of project proposals from the local level for the new funding period. *Further details at:*
<http://www.laratoolbox.net>

New EU Sustainable Development Strategy

EU governments, businesses, NGOs and citizens must come up with new and better ways to "move towards a more sustainable way of life". This is

the key message in the European Commission's review of the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy, which it presented on December 13. The document reiterates the Commission's commitment to sustainable development and sets out concrete actions for the coming years such as developing cleaner cars, cutting greenhouse gases, saving energy and renewing the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme. The Commission will submit a progress report every two years. *Further details at:*

http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/sds2005-2010/index_en.htm

Online Register of Expert Groups

As part of its new initiative on Transparency and Better Regulation, the European Commission has published a register of the expert groups that help it in preparing legislative proposals and policy initiatives. The new register covers formal and informal advisory bodies. It provides information on the nature and tasks of each group, and indicates which department (DG) within the Commission is responsible for overseeing the group. It covers a total of around 1,300 expert groups. However, the exact number varies over time as different groups are created and others are wound up after completing their tasks. *Further details at:*

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat-general/regexp/>

Irish Regions Office
6 Rond-Point Schuman,
B-1040 Brussels
Fax: +32 2 2828475
Website: www.iro.ie

Robert Collins
E: robert.collins@iro.ie
Tel: +32 2 282 8474

Eamon O'Hara
E: eamon.ohara@iro.ie
Tel: +32 2 282 8477

