

# EU News Bulletin

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

## Number 24 – February 2006

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



Irish Regions Office



### FUNDING ..... 1

*Intelligent Energy Europe*

*Town Twinning*

*e-Services*

*Innovative Youth Projects*

*Green Week Schools Competition*

### NEWS & POLICY ..... 2

*Structural Funds allocations 2007-'13*

*New EU strategy to boost biofuels*

*Call for focus on rural village renewal*

*First meeting of new CoR mandate*

*Satisfaction with Ireland's reform prog.*

*New "pact" for EU research*

*EU road safety review*

*Entrepreneurship in education*

*Consultation: social inclusion*

*Consultation: communicating Europe*

### EVENTS ..... 4

*Forum: suburban local authorities*

*Local action on energy & climate*

*Urban action: from vision to action*

*Employment Week 2006*

*Regions as drivers of competitiveness*

### PUBLICATIONS ..... 4

*Portrait of the regions*

*Open Days 2006: website and call for papers*

## FUNDING

### **Intelligent Energy Europe**

The 2006 call for proposals under the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme, the last for the current period (2000-'06), will be published in May 2006. Approximately €55 million will be available to cofinance projects on energy efficiency, renewables, intelligent use of energy in transport, the creation of new local or regional energy agencies, etc. The deadline for applications will be the end of October 2006. A European Info Day will be held in Brussels on 30 May. National Info Days will also be organised. *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/index_en.html)

### **Town Twinning**

The 2006 call for proposals for the Promotion of Active European Citizenship will support citizens' meetings in the framework of town-twinning. Meetings should aim to: raise awareness of the EU and reinforce commitment to European integration; bring EU citizens closer together and increase their sense "Europeaness"; promote active citizen participation in a dialogue on the future of the EU; and create new and strengthen existing links between municipalities in Europe. Total budget: €7,5 million. Grants per project can range from €2,000 to €20,000. The next deadlines for proposals are 3 April and 1 June 2006. *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/townwinning/call/call\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/townwinning/call/call_en.html)

### **e-Services**

The European Commission has published a call for proposals under the eTEN programme, which is designed to help the deployment of e-services in the EU. Funding under this (2006) call aims to support "initial deployment" or

"market validation" in one or more of the following thematic areas: 1. eGovernment; 2. eHealth; 3. eInclusion; 4. eLearning; 5. Trust & Security; and 6. Services supporting SMEs. Funding of up to 50% (or 100% under the additional cost model) is available. Total budget: €45,6 million. Deadline for proposals: 19 May 2006. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/eten>

### **Innovative Youth Projects**

In the framework of the Youth Programme, the European Commission has published a call for proposals for innovative cooperation, training and information projects in the field of non-formal education. Priority themes include: cultural diversity and tolerance; less-favoured regions; innovation in EU citizenship education; and cooperation between local or regional authorities and youth NGOs. Projects must have a clear trans-national dimension and must lead to new or enhanced partnerships. Total budget: €2 million. Funding per project can be between €100,000 and €300,000. 10 to 15 projects will be supported. Deadline for applications: 1 July 2006. *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/call/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/call/index_en.html)

### **Green Week Schools Competition**

This year's Green Week, which will take place in Brussels between 30 May and 2 June 2006, includes the annual Green Week Schools Competition. There are two competition categories: A drawing and painting competition on the theme of biodiversity for children aged 6 to 10 and a short digital video competition on the same theme for children aged 11 to 16. The top three winners in each category will be invited to Brussels during Green Week for the awards ceremony. Deadline for entries: 25 March. *Further details at:* [http://www.greenweek2006.eun.org/www/en/pub/greenweek\\_2006/home.htm](http://www.greenweek2006.eun.org/www/en/pub/greenweek_2006/home.htm)

## NEWS & POLICY

### ***Ireland's Structural Funds Allocation for 2007-2013***

The European Commission has presented an indicative Structural Funds allocation for Ireland for the period 2007 to 2013 of €811 million. This is roughly in line with previous expectations and breaks down as, €419 million for the BMW region, €260 million for the Southern & Eastern Region, €74 million for Territorial Cooperation (€63 million for cross-border cooperation and €11 million for transnational cooperation) and a further €58 million for the PEACE programme. In relation to the BMW region, the allocation is to be frontloaded, starting at €143 million in year 1 (2007) and dropping to €13 million in years 5, 6 and 7. Allocations to the other programmes will be spread evenly throughout the 7-year period. These figures are provisional and are intended as a guide to assist in the programming process, which is now underway. The final figures will only be confirmed once the Regulations governing the Structural Funds are adopted, probably in July. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

### ***New EU Strategy to Boost Biofuels***

On February 8, the European Commission adopted a new EU Strategy for Biofuels, with a range of potential market-based, legislative and research measures to boost production of fuels from agricultural raw materials. The Biofuels Strategy is aimed at giving new momentum to the 2003 EU Biofuels Directive, which set indicative targets (2% market share for biofuels in the overall transport fuel supply by 2005 and 5.75% by 2010) for the production of biofuels from biomass feedstocks. At present, Member States are not on course to achieve these targets and, therefore, following up on its December 2005 Biomass Action Plan, the Commission is now taking steps to ensure the targets are met. The Strategy proposes measures in a number of key areas, including: a revision of the Biofuels Directive in 2006, which might include mandatory biofuel targets for Member States; expanding feedstock supplies (including, making sugar production for bioethanol eligible for CAP support schemes; processing cereal intervention stocks; information campaign for farmers and forest owners; a forestry

action plan); the setting up of an ad hoc group to consider the production of biomass and biofuels in national rural development programmes; promotion of second-generation biofuels (e.g. from wood); and more research into the 'bio-refinery' concept and further development of an industry-led "biofuel technology platform." *Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/biomass/biofuel/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/biomass/biofuel/index_en.htm)*

### ***EP Calls for Focus on Rural Village Renewal***

At its plenary session in Strasbourg on February 13-16, the European Parliament adopted a report by its Agriculture Committee on the EU's Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development for 2007-2013. The report, which was prepared by Irish MEP Mairead McGuinness, proposes a number of amendments to the original Commission proposal (July 2005). In particular, it calls for a greater emphasis on village renewal and development, arguing that, "due to its importance, village renewal and development activities should be listed as a key action. Providing local services in the village will keep the area vibrant and keep families living in rural areas." Other amendments include, proposals for more measures for young farmers and the modernisation of agriculture, and more support for the "conservation and upgrading of the natural and cultural heritage." Following provisional agreement on the Community Strategic Guidelines by the Council in November (the Council can only formally adopt the guidelines now that the Parliament has delivered its opinion) most Member States already begun drawing up their national rural development strategies for 2007-2013. In Ireland, a consultation on the national strategy is already underway. These national strategies will have to be agreed with the European Commission in the coming months with a view to having programmes in place for January 2007. *Further details at: [http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?PROG=REPORT&L=EN&SORT\\_ORDE R=D&S\\_REF A=%25&LEG\\_ID=6&AUT HOR\\_ID=28115](http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?PROG=REPORT&L=EN&SORT_ORDE R=D&S_REF A=%25&LEG_ID=6&AUT HOR_ID=28115)*

### ***First Meeting of New CoR Mandate***

The first plenary session of the new Committee of the Regions (CoR) mandate (2006-2010) took place in Brussels on February 16-17. The highlight of the meeting was the election of Mr Michel Delebarre (FR/PES) as the

new CoR President. Mr. Delebarre is mayor of the French City of Dunkirk. The different political groups represented in the CoR also elected new group chairs. Irish CoR member, Cllr Maria Corrigan (Dublin Region - Dun Laoghaire Rathdown) is the new Chair of the Union for Europe of the Nations-European Alliance group. Cllr Corrigan will also join her Irish colleagues, Cllr Seamus Murray (Mid-East Region and head of the Irish Delegation) and Cllr Paul O'Donoghue (South-West Region) on the CoR Bureau (main coordinating committee of the CoR). Cllr Constance Hanniffy (Midland Region) is the new First Vice-President of the Commission for Economic & Social Policy (ECOS). Cllr Hanniffy will take over the Presidency of ECOS from 2008-2010. The other Irish members have been appointed to the following Commissions: Sustainable Development (DEVE) - Cllrs Seamus Murray, Michael Fitzgerald and Patrick McGowan; Economic and Social Policy (ECOS) - Cllrs Constance Hanniffy, Declan McDonnell and Maria Corrigan; Territorial Cohesion (COTER) - Cllrs Cathal Crowe, Patrick McGowan, and Denis Landy; Education & Culture (EDUC) - Cllrs Cathal Crowe, Paul O'Donoghue and Seamus Murray; Constitutional Affairs (CONST) - Cllrs Maria Corrigan, Constance Hanniffy and Declan McDonnell; External Relations (RELEX) - Cllrs Denis Landy, Paul O'Donoghue, Michael Fitzgerald. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

### ***Satisfaction with Ireland's Reform Programme***

On January 25, the European Commission adopted an assessment of the National Reform Programmes (NRP) for Growth and Jobs. The Commission indicated its broad satisfaction with the Irish NRP. According to the Commission, the programme's strengths include its approach to sustaining macro-economic stability and measures to enhance the quality of industrial development. Other positives include the emphasis on the need to promote greater labour market participation and to address skills development. The extensive consultations on the NRP and the existing consensus on many of its policies are also identified as strength. However, this would seem to contradict the recent Committee of the Regions study which highlighted low levels of consultation on the NRP with local and regional levels in Ireland (see EU news Bulletin no. 22). The Commission's

Progress Report encourages the Irish authorities to develop more active measures to ensure policies on R&D and on science and innovation investment are sufficiently robust to reach the ambitious targets set. It also advocates more action on pension coverage. The NRP covers a three-year period and is part of a wider EU initiative to boost jobs and growth. The Commission will now work with Member States to enhance the above mutual learning process, to support their efforts to implement their NRPs and to discuss how programmes can be strengthened. For further details see [http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/annual-report\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/annual-report_en.htm)

### **New “Pact” for EU Research**

In its annual report on the Lisbon Strategy, presented on January 25, the European Commission proposed a new EU 'Pact for R&D' and new rules aimed at promoting entrepreneurship. The Commission report is intended to feed into discussions at the EU summit on 24 March, which will include the annual review of the Lisbon Strategy. The Report identifies four key priorities for 2006. Firstly, a 'Pact', setting a common EU target for R&D spending. Given that the existing target of 3% of GDP by 2010 is unlikely to be met, the Commission wants Member States to fix a new, more realistic target. Secondly, the Commission wants Member States to draw up rules by 2007 to make it easier and cheaper to set up a business. Thirdly, EU leaders will be asked to consider the challenge posed by globalisation and increased competition, notably from Asia. Energy policy is the final priority for 2006. The Commission is expected to push for a reaffirmed commitment to its renewable energy targets (12% of all energy used by 2010) and its action plan on energy efficiency. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index_en.htm)

### **EU Road Safety Review**

The European Commission is expected to publish its mid-term review of the EU's road safety action programme on February 22, ten days before an informal Council of Ministers focusing on road safety issues (March 2-3). The EU's road safety action programme, introduced in 2003, aims to halve the number of deaths on Europe's roads between 2001 (50,000 fatalities) and 2010, i.e. to save 25,000 lives a year. However, an assessment of results

shows that much remains to be done to meet the targets set for 2010, with the number of fatalities in 2004 still as high as 43,500. The review will contain an evaluation of the contrasting performances of the Member States (fatalities in the UK and Sweden are three to four times lower than rates in Latvia and Poland) and, worryingly, it will also show that fatalities continue to rise in a number of Member States, including Ireland. To help counter this, the European Commission is currently working on three legislative proposals, which should be tabled in the course of 2006: 1. A proposal for a Directive on the safety of road infrastructure; 2. A proposal for a Directive on the use of headlights during daylight hours; and 3. A proposal for a Directive on cross-border application of motoring inspections and penalties. The contribution of infrastructure to safety will be a central theme of the Council of Ministers meeting in March. Ministers are also expected to approve a new European road safety campaign. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/roadsafety/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/roadsafety/index_en.htm)

### **Entrepreneurship in Schools and Universities**

On February 13, the European Commission outlined a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the role of education in creating a more entrepreneurial culture in Europe. This initiative forms part of the EU's Lisbon partnership for Growth and Jobs and seeks to stimulate greater awareness among young people of entrepreneurship, and to help them to develop basic entrepreneurial skills. The Commission's recommendations include: greater cooperation at national and regional level, leading to a strategy with clear objectives and covering all stages of education; entrepreneurship to be included in schools curricula, at all levels; practical support and incentives to encourage take-up of entrepreneurship programmes in schools; greater emphasis on training teachers and raising the awareness of heads of schools; cooperation between educational establishments and the local community, especially businesses; fostering entrepreneurship in higher education; and greater use of student mini-companies in schools (around 20% of participants in mini-companies in secondary school go on to create their own business). Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support\\_measures/training\\_education/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/training_education/index.htm)

### **Consultation: Social Inclusion**

On February 8, the European Commission launched a consultation on “action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market”. The level of individuals excluded from the labour market has remained unchanged for as long as European statistics have existed: 16% of the EU population (72 million people) is still at risk of “financial poverty.” The Commission therefore calls for an “active inclusion” approach, a comprehensive policy mix combining three elements: “a link to the labour market through job opportunities or vocational training”; “income support at a level that is sufficient for people to have a dignified life”; and “better access to services that help remove some of the hurdles to entering mainstream society (e.g. counselling, child-care, lifelong learning, etc.)”. The Commission poses the question: is there a need for further action at EU level, and if there is, what are the most useful ways by which the EU could complement and support action at national level? The consultation is open to all interested parties. Deadline for submissions: 16 April 2006. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/consultation\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/consultation_en.html)

### **Consultation: Communicating with EU Citizens**

On February 1, the European Commission adopted a White Paper on a European Communication Policy, which puts forward proposals for how the EU can better communicate with its citizens. The main purpose of the White Paper is to mobilise all the key actors (EU institutions and bodies, the Member States, regional and local authorities, political parties and civil society). It proposes five areas where joint action should be taken; defining common principles for communication on European issues; empowering citizens; working with the media and new technologies; understanding public opinion; and doing the job together. A consultation on the White Paper will run for six months, until July 2006. At the end of this period, the Commission will draw conclusions with a view to proposing a plan of action for each working area. European citizens and all interested parties are invited to submit views. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/communication\\_white\\_paper/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/communication_white_paper/index_en.htm)

## EVENTS

### 2-4 March 2006, Nanterre (F)

The “World forum for suburban local authorities: Outlying towns analyse their metropolises” is being organised by the network, *Outlying Towns and Participatory Democracy*. The Forum aims to facilitate an exchange between suburban local authorities on future challenges. Sub-themes include: a city that belongs to everyone, regional development, the right to housing, public services, and sustainable development and social inclusion. Further details at: [http://www.nanterre.fr/falp/rubrique.php3?id\\_rubrique=2&lang=en](http://www.nanterre.fr/falp/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=2&lang=en)

### 23-24 March 2006, Delft (Netherlands)

The EU network, Energy-Cities is organizing the conference, ‘Facing the challenge of energy and climate change - Local actors working together more effectively.’ The conference will look at: how to build “sustainable energy communities” at local level; how to set up “local intelligent energy forums; and how to make local initiatives more visible. The emphasis will be on the exchanges of experience and innovation. Further detail at: <http://www.energie-cities.org/conference>

### 30-31 March 2006, Graz (A) and Maribor (SLO)

The German-Austrian URBAN network, in cooperation with the cities of Graz (Austria) and Maribor (Slovenia), and with the support of the URBACT programme, are organising a European City Conference entitled ‘Urban action: From vision to action.’ The conference will specifically focus on preparations and concepts for urban actions in the new Structural Funds period 2007-13. EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner, MEPs and representatives from the Austrian EU Presidency and the Member States will participate. Further details at: [http://www.deutscher-verband.org/seiten/urban-netzwerk/urban-action.asp#mrk\\_english](http://www.deutscher-verband.org/seiten/urban-netzwerk/urban-action.asp#mrk_english)

### 16-18 May 2006, Brussels

The theme for this year’s Employment Week is, ‘Working Together for Growth and Jobs.’ Organised by the European Commission, this annual event brings together local and regional bodies, businesses, employment services, research agencies, NGOs and social partners from across Europe for 2 ½ days of networking, discussion and exchange on employment issues. Topics for the 2006 event include: the Lisbon strategy - how well is it working; developing skills for employability in Europe; Europe in the global economy; and employability through diversity. Further details at: <http://www.employmentweek.com/index.asp>

### 18-19 May 2006, Noord-Brabant (Netherlands)

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is organising an international seminar and partnership fair on the theme, “Regions as the Driving Forces of European Competitiveness: from Theory to Practice.” The seminar will address the following questions: What are the elements that determine the attractiveness of a region? How can they be measured? What are the successful examples? What tools are used? What is the role of research and innovation? The deadline for registration is 31 March 2006. Further details at: <http://www.a-e-r.org/events/regional-policies-committee/2006/innovationnb/>

## PUBLICATIONS

### Portrait of the Regions Online

Eurostat, the EU’s statistical office, has launched a new website called, “Portrait of the Regions”. The new site presents profiles of the EU regions under the headings of geography and history, population, employment, the economy, environment, education, health and culture. The site can be navigated by clicking on the map or selecting the name of the region. Further details at: [http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/pls/portal/url/page/SHARED/PER\\_GENSTA](http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/pls/portal/url/page/SHARED/PER_GENSTA)

### Open Days 2006: Website and Call for Papers

On February 16, the European Commission’s Regional Policy Directorate launched the conference website and a call for papers for “OPEN DAYS 2006 - European Week of Regions and Cities”. This year’s event will take place between 9-13 October and some 3,000 regional policy actors from across Europe are expected to attend. The theme for 2006 is, ‘Investing in Europe’s Regions and Cities: Public and Private Partners for Growth and Jobs.’ Through the call for papers, the Commission plans to select about 100 speakers for the series of 35 workshops included in the OPEN DAYS 2006 programme. The workshops will address the following subjects: (A) Investing in competitive enterprises and high quality jobs; (B) Fostering regional innovation; (C) Investing in the sustainable use of resources and environmental technologies; (D) Supporting public-private partnerships for larger infrastructure projects; and (E) Cutting red tape: Managing the Structural Funds between 2007 and 2013. The deadline for proposals is 6 March 2006. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/conferences/od2006/index.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/conferences/od2006/index.cfm)

**Irish Regions Office**  
6 Rond-Point Schuman,  
B-1040 Brussels  
Fax: +32 2 2828475  
Website: [www.iro.ie](http://www.iro.ie)

Robert Collins  
E: [robert.collins@iro.ie](mailto:robert.collins@iro.ie)  
Tel: +32 2 282 8474

Eamon O’Hara  
E: [eamon.ohara@iro.ie](mailto:eamon.ohara@iro.ie)  
Tel: +32 2 282 8477