

# EU News Bulletin

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

## Number 26 – April 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*

*Sustainable dev & renewable energy*

*Innovation and information society*

*Pilot citizens projects*

*eLearning*

*Environmental protection*

*Cooperation of innovation actors*

*Water management award*

## NEWS & POLICY ..... 2

*Agreement on EU budget 2007-2013*

*New Europe for citizens programme*

*Ireland flouts renewable electricity law*

*€5m for disaster-preparedness actions*

*Consultation: road safety infrastructure*

*Consultation: EU energy strategy*

*2008 – year of intercultural dialogue*

*Sugar factories close across the EU*

*European citizen panels*

*Capitals of Culture 2010*

## EVENTS ..... 4

*Waste mgt, Regional Assemblies  
annual conferences, IEE info days, e-  
Procurement, Innovating through the  
Structural Funds.*

## PUBLICATIONS ..... 4

*Handbook on SEA*

## NETWORKS ..... 4

## FUNDING

### **Intelligent Energy Europe**

The 2006 call for proposals under the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme will be published in May. This call will be open until October 2006 and during this time interested parties will be able to apply for financial support for EU projects and one-off events in the area of renewables, energy efficiency, and for the establishment of local/regional energy agencies. Around €50 million will be available for this final call under the current programme. There will be a special IEE information event in Brussels on 30-31 May, and in Ireland on 7-8 June (see page 4). *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/call\\_for\\_proposals/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/call_for_proposals/index_en.htm)

### **Sustainable Development & Renewable Energy**

A call for sub-projects has been launched under the EnergyRegio project, an Interreg IIC Regional Framework Operation (RFO) involving the BMW Region in Ireland and the regions of Saxony (Germany), Smaland and Öarna (Sweden), Emilia-Romagna (Italy) and Crete (Greece). The five regions are working together to promote projects that facilitate sustainable development and increase awareness of renewable energy and energy efficiency. The current call aims to support sub-projects from within the partner regions that address this overall objective. Deadline for proposals: 5 May 2006. *Further details at:* <http://www.energycyregio.net/>

### **Innovation and Information Society**

A call for sub-projects has been launched under the ESTIIC ("Fostering Competitiveness through Innovation Technology and Information Society")

project. ESTIIC is an Interreg IIC Regional Framework Operation (RFO) involving the Southern and Eastern Region in Ireland and the regions of Asturias, Cantabria (Spain) and Nordrhein-Westfalen (Germany). This call aims to support a series of sub-projects to be developed by agents within the partner regions in the fields of innovation and information society. Total budget: €4.4 million. Deadline for applications: 16 May 2006. *Further details at:* <http://www.estiic.org/estiic/index.html> or contact Ronan Gingles at: [rgingles@sereqassembly.ie](mailto:rgingles@sereqassembly.ie)

### **Pilot Citizens' Projects**

The European Commission has published a call for proposals for pilot citizens' projects aimed at promoting active European citizenship. This call will support projects in two categories: 1: Citizens' panels: aimed at encouraging a bottom up approach to allow citizens to express their views and to provide a model for stimulating active interaction between citizens of the EU (see page 3); 2: Capacity building for active European citizenship: aimed at empowering a group of active European citizens, such as community leaders and representatives, to transmit their commitment to active European citizenship. Total budget: €500,000, with co-financing of up to 50%. Deadline for applications: 31 May 2006. *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education/culture/activecitizenship/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education/culture/activecitizenship/index_en.htm)

### **eLearning**

The European Commission has published the 2006 call for proposals under the eLearning Programme. This call covers four areas of intervention: promoting digital literacy; eTwinning of schools in Europe and promotion of teachers' training; European virtual campuses; and transversal actions. It focuses in particular on the promotion, dissemination and exploitation of

results, best practices and achievements emerging from the use of ICT for education, training and lifelong learning in Europe. Total budget: €5.5 million, with co-funding of up to 80%. Deadline for applications: 19 May 2006 (11 May 2006 for eTwinning actions). Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/calls\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/calls_en.html)

### **Environmental Protection**

The European Commission has published a call for proposals to identify actions in the area of environmental protection that might be eligible for financial support. Eligible areas include: environmental communications and awareness raising on climate change; biodiversity; raising awareness within Europe's tourism sector of the Natura 2000 network; promotion of sustainable forest management for bio-energy; support for peer review of national sustainable development strategies; preparation of CIP funding networks; and promoting the role of the individual in environmental protection. Total budget: €2,360,000. Deadline for applications: 19 May 2006. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/intro\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/intro_en.htm)

### **Cooperation between Innovation Actors**

The European Commission published a call for proposals under the programme, "Structuring the European Research Area". This call (FP6-2006-INNOV-10, Strands 2,3,4) aims to support new forms of cooperation between different sub-national or national bodies in order to further promote the development and implementation of good practice in support of entrepreneurial innovation. Possible thematic areas for cooperation include: innovation policy actions in support of the preparation of strategic innovation plans; collaboration between research organisations and enterprises; innovation networking and clusters; innovative start-ups; promotion and protection of intellectual property rights; technology transfer and absorption; innovation financing; innovation management; and the evaluation of innovation programmes. Deadline for proposals: 28 June 2006. Further information at: [http://fp6.cordis.europa.eu/int/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6ActivityCallsPage&ID\\_ACTIVITY=577](http://fp6.cordis.europa.eu/int/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6ActivityCallsPage&ID_ACTIVITY=577)

### **Water Management Award**

The Environment Minister of Lower Saxony, under the patronage of Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for the Environment, has launched the European award, "Our Waters – cost-effective measures to implement the water framework directive". The aim of the award is to highlight and disseminate best practices in improving local water quality. The best projects, based on ecological, economic and social criteria, will receive an award. The closing date for entries is 30th March 2007. Further details at: [www.ourwaters.net](http://www.ourwaters.net)

## **NEWS & POLICY**

### **Agreement on EU budget 2007-2013**

On April 4 the European Parliament and the Austrian EU Presidency reached a compromise on the EU budget for the period 2007-2013. The final agreement is for a budget of €866.4bn, which is €4bn more than the amount agreed by EU leaders in December 2005. The Parliament had threatened to block the December 2005 deal unless their demand for an increase in the budget was met. The additional €4bn is to be divided between a number of measures, including an extra €300m for the interregional and transnational strands of the new Territorial Cooperation Objective, an extra €400m for the new Competitiveness & Innovation Programme (CIP), an extra €300m for the new Research Programme and an extra €800m for Lifelong Learning. A range of programmes on health and consumer protection, youth and culture will also receive an additional €500m. The EU Presidency and the Parliament also agreed to increase European Investment Bank funds by €2.5bn to provide loans for research and development and SMEs. Member States are expected to approve the agreement with the Parliament in the next few weeks while MEPs should endorse the package at the May plenary session in Strasbourg. This will clear the way for the final adoption of EU Regulations concerning a wide range of funding programmes and initiatives for 2007-2013. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/financial\\_perspective/next\\_steps/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/financial_perspective/next_steps/index_en.htm)

### **New Europe for Citizens Programme**

On 5 April, the European Parliament gave its approval to a proposal to set up a 'citizenship' programme for the period 2007-2013. Over the next seven years the new Europe for Citizens programme will receive €235 million from the EU budget to finance four actions, namely: town-twinning (including twinning of sports clubs, a new dimension); transnational and cross-sectoral citizens' projects; support for think-tanks and civil society bodies at European level; and high-profile events organised by or with the European Commission. A fifth action, an active European remembrance, was added by the Parliament for projects to commemorate victims of deportations and widescale Nazi and Stalinist extermination programmes. Further information at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/activecitizenship/new\\_programme\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/activecitizenship/new_programme_en.htm)

### **Ireland Flouts Law on Renewable Electricity**

On April 4, the European Commission launched legal proceedings against eight countries, including Ireland, who have failed to meet the deadline of October 2003 for taking the necessary measures to transpose Community legislation on renewable electricity. Five Member States (Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Cyprus and Greece) have taken insufficient measures to enable an adequate promotion of renewable energies. The Directive sets a target of 21% for the share of electricity from renewable energy sources in total European electricity consumption by 2010 – the current share stands at around 14%. Member States are required to set national targets and to put in place the appropriate measures to achieve the European target. The Commission has initiated the first stage of the infringement procedure with a letter of formal notice. The Member States concerned can subsequently submit their observations to the Commission within two months. Increasing the use of renewable energy is now a high priority for the Commission and is a key aspect of the recently published Green Paper on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy. Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index_en.htm)

## €5m for Disaster-Preparedness Actions

On 30 March, the European Commission approved a budget of up to €5 million to help fund actions to be developed in 2006 to implement the Community mechanism for civil protection. The measures concerned aim to ensure better protection of individuals, the environment and goods and cultural heritage in major emergency situations: natural, technological, radiological or environmental disasters, including accidental marine pollution. Actions to be financed during 2006 will mainly include: training; exercises; mobilisation of experts in case of disaster; the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS); and sharing experiences and the exchange of experts. The Commission has confirmed that the actions will be open to the public and that calls for tenders will be published shortly. The global sum allocated to the programme this year is €5,010,000. This will be divided as: €2,060,000 for exercises, €2,000,000 for training courses, €300,000 for implementation and development of CECIS, €300,000 for the exchange of experts, €200,000 for the mobilisation of experts and €150,000 for conferences on lessons learnt. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/civil/>

## Consultation on Road Safety Infrastructure

The European Commission has launched a consultation on road safety infrastructure. This will feed into the preparation of a new Directive on the safety of road infrastructure to be presented during 2006. Through this new Directive, the Commission aims to ensure that safety is considered in its own right in the context of work on road infrastructure, independent from economic and environmental analyses. The new Directive will only focus at this stage on motorways making up the trans-European transport network. The Commission does not intend to impose detailed legislation, preferring to table guidelines on infrastructure safety, leaving the details to the Member States (national legislation will nevertheless need to be adapted). Interested parties are invited to respond to the consultation paper before 19 May at the latest. *Further details at:* [www.europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/library/consultations/consultation\\_paper\\_infrastr\\_safety\\_20060411.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/library/consultations/consultation_paper_infrastr_safety_20060411.pdf)

## Consultation on EU Energy Strategy

The European Commission has published a Green Paper on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy as a consultation document designed to stimulate ideas on what should be done to deal with practical challenges and problems in this area. This consultation will be open for 6 months, until 24 September 2006. On the basis of the response to the Green Paper, the Commission will then develop more concrete ideas on a number of energy issues. *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index_en.htm)

## 2008 – European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

The European Commission has announced proposals to declare 2008 the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. In light of increased migratory flows and the enlargement of the EU, it is expected that this designation will provide opportunities to promote diversity and address social and community cohesion amongst local groups and populations. Funding will be available to support projects on both a national and pan-European level. It is anticipated that projects on a local and/or regional scale, which can expect to receive EU co-financing for 50% of their costs, will inform actions at a national level. The European Commission has designated 2007 as 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.' *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/eyeo/ey\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/eyeo/ey_en.htm)

## Sugar Factories Close Across EU

Twelve EU countries have announced the closure of sugar factories as a direct result of the EU's sugar sector reform, which comes into force on 1 July 2006. Further announcements are also expected in the coming weeks. Ireland will discontinue sugar production, with Greencore having decided to close its last remaining factory in Mallow. Danish sugar producer Danisco has announced the closure of factories in Assens (Denmark), Köpingrebo (Sweden) and Salo (Finland) after 2006. It also has plans to give up part of its production quota in Sweden and Finland. It expects to keep its two factories in Lithuania and

to buy a new quota for its Anklam plant in Germany. In Italy, only six out of the 19 sugar factories are due to stay in production. In Lithuania, the biggest factory, Jelgavas Cukurfabrika, will be closed, with a decision for the last remaining plant expected by the end of 2006. The other Member States where closures have been announced are Poland (three plants), Germany (two NordZucker plants), Austria (Agrana), Belgium (Iscal Sugar), Spain (Azucarera Ebro) and Slovakia. In the Netherlands, the CSM group (40% of the Dutch sugar market) is looking into the sale of its sugar division whilst in Slovenia the only plant, Tovarna Sladkorja Ormoz (TSO), will be converted into a bioethanol plant after 2007. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

## European Citizen Panels

On May 10, the Committee of the Regions, the Network of European Foundations for Innovative Cooperation, the Foundation for Future Generations, AEIDL and the organisers of regional citizens' panels across the EU will officially launch the, "European Citizen's Panel initiative, on the roles for rural areas in tomorrow's Europe." This pilot initiative combines an *innovative participative process* addressing the gap between citizens and those they elect, and an *issue of European importance*: the roles for rural areas in tomorrow's Europe. The project aims to create around ten regional panels made up of "ordinary citizens." Each panel will receive information through experts and resource people and will formulate proposals which will be sent to European institutions and diffused widely throughout the civil society. *Further details (from April 24) at:* <http://www.citizenpanel.org/>

## Capitals of Culture 2010

On April 11, the selection panel set up to assess the European Capitals of Culture 2010 applications recommended that Essen (Germany), Pécs (Hungary) and Istanbul (Turkey) be designated as "Capitals of Culture" for 2010. The selection panel included representatives of the Commission, the Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions, which was represented by Cllr. Seamus Murray (Irish member). The final decision will be taken by the Culture Council in the second half of 2006, under the Finnish EU Presidency. *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/other\\_actions/cap\\_europ/cap\\_eu\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/other_actions/cap_europ/cap_eu_en.html)

## EVENTS

### 17-20 May 2006, Dublin

The Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling, in association with Dublin City Council, is organising an international conference to share experiences in planning and funding waste management. The conference will present ideas and strategies from across Europe that will contribute to future waste management policy development. It will also cover issues such as funding instruments for waste management; strategies and policies arising from EU Directives; and the development of strategic waste management policies. *Further details:* <https://ssl.iqsawmanagement.ie/wasteman/wasteman.htm>

### 26 May 2006, Naas (Ireland)

This year's annual conference of the Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly will address the theme, "Delivering Community and Local Development: The Case for Structural Reform." Speakers include Mr Éamon O'Cuiv, T.D., Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Conference Fee: €150 (discounts for community and voluntary groups). *Further details from: The Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly, Tel: +353 51 860700, E-mail: [bwhite@seregassembly.ie](mailto:bwhite@seregassembly.ie)*

### 30 May 2006, Brussels

The Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) European Conference and Info Day 2006 "Converting Policy to Action" will take place in Brussels on 30 May 2006. This event will provide advice on how to apply for IEE funding, present ongoing projects, outline the future perspectives of the programme, and facilitate networking of participants. *Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/events/infodays\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/events/infodays_en.htm)*

A national Info Day in Ireland is provisionally planned for 7-8 June 2006. *Contact: Matthew Kennedy. E-mail: [matthew.kennedy@sei.ie](mailto:matthew.kennedy@sei.ie), Tel: +353 1 8082070*

### 7-8 June 2006, Bilbao (Spain)

The European Institute of Public Administration - Centre for the Regions) and the Basque Government are organizing a seminar on "International e-Public Procurement." The seminar will focus specifically on the European Commission's legislative framework for e-procurement, which enters into force in 2006 and which will require public procurement entities in Europe, including local and regional authorities, to perform procurement procedures electronically. The two-day seminar will cover practical aspects of the legislation and provide examples of good practice. *Further details at: <http://www.eipa.nl/index.asp?option=products&section=M&id=1684&fct=Open>*

### 8 June 2006, Roscommon (Ireland)

The BMW Regional Assembly annual conference 2006 will focus on the theme, "Social Inclusion and Equality: A Fairer Economy and Society." The conference will be addressed by Mr Seamus Brennan, TD, Minister for Social Affairs, as well as by other key speakers on social partnership, the National Anti Poverty Strategy, equality, and social inclusion in local government & local development. *Further details from: Fiona Flynn, BMW Regional Assembly, tel: +353 (0)94 9862970, Email: [fflynn@bmwassembly.ie](mailto:fflynn@bmwassembly.ie)*

### 12-13 June 2006, Brussels

The Directorate General for Regional Policy is organising a series of conferences between now and mid-2007 under the general heading 'Regions for Economic Change'. The events are designed to assist regional policy practitioners in learning about the opportunities provided by the Structural Funds and to examine the different ways in which they can contribute to the Lisbon process. There will be three events in the series, leading up to the fourth Cohesion Forum, which takes place in June 2007. The first event, 'Innovating through the Structural Funds' will take place on 12-13 June in Brussels. *Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/conferences/innovating\\_june06/home\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/conferences/innovating_june06/home_en.cfm)*

## PUBLICATIONS

### Handbook on Strategic Environmental Assessment

On 4 April 2006, the European Commission published a handbook on how to comply with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive in developing the Structural Fund programmes 2007-'13. The handbook, developed by the "Greening Regional Development Programmes" network, an Interreg III C partnership, can also be used for the SEA of other development programmes. The SEA Directive came into force on 21 July 2004 and, for the first time, may now apply to new Operational Programmes. *Further details at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/working/doc/sea\\_handbook\\_final\\_foreword.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/doc/sea_handbook_final_foreword.pdf)*

## NETWORKS

### Europe INNOVA

Launched in October 2005 by DG Enterprise and Industry, Europe INNOVA brings together over 300 partners from 23 Member States in a family of sectoral networks, projects and horizontal support services. Europe INNOVA examines the sectoral barriers and challenges for innovation, maps the most competitive and innovative sub-sectors, identifies the hot spots for new company and employment creation, and highlights the interfaces between sectors that show promise of innovation potential through collaboration or the application of new technologies. *Further details at: <http://www.europe-innova.org/index.jsp>*

**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