

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

Intelligent Energy Europe

European eGovernment awards 2007

Cooperation with third countries

SMEs and intellectual property rights

Youth sector innovation & cooperation

NEWS & POLICY 2

Agreement on LIFE+ programme

Update: Structural Funds 2007-2013

Ireland breaches law on drinking water

Ireland in breach of Landfill Directive

Promoting knowledge transfer

European Research Area consultation

“New governance” to involve all levels

No voluntary modulation in Ireland

The future of the CAP and rural dev.

Solar energy potential in EU regions

EVENTS 4

Energy from biomass; Eco-innovation;

Homelessness; SME finance;

Renewable energy; Local renewables

NETWORKS 4

World Network of Regions

PUBLICATIONS 4

Innovation in the South West Region

FUNDING

Intelligent Energy Europe

The first call for proposals under the new Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme was published on 17 April 2007. The new programme will focus on three priority themes: energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy and transport. Support will be provided for activities aimed at promoting market transformations, capacity building and behavioural change, but, in general not capital investment. Support will also be provided for new local or regional energy agencies. The budget for this call is €52 million and EU funding of up to 75% is available (up from 50% in 2000-06). The deadline for proposals is 28 September 2007. *Further details at:* http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/call_for_proposals/index_en.htm

An information day on the call will take place in Dublin on 4 May 2007. For details, contact Matthew Kennedy, Sustainable Energy Ireland. Tel: +353 1 8082070, e-mail: Matthew.Kennedy@sei.ie

European eGovernment Awards 2007

The European Commission has launched the European eGovernment Awards 2007. There are five categories for this year's award: 1. Better public services for growth and jobs; 2. Participation and transparency; 3. Social impact and social cohesion; 4. Effective and efficient administration; and 5. The most inspiring good practice (initiatives that provide creative and inspirational solutions to common challenges), which will be selected by public vote. The awards are open to all public administrations in Europe (national, regional and local) that deliver eGovernment services. Submissions will be accepted from 1 April until 1 June 2007. *Further details at:* <http://ec.europa.eu/egov>

Cooperation with non EU Countries

The European Commission has published a call for proposals on promoting mutual awareness, understanding and cooperation between the EU and Asia, Latin America, the European Neighbourhood Region and Russia. The call specifically focuses on actions relating to local development and information activities. Eligible applicants include local and regional authorities and other local and regional bodies. The total budget is €3.2 million, with EU cofinancing of between 50% and 90%. Deadline for applications: 3 July 2007. *Further details at:* <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tender/data/d65/AOF75765.doc>

SMEs and Intellectual Property Rights

The European Commission has launched a call for proposals under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme to implement a 3-year IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) Awareness and Enforcement Project targeting SMEs. The project will cover all forms of IPR (patents, designs, trade marks, non-disclosure agreements, trade secrets etc.). The total budget is €7.9 million, with co-financing of up to 80%. Deadline for applications: 22 June 2007. *Further details at:*

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/funding/grants/themes_2007/calls_prop_2007.htm

Innovation and Cooperation in the Youth Sector

The European Commission has published two calls for proposals under the Youth in Action programme. The first call aims to support innovative projects in the fields of non-formal education. The second seeks to support projects promoting cooperation with countries outside the EU. *Further details at:* http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/calls2007/index_en.htm

NEWS & POLICY

Agreement on LIFE+ Programme

The Council and the European Parliament reached a final political agreement on March 27 on the new LIFE+ programme for the period 2007-2013. The Commission had originally proposed the decentralised management of 80% of the total budget, with specific budget allocations for each Member State. However, the European Parliament rejected this proposal, which meant a compromise had to be found. Under the terms of the compromise, the Commission will be responsible for selecting projects according to a series of common criteria and priorities. However, the agreement does foresee more involvement of Member States in defining national priorities, and also includes a provision to ensure a proportionate distribution of projects by establishing indicative national allocations based on specific criteria (population size and nature and biodiversity). The programme will have an overall budget of €1.9 billion and will support innovation and demonstration projects in four priority areas - climate change; nature and biodiversity; health and quality of life; natural resources and waste. The first call for proposals is expected in the autumn of 2007. *Further details at:* <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/new/futureoflife.htm#concilmarch>

Update: Structural Funds 2007-2013

On April 2, EU Regional Policy Commissioner, Danuta Hübner, presented an update on preparations for the new Structural Funds programmes for the period 2007-2013. All Member States submitted their National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRFs), the documents setting national priorities for 2007-2013, to the Commission by the 5 March 2007 deadline. The NSRFs are currently under examination by the Commission. Four have so far been finalised (Malta, Greece, Austria, Denmark) and a Commission decision on Germany's NSRFs will be adopted in the coming days. The Commission expects to have all the NSRFs adopted by the end of July. Meanwhile, the Commission has so far received, and is assessing, 311 (206 for the ERDF and 105 for the ESF) of the 441 Operational Programmes (OPs). This includes the three OPs from Ireland. A "programming

scoreboard" is now available on the Regional Policy website, which monitors progress in relation to the adoption of the new programmes. *The scoreboard is updated on a weekly basis and is available at:* http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/newsroom/pdf/scoreboard020407.pdf

Ireland in Breach of Laws on Drinking Water and Citizens' Rights

The European Commission is sending Ireland a final written warning for failing to comply fully with a 2002 European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling requiring drinking water supplies to be kept free of E.coli bacteria. It is sending Ireland a similar warning for failing to comply with a 2005 ECJ ruling requiring greater controls on polluting discharges to surface water by local authorities. The Commission is also referring Ireland to the ECJ for failing to give adequate rights to citizens to legally challenge decisions in cases involving environmental impact assessments and integrated pollution prevention and control. Four years after the ECJ ruling a significant number of local authority and private water supplies still show a presence of E.coli. More than half of private group water supplies in Cavan, Kerry, Leitrim, Mayo, Donegal and Sligo breached the E.coli standard in 2005. In relation to controls on local authority polluting discharges, the government has committed itself to a new licensing system for local authority treatment plants and collecting systems to be managed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, adopted legislation is still not in place. *Further details will be provided in the next EU Policy Review.*

Ireland in Breach of Landfill Directive

The European Commission has decided to start legal action against 14 Member States, including Ireland, for inadequately transposing the EU Directive on the Landfilling of Waste. In each of the 14 Member States to receive first warnings (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK), various provisions have not been fully transposed into national or regional law. Problems identified include incomplete, incorrect or non-transposition of: the definitions of different types of waste and storage methods; the scope, including the types

of waste that may be exempted; requirements concerning which types of waste can be sent to which classes of landfill; requirements concerning the content of operating permits for landfills; the requirement that the prices charged by the operator for use of a landfill must cover all costs, including after-care costs for at least 30 years after closure; requirements concerning procedures to be undertaken before waste can be accepted at a landfill; and requirements concerning the continued operation of existing landfills. *Further details will be provided in the next EU Policy Review.*

Promoting Knowledge Transfer

On April 4, the European Commission published a Communication on "Improving Knowledge Transfer between Research Institutions and Industry across Europe." The Communication includes a number of recommendations on improving the transfer of knowledge between universities and industry, including: the need to make it easier for staff exchanges to occur between universities and the private sector; the need to actively promote the pooling of intellectual property between universities, especially those which are too small to have their own knowledge transfer offices; and the need to promote greater interaction between universities and SMEs. The Communication aims to promote discussion on how to address deficiencies in the way Europe exploits its public R&D. It notes the continued existence of many barriers to knowledge transfer in the EU. These include cultural differences between the business and science communities, a lack of incentives to cooperate, legal barriers and fragmented markets for knowledge and technology. To help remedy this, the Commission also published a set of "Voluntary guidelines for universities and other research institutions to improve their links with industry across Europe". *Further details:* <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/127&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Consultation on the European Research Area

On April 4, the European Commission published the Green Paper, "The European Research Area: New Perspectives," which outlines the Commission's vision for how best to

exploit Europe's research and innovation potential. The Green Paper highlights the challenges posed to Europe by underinvestment in and fragmentation of research and the need to move towards the realisation of a genuine European Research Area. To address this, it proposes six main priorities: 1. Adequate flow of competent researchers, with high levels of mobility between institutions, disciplines, sectors & countries; 2. World class research infrastructure, integrated, networked & accessible to research teams from across Europe & the world; 3. Excellent research institutions; 4. Effective knowledge-sharing, between public research & industry, as well as with the public at large; 5. Well-coordinated research programmes & priorities, including significant jointly-programmed public research investment at European level; 6. Opening the European Research Area to the world, with a commitment to addressing global challenges. An on-line public consultation on the proposals in the Green Paper will remain open from 1 May to 31 August 2007. Contributions will feed into the design of actions for the development of the European Research Area from 2008. *Further details at:*

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/era>

“New Governance” to Involve all Levels

EU urban development and territorial cohesion ministers are expected to adopt two key documents when they meet in Leipzig on 24 and 25 May: a Charter on Sustainable European Cities and a “Territorial Agenda”. The two documents set out what are expected to be the priority actions at local and regional level for “integrated” urban development, and define the basics of what is seen as “new governance”, with greater involvement of all levels of authority and civil society. The Charter emphasises the need for development that involves “all players” and allows “citizens to play an active role in shaping their immediate living environment.” The draft recommends that all European cities consider developing integrated urban development programmes. It recommends the creation of high-quality public spaces, the modernisation of infrastructure networks, increased energy efficiency in buildings, and innovation policies in the education and training sector. It also recommends that special attention be paid to deprived neighbourhoods and the provision of “healthy and affordable housing” and

calls for the establishment of city networks at EU level. Although the Territorial Agenda is more focused on regional development and cohesion, it also makes reference to the integrated approach and calls for greater cooperation between metropolitan areas. The next EU presidencies, Portugal (second half of 2007) and Slovenia (first half of 2008) have committed to drawing up programmes for implementing the adopted measures. It is also expected that the Committee of the Regions (CoR) will adopt a declaration supporting the two documents in advance of the meeting. *Further details will be provided in future edition the EU News Bulletin.*

No Voluntary Modulation in Ireland

On March 19, the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers reached agreement on the application of voluntary modulation of funds from pillar 1 of the CAP to rural development. Under the terms of the new agreement, only the UK and Portugal will be able to apply voluntary modulation of up to 20% (up to 20% of direct farm aid could be transferred for the financing of rural development). Voluntary modulation, which applies in addition to the obligatory modulation of 5%, had been agreed in December 2005 by Heads of State and Government, who also foresaw the possibility of its application in all Member States. However, the European Parliament opposed this and ultimately forced the compromise that voluntary modulation is now only authorized in the UK and Portugal. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

The Future of the CAP & Rural Development

Speaking in London on March 27, Mariann Fischer Boel, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, said the European Commission was currently preparing the ground for a review of the CAP, in an exercise she called, “One vision, two steps”. Step one, she said, would involve a “Health Check” of the CAP and will get underway in 2007. This will involve only minor adjustments, with no “substantial” changes. Areas to be looked at include the Single Payment Scheme (SPS), and in particular, the move towards full decoupling for all sectors in all Member States, as well as cutting down on the number of types of

SPS entitlement and harmonising the range of SPS models currently applied. Step two, which is part of a wider review of the EU budget, will look at the CAP beyond 2013, and will take place mainly in 2009. The reflections on the CAP after 2013 will be more fundamental than the Health Check and will focus in particular on the need for some “rebalancing of funding between the CAP's first and second pillar” after 2013, through higher rates of compulsory modulation. The Commissioner also said she believed the milk quota system should not be renewed when it expires in 2015. She said a decision on this was needed as early as possible in order to give dairy farmers time to plan for a future without milk quotas after 1 April 2015, and to consider the need for transitional measures to prepare them for the change. Finally, the Commissioner referred to the recent EU commitment that biofuels would provide 10% of transport fuel supply by 2020. This, she said, provided a more favourable climate for investing in bioenergy, providing new opportunities for farmers, supported by the relevant measures in the CAP's first and second pillars. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

New Map Shows Solar Electricity Potential of EU regions

On March 30, the European Commission published a new map showing the solar energy potential of different regions of Europe, and a new interactive on-line Photovoltaic Geographical Information System (PVGIS), which allows users to estimate solar energy performance at any given location in Europe. This new online resource allows very specific calculations of the amount of energy that can be generated in any given location. These calculations are based on the sun's energy, geographic distribution, terrain, and detailed technological analysis of the available solar technologies. It shows that considerable potential exists in Europe for greater use of solar energy and that an identical solar energy system will generate twice as much energy in sunny areas of Europe, such as Malta and Southern Spain, than in areas such as Scotland or Northern Scandinavia. *The map can be downloaded from: <http://re.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pvgis/> The interactive services of PVGIS can be found at: <http://re.jrc.ec.europa.eu/solare>*

EVENTS

7-11 May 2007, Berlin (Germany)

The 15th European Biomass Conference & Exhibition, "From Research to Market Deployment - Biomass for Energy, Industry and Climate Protection," will present the latest information on biomass resources, biomass conversion, the market for biomass and the policy framework (EU, national and regional). An exhibition running in parallel with the Conference will feature state-of-the-art biomass technology. *Further details at:* http://www.conference-biomass.com/Biomass_2007/welcome.asp

1 June 2007, Stuttgart (Germany)

"Eco-innovation: The way ahead for competitive regions" is the title of the 2nd Association of European Regions conference on regional economic development. The conference will examine what regions can do to support eco-innovation and, on the basis of best practices from EU regions, identify key tools for supporting eco-innovation at local and regional level. *Further details at:* <http://www.a-e-r.org/events/regional-policies-committee/2007/stuttgart.html>

1 June 2007, Brussels

This European seminar on homelessness, co-organised by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and FEANTSA, is entitled, "Key elements for a successful local homeless strategy: How Europe can support local authorities to improve the fight against homelessness." The European Local Authorities Forum on Homelessness will take place the day before (31 May 2007 in Brussels) to explore future opportunities for transnational cooperation. *Further details at:* <http://feantsa.horus.be/code/EN/pg.as?Page=716>

6 June 2007, Brussels

On 6 June 2007, FinNetSME, the Network for Regional SME finance, will

hold a conference on "Financing enterprise growth in the regions of the EU – models and recommendations." The FinNetSME network, which was established with support from Interreg IIIC, aims to build a platform for regional public bodies on sustainable and intelligent financing solutions for SMEs. *Further details at:* <http://www.finnetsme.org>

13 June 2007, Carlingford (Ireland)

The BMW Regional Assembly's annual conference 2007 will focus on the theme, "Renewable Energy – An Opportunity for Regional Development." The conference will be addressed by Mr Duncan Stewart, Eco Architect and TV Presenter, representatives of Airtricity, Teagasc, Dundalk IT, as well as other experts on renewable energy. *Further details at:* http://www.bmwassembly.ie/news/events/Conference2007_AdvanceNotice.doc

13-15 June 2007, Freiburg (Germany)

The ICLEI (Local Government for Sustainability) European secretariat is organising a conference on "Local Renewables". The conference will examine the latest thinking on local renewable energy strategies and the implementation of sustainable energy in communities, and particularly, local renewables linked to energy efficiency in an urban and peri-urban context. *Further details at:* <http://www.local-renewables2007.org/>

NETWORKS

First Worldwide Network of Regions

On March 7, a new World Forum of Networks of Regions was founded at the First International Convention for a Local and Regional Approach to Development in Marseilles. The meeting was organised by the Conference of Peripheral & Maritime Regions (CPMR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The new forum includes associations or networks of regions from the five continents. The CPMR

will serve as its secretariat and the CPMR President will initially head the forum. The aim of the forum is to "group the regions of the world to identify their joint concerns and suggestions with regard to globalisation". The idea is to facilitate regional representation in international bodies such as the World Trade Organisation, the International Maritime Organisation and the United Nations. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

PUBLICATIONS

Study on Innovation in the South West Region

The South West Regional Authority (Ireland) recently published a Business Innovation Benchmarking Study, which examines the drivers of innovation in businesses across Cork and Kerry. The study was funded under the EU INTERREG IIB programme and is part of a wider project to examine the drivers of innovation in the region, and to undertake new initiatives to heighten levels of growth in indigenous micro, small and medium sized enterprises. The project, called DRIVE (Directing Research Into Viable Enterprises) for Growth, is being implemented in partnership with all of the regional and local development agencies as well as University College Cork and Tralee and Cork Institutes of Technology. The project is also running in the South East Regional Authority area and is seen as a first step, along the southern seaboard, in delivering the new Government Atlantic Gateways initiative, under the National Spatial Strategy. *Further details at:* www.driveproject.eu

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