

EU News Bulletin

The latest EU funding opportunities, news and events for local & regional government

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Irish Regions Office



FUNDING

Recent Calls

Local Employment Development - LED (PROGRESS)

This call aims to identify and share good practices in the field of LED and to provide inputs for the development of future local and regional strategies to:

- better implement the Structural Funds at the local level (including stakeholder involvement)
- generate innovative ideas for turning the perceived disadvantage of delocalisation into long-term aspirations of greater local prosperity
- facilitate knowledge acquisition and transfer in the emerging issues of inclusion, migrants, ethnic minorities, demographic change, and/or youth.

OJ Ref: VP/2008/010.

Budget: €1.165 million. Deadline: 14 July

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/calls/2008/vp_2008_010/call_en.pdf

Youth in Action - European elections awareness raising

The European Commission has published a call for proposals under the Youth in Action programme for projects providing information and raising awareness of the European elections.

Budget: €1.5 million. Deadline: 15 July.

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc90_en.htm

Lifelong Learning

Proposals are sought for actions by consortia of organisations (SMEs, Trade Unions, local and regional authorities, Chambers, national agencies and state administrations) from at least 5 countries to develop and implement the European qualifications framework (EQF), including national and sectoral qualifications frameworks.

OJ Ref: 2008/C 132/09

Budget: € 2 million. Deadline: 13 August
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lfp/eqf/2008/documents/eqf_call_%20en_2008_22052008.pdf

Flexicurity (PROGRESS)

Applications are sought for projects which contribute to the implementation of flexicurity, covering the following objectives:

- developing and/or implementing integrated policies in line with the common principles of flexicurity
- encouraging the mutual learning process in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy through development of flexicurity pathways
- suggestions on monitoring the process of development and/or implementation of flexicurity policies
- involving social partners in the development and/or implementation of integrated flexicurity policies.

OJ Ref: VP/2008/008

Budget: €1.5 million. Deadline: 14 August.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/calls/2008/vp_2008_008/call_en.pdf

Road Safety

Applications are sought for projects covering road safety and optimising infrastructure use by operators through the following actions:

- coaching, teaching, training and learning aimed at improving the behaviour of road users and operators in traffic
- research and dissemination of best practices
- coordination and harmonisation of standards and procedures

OJ Ref: 2008/C 112/14

Budget: €5.4 million. Deadline: 18 August.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/energy_transport/grants/doc/2008/transport/call_transport_2008_sub_01_en.pdf

Long-term perspectives for better social conditions (PROGRESS)

DG Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities have launched a call to promote better long-term societal conditions by financing reflections (research, workshops, focus groups, conferences, communication) based on improved quality of life for all.

Budget: €750,000. Deadline: 19 August.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/calls/2008/vp_2008_016/call_en.pdf

e-Participation

This call under the e-participation programme will harness the use of ICT to improve legislative and decision-making processes and enhance public participation in such processes, at all levels of governmental decision-making.

Budget: €4.7 million. Deadline: 29 August.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:146:0024:0025:EN:PDF>

Interreg IVA Ireland-Wales

The second call will be launched on 4 July with a 19 September deadline. Round one was a good start for the Programme. It approved six projects with an ERDF grant commitment of roughly €6.3 million. Over €40 million remains available in Priorities 1 - delivering Knowledge, Innovation and Skills for Growth - and Priority 2 - Climate Change and Sustainable Regeneration. A maximum 75% ERDF grant support is available.

Find out more at www.irelandwales.ie or contact the Joint Technical Secretariat on +353 51 318100.

Cultural Heritage (2009 Europa Nostra Prize)

This call aims to recognize excellence and high standard in conservation practices, the exchange of experience and encouragement of further efforts through examples. This is part of the implementation of Culture 2007

Categories:

- Conservation & enhancement
- Research towards tangible effects
- Outstanding dedicated service by individuals/organizations
- Education initiatives, training schemes and awareness raising programmes.

Budget per project: €10,000. Deadline: 1 October

Further details:

http://www.europanostra.org/lang_en/index.html

NEWS & POLICY

Waste Framework Directive

After almost 30 years, the legislation underpinning the EU's waste management and processing policy has been amended with the European Parliament's adoption at second reading (co-decision) of an updated and streamlined framework directive.

As well as confirming a five-tier hierarchy of preferential means of treatment from prevention to re-use, recycling/composting, recovery by incineration (provided energy efficiency standards are met) and, as a last resort, landfill, the text also clarifies what waste 'by-products' are and when an 'end of waste' status has been reached by recovery. Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas described the legislation as marking "a shift in thinking about waste from an unwanted burden to a valued resource and helps to make Europe a recycling society".

Member States will be obliged to develop national waste prevention programmes. The Commission will report on performance and set and incorporate waste prevention objectives in line with the 2020 recycling goals of 50% for municipal, paper, glass, metal and plastic waste streams, and 70% for industrial waste.

DG ENV waste policy homepage:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/index.htm>

Services of general interest

Nine major French and German associations of local authorities and public enterprises have officially affirmed their common concerns over the organisation and development of local public services and urged the creation of an EU legal framework for public investments. A joint declaration entitled 'More legal certainty for local authorities and local public enterprises in the European internal market' calls for the local authority roles of providing high quality, on-site public services which are adapted to citizens' needs and accessible to all, to be facilitated by having the freedom and means to plan, finance, administer and carry out such services. This declaration is in line with the Charter of Local Self-Government as recognised by a Treaty of Lisbon Protocol on services of general economic interest which seeks to strengthen the role of municipalities in Europe.

The main recommendations are:

- matters of intermunicipal cooperation, even where contracts are awarded, should be decided upon within the national system(s) without coming under internal market law including Community rules on public procurement;
- the definition of 'in-house' contract awards must be clarified – ideally through the new regulation on public passenger transport services;
- the Commission's February 2008 Communication on institutional public private partnerships (IPPPs) satisfactorily recognises the diversity of instruments available to local officials to deliver services but these need to be legally secured;
- the Communication's differentiation of the legislation applicable to public contract awards and of public service concessions is welcome but no European legislation is necessary for the latter.

This may be only the first step as the consortium has called for closer involvement of the European Parliament through the co-decision procedure and may yet "defend these common concerns together in Brussels" by mobilising associations of local authorities and public enterprises from throughout the Union.

http://www.rgr.de/pdf/erkl_daseinsvorsorge_en.pdf

Green Vehicle Procurement

EU Transport Ministers meeting in Luxembourg on 13 June have agreed a directive on the need to oblige public authorities and publicly-owned companies to take environmental and energy impacts into account when purchasing public transport and utility vehicles or awarding public contracts. This follows a Commission proposal late last year, to create a market for 'green vehicles' through public purchasing. By stimulating demand for clean vehicles, the Council and Commission hope to see costs decrease for clean technologies, with a consequent dividend in terms of environmental and atmospheric benefits.

Consequences to be taken into account by public authorities will include energy consumption and emissions of CO₂ and other pollutants. It is unclear as of now whether European vehicular energy and environmental performance standards will apply or whether required levels of performance will be integrated into individual contracts as key criteria. The new criteria would apply by as early as 2010. The next *EU Policy Review* will cover the new Directive in greater detail

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st10/st10724.en08.pdf>

Outstanding local/regional projects: 11 July deadline

The Parliament Magazine's *Regional Review* along with the Committee of the Regions has launched its search for the best EU-supported programmes and projects at regional and local authority level - the European Regional Champion Awards. Activities in the areas of communication, culture, employment, energy, environment, innovation, intercultural dialogue, maritime, social policy and transport are welcome to apply before the 11 July deadline. Nominations need to be channelled through the respective Brussels-based regional offices such as the IRO.

<http://www.theparliament.com/regionalchampions>

Road infrastructure Safety Directive

A new directive on road infrastructure safety is expected to be adopted shortly. On 19 June the European Parliament adopted a report at first reading that reflects a co-decision agreement reached with the Council of Ministers on a series of amendments to reduce the scope of the original Commission proposal. This means that the Member States will be allowed to keep their existing safety management systems where appropriate and consistent with the philosophy of the new directive. A set of safety criteria which had been proposed as binding has now been watered down to "be taken into account" through a series of safety impact assessments, audits and other inspections to take place at every stage of the life cycle of road infrastructure, from design to construction.

While the scope of the directive will be limited to roads making up part of the (existing and planned) Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), Member States will be able to apply its good practices to other road infrastructure that was built using Community funding. The most dangerous sections of roads will have to be identified based on a review of the road network every three years while 'safety auditors' are to be appointed by Member States to assess infrastructure projects. The Commission will put in place a system for the exchange of best practice between the states.

<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l24233.htm>

Rural & agricultural development on urban fringes

The Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe (PURPLE) whose membership includes the Dublin Regional Authority held its biennial event in Brussels in late May. The network was established to develop a long-term vision in support of sustainable rural and agricultural development on the edges of cities. Discussions at its latest event, with Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel in attendance, centred on the Peri-Urban dimension of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Emphasising the need to maintain competitive farming, natural beauty and vibrant economies in rural and peri-urban areas, the Commissioner recognised that agriculture continues to play a major role on the edge of cities. She advocated that emerging challenges must be faced and well-resourced policies developed. In particular she noted that “the time has come, at the European level, to think beyond the rural-urban divide and to recognise that peri-urban Regions, at the interface between urban and rural trends, are key to the equilibrium of the EU territory as a whole and to the well-being of its citizens.”

View conference proceedings at: www.purple-eu.org

Green Capitals

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas and Dublin's outgoing Lord Mayor Cllr. Paddy Bourke in his capacity as the first citizen of the current holders of the presidency of the Union of Capitals of the EU jointly launched the *European Green Capitals* award in Brussels on May 22. The new scheme recognises European cities (not necessarily capitals) that are leading the way with environmentally-friendly policies and practices based on criteria including the local contribution to global climate change, transport, public green areas, air quality, waste management, water consumption and sustainable land use.

The awards will enable cities to share best practices to bring about further improvements while at the same time increasing quality of life, tourism and investment prospects. Winning cities for 2010 and 2011 will be announced later this year with Dublin among the declared candidates.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/index_en.htm

Fifth Cohesion Report backs local & regional roles

Along with the, now traditional, analysis of economic and social development trends in the European regions, the *Fifth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion: Growing regions, Growing Europe*, adopted on 18 June, also reviews the public consultation carried out towards the end of last year on the future of Cohesion Policy.

Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner took the opportunity of the report's launch to highlight contributions received from Member State governments in particular which “confirm their ongoing commitment to an ambitious policy involving all EU territory” (i.e. not confined to the poorest regions) rather than any attempt at renationalising. Mrs Hübner particularly underlined the report's contents as a call for stronger links with EU sectoral policies in the light of complex challenges (especially relating to rural development); for a desire for “change in Cohesion Policy management and governance” to ensure simplification; and for greater involvement of local and regional authorities in policy programming and implementation.

The report also illustrates a broad consensus in favour of further developing a Regional Policy area where regional bodies are already prominently involved – namely territorial cooperation ('Interreg') - with greater flexibility to enable cooperation between regions not necessarily in the same geographical zone being seen as desirable

Download the report from: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/interim5/com_2008_371_en.pdf

Call for better social exclusion indicators in planning

Separately, a report adopted in the European Parliament plenary session of 17 June on *the impact of Cohesion Policy on the integration of vulnerable communities and groups* has voiced concerns that some of European society's most vulnerable populations are being ignored by the aggregated statistical methods typically employed in programming and planning.

To avoid the continuance of extreme intra-regional imbalances, the MEPs' report asks the Commission and Member States to elaborate long-term integrated territorial development programmes which better recognise and specifically address the needs of those areas most at risk of social exclusion

due to problems such as isolation, low levels of education, high unemployment, old industries, segregated minorities, insufficient administrative capacity, infrastructure deficit, poor access to services, and deteriorating housing conditions.

The EP resolution adopting the report calls on the Commission “to carefully examine the extent to which new quantifiable development indicators in addition to GDP per capita, such as social indicators, should also be used in order to identify the most vulnerable communities and groups and their location, reveal disparities between and within regions, evaluate implementation and policy efficiency and be used as guidance for development planning.” Such actions would underpin targeted and systematic measures involving regional and local authorities, economic and social partners, and NGOs, says the report.

This initiative ties in with the Commission's forthcoming *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* which is expected to define the concept, the criteria determining it, its instruments and the means available for achieving territorial targets.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/file.jsp?id=5531202>

Water Quality Standards

The final major piece of legislation needed to support the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is now in place after the European Parliament's adoption, on 17 June, of a directive on environmental quality standards for water. The aim of the new text is to achieve “good environmental status” through the prevention and control of chemical pollution of river, lake and coastal waters via harmonised environmental quality standards (EQS) for 33 priority chemical substances including pesticides and heavy metals) by 2015.

The completed WFD is expected to provide a long-term basis for decision-making at all levels and will be of particular relevance for the development of river basin management plans and programmes of measures, which Member States are due to complete by December 2009. Inventories of pollutants' emissions, discharges and losses will also need to be established at national level to will act as the basis for Commission reporting on progress.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/958&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&quiLanguage=en>

EVENTS

3-4 July, Bologna.

Regions Facing Lisbon Strategy Challenges

The '2008-2010 and beyond: Lisbon Strategy and Cohesion Policy. European Regions Facing Future Challenges' conference intends to underline the links between the EU political Agenda for Jobs and Growth and Regional Policy, stressing the fundamental role that regions can play in contributing to the achievements of concrete results and improvements for the future of Europe. The conference wishes to give Regions the opportunity to promote their ideas on a stronger European Union, able to face future challenges with a multi-level governance approach.

<http://www.spazioeuropa.it/LRNconferenze/ufficiobruelles>

27-31 August, Liverpool.

Culture, Cohesion & Competitiveness - Regional Perspectives

The 2008 European Regional Studies Association Congress will be jointly hosted by the University of Liverpool Department of Civic Design and by the British & Irish Section of the Regional Science Association International.

A vast number of topics ranging from regeneration to globalisation to new technologies and innovation will reflect the central theme of 'Culture, Cohesion & Competitiveness', but there will be provision for other European regional and urban development topics in a programme including: climate change; labour mobility; river basin management; GIS and spatial analysis; air transport; rural and local development; Dublin & Liverpool compared; cross-border development; renewable energy; public health; public finance and regional development; sustainable development and regional economic strategies; retail development; clusters; city and regional marketing; city regions and governance; infrastructure, transport, mobility and communication; and learning regions.

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/ersa2008/index.htm>

18-19 Sept., Tartu (Estonia)

Bicycle Policy Audit

BYPAD (Bicycle policy audit) is an instrument for the evaluation of local and regional cycling policy and improvement of its quality that has been developed, applied and continuously improved since 1999, with support from the European Commission. In that time, more than 100 cities and regions in 20 European countries have begun to evaluate and improve their cycling policy, supervised by 34 BYPAD-certified auditors who apply what has become a European quality standard for cycling policy and a vital European network. This event will allow representatives from local and regional authorities that have implemented BYPAD to present their cycling policies and exchange their experiences in the interests of improving the quality of cycling policies.

www.BYPAD.org

25-26 September, Ennis.

Technology for All Citizens

The final event of the Interreg IIIb project *Citizen First* which has linked Mid-West Ireland (under the Mid-West Regional Authority as Leads) with partners in Cambridge, Eindhoven and West Flanders will take place in September. *Citizen First's* activities to date have concentrated on refocusing local and regional activities from organisation-driven services towards citizen-centric services. The project has led to the successful implementation of services that focus and are deployed around the stated and diverse needs of citizens. However, some target groups remain at risk of further exclusion with the digitalisation of public services and in the last year, the project has been working closely with these target groups to further gain the participation of hard to reach, marginalized groups and people with special needs.

While primarily aimed at local & voluntary stakeholders working on providing solutions to social exclusion by exploring the benefits of ICT, this event should also be of interest to all regional and local authority officers and politicians concerned with, social inclusion, e-inclusion, e-democracy, e-participation and people empowerment.

<http://www.citizen-first.net/>

Supporting our SMEs

On the occasion of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) Economic and Social Policy Committee meeting in Athlone this autumn, the CoR in conjunction with partners in the Midland and BMW Regions are organising a conference on SME policy with a focus on the recently adopted Small Business Act for Europe. Speakers will include representatives from the main EU institutions and the conference will also provide case studies from a number of European regions and examine Irish policies to support SME development. Further information in the next *Bulletin* or from the IRO.

17 October, Inchydoney

'Ireland's Waters: an Untapped Resource?'

The Association of Irish Regions annual conference will take place at the Inchydoney Lodge & Spa Hotel, Co. Cork. Further details to follow.

Contact: Pgrennan@bmwassembly.ie

PUBLICATIONS

Regional Policy 2014+

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) has published an in-depth study on future regional policy as the outcome of a consultation carried out last autumn in which 60 regions from more than 22 European countries participated. Among the recommendations are strengthening the dissemination of best practices and the training of regional authorities in the management of funds and community projects are strongly proposed.

<http://www.a-e-r.org/main-issues/cohesion-regional-policy.html>

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