

EU News Bulletin

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

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Irish Regions Office



FUNDING 1

European research

Regions of knowledge

Regional innovation awards

Youth in action

NEWS & POLICY 2

EU policy for energy & climate change

Consultation on regional programmes

Consultation on Ireland-Wales prog.

Consultation on EU PEACE III

Consultation on EU ecolabel

Ireland lagging on R&D spend

Ireland lagging on patent applications

Improving SME participation in FP7

Age proofing toolkit

Irish becomes official EU language

EVENTS 4

Local and regional energy policy

local partnerships

ICT at local level

Town twinning

Regional innovation

NETWORKS 4

Local governments for sustainability

PUBLICATIONS 4

50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

FUNDING

European Research

On December 22, the European Commission published the first round of calls for proposals under the new 7th Framework Programme for Research & Technological Development (FP7) 2007-2013. This call invites applications for proposals under all four strands of the FP7: Cooperation, Ideas, People, and Capacities. Of particular interest to those involved in local and regional development will be the Capacities strand, which provides support for: the creation and development of local and regional research clusters (see Region of Knowledge call below), promoting science in the community, research infrastructure, and the participation of SMEs in research initiatives. Further details on all open calls are available at: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

Regions of Knowledge

The European Commission recently published three different calls for proposals under the new Regions of Knowledge initiative 2007-2013, which is now a sub-programme of the new FP7 (see above). The 'Regions of knowledge' initiative aims to strengthen the research potential of European regions by encouraging and supporting the development of 'research-driven clusters', associating universities, research centres, enterprises and local and regional authorities. The three calls for 2007 cover: 1. Analysis, mentoring and integration of research actors (budget €8.8 million); 2. Facilitating the emergence of new clusters and mutual information (budget €0.8 million); and 3. transnational co-operation (budget €0.4 million). Suitable participants would be consortia of regional research clusters or a single research-driven cluster having multinational partners. Deadline for applications: 24 April 2007. Further details at: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/capacities/regions-knowledge_en.html or contact:

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Regional Innovation Awards

The Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) network recently launched a new IRE Award, which aims to distinguish successful regional innovation schemes developed and implemented by European regions. For the purpose of the Award, a regional innovation scheme is defined as a clear and identifiable set of actions that are implemented to promote innovation at regional level and to enhance the performance of regional innovation systems. The deadline for submitting applications is 15 February 2007. Further details at: <http://www.innovating-regions.org/award/index.cfm>

Youth in Action

The European Commission has published the first call for proposals under the new Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013, successor to the YOUTH Programme (2000-2006). The new programme aims to provide young people between the ages of 13 and 30 with opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension. As 2007 is European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, priority this year will be given to proposals addressing issues of discrimination, as well as projects aimed at improving young people's health (through physical activities, etc.). Deadlines for applications in 2007: 1 February, 1 April, 1 June, 1 September and 1 November (note. Some projects are selected at national level, others at European level). The total budget for the programme is €885 million. Further details at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/yia/index_en.htm or the National Contact Point in Ireland is Leargas: <http://www.leargas.ie/youth>

NEWS & POLICY

New EU Policy to boost Energy Security and Combat Climate Change

On January 10, the European Commission proposed a comprehensive package of measures to establish a new Energy Policy for Europe to combat climate change and boost the EU's energy security and competitiveness. The new package establishes targets on greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy and aims to create a true internal market for energy. On climate change, recent estimates suggest the need for a global reduction of 50% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Commission believes that post-2012 (Kyoto) negotiations should aim for a 30% cut in emissions from developed countries by 2020, but sets an interim EU target of 20% by 2020, which is to be achieved mainly through energy measures. The package proposed by the Commission focuses on three areas: 1. A true internal energy market, by promoting a clearer separation of energy production from energy distribution; 2. Accelerating the shift to low carbon energy – with a binding target of 20% of the EU's overall energy mix from renewable energy by 2020, including a minimum target for biofuels of 10%; and 3. Energy efficiency. The Commission restates the objective of saving 20% of total primary energy consumption by 2020. To meet these objectives, the Commission emphasises the need for Member States to change their policies to increase the use of renewable energy. Specifically, it refers to the need to “improve pre-planning mechanisms in which local and regional authorities have to assign suitable locations for the deployment of renewable energies and integrate renewable energies into their regional and local plans.” In general, the Commission highlights the important role of regions and local authorities in helping to meet renewable energy and energy efficiency objectives. This subject will be covered in more detail in the next edition of the EU Policy Review. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu/press_room/presspacks/energy/index_en.htm

Consultation on Draft Regional Programmes

The Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly and the Border, Midland, Western Regional Assembly have both

published for consultation the draft Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) for the period 2007-2013. The draft ROPs outline a range of regional development measures to be implemented in the regions during this period, which will complement measures to be supported under Ireland's new National Development Plan, to be published on January 23. The ROPs will be co-financed by the exchequer and the European Regional Development Fund (Structural Funds). The Regional Assemblies have also prepared environmental impact reports on the draft ROPs, which are also now available for consultation. Written submissions on both the draft programmes and the environmental impact reports are encouraged. The deadline for receipt of submissions on the ROP for the Southern & Eastern Region is 4.00 pm on 5 February 2007. *Further details at:* <http://www.seregassembly.ie/opconsultation/consultation.asp> The deadline for receipt of submissions on the ROP for the BMW Region is 4.00 pm on 12 February 2007. *Further details at:* http://www.bmwassembly.ie/op/NewOP_Index.htm

Consultation on New Ireland-Wales Programme

The Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly recently launched a public consultation on the draft Ireland-Wales Territorial Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 (INTERREG 4). The new programme will focus on two key priorities: 1. Knowledge, innovation and skills for growth; and 2. Climate change and sustainable regeneration. As the new Managing Authority, the Assembly is responsible for drawing up the programme and for overseeing the implementation process. An Environmental Screening Report on the draft Programme, as required under the EU's Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, is also available for review. Deadline for receipt of comments is 4.00 pm on February 8th 2007. Details on the consultation, and copies of both documents are now available for download at: <http://www.seregassembly.ie>

Consultation on PEACE III

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) recently launched a public consultation on the draft Operational Programme for the PEACE III Programme 2007-2013. The new programme covers Northern Ireland and

the border counties of Ireland and will have a budget of a €300m, including €225 million from the EU and €75 million in national co-financing. PEACE III is a follow-up to the PEACE I and PEACE II programmes, which provided more than €1 billion in funding for Northern Ireland and the border counties over the past eleven years. It focuses on two distinct priority areas, reconciling communities and contributing to a shared society. These priorities will be specifically targeted at areas and groups that have been affected by the conflict and experience particular problems of segregation, marginalisation and isolation. The draft programme, which is now published for consultation, contains the rationale for the new programme, its priorities and areas of intervention along with the proposed implementation provisions. The consultation will run until 4 April 2007. *Further details at:* www.seupb.eu/consultation

Consultation on EU Ecolabel

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the review of the EU Ecolabel. The EU Ecolabel (the flower) is an EU award scheme for products which meet very high environmental standards. Businesses which can show that their products meet the demanding criteria set by the scheme can apply to the body running the scheme in their country (*the contact in Ireland is Mr Pat Hayes, National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), tel: +353 (0) 61 411 872, e-mail: pat.hayes@nsai.ie*) to use the Ecolabel's Flower logo on their products and in advertising. The scheme currently covers twenty-four product groups, including tourist accommodation and campsites (*further details at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/whats_eco/ov_concept_en.htm*). The Ecolabel was originally established by an EU Regulation in 1992, and the Commission is currently reviewing and revising it. The consultation is the second part of a process, which began with an evaluation study. This study showed that the original idea behind the scheme is still valid and desirable from the business perspective. However, it also identified a number of issues that need to be addressed, notably: low awareness and uneven geographic take-up of the label; insufficient product group categories; cumbersome procedures and organisational structures; fees and costs of getting the label are perceived as barriers; and a lack of perceived public purchasing benefits. This consultation will try to determine the best way forward for the

EU Ecolabel. *Further details at:* http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/consultation_en.htm

Ireland Lagging in R&D Spend

According to a recent report from Eurostat (12 January 2007), R&D expenditure in Ireland stood at 1.25% of GDP in 2005, below the EU27 average of 1.84%, and considerably below the EU target of 3.0% by 2010. R&D intensity (i.e. expenditure as a percentage of GDP) in the EU generally remains significantly lower than in other major economies. In 2004, R&D intensity in the US was 2.68% and 3.18% in Japan, and it had reached 1.34% in China in 2005. R&D expenditure in the EU27 rose by 1.5% on average per year between 2001 and 2005, compared to 1.7% in the US and 2.0% in Japan between 2001 and 2004. Also, in 2004 the business sector financed only 55% of total EU27 R&D expenditure, while the corresponding share was 64% in the US, 75% in Japan and 66% in China. In the EU, the highest R&D intensities were registered in Sweden (3.86%) and Finland (3.48%). The lowest intensities were found in Romania (0.39% - 2004) and Cyprus (0.40%). Annual average growth rates of R&D expenditure over the period 2001 to 2005 ranged from +18% in Latvia to -2% in Belgium. Ireland's R&D intensity of 1.25% in 2005 was up from 1.21% in 2004 and 1.10% in 2003 (8.5% growth rate per annum). 57.2% of this is financed by the business sector. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=STAT/07/6&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Ireland Lags on Patent Applications

Ireland ranks well below the EU27 average, and close to the bottom of the EU15 in terms of the number of patents applied for and granted. A recent Eurostat survey shows that in 2003, Ireland had a total of 77 patent applications to the European Patent Office (EPO) per million inhabitants, lagging well behind Germany (312), Finland (306), Sweden (285), the Netherlands (244) and Denmark (236). Ireland came fourth from the bottom of EU15 countries, ahead of Greece, Spain and Portugal. The EU27 average for 2003 was 128 patent applications per million inhabitants. The figure for the UK was 121, slightly below the average. In terms of patent applications granted,

Ireland (39) moved closer to the EU average (55) and ahead of Italy (30), but still languished at number 11 in the EU15 table. Sweden had the highest number of applications granted (132), but even this was well behind Japan (276) and the US (275). *Further details at:* http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/TY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-07-009/EN/KS-SF-07-009-EN.PDF

Model Agreement to Improve SME Participation in FP7

European associations representing researchers and industry have launched a new simplified Model Consortium Agreement, which aims to facilitate greater participation of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the new 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7). Consortium agreements are signed by partners in a project and address issues such as internal organisation, the distribution of EU funds, rules of dissemination of intellectual property, the settlement of internal disputes, as well as liability, indemnification and confidentiality arrangements. The new model agreement, called Desca - short for "Development of a Simplified Consortium Agreement for FP7" is intended to replace the 17 different model consortium agreements used under FP6 and to provide a single European model that is clear, simple and easily available to projects wishing to use it. The content of the model agreement has been "reduced to the necessary minimum," with guidance notes provided on all the clauses. The model also attempts to achieve greater "balance" regarding the individual interests of the partners in a consortium. It does this by addressing key issues such as membership of management bodies and voting rights, and the extent of each partner's liability, according to the principles set out in a voluntary code of conduct known as Responsible Partnering. The new Model Consortium Agreement was launched at a workshop in Bonn on 17 January and will be made available for *free at:* www.desca-fp7.eu

'Age Proofing Toolkit' for Regions and Local Authorities

The Committee of the Regions has joined forces with Age Concern England and AGE, the European Older People's Platform, to produce a guide to help local and regional authorities cope with

the impact of demographic change. With Europeans now living longer (more than a third of adults will be aged over 60 in 20 years time) and, in general, having fewer children, older people are becoming increasingly important for their contribution to economies and communities, as well as for the demands they make as consumers and for their expectations as citizens. This has important implications for the future strategies of regions and local authorities, as well as the services they provide. The 'age proofing toolkit,' which will be launched in Brussels on 25 January, is aimed at increasing awareness of demographic change and helping regions and local authorities to identify effective policy responses. The toolkit is based around five themes: general trends and indicators, regional economies, regional development, regional infrastructure and regional governance. *Further details at:* http://www.cor.europa.eu/document/pres/2454_ageing_EN.pdf

Irish becomes an Official EU language

On 1 January 2007, Irish became an official and working language of the EU. Irish translation will start with a workforce of five translators. Under a derogation proposed by the Irish authorities in 2005, only Regulations adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council under the co-decision procedure and correspondence with the public will be translated into Irish for a period of five years, in order to allow time to train and recruit additional translators. Interpretation from Irish will also be available to cover the limited demand foreseen in the EU institutions once the required interpreters become available, possibly by the summer of 2007. Currently, there are only four interpreters who can work from Irish: three staff interpreters and one accredited freelance interpreter. The annual cost of the new Irish language services over the next five years is estimated at around €3.5 million. Since the accession of Ireland in 1973, Irish has had the status of a Treaty language. Therefore, the primary legislation, including the accession agreement, and certain other pieces of legislation, has already been translated into Irish. *Further details at:*

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/language/languages/index_en.html

To mark the introduction of Irish to proceedings at the CoR, the Irish delegation will host a reception in Brussels on February 13.

EVENTS

30 Jan - 1 Feb 2007, Brussels

The 6th ManagEnergy Annual Conference takes place as part of the first EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW). ManagEnergy is an initiative of the European Commission which aims to support energy efficiency and renewable energies at local and regional level. The 2007 annual conference will include workshops on: Education Today for Tomorrow's Energy Users; Marketing Strategy for Local Energy Actors; Global Energy Crisis - Local Energy Solutions; and Financing Local and Regional Sustainable Energy Solutions. *Further details at:* <http://www.managenergy.net/conference/2007.html>

1-2 March Vienna, Austria

The Third OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance will address the topic, "Improving cross-sector and multi-level collaboration." The Forum, which was established in 2004, builds on the expertise and the informal networks developed by the OECD study on Local Partnerships. The study looks at ways to optimise the contribution of partnership structures to local governance and to the effectiveness of policies. The Third Forum Meeting will focus on cross-sectoral and multi-level collaboration, supporting the exchange of experience and practice between partnerships and exploring ways to overcome common obstacles. *Further details at:* http://www.oecd.org/document/39/0,2340,en_2649_34455_37832103_1_1_1_1,00.html

16-18 April 2007, Hämeenlinna (Finland)

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is co-organising its 6th conference on local and regional governments and the information society, EISCO 2007. The conference aims to promote greater uptake of ICT at local and regional level and will focus on five thematic areas: Engaging citizens in local decision-making processes; e-participation and e-capacity building; ICT infrastructure and wireless

systems for eServices in Europe's regions; eGovernment interoperability and support for networked enterprises; and the new generation of municipal services in a multi-channel environment. *Further details at:* <http://www.hameenliitto.fi/eisco2007/>

10-12 May 2007, Rhodes (Greece)

"Twinning for Tomorrow's World" is the title of a major conference on Town Twinning being organised by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), in collaboration with the union of cities and communities of Greece (KEDKE). The conference will bring together representatives of European municipalities and institutions to debate issues such as, the EU's new "Europe for citizens" programme, town twinning and social inclusion, twinning and youth, and the future of twinning in Europe. *Further details at:* http://www.ccre.org/docs/ccre_flyer_annonce_rhodes_en.pdf

24-25 May 2007, Ennis (Ireland)

The 5th Plenary Conference of the Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) network, which is being organised by the European Commission in collaboration with the IRE Secretariat, will be hosted by Shannon Development. The conference will consider the latest developments in European innovation policy, including new EU funding opportunities. It will also include the presentation of good practice and the IRE Award for 2006 (see above). *Further details at:* http://www.innovating-regions.org/network/events/eventDetails.cfm?eve_id=422&period=current

NETWORKS

Local Governments for Sustainability

ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, or better known as Local Governments for Sustainability) is an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organisations that have made a

commitment to sustainable development. More than 475 cities, towns, counties, and their associations worldwide comprise ICLEI's membership. ICLEI works with these and hundreds of other local bodies, providing technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local government in the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. ICLEI was founded in 1990 at the *World Congress of Local Governments for a Sustainable Future*, at the United Nations in New York. ICLEI's European Secretariat is based in Freiburg, Germany. *Further details at:* http://www.iclei-europe.org/index.php?id=iclei_europe_home

PUBLICATIONS

50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

The European institutions have a new website entirely dedicated to the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. The website features information on all the events being organised to mark this occasion. It also provides access to general information concerning EU achievements since its creation, as well as information on the EU institutions. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu/50/index_en.htm

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