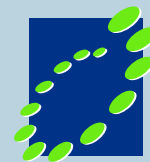


# EU News Bulletin

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

## Number 52 – September 2008

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



Irish Regions Office



### Inside in News & Policy...

**Renewable energy targets; biofuels downgraded; integrating marine & maritime; tourism in coastal areas; micro-finance; ICT strategy consultation; energy-proofing buildings; global food crisis relief; new European network of local authorities; urban transport.**

## FUNDING

### Recent Calls:

#### **Regional Clusters on Sustainable Resource Use**

Regions of Knowledge (FP7- Capacities) funding worth EUR 16.15 million is available to support transnational cooperation between regional research-driven clusters whose activities will support economic competitiveness in enhancing the sustainable use of natural resources and the man-made environment. Activities should demonstrate how public authorities can facilitate industry-led innovation by using public procurement to encourage local innovative goods and services; setting standards; improving access to risk capital; or providing support for research ('Lead Markets Initiative').

Clusters must be composed of at least a 'triple helix' consortia with the public sector element involving local and regional government, development agencies or specialised entities with a policy design/implementation function. National entities with a regional level organisational structure are also eligible. Where appropriate, additional regional/local entities such as technology transfer offices, science parks, chambers of commerce and financial entities may be involved.

*Deadline: 15 January 2009*

*Details: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls/> or contact the IRO.*

#### **Expertise on green business, energy efficiency & renewables, and freight**

The European Commission's Executive Agency for Competitiveness & Innovation (EACI) is building a list of experts in green business, energy efficiency and renewables, and sustainable freight transport to assist with the evaluation of new project proposals, ongoing or closed projects, and the overall direction and impacts of three of its managed programmes: Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE), Eco-Innovation and Marco Polo. The new list supercedes all previous lists.

*Apply online:*

*[http://ec.europa.eu/eaci/call\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/eaci/call_en.htm)*

#### **Cultural Policy Networks**

Under the Culture Programme 2007-2013, funding is available for networks of stakeholders, including at regional and local level, with direct and practical experience in the analysis, evaluation or impact assessment of cultural policies (mobility of cultural performers; access to culture, especially through the promotion of cultural heritage; cultural tourism; multilingualism; digitization; synergies with education; maximising the potential of cultural and creative SME industries etc.).

*Deadline: 1 November.*

*Details:*

*[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/guide/strand\\_2/funding\\_en.htm](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/guide/strand_2/funding_en.htm)*

#### **Biorefineries**

FP7 has published two calls (EUR57 million) for transnational projects on:

- Sustainable Biorefineries; and
- Enhancing exchanges between biorefinery projects.

Applications should relate to one of: sustainable non-food products and processes; integration of technologies for industrial applications; renewable fuel production; or environmental technologies.

The participation of relevant industrial partners, SMEs, end-users and civil society organizations is required along with clear identification of the expected economic, social, and environmental impact.

### Online Partner Searches:

*Our website carries an up-to-date range of requests from organisations in other countries in search of partners to join them in EU projects. The current 'offer' includes:*

- Youth Leadership Scheme.
- Regional sustainable energy platforms
- Development Models for Small Peripheral Centres
- Integrated, learning-based, dynamic regional development model
- Energy district renewal
- Entrepreneurial Women
- Local partnership drugs strategies
- Cultural Policy Networks (see above)
- Rural Transport
- Sustainable buildings; smart purchasing; and materials recycling
- Social policy in entrepreneurship and immigration
- Intelligent Transport Systems
- Local level ICT use (eParticipation)
- Geothermal Heating & Mapping
- Energy efficient public buildings/spaces

*Check out the possibilities on*

*[http://www.iro.ie/funding/news/partner\\_searches/](http://www.iro.ie/funding/news/partner_searches/) to get involved.*

*Deadline: 2 December (stage 1)*

*Details: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls/> or contact the IRO.*

#### **Environmental Resources, Food & Life Sciences**

FP7 Cooperation Theme 2 is providing EUR188.85 million towards transnational and single partner projects on various prescribed topics under:

- Sustainable production/management of land, forest and aquatic environment resources;
- Fork to farm: Food (including seafood), health and well-being; and
- Life sciences for sustainable non-food products and processes.

*Deadline: 15 January 2009*

*Details: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls/> or contact the IRO.*

## NEWS & POLICY

### **Renewables: national targets, grid access & buildings**

The European Parliament's (EP) Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) has overwhelmingly adopted a report on a Commission proposal to boost the share of renewables in final energy consumption to 20% by 2020 – thereby paving the way for massive investment in renewables.

The Commission plans for a directive to boost the role of renewable sources in overall EU energy use to 20% by 2020 included individual Member State targets. The EP report has tightened up and bolstered this with the addition of interim goals to plot progress over the course of the next decade.

'Flexibility mechanisms' will also allow for joint cross-border renewables investments and projects whose outputs would count towards these targets. This is timely as the Commission is due to present an action plan on offshore wind this autumn, as part of a wider EU Strategic Energy Review which will include recommendations on how to coordinate Member States' efforts to realise large-scale offshore wind projects.

The importance of meeting national commitments is underlined in the report by penalties of up to €110 per megawatt (mw) for underperformance whereas surplus production would be rewarded to the tune of €30 to €40 per mw. These issues will shortly go before the Council and it is expected that Member States will back the main substance of the EP decision.

Two further issues for discussion between national governments arising from the report are how to give renewable energies priority access to existing electricity and gas infrastructure/grids (something currently being debated by Ireland's Commission for Energy Regulation); and prospective new national rules to promote, or oblige, the use of renewable technologies in new and existing buildings.

Commission renewable energy site:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/index_en.htm)

### **Biofuels downgraded by EP**

The perceived unsustainability of biofuels – given concerns over food prices and shortages and deforestation – as the solution to renewable energy needs received further impetus when the above EP report curbed their contribution to transport fuel needs as

proposed in the Commission's draft renewable energy directive.

The binding 5% by 2015 and 10% by 2020 renewables in transport targets were maintained but the parliamentary Industry Committee specified that 40% of this amount should come from sources not linked to food production: second-generation biofuels (e.g. derived from leaves, tree bark, or woodchips), green electricity and renewable hydrogen. Additionally, 'traditional' biofuels such as ethanol or biodiesel would only count towards the target provided they could guarantee meeting much stricter social and environmental sustainability criteria than originally envisaged such as guaranteeing local community land rights and providing carbon emission savings.

The committee is further demanding that a full review of the whole EU biofuel promotion policy and its social and environmental impacts be carried out in 2014 to determine whether the targets need revising.

Contact the IRO for a copy of the EP Report.

### **Integrating marine & maritime**

In June 2007, experts in marine and maritime science and policy issued the so-called 'Aberdeen Declaration' calling for a European marine and maritime research strategy that addresses both environmental and economic concerns. The resulting document has now been unveiled by the European Commission and advocates a more joined-up approach, described by EU Maritime Policy Commissioner Joe Borg as being essential "to realise the full potential of sea-based activities in an environmentally sustainable manner".

Key to the *European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research* is the integration of the efforts of the research communities studying the complexities of the marine environment and those focused more on the development of new techniques and technologies to exploit maritime resources. This aims to enable the shared understanding (including interdisciplinary research on cross-cutting issues, such as climate change; human activity impact on coastal environments; and renewable energy resource exploitation) to enhance the conservation of the fragile marine environment while facilitating the development of economic activities such as shipping, fisheries and tourism as well as emerging sectors such as offshore wind and tidal power.

The Commission additionally proposes that a Forum made up of stakeholders from both research communities, governments, regional and local levels,

industry and representatives from civil society should be established to set common research priorities and establish measures to implement the strategy. Support for this initiative will be provided through a range of funding mechanisms, including the Seventh Framework Programme. The strategy will now be discussed by the European Parliament and the EU Member States.

Strategy:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/press/2008/pdf/com\\_2008\\_534\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/press/2008/pdf/com_2008_534_en.pdf)  
 EU Maritime Affairs website:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/>

### **Impact of tourism on coasts**

The type of EU support granted to tourism in coastal regions comes under scrutiny in a new study conducted by the European Parliament. While tourism is not a top priority of the ERDF, it is apparent that the industry plays a significant role in the integration of policies and institutions in coastal areas. Environmental sustainability, both in relation to the industry and to the policies for coastal regions, emerges as the most significant issue.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/athens/1/uploads/tourisms\\_impact\\_coastal\\_areas.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/athens/1/uploads/tourisms_impact_coastal_areas.pdf)

### **Micro-Finance Support**

A new technical assistance facility to boost the potential and reach of institutions providing financial support, loans and capital to SMEs, was announced by Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner on 11 September. JASMINE will assist in the setting-up, management and growth of Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) by offering them easier access to financial or administrative support via the European Investment Fund.

The move is expected to go some way towards bridging a significant gap in access to finance and business development. It is estimated that an additional 700,000 micro-loans – defined as less than €25,000 to benefit existing or aspiring firms of less than 10 staff with an annual turnover not exceeding €2 million – could be disbursed in Europe in the coming years if the right conditions were in place. There may be scope for community-level organisations such as Enterprise Boards or Credit Unions to get involved in this initiative.

JASMINE is also expected to devise a code of good conduct to help MFIs reach the quality standards required to become credible in the financial market. A pilot phase of three years is

scheduled to begin in 2009 before operations begin on a larger scale.

Further information:  
<http://www.eurofi.net/>

### **ICT research & innovation strategy consultation**

A public consultation on ICT research and innovation, asking industry, experts and policymakers to help overhaul the EU's agenda in this field towards an integrated strategy, has been launched.

The exercise, which is open until 7 November, aims to gather stakeholders' views on the main challenges ahead for ICT research and innovation in the EU over the next decade on issues such as finding the means to remove barriers to innovation and promote stronger interaction between users, researchers and business, in particular in regional innovation systems.

The strategy that emerges by spring 2009 is expected to set out key priorities and identify new areas on which the Union should concentrate its efforts to attain excellence. Energy, health and ageing are thought to be among the front-running fields of focus given that these are sectors where ICT already offers viable solutions. Defining the role of public policy on standardisation, licensing and intellectual property regimes to support commercialisation of research results and make Europe the world leader in ICT innovation will be another feature.

Consultation:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=ICTRD>

### **Energy-proofing buildings**

The general trend in the implementation of the EU's 2004 Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) is picking up momentum according to a new Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors report, but overall progress remains slow with some states having failed to even present their operational plans.

The directive provides a common methodology for calculating the energy performance of buildings exceeding 1000m<sup>2</sup> area. It contains a range of provisions aimed at not only raising standards but also improving consumer knowledge and confidence in these matters. Ireland is among the vanguard of compliance having established a Building Energy Rating (BER) certification requirement on completion of each applicable new building (since 1 January 2007 for residences and since 1 July last for non-residential and public buildings) and for the sale or rental of existing buildings as of 1 January 2009.

It should be noted however that Energy Commissioner Piebalgs has spoken at length in recent months of a desire to recast the directive by reducing or even abolishing the building size threshold; taking steps to encourage low/zero energy buildings; strengthening the inspection and certification framework; creating a benchmark standard tool; and allowing the public sector to assume the lead role in implementation.

Meanwhile the possibility of EU-15 countries employing EU funding towards energy retrofitting in housing (see the April Bulletin) has been prioritised by the current French Council Presidency who are seeking to amend Regulation 1828/2006 to re-define spending on energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in the housing sector as 'energy investments' rather than the currently ineligible 'housing expenditure'. This would make all EU regions eligible for co-funding of certain energy spending linked especially to housing projects aligned with social strategies such as area renewal. The proposal has found favour with the European Parliament's Regional Development Committee (REGI), with MEPs generally, and with the Commission in principle.

EPBD Platform:  
<http://www.buildingsplatform.org/cms/>

### **Agri-funding towards global food crisis?**

A report by Gay Mitchell MEP on a plan to use surplus money from the EU's agriculture budget to boost food production in developing countries and provide urgent food aid has been backed by the European Parliament's Development Committee meeting on 17 September. The proposal recommends that a sum of €1 billion over the next 2 or 3 years – to be matched by money from the Member States – be made available to relieve hunger and to safeguard gains made by aid programmes. Most of the money would be used towards long-term improvement measures.

The move could be made feasible by the fact that the amount in question is specifically earmarked for EU agricultural price support subsidies at a time when food prices are rising not only in Europe but throughout the Developing World. Mitchell summed up the urgency of the situation, saying "We have a harvest coming up and next March is an important deadline. If we vote this money through Parliament now, we would be able to commit to spend €750 million this year, in time." He also underlined the need to refocus EU efforts on the Millennium Development goal to end hunger and malnutrition and to demonstrate that the Union is capable of reacting to events in

the world. A decision on whether to proceed will be made by the Parliament plenary session on 7 October.

Further details:  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story\\_page/028-36464-350-12-51-903-20080904STO36266-2008-15-12-2008/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/028-36464-350-12-51-903-20080904STO36266-2008-15-12-2008/default_en.htm)

### **New local authorities network**

The Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI) has been established over the summer as a European network among national associations of regional/sub-regional administrations to develop a direct dialogue and collaboration between EU institutions and the local and regional levels with an emphasis on influencing future policy direction. CEPLI also aims to use formal and informal channels to promote the exchange of good practices and transfer of experimental local policies innovative strategies among authorities, and to facilitate member involvement in EU funding programmes.

The related and more-established Partenalia network of (individual) local administrations has recently published a report on this level's contribution to the aims of the Lisbon Strategy and influencing EU innovation and enterprise policy.

CEPLI Charter:  
[http://www.partenalia.eu/documents/projet\\_de\\_charte\\_CEPLI\\_EN.pdf](http://www.partenalia.eu/documents/projet_de_charte_CEPLI_EN.pdf)  
 Local Innovation Report:  
<http://www.partenalia.eu/documents/InformationsPartenalia.pdf>

### **Urban Transport Strategy**

The first outlines of a new urban transport strategy, highlighting a large range of potential solutions and areas where EU action could play a role in tackling the growing congestion, pollution and safety problems in Europe's towns cities, has been presented. This follows upon a broad consultation on last year's *Towards a new culture for urban mobility* Green Paper.

A change in Commissioner earlier this year to Antonio Tajani has delayed delivery of the action plan originally expected by October. It is now expected in the new year but seems unlikely to contain any legislative measures, instead giving the EU roles some role in supporting Intelligent Transport Systems, interoperability, the definition of harmonised rules for green zones and providing funding for innovative projects to improve mobility in towns.

Clean urban transport:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/transport/clean/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/clean/index_en.htm)

## EVENTS

### 30 Sept - 1 Oct., Geneva Sustainable Cities

The inaugural Sustainable Cities and Communities conference will focus on the key developmental challenges and practical opportunities facing cities and communities by offering opportunities to learn about how urban settings can integrate renewable energies; identify sustainable transport solutions; use planning to reduce carbon footprint and improve quality of life; and improve the environmental quality of buildings through innovative architectural designs.

Download the programme:

[www.greenpowerconferences.com/renewablesmarkets/documents/gpc5260\\_SS\\_C.pdf](http://www.greenpowerconferences.com/renewablesmarkets/documents/gpc5260_SS_C.pdf)

### 2 October, Newlands Cross Broadband & ICT for SMEs

The Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly is holding a half-day workshop entitled '**Broadband Strengthening your Business**' to showcase both the practical applications of the technology in stimulating ICT usage among SMEs and developing competitive advantage, and the opportunities available under the 2007-2013 Regional Operational Programme.

Further details:

[www.seregassembly.ie/conference/brochure.pdf](http://www.seregassembly.ie/conference/brochure.pdf)

### 6 October, Brussels Affordable Housing

The '**Decent and Affordable Housing in European Cities**' conference will discuss the role of the rental sector in urban structure; sustainable housing; and future policies including potential EU Cohesion Policy intervention with particular reference to expensive cities.

Details: [www.hic-net.org/eventsdetail.asp?PID=792](http://www.hic-net.org/eventsdetail.asp?PID=792)

### 7-9 October, Brussels Open Days 2008

143 seminars will take place over 3 days next month on the following broad regional and local development themes:

- Promoting research and innovation;
  - Responses to climate change;
  - Cooperation and networking;
  - Future European Cohesion Policy.
- Many events are now fully subscribed.

Register: [www.opendays.europa.eu/](http://www.opendays.europa.eu/)

### 14 October, Tullamore Interreg B & C Programmes

This seminar organised by the Dept. of Finance in association with the BMW and S&E Regional Assemblies will profile the opportunities available under Interreg's transnational (North West Europe, Atlantic Area and Northern Periphery) and Inter-regional (IVC) programmes and offer practical guidance in project idea development.

Contact: [ajordan@seregassembly.ie](mailto:ajordan@seregassembly.ie) or [jtowey@bmwassembly.ie](mailto:jtowey@bmwassembly.ie)

### 17 Oct., Inchydoney, Co. Cork Ireland's Water Resources

'**Ireland's Waters – an Untapped Resource**' is this year's Association of Irish Regions conference theme. The event will examine the use to which the natural and economic assets of our rivers, lakes, waterways, coastal areas and the marine are or are not being put; the potential these resources offer; and what can be done through research, long-term planning and investment to optimise development in a sustainably managed manner.

Contact: [pgrennan@bmwassembly.ie](mailto:pgrennan@bmwassembly.ie)

### 22 October, Brussels Smart Economic Growth

SEG was an Interreg NWE project to explore how smarter development and land use, combined with new ways of working, could support continued growth, whilst improving the quality of life and the environment in some of Europe's most dynamic and successful regions. Its '**Smart Economic Growth Development Guide**' for planners, policy makers and businesses, will be launched at this event.

To register contact:

[smarteconomicgrowth@gmail.com](mailto:smarteconomicgrowth@gmail.com) and visit [www.segproject.org/](http://www.segproject.org/)

### 27-28 October, Lille Interregional Cooperation

The INTERREG IVC Forum is a large-scale thematic networking event allowing project developers to broaden and finalise their partnerships in advance of the second call (27 Oct.-30 Jan. 2009) as well as being an opportunity to profile examples of best practice in Innovation & the Knowledge Economy and Environment & Risk Prevention.

Register at: [www.interreg4cforum.eu](http://www.interreg4cforum.eu)

### 4-5 November, Malahide Green Infrastructure

Fingal County Council and the Heritage Council are hosting a major conference, the first event of its kind to be held in Ireland, entitled '**Green Infrastructure - Connecting Nature, People and Places**'. This will examine the planning and development of green areas to provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits to society. Leading international practitioners will discuss issues including protecting nature and natural systems, providing a network of green space for people, and underpinning economic prosperity by creating a high-quality environment.

Further details:

[www.fingalcoco.ie/Planning/Conservation/Heritage/GreenInfrastructure/-d.en.13167](http://www.fingalcoco.ie/Planning/Conservation/Heritage/GreenInfrastructure/-d.en.13167)

## PUBLICATIONS

### Rural areas' proximity to cities

The first short paper in the Commission's *Regional Focus* series on specific regional research themes is now available. '**Remote Rural Regions - How proximity to a city influences the performance of rural regions**' focuses on the rural relationship with nearby significant urban centres.

Download the study:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/study\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/study_en.htm)

### Mobility Best Practice Guide

This new guide contains a series of best practice examples of activities undertaken in cities and towns of various sizes during **2007 European Mobility Week**. Any city, town or local authority area is welcome to participate in this annual (16-22 September) campaign to engage citizens in influencing urban transport issues.

Further information:

[www.mobilityweek.eu/IMG/pdf\\_best\\_practice\\_guide\\_2008\\_en.pdf](http://www.mobilityweek.eu/IMG/pdf_best_practice_guide_2008_en.pdf)

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